

Socio – cultural existence of modern East Mary subethnos

Received: January 18, 2020

Accepted: March 15, 2020

Written by:

O. M. Ivanova¹³³**E. A. Guriev**¹³⁴**L. M. Bilalova**¹³⁵**I. S. Gareev**¹³⁶

Abstract

The article deals with the history, traditions and way of life of sub-ethnic group of the Finno-Ugric tribes – the Eastern Maris, who are considered the "last pagans of Europe". Using specific ethnographic material, scientific and popular-scientific works, the authors showed the unique culture of the Eastern Maris sub-ethnos, pagan beliefs, preserved to date and reflecting people's social existence, beauty of the traditions and essential national characteristics. The authors draw a conclusion that the Eastern Maris present an independent sub-ethnos tending to self-reproduction. Being amidst the powerful Slavic and Turkic civilizations, the Eastern Maris managed to maintain its national self-identity with some borrowings from neighboring cultures.

Keywords: Eastern Maris, ethnic mindset, paganism, traditions of the Finno-Ugric tribes.

Introduction

The first great geographical discoveries of the 15th century led to the cultures interaction and initiated the multicultural world formation. (Gayko, 2015; Holliday, 2010) The XX century brought rapidity and intensity to the world history course and activated the integrative socio-cultural movements. Philosophical view of the modern development of the world allows us to conclude that, the economic, political and socio-cultural integration engulfed the modern world in a global scale, blurring the informal boundaries of cultures, nations and peoples. Ivanova O.M., Guriev E.A., Bilalova L.M. (2015) The world of the second decade of the twenty-first century represents ultimate blend of nations, peoples, traditions and languages, showing thus centripetal movement towards the global multiculturalism. Ivanova O.M., Guriev E.A., Bilalova L.M. (2015) Interestingly, in most Western Societies, support for multiculturalism has decreased, especially among politicians and opinion-makers. (Ng Tseung-Wong & Verkuyten, 2015) However, in Mauritius, for instance, the support for multiculturalism is

defined in Constitution - "The population of Mauritius shall be regarded as including a Hindu community, a Muslim community, a Sino-Mauritian community and every person who does not appear to belong to one or another of these 3 communities shall be regarded as belonging to the General Population which shall be itself regarded as the fourth community." In fact, Canada was the first country that formulated official policy for multiculturalism and gave it a full legal authority in 1971. (Guo & Wong, 2015) The deeper and the more powerful the multicultural processes are, the greater the centripetal forces of the ethnic self-identity prove themselves (Zeybek, 2019). In this aspect the research of the Eastern Maris culture, which appears to us as a synergetic phenomenon of tolerance and identity, is of interest to the authors of the article. Like other Finno-Ugric peoples, the Eastern Maris has coexisted for many centuries amidst the two powerful civilizations: Slavic and Turkic – without losing their unique cultural identity (Lalukka, 2003).

¹³³ PhD (Philosophy) Professor, Associate Professor of philosophy, sociology and political science at the «Bashkir State Pedagogical University of Miftahetdin Akmulla" Department of Philosophy of Bashkir State Medical University, Ufa, Russia.

¹³⁴ PhD (Law) Assistant professor Branch of Bashkir State University in Birsik, Russia; Institute of LAW, Birsik, Russia.

¹³⁵ PhD (Philosophy) Assistant professor Branch of Bashkir State University in Birsik, Russia.

¹³⁶ PhD (History) Assistant professor Branch of Bashkir State University in Birsik, Russia.

The research interests in the Eastern Maris, their history, culture, phenomenal tolerance and simultaneous identity presented in the first article of the cycle is determined by our genetic involvement in this ethnic group. Thus, we represent the authors' "inner «view on the East-Mari ethnic group genesis originality and its current position in the multicultural space of Russia.

Development

The stages of research

The research origins date back to the works of our father, colleague – Mikhail Ivanovich, who in the middle of the 1970' s wrote about the dialectics of national and international in the life of the people presenting a form of historical community, about the national and international education improvement and the Eastern Maris ethnography. He began to study religion of Eastern Maris.

