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Hostages of the Place of Exile. Polish Researchers of Shamanism in Soviet Academic and Museum Discourses

The crucial role of Polish researchers in the investigation of Siberian indigenous cultures in the 19th century provoked attempts to use the Polish heritage in the project of Soviet Siberia. Streets and schools were named after the Polish researchers and their work was paid attention to at numerous museum exhibitions. This positive mythology was not politically neutral. The researches special status of political victims and “European viewers” was supposed not only to legitimize the official (Soviet) knowledge about traditional cultures, but also to continue the democratic discourse of “Siberia as a prison.” The Soviet state tried to use the academic heritage of Polish exiles for its own purposes. The confrontation of these well educated Europeans with extremely traditional cultures symbolized the right (European and scientific) perspective to look at Siberian cultures. Their papers, books and collections were combined with the Soviet ethnographic perspective to perceive traditional cultures and their “backward past.” The aim of this paper is to investigate the Soviet use of the Polish exiles’ heritage in the conceptualization of shamanism as a set of religious and social practices. The main goal here is the reconstruction of models of use, contexts of quotations, selection of data and symbols of representation of the Polish academic heritage in Siberia.

Introduction

The relationship between scientific observation of Siberian shamanistic practices and ethnographic texts has been a problem of stable concern on the part of ethnographers and social anthropologists. The complicated relationship between scientific observation and the nature of rituals, the

exogenous character of basic terms (shamanism), and the unclear role of Russian archive sources (used for the colonial control of memory) provoked uneasiness and suspicions about the possibility of explaining those research phenomena. The critique was directed to the basic assumptions of the biomedical approach to shamanism and rose new questions about the emotional aspects of investigation, the colonial roots of the past academic traditions, the participation of colonial power institutions in the creation of both “traditional” cultures (and, generally, the *traditionality* of the area) and the “indigenous personhood” confronted by the canonic texts with the colonial order in a rather naive way in the canonic texts.

The evolution of the designate for the term ‘shamanism’ was a series of translation practices (in B. Latour’s sense of the term), which placed the studies on the phenomenon in the context of specific cognitive maps of research. The Soviet discourse about shamanism was no exception. The specificity of Soviet approaches to shamanism lied in their special combinations of continuation and discontinuation practices related to the past academic traditions. On the one hand, the Soviet social studies were an attempt to radically separate the approaches based on the definite political platform, materialistic ontology and politicization of social vocabulary. On the other hand, that “new ethnographic knowledge” required legitimacy in the form of noble genealogy and was an attempt to represent Marxism as the next and highest stage of development in the field of social knowledge. That in turn provoked constant past-invention practices in Soviet discourses about shamanism. A very interesting and relatively unexplored part of the Soviet past-invention practices concerns the academic heritage of Polish exiles in Siberia in the new genealogy of Soviet ethnographic discourses about shamanism and “primary religions.” In this case we can observe the instrumental use of invented academic tradition in Soviet ethnographic texts, based on the need for noble genealogy and the ambivalent status of the 19th-century Polish researches in the Soviet society. The aim of this paper is to investigate the Soviet use of the Polish exiles’ heritage in the conceptualization of shamanism as a set of religious and social practices. The main goal here is the reconstruction of the models of use, contexts of quotations, selection of data and symbols of representation of the Polish academic heritage in Siberia. That discourse-oriented approach contrasted in many key ways with other types of narratives applied to the intellectual history of the Polish diaspora in Siberia, which based on the classical opposite of the state and the “Westernized newcomer society” in the colonial situation. The colonial roots of the basic categories employed in shamanistic studies described by Marina Hakkarainen (2007) emphasize the impossibility of avoiding the social dimension of the research on traditional cultures in Siberia.

The background: continuation versus discontinuation practices in Soviet shamanistic studies

Shamanistic research is a relatively unstable discipline with a diversity of approaches and considerable dependency on ontological assumptions. For many years the research perspective on shamanic studies resulted from the forced asymmetry between observers' and local people's knowledge. Taking into account Marilyn Walker's opposition of "biomedical" and "intuitive" approaches towards shamanistic studies (Walker 2001: 38) we can observe the slow shift to a more emphatic and friendly model of knowledge about shamanism, highly aware of the role of knowledge in colonial relations. The aggressive scientific vocabulary regarding shamanistic activity (hysteria or schizophrenia assumptions) has been corrected and replaced with a more moderate approach considering the "voice of the respondents" and the possibility of many correct ontologies. This shift from "hard" to "sensitive" approaches in shamanistic studies has also placed the studied phenomena in the context of specific cognitive maps of researchers and the social role of academic institutions.

