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Mark Egart's Travel Writings: Anthropology and Religion in Altai

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The article analyzes the anthropological and religious aspects of Mark Egart's travel essays, which focus on the indigenous peoples of Altai during the Soviet collectivization of the 1930s. His book "The Ferry: Sketches of the Struggle for Socialism in the Altai Mountains" (1932) is examined as a valuable source that combines literary and ethnographic techniques to illuminate the profound cultural and religious transformations brought about by Soviet modernization. The study highlights shamanism, Burhanism, and everyday practices, through which Egart explores the interaction between traditional belief systems and Soviet ideological processes. Special attention is given to the methods Egart used to document the region's spiritual and cultural heritage, as well as to how he integrated ideological narratives into his ethnographic descriptions. The article emphasizes the duality of Egart's position: on one hand, he meticulously records the cultural specificities of the region; on the other, he interprets them through the lens of Soviet ideological paradigms, portraying traditions as relics of the past to be modernized. The study's findings evaluate Egart's contribution to shaping the perception and literary image of the indigenous peoples of Altai through the interplay of anthropology, religion, and politics in the context of Soviet history. His travel essays are presented as an important source for understanding the dynamics of cultural change and the influence of ideology on traditional communities.

KEYWORDS
Mark Egart, Altai Mountains, Soviet collectivization, anthropology, Shamanism, Burhanism, Religious transformations, Indigenous beliefs, Cultural modernization, Soviet ideology

Introduction

The travelogues and anthropological writings of the twentieth century have become significant tools for exploring and documenting cultural transformations, while also opening new possibilities for analyzing local cultural and religious phenomena. These texts not only record traditions that may have been overlooked by ethnographers and religious scholars but also shape discussions on strategies for representing cultural and regional specificities. The issue of localization, which James Clifford interprets as an integral component of anthropological description, is particularly important in the context of itinerant anthropology. According to Clifford, the effort to objectively represent "other" ways of life involves a complex interplay between the author's subjective vision and the methodological challenges encountered during text interpretation (*Clifford, 1991*). This perspective raises a number of questions: Who defines the boundaries of communities, their cultural practices, identities and objects of study? How do spatial representations shape the image of "locals" in texts? Additionally, we have to consider the peculiarities of the historical period and the ideological convictions of the author.

Critical analysis of these questions reveals a broader dimension of anthropological writing that not only describes but also shapes perceptions of cultural and religious phenomena. In contemporary research, this discussion continues in religious studies, particularly in the anthropology of religion, which examines beliefs, rituals and transcendental ideas through the prism of cultural context. The peculiarity of religious anthropology lies in its ability to illuminate the deeper aspects of human experience, reflecting the relationship between the sacred and the secular in different societies.

In the 1920s and 1930s, significant socio-cultural changes took place among the indigenous peoples of North Asia, attracting the attention not only of ethnographers and historians but also of writers. Writers whose anthropological observations were reflected in travelogues and memoirs made a particular contribution to documenting these processes. However, this legacy remains largely unexplored outside of literary studies. The main focus of this study is to document the worldview and beliefs of the Altai Turks in the context of religious anthropology. Of central interest is Mark Egart's travel essay *The Ferry; Sketches of the Struggle for Socialism in the Altai Mountains* (1932), in which the author highlights certain aspects religious worldview of the indigenous peoples of the Altai Mountains. In particular, we will look into the seemingly insignificant descriptions of ritual practices and beliefs, along with the details of everyday life, that provide for deeper understanding of the worldview of these communities during a specific historical period and help assess their significance within the discourse of religious studies.