In the early 21st century, students of Pedagogical institute and pharmaceutical college made researches of traditions, religious beliefs, closes of Eastern Maris.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article is to present the current state of the culture of eastern Mari as a synergetic phenomenon of tolerance and identity and their socio-philosophical justification.

Research Methods

By combining the anthropocentric method with the dialectical method of interaction of contradictions, we show the sociocultural significance and historical perspective of regional cultures in the world's multicultural space. The culture of Oriental Mari today is a unique example of the people's careful attitude towards their national identity.

The culture of eastern Mari is investigated by using the systematic method, namely: as an integral part of the Russian socio-cultural history, and also as part of the national Mari identity.

The empirical material is selected on the basis of interrogation and observation of the way of life of the inhabitants of Birsks, Mishkinsky, Kaltasinsky and a number of other regions of Bashkortostan, where the eastern Mari live compactly. The survey was conducted during last year.

The method of historical reconstruction is used to create a picture of the migration of Finno-Ugric tribes and the formation of the Eastern Mari sub ethnos in the territory of the Kama and Ural regions.

Analytical review of the literature made it possible to present the state of study of socio-cultural genesis and the current situation of the Eastern Mari sub ethnos.

Literature analysis shows, that references to the Mari of the Prikamye and the Urals are encountered in studies presented on the international level. However, these materials contain generally common or fragmentary information about the Mari in general and the Oriental Mari, in particular. Historiographic analysis of the study of the Turkish and Finno-Ugric tribes is provided by the scientists of the Kazan Federal University (Valeev et al., 2015; Ivanov A.G. (1993). The archaeological aspect of the Finno-Ugric societies until 800 AD contain the scientific research of Christian Carpelan (Carpelan, 2006). The research about the enlightenment of Finno-Ugorian peoples in Russia in XX century written by Salminen. (Salminen, 2009). A comparative historical analysis of Mari folklore in the aspect of interethnic and intercultural interactions was studied by professor L. Barag (Barag L.G., 1977) Describing the culture of eastern Mari as a synergetic phenomenon of tolerance and identity, we rely on the method of anthropocentrism, which, according to E.S. Cubryakova allows you to explore scientific objects from the point of view of their significance for an individual, and the person himself becomes a starting point for the analysis of certain phenomena. (Cubryakova E.S., 1995; Zvukova, 2010).

General information about Eastern Maris

The "Eastern Maris" is the name of sub-ethnic groups living "outside the Republic of Mari El in the east of the Vyatka River, in the Kama and Ural regions, moved here from the Maris ethnic meadow territory tentatively in XVI - XVII centuries". (Asylguzhin, Gumerova, 2010; Gulina 2013). One can find more information about the East-Mari ethnic group formation history in the book "Mari peasants from the Kama River and Ural regions in the XVIII - first half of the XIX centuries", - written by I. Gareev (Gareev, 2014).

According to the 1897 All-Russian Population Census, there were 3.6 per cent of the Mari population in Bashkortostan. (Perepis' naselenija

1897 goda). According to the 2010 All-Russian Population Census, there are 103 658 of the Mari population living in the Republic of Bashkortostan, representing 2.6 percent of the Republic of Bashkortostan total population, and being at the same time the youngest one (average age – 36.4 years). Mari-villagers constitute 66.3 percent of the Maris living in Bashkortostan. The greatest number of the Mari population in Bashkortostan is concentrate din the Mishkinsky district (69.3% of the district population), in Neftekamsk (9.9% of the district population), in Birk and the Birk district (20.5 % of the population). In the capital of Bashkortostan – Ufa –there are 9134 of the Mari people constituting 0.9 percent of the total number of residents. The Maris constitute a certain part of the population of Karaidelsky, Nurimanovsky, Sharansky, Baltachevsky, Blagoveshchensk and other regions. About 24 thousand of the Eastern Mari sub-ethnic representatives called “the Ural Maris” live in the south of the Sverdlovsk region. There are 4.1 thousand Maris in the Perm region which is 0.9 percent of its total population. (Vserossijskajaperepis' naselenija goda,2010). The statistics show that the Eastern Mari sub-ethnic group is relatively stable in numerical ratio for a quite long historical time. The analytical view on the statistics represented gives ground to assert that the Eastern Maris densely live mainly in the Republic of Bashkortostan, with two thirds of them being rural residents. Thus, they are engaged in the traditional for this ethnic group activity - agricultural production.