The Soviet discourse about shamanism was a special kind of marriage between the "biomedical" discourse and the ideological one. The studies on the Soviet ethnography of religion (including shamanistic studies) focused on involving the discipline in the politics of forced secularization and ethnic management in the USSR. Following the collapse of the USSR the disqualification of both forced atheism and the ethnicity-nationalization policy in the USSR significantly decreased the value of the scientific foundation of the Soviet practices concerning religion (shamanistic) studies. The criticism concerned the basic assumptions of Soviet religion studies: the ideological ties, aggressive attitude towards research phenomena and obsession with prehistoric times. Much less attention was devoted to the attempts at inventing the genealogy of Soviet shamanistic studies. This invented the character of the Soviet a priori assumption of natural continuation of the best tradition of Russian ethnographic school by Soviet ethnography and the exclusive right of the Soviet people to the Russian ethnographic heritage. The situation was not so clear because of the broken generation overlap in the Soviet academic life, the presence of Russian (non-Soviet) academic institutions outside the "motherland of proletarians" and the excellent academic performance of White Russian émigrés. It is noteworthy that the relationship between political and national communities was highly complicated in the USSR since the state had a dualistic status as an international political community of communists¹ and an ethnopolitical

¹ The term "the USSR" did not contain any geographical and ethnic designates.

structure with the special status of Russians (Vishnevsky 1998). The USSR also enjoyed the status of a continuator of the Russian Empire displaying selective and arbitrary continuation of its commitment to all the Russian cultural and academic heritage. That subjective right to national tradition was crucial to understanding the specificity of the Soviet attitude to the past academic tradition.

Theoretically, the relationship between continuation and discontinuation is a very important element of every analysis of ultraradical social changes (Cohen 2006). The case of Soviet studies concerning religion was no exception, because we are dealing with the simultaneous occurrence of two interrelated potential continuities: the academic tradition and general cultural patterns of colonial experience. These potential continuities were linked and interdependent. The past academic heritage was the basis for colonial investigations of the area. A general colonial cultural pattern has a sufficient impact on the character, vocabulary and social function of academic discourses. In that context the question about continuation or discontinuation in relation to the Soviet shamanistic studies depends on a wider and broader definition of the “past tradition.” The discursive and institutional break in the academic tradition did not mean the liberation from the Russian colonial paradigm. On the other hand, the continuity of that cultural pattern allows for easy reconnection with the past academic tradition and the import of basic assumptions.

In this context the break in the transmission of academic experience between Tsarist and Soviet research communities was substituted by the continuity of a certain Russian cultural pattern. Some prerevolutionary ethnographic texts about Siberia infected Soviet ethnography with certain features of the presocialist Russian ethnographic discourse (emotional links with indigenous peoples, the myth regarding the neutral character of Russian ethnography compared to colonial entanglement of Western schools, the victimization-related vocabulary used when referring to indigenous peoples, etc.) (Plotkin 1985). Nikolai Vakhtin wrote about the common feature of Russian and Soviet ethnographies:

Simultaneously, the specific character of Russian colonialism, as well as the theoretical mainstream of Soviet ethnography, determined the development of Siberian anthropology in two respects: it was ethnohistorically biased and had an emphatic eschatological disposition. Russian (Soviet) ethnographers viewed the ‘objects’ of their research as people who would very soon become ‘like us’, hence their restraint from studies of contemporary conditions of ‘the native peoples’ and the tendency to study ethnic history. And, since the ‘objects’ of study were supposed to disappear soon and merge into a homogeneous mass (be it “citizens of the Empire,” or “the Soviet people”),

the primary mission of an ethnologist was to record this vanishing past—an approach Susan Gal (1989) calls ‘pastoralist.’ (Vakhtin 2006: 49.)