First and foremost, it is worth providing some context about the author of these essays. Mordechai Boguslawski, better known as Mark Egart (1901-1956), was born in Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine. He was raised in a Jewish community. His father was a teacher at the local Jewish school, and from the age of fifteen Mark worked as a tutor for other

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Jewish children. In 1918 he graduated from the commercial school in Kryvyi Rih. In 1921 he left for Poland and later Palestine, where he lived for several years. Disillusioned with the social system and struggling with health problems, particularly due to the local climate, he decided to leave Palestine. In 1928 he received permission from the Soviet authorities to return to the USSR. Mark Egart went to Moscow and started to actively participate in the proletarian literary movement. He became a famous writer working in the genre of social realism. His works reflect the socio-cultural and ideological changes of the twentieth century (*Shrayer, 2018: 335*). However, one of his works stands out from the rest: "The Ferry: Sketches of the Struggle for Socialism in the Altai Mountains", written after a trip to the Altai Mountains in 1930, which marked an important stage in his career. This work focuses on the collectivization of the Altai Territory, known as the Oirot Autonomous Oblast back then (1922-1948). The author blends documentary accuracy with artistic expression, portraying social conflicts and cultural transformations in the region.

Many critics disliked this work due to its excessive realism and its treatment of the challenges in integrating communist ideals among the indigenous peoples of Altai. As the author himself noted, he was compelled to address all criticism regarding his inadequate portrayal of the impact of communism on the region's transformation, as well as his detailed descriptions of local traditions and his attempt to present most of the problems caused by collectivization through the perspective of the indigenous Altai people (*Egart, 1932c: 13*). Indeed, this is what makes the work a valuable source for studying the social and cultural changes of the Soviet era, particularly the worldview of the indigenous Altai people. It is also worth noting that these essays have been translated into English and German. Mark Egart's work has mostly been analyzed in terms of Jewish-Soviet literary characteristics (*Khazan, 2023*). His essays on Altai, however, are rarely mentioned. Exceptions include the publications of the Ukrainian Orientalist Borys Kurtz (*2014*) and the anthology *Voices of Jewish-Russian Literature: An Anthology* edited by Michael Shrayer (*2018*).

The aim of this article is to analyze the anthropological material collected by Mark Egart from the perspective of religious studies to explore the worldview and lives of the peoples of North Asia, in particular Altai. There is also an attempt to verify this material within the framework of historical anthropology to assess its accuracy and significance for contemporary research.

Research methods

The methodological foundation of this study relies on an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the history of anthropology, the history of religious ideas and the anthropology of religion. Such a perspective allows us to consider the history of anthropology not only as a tool for understanding other cultures but also as a methodological framework for analyzing the transformations of religious beliefs and practices in the context of globalization and local change. Particular attention is given to conceptualizing travel as a mechanism of interaction between the author of the text and local communities, enabling the recording and interpretation of unique religious phenomena documented in travelogues.

Methodologically, the study employs hermeneutic and textual analysis methods. The concept of exploration writing, as defined by Marie Louise Pratt (*1992*), is used to identify the ways in which the religious ideas of the indigenous peoples of Altai are represented in the Mark Egart's work. The synthesis of ethnographic and historical materials is used to create a holistic picture of religious phenomena, which allows us to trace the relationship between the author's text and the anthropological interpretation of local indigenous beliefs. This approach allows us to integrate the history of anthropology into the discourse of religious studies, emphasizing its value for understanding religious experiences within a historical and cultural context.

Results of the research

Mark Egart's book *The Ferry: Sketches of the Struggle for Socialism in the Altai Mountains* begins with a critical perspective on the earlier literary tradition that shaped the image of the Altai:

> "The pristine silence. Pure snowy peaks, clear lakes, narrow paths in the taiga. The furious 'shamans' with their wildly beating tambourines, the carcasses of freshly slaughtered horses sacrificed to a bloody deity, and the 'primitive,' 'simple' man... This exotic Altai is dead. The author even suggests that such an Altai never existed. It was invented by writers who, in search of the extraordinary, traveled to a "wonderful mountainous country" (*Egart, 1932b: 3*).

It is worth noting that this text appears in the original preface to the essays. However, in the English translation, the introduction is more extensive and includes clear ethnographic details. For example, the author provides a specific geographical localization of Altai and a detailed description of the inhabitants of the region (*Egart, 1932b: 5*).