The Eastern Mari language is a bizarre blend of Finno-Ugric heritage with borrowings from the Russian, Tatar and Bashkir languages, which are spoken almost by all the Maris in addition to their native language.

The Eastern Maris ethnic cultural portrait

In the beginning of the XX century, the plow farming based on family labor within the rural community presented the material culture basis of the Eastern Maris. Horticulture, horse, cattle, sheep and poultry breeding, hunting, season woodcrafts (logging and timber floating, extraction of tar), bee-keeping and later such family crafts as apiarian beekeeping and fishing were of subsidiary value. Carpentry and woodwork, arts and crafts such as embroidery, wood carving and jewelry were developed. From 1928 to 1932 the Eastern Mari, as well as Russian, Tatar and Bashkir peasants, worked in the collective farms – kolkhozes and sovkhoses, created by the Soviet authorities.

Considering the Eastern Mari ethno cultural portrait, it should be noted that vicinity to the Russian and Tatar-Bashkir population reveals the special features of this ethnic group the simultaneous combination of amazing tolerance and cultural and ethnic identity. The German physician, chemist, naturalist, ethnographer, traveler, professor of mineralogy and academician of the Imperial Academy of Sciences and Arts I. Georgi wrote about this in his ethnographic work “Description of the Russian peoples, their way of life, religion, customs, houses, clothes and the other differences. "In the middle of the XVII century, he was engaged in the research of the Volga region, the Middle and South Urals and other Russian regions, and described the Cheremisses (Mari) way of life, traditions, customs, and their sufficient distress among the other Russian Empire nations. In particular, he noted that the Maris are “unhurried and diligent”, “not brave and not cunning, and therefore they are not prosperous. They never live in towns. It is considered, that the Maris became engaged in farming because of “the places constraint.” (Georgi, 1799).

The modern Maris way of life retains specific features of the farming culture, which is largely close to the Slavic one. However, the sacred attitude to the mother earth, characteristic once for the Slavs, nowadays is more preserved by the Mari. The economic management specificity is mostly retained. There are meat, milk, and grain and hay production. Good-quality honey is produced, mostly by private households and farmers, which are mainly family ones.

In this regard it is noteworthy that the Mari village in the Republic of Bashkortostan, as compared, for example, with the Republic of Mari El, preserves its structure and does not tend to disappear, thereby contributing to the preservation of the Mari ethnic mindset. The population migration statistics study shows that the level of the Eastern Maris migration from rural to urban areas is much lower than, for example, Russian villagers migration. According to our data, only a few Mari villages in RB disappeared; the north-eastern and eastern regions of Bashkortostan appear to be the most sustainable in this regard.

The Eastern Mari sub-ethnic group of Bashkortostan has strong internal relationships and maintains the ethnic group cultural uniqueness as a whole owing to the traditional society elements preservation. At the same time, this feature imposes the responsibility on the

regional leadership for the Maris village support and development. This is especially important if we take into account the significant reduction of the agricultural sector in Russia and the rural population active migration to urban areas. It is no accident, therefore, that at the 10th Yoshkar-Ola World Congress of the Mari in April 2016, the Head of the Mari El Republic, said: "Now our main goal is to maintain the Mari village". "The optimization processes result, in particular, in the rural schools 'closure. The studies have shown that the closure of schools is the major reason causing the villagers migration activity. We have repeatedly stressed in our works that in the Russian context, school is a historically developed cultural center, which contributes to the ethnic culture preservation and development. (Bilalova, Ivanova, 2007, 178-189).