This combination of aggressive materialistic ontology, biomedical and criminological suspicions regarding shamans with kinds of “pastoralist” and eschatological dispositions showed the path-dependency of Soviet ethnography on the main cultural patterns of Russian culture and Russian colonial experience. In this case we can imagine the Soviet ethnographic discourse about religion as a space of complicated rhetorical practices connecting scientific elements with communist ideologies and past colonial sentiments based on certain paradigmatic assumptions, temporality regimes, and controlled perception of non-Soviet sources of knowledge. This colonial entanglement of academic narratives about shamanism based on strong discursive continuity regardless the revolution caesurae in the Russian-Soviet perception of Siberia.

Soviet shamanistic studies community from the perspective of sociology of science

The major inventions of the “new Soviet knowledge of shamanism” were not only the new field data or radically new theoretical conceptualization of various phenomena, but the new conceptualizations of an “author,” the forced imperative of political responsibility and the exponential increase of ethnographer’s impact on the lives of the studied communities. The main approaches to the specificity of Soviet discursive practices are divided in the literature of the subject in question into the generation-oriented approach (in which Soviet science resulted from the emergence of new indoctrinated scientists),² discourse-oriented approach (in which Soviet science resulted from the linguistic turn)³ and the goal-oriented approach (the specificity of truth-searching in Soviet humanities).⁴

The first approach emphasized the impact of institutional and social changes on the academic environment in the USSR. In that context the specificity of Soviet humanities stemmed from the deep influence of socialist modernization practices (in their Stalinist version) on all the spheres of the academic life. The crucial role was also played by the processes of state management of scientist communities as “Soviet collectives” with strong political responsibility of scientists. The internalization process of the Soviet propaganda patterns and the development of useful self-disciplining habits

² See: Vishnevsky 1998; Peshkov 2010.

³ See: Halfin 2002; Halfin 2009.

⁴ See: Zalejko 1994.

(Humphrey 2009) provoked radical changes in normative Soviet academic personhood and standards of normality in academic life. The continuation of the past academic tradition was very problematic because the disappearance of the majority of prominent Russian ethnographers, the emergence of the so-called “Red professors” and strong repressions against ethnographers in 1937. An important aspect was also the degradation of the status of the discipline in 1929 resulting from its conceptualization as a part of the analysis of historical formations. This radical transitions made researchers engage in “the struggle for a better life” and unified the ontological and axiological assumptions. The transition from “normal researches” to “social warriors” required academics active participation in the fight against superstitions and careful selection and interpretation of the sources. They also had to have a critical distance to contemporary Western writers and a clear understanding of the class character of social knowledge. According to P. A. Gray, N. Vakhtin and P. Schweitzer:

Stalin’s rise to power in the 1920s and subsequent shifts in Soviet policy simultaneously began to create an atmosphere of hostility toward any activities or ideas perceived to be anti-Marxist, or even simply not Marxist enough For the rest of the Soviet period, the ethnography of the peoples of Russia (the USSR) was almost exclusively the province of Russian (Soviet) ethnographers. (Gray 2003: 198.)

The discourse-oriented approach underlines the dramatic effect of Soviet language innovations on research. In this context the language of ethnographic texts was characterized not only by subtle conceptual violence, but also had a tendency to “performative utterances” about cultural and social divisions. On a discursive level the transition to special kinds of texts generated completely new viewpoints, temporalities and eschatological attitudes. The new modes of descriptions, “active reading” and “political responsibility” created a new perspective of the investigated phenomena. The ambivalent status of shamanism (as a religion, a superstition, mass hysteria and local medicine) and political thesis on the decline of superstitions in the USSR provoked some common discursive decisions which determined the object of study, the chronology of the studying processes, contacts with respondents and the role of fieldwork in religion studies. The new approach to the Soviet discursive practices showed the limits of the antithesis of the scientific and political elements in Soviet humanities. The Soviet ethnographic discursive space was simultaneously scientific and political, independent and past-oriented, pro- and anticolonial, hostile and friendly towards the respondents. Those superficial contradictions resulted from a special axiological perspective, in which the “political” strengthened the “scientific”

(and vice versa), radical theoretical innovations strengthened traditions, the “right-wing” nationalist orientation strengthened the internationalist one, and the search of truth was mixed with conscious disinformation, etc. That discursive space was politically organized in a coherent way and concerned social-building practices. In the Soviet case the links between academic and political activities were very close.