He also devotes significant attention to the religious beliefs of the indigenous people of the Altai:

> "As far as religion was concerned, the Oyrats were divided into Burkhanists (who worshipped Burkhan and Erlik, powerful spirits in whose honor rituals were held, often accompanied by blood sacrifices) and a small number of Greek Orthodox Christians who had been forcibly baptized by tsarist priests. The tribes living in areas bordering Mongolia were influenced by Lamaism and Buddhism" (*Egart, 1932b: 5*).

The author continues with descriptions of the everyday life of the Altai indigenous communities, emphasizing aspects such as their housing structures, the organization of Aul (village) settlements, the use of pressed tea, tobacco smoking, and the production of arak (milk vodka) (*Egart, 1932b: 6*).

Egart also discusses the conditions of the indigenous peoples of the Altai under tsarist rule and details the changes introduced by the Soviet regime in this remote region of the USSR: "When the civil war came to an end, the Soviet government was able to focus on the economic development of these backward peoples, leading to profound economic and social transformations in the region. The old primitive nomadic way of life is gradually disappearing as the population adopts settled practices in agriculture and industry. Significant efforts have been made to raise the cultural level of these communities. They now possess written language, schools have been established, and literacy is steadily increasing. Traditional Auls are being replaced with permanent housing, and habits of cleanliness are being introduced. Like all nationalities in the Soviet Union, they enjoy self-government and manage their own affairs" (*Egart, 1932b: 7*).

Overall, the introductory information aligns with the general characteristics of Soviet literature of the time, which often aimed to propagate and integrate the image of indigenous peoples into the canon of Soviet ideology. From the perspective of a "true agent of the Cultural Revolution," Egart downplays the region's national and cultural

specifics (such as shamanism or traditional clothing) and instead emphasizes the ideological themes of the transitional era and the establishment of communism in the region.

The ideological image of Oyrotia, i.e., Altai, created by Mark Egart in *The Ferry: Sketches of the Struggle for Socialism in the Altai Mountains* appears in a concentrated form in the literary accompaniment to the photographs in a special "Oyrotia issue" of the then highly popular magazine USSR under Construction. The "Furious Kam" is presented as a recurring antagonist throughout the issue. This suggests that even Mark Egart himself could not resist the temptation to create an exoticized image of the Altai people for his readers (*Soviet Oyrotia, 1932*).

The first piece of documentary evidence of interest for this study is a fragment of a confession by a former shaman who publicly renounced his craft through an appeal published in a local newspaper:

> "For 15 years I was a Kam, deceiving the Altai people. Now I am convinced that religion is a tool used to oppress the people and enslave the working class. I hereby renounce my rank of Kam and urge all Kams and Yarlyks to do the same, choosing instead a life of productive labor. I am currently attending a literacy school where I am learning to read and write. Signed: Karmayev Iotuk, Agtel village, Shabalinsky aimak" *(Egart, 1932b: 20).*

Such publications were not uncommon. For example, in 1929, a similar message appeared in the newspaper Kyzyl Oirot:

> "I, Kokpoev Peter (Kosh-Agach aimak), was once a Kam and lived entirely by deceiving people. Now I understand that such behavior is bad, and I have realized that there is nothing but deception in the practices of shamans. I am no longer a shaman and do not believe in shamans myself – I am reporting this" (*Kokpoev, 1929: 4*).

Dozens of similar confessions were printed during the 1920s and 1930s.

In Egart's book, shamans are often portrayed as negative characters who deceive the simple and honest people and excessively consume arak: "A drunken father drank too much arak during a kamlania and died" (*Egart, 1932a: 26*). However, alongside such depictions, Egart incorporates local folklore, which presents shamans as figures of a distant past, now only remembered in songs: "Altyn-Kol is the holy lake of the Kams, Altyn-Tu guards Altyn-Kol; it guards all of Altai. From envious eyes, from other people's hands…" (*Egart, 1932a: 27*). This narrative logic supports Egart's thesis, stated at the beginning of his essays, that an "exotic Altai" never truly existed. While Egart pushes religious beliefs and practices into the past, they remain very close to the lives of his characters.

An illustrative example is found in the essay *The Grave of Urmat*.