School is closely connected with family as the primary unit, carrying out social reproduction and primary socialization of a man. The researchers of Mari ethnic group culture emphasize that family has a great value in the Mari culture. As arguments to the stated thesis, we use materials from the article "Mari Ethno mentality" by E. Nikitina. Referring to certain sources, she writes: "The well-being of the family and community had a sacred meaning to the Mari. In the Maris mindset family presents as home, which in its turn is associated with the bird's nest, and children - with nestlings. Some proverbs also present phytomorphic metaphors: a family is a tree, and children are its branches and fruit. Moreover, "family is associated not only with a house as a building or a hut (for example, a house without a man is an orphan and in this case a woman supports only three corners of the house, instead of four as it should be with husband), but also with a fence, behind which people feel safe and secure. Husband and wife in their turn are the two pillars for the fence, if one of them falls, so the whole fence would be ruined, i.e., family life would be at risk." (Nikitina, 2014).

In Bashkortostan areas densely populated by the Eastern Maris their functions health care institutions network: regional and district hospitals, medical and obstetric centers, pharmacies. Unfortunately, due to the overall state program of optimization, many medical and obstetric centers and pharmacies were closed which is very sad. Almost every family has fridges and TV sets. However, even now the issues of implementation of running water, sewerage, gasification and other industrial and post-industrial civilization scientific and technological achievements remain relevant.

In many settlements, inhabited by the Maris, there are interest clubs with developed amateur groups and libraries with good literary supply. Such events as farewell to winter, solemn marriage registration, and army seeing-off events, evenings devoted to the holiday dates are celebrated in the rural culture clubs (RCC). These activities are accompanied by amateur artists' performances. Russian and Mari playwrights' works productions are carried out in the RCC. That may explain the national culture elements preservation in its ethnic purity in the Mari families.

As to the children physical education, Mari families prefer skiing to other kinds of sport. There are many cases when representatives of the areas under the study often become participants of the republic mass ski races and win the ski competitions of different levels.

The Eastern Maris have also preserved their national clothes. Although clothes of European style came into the Mari people life under the influence of the world culture, yet traditional costumes and decorations are not only stored in grandmother's trunks, but also are also used on the national holidays and weddings. Even now, one can often see women in national clothes, which they wear in everyday life.

Mari traditional vintage clothing consisted of richly embroidered shirts of the tunic cut, pants, summer caftan without buttons; waist towel made of hemp canvas and a belt. Men wore caps and-bracelets, rings and rich jewelry made of beads, sequins, coins and silver clasps –syulgan,- were typical for female costume. The Eastern Maris typical jewelry was a breastplate made of silver coins - sogan. Today sogan is a rarity, which is carefully preserved in the families, and handed down from mother to daughter.

The Eastern Maris national clothes have undergone certain historic changes. The ruffles on the bottom were added to the shirt-tunic, the embroideries were complemented with woven pattern, ruffles and ribbons. Narrow rough in waist dresses made of red, black or white homespun fabrics are decorated with dense embroidery on the chest and on the hem. The mica glitter and pearl buttons are added to the design. Sateen dresses and aprons made of red, blue, light blue and pink materials with a floral pattern, embroidered in satin stitch, became a new fashion. Self-made homespun dresses were replaced by bright color industrially produced national costumes. The Eastern Mari girls

complement these dresses with designs and make head wear jewelry from beads, mica and other materials. According to ethnographic researches, a modern Eastern Mari girl should have more than one of such dresses in her trunk for a wedding and for participation in national holidays. The kerchiefs of the white, bright orange, green and red colors decorated with flowers came into being instead of head wear called "äkäy".

Like music of other nations, Mari music inherits the wealth of forms and melody. From the folklore genres, we can point out songs among which "sorrow songs", tales and legends occupy a special place. The Eastern Maris traditional musical instruments were harp, drum, and trumpet. Today, the folk music instruments are bagpipes (shuyvr), drums (tumyr), harp (kusle), wooden pipes (beams), flute (puch) and reed pipe (shiyaltysh). They are used during the family vacations, and every where by artistic groups. One can learn to play such instruments in music schools, which function in many districts of the Republic. These instruments are also used during national holidays, weddings and other folklore events. Musical families play the accordion, chromatic accordion, talianka and hromka.

A typical Mari dance is "verevochka" – "kandrampunysh" – a dance of amazing beauty and form. Men and women are going toward one another singing and touching each other with right or left shoulder alternatively, stamping feet from time to time. At the same time, women's part carefully follows the soft and graceful movements.