The goal-oriented approach concerned the balance between the declared and implemented purpose of Soviet ethnography. The semi-paradigmatic character of “applied Marxism” provoked introducing truth searching into the complicated process of adjustment to the a priori theoretical base. The imperative of the correspondence between the truth and the “objective world” implemented by the Marxist-Leninist interpretation of “objectivity” as coherence between the “basic social law” and observation. That approach linked the elements of the generation-oriented approach and discourse-oriented approach. The basic assumption was the paradigmatic mode of research behavior when the truth-searching limited by common assumptions was excluded from critical reflection. The most satisfying investigation of the paradigmatic activity of Soviet humanities was described by G. Zalejko (he explored the case of historians, but we can also apply his perspective to Soviet ethnographers, because of the common theoretical, axiological and ontological base). Discussing the nature of scientific activity in the USSR he suggested:

... to reflect on Soviet historiography conceived not as a quasi-cognitive activity, degenerated and maimed by lack of freedom and a strong external pressure, but also normal institutional science pursued in abnormal social surrounding. (Zalejko1994: 180.)

The creation of new models of authors radically changed the possibility of investigating religious phenomena and complicated the temporality regimes in Soviet narratives about shamanism. Paradoxically, in the case of ethnography the communist future—oriented attitude provoked the turn to the past as regards research perspective. Studying the contemporary time a Soviet investigator applied the perspective of permanent changes from traditionality into modernity, in which the first one was conceptualized only as an impermanent phenomenon:

... the present was supposed to be described solely in accordance with ideologically approved prescriptions; as a matter of fact, this was also true for the past but still, the margin of free choice was, for social research of the present, much narrower. It was safer to turn away from the present and focus on the past. This, together with ideological censorship and a language barrier, caused a deep breach between Russian and Western anthropological traditions. (Vakhtin 2006: 49.)

Those ontological assumptions provoked essential empirical results. The institutional status of an ethnographic expedition (as a fieldwork knowledge machine organized by the model of a “Soviet collective”) created a special mode of knowledge production, in which “religion” was located only in the past perspective (in memories and legends). For this reason, the Soviet shamanistic studies were an extremely secondary-source-oriented school of ethnography at that time. As a result of the chosen perspective the Siberian religious life of the time was closed in the Soviet period not only to foreigners,⁵ but also to Soviet researches because of their conscious blindness to local knowledge.

The Soviet use of Polish exiles’ heritage in the conceptualization of shamanism

The prerevolutionary Russian ethnography was multinational, with the founding influence of German culture⁶. But the status of Polish researches in Siberia was extraordinary in the USSR. Their special status of political victims and “progressive Siberian newcomers” provoked attempts to use the Polish heritage in the project of Soviet Siberia. The Soviet state tried to use the academic heritage of Polish exiles for its own purposes. Streets and schools were named after the Polish researchers and their work was paid attention to at numerous museum exhibitions. That positive mythology was not politically neutral. Their special status of political victims and “European observes” was supposed not only to legitimize the official (Soviet) knowledge about traditional cultures, but also to continue the democratic discourse of “Tsarist Siberia as a prison” (Bassin 1992). The confrontation of the well educated Europeans with extremely traditional cultures symbolized the right (European and scientific) perspective to look at Siberians cultures. Their papers, books and collections were combined with the Soviet ethnographic perspective to perceive traditional cultures and their “backward past.”

The Russian-Soviet conceptualization of Siberia was a strong cultural pattern resulting from the combination of the self-Orientalist discourse, the myth of the polar conquest and the utopian thesis about the unlimited development possibility of the “Siberian wasteland.” That combination changed the image of Siberia from the backward area to the space of design,

⁵ With some exceptions of field researches from socialist countries (Hungary and Poland) only three Western researches attempted to do fieldwork in Soviet Siberia: Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer (1975 and the late 1980s), Caroline Humphrey (1967), Piers Vitebsky (1986); see: Vakhtin 2006.