> Urmat was a shaman who had died only a year prior, but her death caused the entire Ail to relocate from the vicinity of her burial site. Egart even specifies the location as the valley of the Chulyshman River, near Lake Teletskoye. This was a very fertile area, and the fertility of the land becomes a key element of the narrative. Among the residents of the Ail, a communal group forms that grows frustrated with the old beliefs that prevent them from settling and cultivating the land.

The main reason for this is the restless spirit of Urmat. The locals believe that, after her death, the shamaness took the lives of several people from the village. Despite being given a proper burial, the spirit of Urmat remained unsatisfied and continued to terrorize the people:

> "That year, the shamaness Urmat died. She was solemnly buried far from the village, on a neighboring hill. Heavy stones were piled on her grave to make it difficult for the spirit of Urmat to escape, and a wooden shrine was placed on top. But it seemed that the people of Kirsay had offended Urmat somehow. She did not rest in the earth. At night, the wind carried moans and screams from the hill – the spirit of Urmat was angry" (*Egart, 1932: 42*).

After several deaths, the locals decided to relocate their homes farther away from the burial site. However, the shadow of the deceased shamaness continued to loom over the lives of the villagers. This was particularly true for the older generation, who had been raised in the old traditions and struggled to understand the new communist ideology, collective farming, and other modern changes.

One of the central characters in this essay is an elderly man, Kara-Ivan,, who suffers from sore legs – a condition he also attributes to the actions of the dead shamaness's spirit. After returning from a fair, he passed by Urmat's grave and encountered the angry spirit:

> "The sun was setting, stretching trembling wings of light into the air, mercilessly tearing them against the dense wall of the taiga and scattering fiery drops into the rivers. Long shadows settled on the path. It grew colder, and the shadows became watery, flowing downward like a stream; the hooves of his horse clicked louder against the rocky trail, while behind him, slowly catching up, the stream poured in a white curve...
>
> An hour later, he rode to the top of the hill. From there, only the sky and the tops of fir trees and rivers were visible. Then the scorched fir tree appeared against the milk-colored grass. The starless sky smoldered over the taiga; from its depths, a fiery moon emerged.
>
> From the scorched fir tree, a black claw stretched across the milk-colored grass. The claw scratched the grass, curling and shortening, and the red moon swayed on the tip of the fir tree.
>
> The moon swayed, and with it, the night in the taiga swayed. It was quiet.
>
> Suddenly, the horse shuddered and pricked its ears. A shadow darted across the milk-colored glade, and Kara-Ivan felt cold sweat on his back. He stood up in his stirrups, peered ahead, and suddenly let out a loud cry, his mouth wide open, like a wounded mountain goat (teke) cries in the taiga. His voice shattered the stillness of the night, and the echo resounded loudly overhead:
>
> - Kara-Ivan... Ka-ra-Iva-a-a-n!...
>
> It was the cry of the angry Urmat. It was her black claw stretching across the glade" (*Egart, 1932: 46-47*).

After this encounter, Kara-Ivan grew even weaker. Feeling that death was near, he arranged a wedding for his daughter following old customs. The event was conducted traditionally, with the preparation of araka, appropriate food, gifts, and celebrations. The author portrays the wedding ceremony as something archaic and outdated, destined to fade away along with the old way of life. Even the bridegroom, depicted as a deformed dwarf, is presented as a continuation of the obsolete traditions. At the moment of his death, immediately after the wedding, Kara-Ivan dreamt that the spirit of Urmat had come for him. He died in agony.

Amid these events, discussions emerge between the older and younger generations of the community. The younger generation, aligned with communist ideology, dismisses the harmful influence of the shamaness's evil spirit. By the end of the essay, Komsomol members decide to return to the area, ignoring the warnings of the older generation: "Far down in the valley, at the foot of the hill where Urmat's grave stood, there were three huts – the first to be built by the new collective farm" (*Egart, 1932: 64*).