Eastern Maris beliefs

The reverential attitude of Mari toward the ground, family and work is reinforced in the mythological consciousness of ethnicity. Thus, in a mythological representation the supreme Mari god Jumo is a great labourer. S.K. Kuznetsov – pre-revolutionary researcher of the Mari history, Russian historian, archaeologist and ethnographer, referring to the form of the Mari Supreme God, preserved the following mythological story for posterity: "They (the Maris) imagine that their god Jumo works hard just like they do and that he lives in the sky in a beautiful hut and has huge herds of horses, cows and sheep. When the herds go to the watering place, one can't see the end of this long caravan coming out of the heavenly stables. Being a good man, Juma works constantly together with his family. His large farm requires unfaltering supervision and constant worries that distract

Yuma from earthly cares so that once he forgot about the mankind existence" (Kuznetsov, 1880). Being sincere believers, in their real life Maris work tirelessly on the ground following Jumo's behavior. The anonymous author of "The Tale of the kingdom of Kazan" (Ivan the Terrible times/era), known as the Kazan chronicler, calls the Maris "husbandmen-workers" (Nikitina, 2014).

Maris' adherence to traditional farming culture and cult of the family is reflected in the originality of the Mari holidays and give rise to the following specific ethno-psychological features of the world perception like credulity, naivety, honesty, simplicity and peacefulness. Baydimirov writes about that in his research thesis "Culture of the Mari people everyday life": "In the sphere of the Maris spiritual reality the traditional national religion still takes a special place. The key installations of it are associated with the universal principles of vitality, environmental awareness and culture ecology. Within this framework, spirituality is a necessary condition for the formation of daily life that manifests itself through the goals and values, embodying them in the sphere of everyday practice. In such a way, traditional natural religion of the Maris imposes the following principle: how I treat the nature today, so I, my family, my people will live tomorrow. In the structure of such a universe people are actively involved in efforts to ensure their successful existence, trying to prevent unintentional violation of the cosmic order. At the same time, they pay homage to the external forces of another cultural world, showing specific non-confrontational manifestation techniques of solidarity and cultural identity." (Baydimirov, 2012).

Mythological worldview manifests itself in the Holiday of the Arable land that signifies the termination of the spring field works. Originally, it was aimed at strengthening the economy and family welfare, at the rural collective cohesion, strengthening the related groups' relationship and their unity. It is a great agrarian holiday with sacrifices that is usually held in a certain place in the woods, followed by cooking eggs and pancakes. At the Semyk – All Souls Day people appeal to their deceased relatives for the good luck in the domesticities and everyday life. The first day of the feast was considered precautionary. For this reason, since the very morning all work except cooking was stopped. Before the dinner one should not go beyond the territory of their yard and let anyone else into it, as it was considered to bring a misfortune. After

preparing ritual foods, the senior member of the family lights candles on the shelf or table placed near the door. The number of candles corresponds to the number of deceased relatives. People wish them a light and quiet life, asking for the assistance for prosperous life to the alive. Then they have meals, putting pieces of food in a separate dish for the deceased ancestors. In the night of the second day the celebration continues followed by the rites on the house protection, because it was believed that it was time of the evil spirits appearance. In the morning Mari people should heat the bath-house (Russian banya), where ritual ablution is committed, performing a cleansing, healing and protective functions. The third day – Semyk is the day of the general festivities, games, weddings, etc. On Saturday the feast ends, on Sunday and on Monday the Trinity and the Day of the Spirit – "MlandeShochmoKeche" are celebrated. After all these celebrations it is time for a free summer when farmers are preparing for other summer works.

Mythological world view in the form of the paganism serve as the essence of the ethnos world view as a whole and as its sub-ethnic eastern branch. Not only the major part of the religious Maris adheres to pagan beliefs, but also the part that in the 18th century was converted to Orthodoxy. Many religious holidays of the Maris are similar to the Christian ones, for example, Kugeche – Easter, Shorykyol ("Sheep foot") – Svyatki, Roshto – Christmas, Uyarnya – Mardi Gras, and others. Historical forms of management, life and social relations reflected in the Mari religious beliefs.

