

OLD BELIEVERS' BURIAL COMPLEX IN THE COLLECTION OF THE IRKUTSK MUSEUM OF REGIONAL STUDIES: STRUCTURE AND SYMBOLISM

The article reveals the information potential of such a unique part of the Old Believers' collection of the Irkutsk Museum of Regional Studies as a burial complex. It includes burial clothes, a coffin and other attributes of a burial complex. The Museum employee A. Popova brought these objects from her expeditions to the Semeiskie Old Believers' settlements in Transbaikal region in 1924–1927. In addition to the complex itself, the fabric, color, technique of creation and the structure of components, the symbolism of numbers is of particular interest, as it appeals to the most important Christian categories. The key to this symbolic system is a “lestovka” — an Old Believers prayer rope — containing the main numbers (3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 33, 40), which accompany a Christian during his or her lifetime and which are reproduced during his or her transition to the Other World. The structural analysis of objects and the analogy method revealed that almost all objects related to the burial, in one way or another, have an imprint of symbolism, including the numbers symbolism. The latter manifested itself to a greater extent in the structure of the kichka (head wear), shirt, sundress, kalishki (burial shoes) and in the usage of stockings and shrouds. It is concluded that in the 1920s some of the Semeiskie Old Believers maintained such a numerical understanding of Christian doctrine and religious life. Modern observations made in expeditions indicate that the evolution of the tradition formalized this approach and preserved only some of these elements.

Keywords: *Old Belief, Old Believers, Semeiskie Old Believers, Transbaikal region, burial cloth, numbers symbolism.*

Author Info: **Kostrov, Aleksandr V.** — Doctor of History, Professor in the Department of World History and International Relations, Irkutsk State University (1 Karl Marx St., Irkutsk, 664003, Russia). E-mail: a_kostrov@mail.ru ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5274-5424>

For citation: Kostrov, A. V. 2022. Old Believers' Burial Complex from the Collection of the Irkutsk Museum of Regional Studies: Structure and Symbolism. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)*. 3: 180–194.

References

- Afanas'eva, Yu. Yu. 2017. Transformatsiia pokhoronnogo obriada semeiskikh Zabaikal'ia (na primere s. Bichura) [The transformation of the burial rite of the Semeiskie Old Believers in Transbaikal region (on the example of the village of Bichura)]. *Vestnik Surgutskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta*. 4(49): 149–156.