In addition to these descriptions and references to a more archaic animistic worldview, Mark Egart also addresses the liquidation of the followers of Burhanism, also

known as the Ak Yang religious movement (in Altai: **Ак јаҥ**, meaning *White Faith*). This indigenous religious movement emerged among the Altai people of the Altai Republic in the early twentieth century. The Russian Empire perceived it as a threat due to its potential to incite national discontent and attract foreign influence. Later, the Soviet Union suppressed the movement, fearing that it could unite the Turkic peoples of Altai under a common nationalist ideology. Unfortunately, Egart does not provide a detailed exploration of the movement's features.

In his essay *The Horse of Kidrash*, the author refers to Burhanists as rebels opposing the new Soviet government. These were remnants of ideological followers of Alexander Kaygorodov, a participant in the Russian Civil War and leader of the troops in the Karakorum-Altai district. Kaygorodov was a member of the White Movement, as well as an ally of General Baron R.F. Ungern von Sternberg. He participated in military actions against Red Army forces in the Irtysh River region and in Altai. In the war's final stages, from 1920 to 1921, Kaygorodov's units were stationed in Bogd Khan's Mongolia. In September 1921, with a group of 400 fighters, he crossed from Mongolia into Altai to support an anti-Soviet uprising among the Altai people. The uprising was defeated, and Kaygorodov was killed in battle in April 1922. Egart himself notes that the rebels mentioned in his essay were part of this movement (*Egart, 1932b: 133)*. Naturally, the remaining dissident groups who opposed the new Soviet regime were ultimately defeated by Bolshevik punitive forces.

However, there is an intriguing detail in the text that may be of interest: Egart localizes one of the Burhanist shrines. He writes:

> "A faint aroma filled the air. It came from the huts, where heather was burning, and offerings of milk were being made to the god Bur-Han. Day and night, with a mixture of fear and hope, people watched the mountain behind which lay the Ay-Gulesh gorge, shrouded in mist. Their eyes burned with hatred, fear, and hope for revenge. But they would not get their revenge" (*Egart, 1932b: 136*).

This passage identifies the Ay-Gulesh gorge as a sacred space for Burhanism, a detail that seems particularly valuable for locating a potential Burhanist sanctuary. Egart also emphasizes the perceived threat that Burhanism posed to Soviet authority.

Another notable aspect is Egart's description of how the renunciation of Burhanism took place, which he refers to as a "purge." He writes:

> "He wants to tell us how they conduct a purge in the collective farm.
> - Purge? Very well. Listen to this. We're having a purge in Karakal. The Tadysh aimak commissar asks a communist:
> - Are you a communist?
> - A communist.
> - Have you cut your hair? Did you burn your yak (an attribute of Burhanism)?
> - The Altai man: What should he do? He stays silent. Then Tadysh shouts:
> - Take off your hat, kneel down! – The Altai man removes his hat and kneels. And when the communist Menat said he would pray, he was expelled. If you won't cut your hair, we'll expel you and send you to Belukha" (*Egart, 1932a: 165*).

These are the main points in Egart's essays that merit attention in the context of this study. Additional details include information about the transformation of a monastery into a boarding school, the conflict between Burhanists and Christians, and even the awkwardness of Christian prayers performed by the indigenous people. Egart highlights the perceived incompetence and foreignness of Christianity to these communities. However, he only briefly mentions these points without delving into the underlying reasons or the broader context of these transformations and interactions among the indigenous peoples of Altai.

Discussion of the results

Orientalist Borys Kurtz notes that in his Altai Essays, Mark Egart explored the transformation of the Oirat Autonomous Oblast, aiming "to identify the forces driving this region forward. His focus was on the struggles and changes occurring in remote villages – from the deserted highlands of Ulagan to the Chui Road" (*Kurtz, 2014: 545-546*).

Mark Egart did not seek to embellish reality; instead, he strived to present it truthfully, with all its positive and negative aspects. Among the challenges he identified were cruelty, superstition, filth, harshness, and mistrust of innovators. At the same time, these difficulties served as the backdrop for the struggle for a new way of life and the construction of socialism. His essays illustrate the process of establishing collective farms, dismantling religious beliefs, the emergence of new communist cadres, and the creation of the image of the "new woman."