⁶ German was also the first language of Russian ethnography; see: Znamenski 2003.

in which “yesterday” meets “tomorrow.” In that cultural context modernity in Siberia was implemented in a non-evolutionary way from the Center to the Peripheries, in an extraordinary form. Contrary to Central Asia, “Siberian waste areas” were not conceptualized as the “sleepy Orient,” but as a space of development with some exotic cultural scenery. In that context scientific investigation of Siberia formed the crucial part of empire-building practices. The retranslation of local knowledge into scientific reports supported the possibility of transforming that part of Northern Asia into the new land of Russian Empire destiny. The role of ethnographers was essential in that case. Collected data, reports, papers and books create not only an information basis for political and economic activity of the newcomer society, but also a perspective in which Western discourses registered and gave their legitimization of the ongoing cultural situation. Even today the prestige of an unselfish researcher is a very important part of the regional identity: many Siberian tribes have their own official “protectors of their culture.” From that perspective, the investigation of traditional cultures was not only an ethnographic, but also a social-building practice. The “torch of enlightenment” in Siberia was a very important part of the conceptualization of the precolonial cultural “darkness” of the area.

From the academic perspective Polish exiles’ heritage in Siberia is a bibliographical construction with an unstable borderline⁷, based on the special status of a part of the Polish researches in Siberia (non-Russian European political prisoners) and their affiliation with the Tsarist academic structure (in terms of the language, methodology, grants, membership in scientist association, employment in museums). The last element is crucial, because some researches were included in the analyzed group regardless of the lack of imprisonment episodes in their lives (J. Talko-Hryniewicz). This local affiliation is basic to the dualistic status of that group as Russian scientists and Polish patriots.⁸ For example, the prominent Polish-British researcher of Siberia Maria Czaplicka was never included in that construction because of the language, and the methodological and institutional autonomy from the Russian science. Generally, the isolated (autonomous) group of Polish researches was a myth from the historical perspective. In the case of this group we can observe many models of academic activity: from leadership in

⁷ The Soviet/post-Soviet selection criteria based on nationality, Russian academic affiliation and political victimization. The Polish selection criteria based on a wider perspective of nationality and geographic locations of research interests, but retained the victim image (Avaniti 2008).

⁸ The positive mythologization of the Polish diaspora in Siberia in both Russia and Poland concerns mostly biographies of the patriots and victims, the collaborationists and people with a neutral political attitude were excluded from the official memory in both countries.

international research groups to relatively independent research strategies, from the forced transition into Russian to the natural use of the language, from constant problems with academic employment to excellent academic carriers in Russia (and later in the USSR). From the perspective of a Russian (Soviet) reader the papers and books written by Polish researches in exile were a coherent part of the Russian ethnographic discourse. In that context, the use of Polish achievements in the Soviet period consisted of two processes: the inclusion of Russian ethnography in the discourse of Soviet scholars and the “grounding” of Polish achievements in the regional identity.

The “Polish ethnographic heritage in Siberia” was used by Soviet authors as a source of quotations and as their “own” academic tradition developed in the Soviet time. The quotations served three main functions in the Soviet ethnographic discourse:

- a) data and description gathered during the fieldwork,
- b) secondary quotations,
- c) informational base for legitimization of political assumptions.

The first function was crucial in the context of fieldwork barriers in the Soviet shamanistic studies. Profound descriptions of shamanistic practices and social functions of shamans were a substitution of open-field contacts with the investigated phenomena. In that context the Soviet shamanistic studies were involved in a complicated relationship with the works of Polish authors: on the one hand, people tried to use them for their own purposes, on the other, Soviet authors depended on the observations made by Polish authors. The second function was very significant because of the closed regime of Soviet libraries (the hierarchical access to non-Soviet bibliographical units) and lack of contacts with international research. The third function was essential because of the subjective power of Soviet ethnography partly due to the ability to use the right mode of reading and explanation (reinterpretation of tradition in the light of the “only true theory”). The fragments of Polish authors’ texts were used for the construction of an absolutely ideological discourse. Soviet authors applied the technique of active (interpretative) reading for the reinterpretations of prerevolutionary text. These active reading practices created the ability to compensate the lack of ordinary field research of the local religious life with the reinterpretation of prerevolutionary ethnographic data and historical sources. In this context the Soviet discourse about religion was not simply a discursive gap, but a new style of writing with virtual links to the past academic tradition.

