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Original article

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SHAMANIC FUNERAL RITUALS IN THE TUVAN PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC (1921–1944): PROHIBITION AND TRANSFORMATION

The author describes the religious situation and ritual culture during the period of the Tuvan People's Republic, and discusses a sharp change in state religious policy. It is revealed that the ritual traditions of the life cycle were practiced in their traditional form and in all their diversity only until the anti-religious propaganda emerged in 1929. The paper outlines the changes to traditional wedding ceremonies and the guardianship of young children, the ban on the traditional aerial burial of shamans and transition to a new, previously not practiced method, and the appearance of common cemeteries. The ban on traditional shamanic funeral rites proved to be a difficult test for the Tuvans since the idea of the 'pure bone' of a shaman was deeply rooted in their mythology. According to this idea, the bodies of deceased shamans could not be interred in order for their life force to enter another person and for them to become a new shaman. Based on such ideas, during this period, attempts were made to imitate a shamanic burial — the body of a deceased shaman was placed in a shallow pit, and ritual objects were hung near the burial site. According to ethnographic sources, Tuvan believers and priests underwent a painful transition from established religious principles to following the new anti-religious policy. However, in such a short period of time, it was still difficult for Tuvans to change their stable mythological beliefs, the traditional worldview, and to adapt painlessly to a new situation. Therefore, during the prohibition period, shamans were secretly buried in the traditional way in remote, hard-to-reach places, while ordinary people were buried in the ground.

Keywords: Tuvan shamanism, religious and ritual culture, funeral rituals, methods of burial of shamans, prohibition and transformation, Tuvan People's Republic

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