American researcher Yuri Slezkine notes that a unique type of literature emerged during the Soviet period, describing the transformations in the lives of the indigenous peoples of North Asia. He characterizes it as the literature of the "great journey" (*Slezkine, 1994: 291*). Egart's work fits this definition. His essays became part of the symbolic "great journey" of the indigenous peoples of Soviet Altai toward a "better future." A characteristic feature of socialist realist works of the time was their narrative structure, which depicted the overcoming of backwardness. According to Soviet ideology, the greater the backwardness, the more pronounced the progress appeared. Images such as the nomads of the taiga, the inhabitants of the Arctic, or simply "children of nature" emerged from the forest to stand side by side with the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union. Particular emphasis was placed on the "wandering" savages, the simplest and most unpretentious characters, who embodied the essence of the "young proletarians" – nomads looking for home (*Slezkine, 1994: 292*). These representations reflected the Soviet aspiration to integrate indigenous peoples into a unified ideological space, while romanticizing their transition from "savagery" to "civilization."

Accordingly, if we analyze the content related to the religious beliefs of the Altai natives in Mark Egart's travelogues, we can confirm their authenticity. For instance, the description of the dead spirit of the shamaness Urmat aligns with traditional beliefs of the Altai peoples regarding the posthumous fate of a person, which exist in several variants. According to Andrei Anokhin, the deceased either exit the world of the living to become servants of the ruler of the lower world, Erlik, or they transform into eternally hungry evil spirits, **jaman körmöstör**, who remain in the middle world among humans. Such spirits pose particular danger to the living at dusk (the so-called "red evening") and at night. For example, the spirits of **körmös** shamans often bring disease and cause suffering (*Anokhin, 1924: 22-25*). Egart's descriptions of the shamaness's restless spirit in *The Grave of Urmat* closely correspond to these traditional functions and the timing of such appearances.

The **kut** or **сӱне** of the deceased transitions to the land of the dead, located in the "earthly zone," or moves to the underworld (*Anokhin, 1929: 253*). The term **kut** is multivalent in Altai tradition, signifying "embryo," "soul," or "life force" that sustains living beings. In some cases, the term сӱне refers to the "double soul" of a person, which leaves the body in the event of fright or death. The word **kut** also

overlaps with **сӱне**, meaning the soul that leaves the body upon death. This concept reflects the complexity of traditional ideas about the soul and its role in life and death.

These beliefs reflect the complex structure of Altai cosmology, where the afterlife is not only a place for the soul, but also a source of potential threats to the living. Mark Egart was able to record and transmit fairly reliable testimonies shared with him by local people. Ideas about the posthumous fate of shamans, unlike those of ordinary people, have their own distinct characteristics. Shamans, who possessed considerable magical powers during their lives, are believed to retain their influence after death. It is believed they can help their descendants for several generations, as long as their names are remembered. In particular, they are believed to aid other shamans as spirit helpers during the process of *kamlania*.

Some recorded texts, including Egart's essays, reflect the well-known motif of the "restless dead": a shaman might be seen in their home even during the day, appearing as though still alive, or their footsteps, sighs, or voice might be heard. These beliefs testify to the special status of shamans in traditional culture, where their power is not limited to the boundaries of physical life, but continues to influence the world of the living after the shaman's death. This is also evident in the beliefs of the people depicted in *The Grave of Urmat*.

However, when it comes to the position of shamans and Burhanism in the Altai region before the 1930s, Egart deliberately downplays and misrepresents information. In general, Soviet policy towards shamans in Altai was contradictory. Researchers note that the 1920s marked a period of intense revival of shamanism, which was linked to the cessation of Orthodox activities by the Altai Spiritual Mission. The anti-religious campaign of the time primarily targeted Christian churches and largely bypassed shamans (*Tadyev, 1955: 11*). By 1931, on the eve of mass collectivization, the journal *Antireligionist* reported 170 shamans and 62 **ак јан** – **ярлыкчи**, Burhanist priests, in Altai (*Eyngorn, 1969: 24*). The se data illustrate the contradictory nature of Soviet policy towards shamanism, which combined efforts to preserve elements of local culture with a simultaneous desire for ideological control over religious practices. Official information starkly contrasts with Mark Egart's assertion that shamanism and Burhanism were relics of the past, though not a very distant one.