The new pragmatic knowledge about class relations, class-dependent social motivation for exploitation, and the social function of superstitions had to be justified using the past ethnographic data and descriptions. The examples showed in the paper by Tokarev entitled *Shamanism among the*

Yacuts in the 17th Century (Tokarev 1939) were symptomatic. The author quoted W. Sieroszewski's statement about the diversity of life standards among shamans and came to a "politically correct" conclusion that poverty of many shamans only strengthened the motivation to obtain "income not derived from work" (*netrudovoi dohod*) (Tokarev 1939: 94). That context connected the Soviet social designate (*kulak*) with the observations made by politically indifferent scientists and transmitted the Soviet perspective into the prerevolutionary times (the existence of "kulaks" in W. Sieroszewski's time). The next example from the same paper is the explanation of shamans' class interests. The author cited the descriptions by W. Sieroszewski and M. Witaszewski on charges for medical services. (Tokarev 1939: 99). This information has strong political impact because in the prewar period ethnographers tried to mediate between many "social discourses" of local power, ideological institutions, demographic and social policy institutions. Slezkine described the essential participation of ethnographers in the Soviet project of convergence of "ethnic borders with administrative ones" as a shift of ethnographers to "administrators" function (Slezkine 2006: 342). They had extreme influence on the state policy regarding administrative divisions, social stratification (describing the classes of the traditional society), cultural policy (the division between the backward, neutral and progressive cultural elements) and the ideological pattern (religion). The study of the Soviet policy against shamans showed that the shift in the perception of shamans' activity from religion-related service to social service paradoxically excluded "shamans" from the goals of the NKVD repression policy (Vasileva 2000: 111). The Soviet legal policy concerning shamans focused on nonreligious elements of shamanistic activity (non-state medical service, sexual abuse, economic porosity, illegal economic practices). Based on that assumption the Soviet administrative policy combined the destruction of attributes of shamanistic practices (special burials, accessories) with the propaganda of Western medicine and an atheist attitude. The war against superstitions was not so aggressive in its character as the war against religion.

But the medical suspicions (schizophrenia assumptions) present in the Soviet view on shamanism provoked another kind of repressions (forced psychiatric treatment) (Balzer 1996: 7). In that context the possibility to include Polish descriptions of mental disorder in Siberia into the Soviet narrative legitimized the perception of shamans as mentally ill individuals.⁹ Professor Zelenina in her paper *Ideology of Siberian Shamanism* based on Sieroszewski's and Mickiewicz's descriptions of mental illness among Siberian settlers attempted to create the holistic concept of a psychiatric genesis of shamanism:

⁹ For the social consequences of this ethnographic attitude see: Balzer 1996.

... when people with nervous diseases were used by their ancestral collective for medical practices, and when using their closeness to demons and immunity to disease spirits they deliberately began taking on other people's disease demons, then they became shamans. A shaman, in our opinion, is a person with nervous diseases who was forced by his collective to fulfill the function of taking on the disease demons haunting the members of the given collective in order to heal the sick quickly and properly. (Zelenina 1935: 726)

This very ideological text showed the complicated mixture of historiosophic speculations, the Soviet idea of a collective, the assumptions about religion as a cognitive error, and the 19th-century discourse about mass hysteria in Siberia.

The Soviet shamanistic studies applied a dualistic interpretation of Siberian shamanism as a prehistoric "primary religion" and its continuation among the indigenous peoples of the area. The ideal form of the studied phenomena was situated in prehistoric times, the remaining history of shamanism was supposed to be a long road to degradation and decay. Those approaches resulted in many temporal perspectives: "the initial times," the time of colonization, the late Tsarist period, the Soviet times. The differences between these periods were related to methodology, axiology and the role of direct observation. In the first case we are dealing with ethno-archeological speculations (in the neutral sense) about religion in pre-historic societies based on the Marxist thesis, the interpretation of archeological artifacts and the use of pre-Soviet ethnographic data about shamanism as a basis for the parallel. In the second and third case Soviet scientists reconstructed religious life based on historical sources and previous ethnographic data in the framework of materialist approaches to religious phenomena. As regards the latter perspective we are dealing with a very ideological description of the relicts of shamanism as a set of social, physiological and cultural practices and comparisons with pre-revolutionary times. This past-oriented approach decrypted the traces of the past in the present time and largely based on the sources offered by Russian ethnographic heritage. This very complicated temporal pluralism in the Soviet shamanistic studies was very well illustrated in the definition of shamanism from the Large Soviet Encyclopedia, in which:

- a) the personhood of a typical shaman was described from the timeless and medical perspective: "Professional shamans have been nervous, easily excitable people who could evoke a state of ecstasy and hallucinations in themselves." (Veinstein 1973–1982)