According to the research of the Mari beliefs conducted by known sociologists, ethnographers and historians (Kozlova K.I., 1978; Golubkin, 1994; Bagin, 2011; Kaliev, 2003; 2007), Eastern Maris worship the "great White God" - "Osh KugoJumo".

It is also confirmed by ethnographic research carried out in the Mishkinskiy and Baltachevsky districts of Bashkortostan by the students from the Birk branch of the Bashkir State University and Birk Medical and Pharmaceutical College. The great White God decides people's fates, supported by his "assistants" and "advisers", including:

- Purysho – the god of fate, the caster and the creator of the future of all men.
- Sakchejumo – KugoJumo's will Guardian-Angel.

- Keche Cava and KecheSalavat - Osh KugoJumo's assistants, protectors and guardians of the sunlight;
- Shochynawa and Shochynacha – patrons of mothers and children;
- SurtKuva, and SurtKugyza – protectors of the family hearth;
- Mlande Ava and MlandeVodyzh – protectors of the earth;
- ShurnoShochyn and ShurnoSaush – patrons of the bread and harvest;
- MyukshCharsha-vlak and MyukshSalavat-vlak – patrons of the beekeeping and bee plants.

It is evident that there is subordination in the hierarchy between the gods in polytheistic beliefs of the Maris. It can be seen in the community and society management system. The laws of earthly traditions of the real life take extraterrestrial forms in the spiritual culture of people. In the socio-philosophical and scientific point of view it is due to known natural human weakness in the face of the natural forces and the laws of social development.

Among the names of the pagan pantheon it is while worth mentioning the name of "Salavat", which is not typical to the Maris. Here we are talking about the belief peculiarities in the spiritual culture of the Eastern Maris living in the Baltachevsky district of the Republic of Bashkortostan, where the majority of the population are Tatars and Bashkirs, with some of them adhering to the traditions of the Muslim religion. Among them the name of "Salavat" is associated with honesty and courage. As a result of the co-residence in a single administrative territory we can observe interpenetration of cultures, manifesting itself particularly in names borrowing.

In the distant past the Eastern Maris were praying in the sacred groves called "Keremet" or "Kysoto". Prayers were held mostly in the birch and oak woods, and less frequently in lime and pine woods. The preference for praying was given to the groves due to the ancient Mari way of life – they lived near the forests. In the "Keremet" people prayed not only on the holidays, but on any Friday, begging, for example, for rain. Prayer was often accompanied by sacrifices. Domestic animals of black and white lea – bulls, sheep, geese – were sacrificed. Relatives – members of the genus – were invited on the prayers. At the present day, these religious traditions and ceremonies begin to revive. Sacred groves are still kept clean by modern believers. It is prohibited to cut trees and bushes in the woods.

As a rule, the sacred grove was a place of holding the religious ceremonies of several families of the same clan, as well as of the residents of several villages. In modern conditions, the family still serve as a place and medium of manifestation and satisfaction of religious and other philosophical senses. There are few people who now believe in the superstition that a prayer can bring rain for the harvest. But instead, family tradition of praying for the dead ancestors – the founders of the tribal community – is reviving. Every nation has such a tradition. Neither atheism nor religion accounts scientifically for the commemoration of the ancestors and maintaining respect for the previous generations work. Nowadays atheism significantly loses its ground in the Mari families.

There is no place for blind worshiping of magic and mysticism in the restored family and community celebrations. A vivid example of it can be, for example, a custom followed by a special ceremony – consecration of the calved cow's milk. It is a traditional celebration on the occasion of dropping a calf that takes place a week later after calving. Relatives and friends are invited on the celebration. It is common to prepare a special dish – "tuburtysh" from the first milk yield, adding eggs and butter. It usually is prepared in a conventional oven or in a gas oven, if available. Ready-made tuburtysh is cut into small pieces and put on the table so, that all the guests could taste it. Usually the first piece of tuburtysh along with a chunk of bread is fed to the calf. At the same time, the priest says the prayer: "God bless the cow to give more milk. God bless the calf to grow bigger. God bless the farm to have more cattle".