For example, the renunciation of shamanic practices, which Egart cites in one of his essays, is entirely plausible. Numerous similar testimonies exist, as renunciation under pressure from local Soviet authorities was a common practice. A recurring theme in these accounts is the rejection of deception (меке) and renunciation of faith (**јангы маштап јам**).

All these anthropological observations, along with Egart's deliberate omission of existing religious phenomena, fit seamlessly into the exploration writing model. Particularly significant is the subjective aspect of perception and the construction of reality through the text created by the author for potential readers. This approach makes it possible to present both true and fictional images of the described region and its inhabitants, creating a certain image of this world based on real observations on the one hand, and on the author's speculations and cultural projections. Thus, the exploration writing model enables the author not only to capture the complexity of the interaction between real and fictional representations but also to lay the groundwork for further conclusions about the impact of cultural, religious, and social transformations on the depiction of the indigenous peoples of North Asia in literary works.

Conclusions

The analysis of Mark Egart's travelogues provides a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural transformations that occurred among the indigenous peoples of North Asia, particularly in Altai, during the period of Soviet power's establishment in the region. The author aimed to depict an accurate picture of that era, drawing attention to both the negative and positive aspects of the changes. At the same time, he illuminated the complex processes tied to the creation of collective farms, the dismantling of religious beliefs (shamanism and Burhanism), and the emergence of new communist cadres, which formed the foundation of Soviet modernization in the region.

The methodological approach employed in this study underscores the significance of itinerant anthropology as a tool for examining cultural and religious transformations, as well as the adaptation of traditional practices to new social and political realities. The socio-cultural transformations described in Egart's essays, such as the dismantling of old religious beliefs, were accompanied by the integration of Soviet ideals, which, in turn, contributed to the creation of a new social and cultural reality. Furthermore, the essays highlight a connection between religious beliefs and nationalist movements, which posed a threat to the establishment of Soviet authority in the region.

Thus, Mark Egart's essays are a representative source for understanding Soviet policy towards the religious beliefs of the indigenous peoples of the Altai and their adaptation to new socio-cultural conditions. In addition, the analysis allows us to assess how literary works of the period, particularly travel essays, reflected the struggle between tradition and modernization, as well as the role that Soviet ideology played in these processes.

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Мандрівні нариси Марка Еґарта: антропологія та релігія на Алтаї

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У статті здійснено аналіз антропологічних та релігієзнавчих аспектів мандрівних нарисів Марка Еґарта, присвячених корінним народам Алтаю у період радянської колективізації 1930-х років. Книга «Переправа. Алтайські нариси» (1932) розглядається як цінне джерело, що поєднує літературні та етнографічні прийоми для висвітлення глибоких культурних і релігійних трансформацій, спричинених радянською модернізацією. У фокусі дослідження – шаманізм, бурханізм та повсякденні практики, через які Марк Еґарт розкриває взаємодію між традиційними системами вірувань і радянськими ідеологічними процесами. Особливу увагу приділено методам документування духовної та культурної спадщини, що застосовував автор, а також способам інтеграції ідеологічних наративів у його етнографічні описи. У роботі підкреслюється подвійність позиції Марка Еґарта: з одного боку, він ретельно фіксує культурну специфіку регіону, з іншого – інтерпретує її в контексті радянських ідеологічних парадигм, представляючи традиції як елементи минулого, що підлягають модернізації. Результати дослідження дозволяють оцінити внесок Марка Еґарта у формування уявлень і образу корінних народів Алтаю в літературі через взаємодію антропології, релігії та політики в контексті радянської історії. Його мандрівні нариси можуть бути важливим джерелом для розуміння динаміки культурних змін і впливу ідеології на традиційні спільноти.

Ключові слова: : Марк Еґарт, Алтайські гори, радянська колективізація, антропологія, шаманізм, бурханізм, релігійні трансформації, корінні вірування, культурна модернізація, радянська ідеологія.

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