

## **HOW DOES A HUNTER TURN FROM A PREDATOR INTO A PREY? THE INTERACTION OF A MAN AND THE GUARDIAN SPIRIT IN THE CONTEMPORARY BELIEFS OF THE ALTAIAN HUNTERS**

*Death is rarely mentioned in everyday life. However, the Altaians eagerly speak about the causes of death, unless these are illness or accident. Such stories about the guardian spirits' punishments for the immoral behaviour are rarely seen as mystical or supernatural, which is typical for the Altaians. This article is an attempt to explore the modern Altaians' beliefs about the ways of interaction of humans and the guardian spirit of Altai. The hunting practices, which, according to Russian and foreign scientists' research, have rather ancient roots, are passed from the older to the younger generation. Importantly, the complex of beliefs about the guardian spirits of Altai existed among all the peoples who lived within this mountain system, which is currently divided by the borders of four states: Russia, Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia. Similarly, all the peoples of the Great Altai believed or still believe that the guardian spirit could punish for unrighteous conduct. The cultural norms of the Altaians, in particular, suggest only one way to safely interact with Altai: follow the rules of reciprocity, avoid poaching, sing praises to Altai, protect life in every manifestation.*

**Keywords:** *Altaians, hunting, master spirit of Altai, perspectivism, non-human property*

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