From the sociological and socio-philosophical point of view, we turn our attention to some important features of the holyday under the study. The first feature establishes the value of household function of the family in the children education. The second aspect of the celebration is that besides the relatives, there are neighbors, friends and acquaintances invited. It shows that the family holydays under the study are endowed with moral and economic function of uniting the family, relatives and friends. There is last but not least feature of these family celebrations – a complete lack of racial, ethnic and national discrimination of its participants.

We see that the cherished traditions of modern Eastern Maris are based on the idea of love of country and respect for labor.

The logic of the identity and tolerance

Socio-philosophical principle of the research makes us seek the truth and get to the essence of the phenomenon reasoning in a strictly logical chain, taking into account all the factors and characteristics of the research object. In our case, we will try to provide the essential and existential foundation of the uniqueness and originality of the Eastern Maris ethnos and its distinctive culture.

Looking at the Mari people historical past, we state the fact that the Maris lived mainly in a difficult condition being under the oppression. According to the historical essays of the 17th, 18th, 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, we can see that the Maris have been under the rule of the Golden Horde for some time: they paid tribute to the Golden Horde Khan and supplied him with recruits. After the Kazan conquest and the Kazan Khanate accession to Russia, Mari people alongside with other so-called non-Russians came under the pressure of the tsarist autocracy. The works of some historians reflect disregard of the state towards them. Thus, the Russian Historian N. Polevoy wrote in his "History of the Russian people," published in 6-volumes: "We will not enter the Finnish tribes in our review. As they lagged far behind the Slavic tribes in bodily structure, were wilder, poorer and smaller in numbers, they were soon left by the Vikings without attention. Speaking about the Finns, vegetating stagnant on the territories that they have occupied since ancient times, is it possible for them to be honorable people, forming part of our civil society? Not at all: they are thistles and wild grasses that grow on the fields seeded with life-giving grain crops ... By this time these tribes live in the same places, known as under the name of Chukhnas, Cheremisses, Chuvash people and Mordovians ... If we circle the line formed by the Finnish peoples, it will look like the sea wave streaming back from the south, that got frozen for centuries" (Polevoy, 1833). Polevoy considers the history of small-numbered peoples insignificant and thinks that it impossible to give them general civil status.

Observing socio-cultural transformations of the East-Mari ethnos during the centuries and till this day, we want to emphasize once again the phenomenal uniqueness of its spiritual culture. Living in the close interaction with the Russians, Tatars and Bashkirs culture, the Volga region Maris preserve their identity; according to many researchers, they are "the last pagans in Europe" (Nikitina, 2014). The question arises: why

paganism as a form of mythological consciousness was preserved at the Mari people by this day? Why the East-Mari ethnic group archetype appeared to be so resistant to environmental influences?

It appears that paganism is a variant of the ethnos self-preservation and homeostasis. Being among the energetic cultures of the Slavs and Turks, Mari people had to find a way to adapt among them without losing their identity and uniqueness. Paganism acted as a kind of totem, through which the Maris got an opportunity for their socio-cultural self-realization. To other adjacent to the Maris cultures paganism in the form of sorcery and witchcraft seemed a kind of sacrament, dangerous world, which was necessary to live in harmony with. By this day the sorcery and witchcraft appears to be a popular and socially acceptable form of the totem self-realization and the condition of ethnic group self-preservation. We can consider popularity of the medical profession among the Mari people as a secularized version of witchcraft and sorcery, characteristic for the modern living conditions of the East-Mari ethnic group.

Conclusions

Eastern Maris are an independent sub-ethnic community residing mainly in the territory of modern Bashkortostan, as well as in the Perm and the Sverdlovsk regions.

By virtue of objective historical-cultural and socio-economic conditions the Eastern Maris sub-ethnos is prone to self-preservation and self-reproduction.

The Eastern Maris culture represents a synergistic phenomenon of tolerance, identity and uniqueness.

International culture interpenetration trends are reflective of socio-cultural unity of humanity. When saving the national culture bases it is impossible to avoid its supplementing by other people's culture elements. When intercultural integration is inevitable, the centripetal forces that contribute to the preservation of the national identity of the ethnicity are preserved. From our point of view, these trends enrich the culture of any nation and contribute to the international rapport of the humanity.

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