- b) the future-oriented dynamic disappearance of shamanist practices was suggested: “Among the peoples of the USSR shamanism has disappeared almost completely.” (Veinstein 1973–1982)

In this situation the role of Polish authors lied in providing the evidence for the analytical process. The information-giving function of prerevolutionary discourse was irreplaceable. Polish exiles' ethnographic data were used in the Soviet shamanistic studies in the operational sense as an instrument of supporting the policy of forced secularization. The specificity of Polish exiles' heritage in Siberia used by Soviet ethnographers and museums lied in their dualistic status of political victims and excellent academics. The “appropriation” of Polish researches' scientific achievements by Soviet ethnography was accompanied by the inclusion of Polish authors in the pantheon of the local heroes of Siberian education. This provoked the connection of the academic and social image of that community. In this case the domination of the Soviet interpretation of Polish independence movement was more important than the academic status. Therefore, the analyzed group was a part of Russian prerevolutionary ethnography and a part of the mythologized Polish diaspora in Siberia. In the first case the heritage of the group was included in the Soviet ethnographic discourse, in the second—it was an important element of Siberian urban mentality and regional culture. The Polish authors were localized through their connections with Siberia as their place of exile. Regional historians formed the hagiographic canon of the noble cultural mission. Schools, museum exhibitions and popular books created the official memory about Polish exiles for the purpose of the local community, which transmitted that canon to researchers and tourists from Poland as personal memories. The Soviet cult of Polish researches in Siberia grew from the colonial attitude towards the role of Westernized scientists in Siberia and had a very weak connection with the real academic debate about their heritage. The positive mythologization of Polish researches transformed them into hostages of their place of exile and the Soviet institutions which used their heritage in the interests of Soviet shamanistic studies and the newcomer colonial community in Siberia.

Conclusions

The academic heritage of the Polish diaspora in Siberia is world renowned and played a significant role in the 19th-century exploration of Siberia. In the case of northern Siberian shamanism the impact of Polish researches in Siberia was fundamental in many ways. The academic part of the Polish diaspora in Siberia in the 19th century was also involved in different national, regional

and political myths, paradoxically linked with common assumptions. The goal of this paper is the reconstruction of Soviet ethnographers' inclusion practices concerning the Polish academic heritage in Siberia as a reference to the radical turn in the Soviet shamanistic studies to fight with superstitions and religions. The above analysis has shown, that the common perception of the social reality by Soviet ethnographers and their historical orientation limited the possibilities of field research to a great extent and was restricted to the studies conducted by their predecessors. In this context the Soviet model of field research was not able to provide detailed descriptions of religious life and had to be supplemented by the research from the previous period. There are two interlinked conclusions. The first one regards the non-neutral and complex character of tradition-building in Siberia-oriented Soviet social science, based on the continuation of imperial cultural patterns and the actual gap in research tradition. The second one concerns the entanglement of ethnography in the colonial experience, which created discursive inertia much stronger than political and methodological radicalism.

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The Hostages of the Place of Exile. Polish Researchers of Shamanism in Soviet Academic and Museum Discourses

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Abstract

The crucial role of Polish researchers in the investigation of Siberian indigenous cultures in the 19th century provoked attempts to use that Polish heritage in the project of Soviet Siberia. Streets and schools were named after the Polish researchers and their work was paid attention to at numerous museum exhibitions. That positive mythology was not politically neutral. Their special status of political victims and "European viewers" was supposed not only to legitimize the official (Soviet) knowledge about traditional cultures, but also to continue the democratic discourse of "Siberia as a prison". The Soviet state tried to use the academic heritage of Polish exiles for its own purposes. The confrontation of the well educated Europeans with extremely traditional cultures symbolized the right (European and scientific) perspective to look at Siberian cultures. Their papers, books and collections were combined with the Soviet ethnographic perspective to perceive traditional cultures and their "backward past". The aim of this paper is to investigate the Soviet use of the Polish exiles' heritage in the conceptualization of shamanism as a set of religious and social practices. The main goal here is the reconstruction of the models of use, contexts of quotations, selection of data and symbols of representation of the Polish academic heritage in Siberia.

Key words: Polish researchers in the investigation of Siberian indigenous cultures, Polish academic heritage in Siberia, shamanism.