- Bolonev, F. F. 1992. *Semeiskie: istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki* [Semeiskie Old Believers: historical and ethnographic essays]. Ulan-Ude: Buriatskoe knizhnoe izdatelstvo.
- Danilko, E. S. 2019. “Smert’ blizhe rubashki’: pokhoronnaia obriadnost’ staroobriadtsev-chasovenykh [“Death is closer than a shirt”: the burial rites of the Chasovenye Old Believers]. *Novye issledovaniia Tuvy*. 1: 44–59.
- Dynnikova, I. V. 2016. Mladencheskaia i smertnaia odezhda v kul’ture staroverov-chasovenykh Latinskoj Ameriki [Infant and burial clothes in the culture of the Chasovenye Old Believers in Latin America]. *Zhivaia starina*. 3(91): 37–41.
- Fursova, E. F. 2009. “Odezhda na tot svet” russkikh staroobriadtsev Altaia i Vasiugan’ia nachala — pervoi poloviny XX v. [“Clothes for the Other Words” of the Russian Old Believers of Altai and Vasyuganye at the beginning — the first half of the XX century]. *Sibirskii sbornik — 1: Pogrebal’nyi obriad narodov Sibiri i sopredel’nykh territorii*. Kn. II. St. Petersburg: MAE RAN. 109–117.
- Ivanov, V. F. 2018. “Kak tsvetok v iantare”. *Narodnyi kostium semeiskikh Zabaikal’ia: nauchno-populiarnoe izdanie* [“Like a flower in amber”. Folk costume of the Semeiskie Old Believers in Transbaikal region: popular science edition]. Ulan-Ude: Ekos.
- Il’ina-Okhrimenko, G. I. 1969. Zhenskii kostium semeiskikh XIX — nachala XX vv. i ego ukrasheniia [Semeiskie Old Believers’ woman costume of XIX- early XX centuries and its decorations]. *Etnografiia russkogo naseleniia Sibiri i Srednei Azii*. Moscow: Nauka. 189–220.
- Kovrigina, I. A. 2014. Pogost kak fenomen kul’tury staroobriadtsev Zabaikal’ia [Burial ground as a cultural phenomenon of the Old Believers of Transbaikal region]. *Vestnik Irkutskogo gosudarstvennogo tekhnicheskogo universiteta*. 3(86): 238–242.
- Kostrov, A. V. 2010. *Staroobriadchestvo Baikal’skoi Sibiri v perekhodnyi period otechestvennoi istorii (1905–1930-e gg.)* [Old Believers in Baikal Siberia in the transition period of Russian history (1905–1930s)]. Irkutsk: Izdatelstvo IGU.
- Kuvaitseva, M. V. 2017. *Belaia lestovka. Pokhoronno-pominal’nyi obriad staroverov Estonii* [White lestovka. Burial and memorial rite of Old Believers in Estonia]. Tartu: Obshchestvo kul’tury i razvitiia staroverov Estonii.
- Maiorov, A. P. 2001. Semiotika pogrebal’nogo obriada semeiskikh Zabaikal’ia [Semiotics of the burial rite of the Semeiskie Old Believers of Transbaikal region]. *Materialy III Mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii “Staroobriadchestvo: istoriia i sovremennost’, mestnye traditsii, russkie i zarubezhnye sviazi”*. Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo BNTs SO RAN. 242–245.
- Matveeva, T. I. 2000. Semantika zapretov v pokhoronnoi obriadnosti semeiskikh [The semantics of prohibition in the burial rites of the Semeiskie Old Believers]. *Tezisy regional’noi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii “Istoriia, kul’tura i iazyk staroobriadtsev Zabaikal’ia”*. Ulan-Ude: Izdatelstvo BGU, 2000. 60–73.
- Ostrovskii, A. B. 2005. Chislovaia simbolika v traditsionnoi kul’ture staroobriadtsev [Numerical symbolism in the traditional culture of Old Believers]. *Materialy VII Mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii “Staroobriadchestvo: istoriia, kul’tura, sovremennost’*. Vol. II. Moscow: Muzei istorii staroobriadchestva. 348–354.
- Pechniak, V. A. (ed.). 2017. *Traditsionnaia odezhda staroobriadtsev Urala* [Traditional clothing of the Old Believers of the Urals]. Ekaterinburg: TsTNK.
- Popova, A. M. 1928. *Semeiskie (Zabaikal’skie staroobriadtsy)* [The Semeiskie Old Believers (Transbaikal Old Believers)]. Verkhneudinsk: Tipjgrafia NKPT.
- Selishchev, A. M. 1920. *Zabaikal’skie staroobriadtsy. Semeiskie* [Transbaikal Old Believers. The Semeiskie Old Believers]. Irkutsk: Tip. “Sibirskoe knizhnoe delo”.
- Yumsunova, T. B. 2005. *Iazyk semeiskikh — staroobriadtsev Zabaikal’ia* [The language of the Semeiskie Old Believers of Transbaikal region]. Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul’tury.
- Yumsunova, T. B. (ed.). 1999. *Slovar’govorov staroobriadtsev (semeiskikh) Zabaikal’ia* [Dictionary of dialects of Old Believers (Semeiskie Old Believers) in Transbaikal region]. Novosibirsk: Izdatelstvo Sibirskoj’e Otdelenij’e RAN, NITs OIGGM SO RAN.

- Yumsunova, T. B., and A. P. Maiorov 2000. Obriazhenie i provody pokoinika u semeiskikh Zabaikal'ia [Dressing and seeing-off the dead at the Semeiskie Old Believers of Transbaikal region]. *Zhivaia starina*. 1: 10–13.
- Zenkova, T. M. 1999. K voprosu o pokhoronnoi obriadnosti semeiskikh Zabaikal'ia [On the question of the funeral rites of the Semey Transbaikalia]. *Materialy Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii "Problemy traditsionnoi kul'tury narodov Baikalskogo regiona"*. Ulan-Ude: VARK. 138–139.
- Zenkova, T. M. 2010. *Narodnaia traditsionnaia kul'tura semeiskikh Vostochnogo Zabaikal'ia: istoriia i sovremennost'* [Folk traditional culture of the Semey of Eastern Transbaikalia: history and modernity]. Chita: Ekspres-izdatel'stvo.