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AT THE ORIGIN OF THE STUDY OF RELIGION IN RUSSIA*

The article is devoted to the early period of the religious studies in Russia. The author defines three periods in the early history of Russian science of religion: the first quarter of 18th century and the creation of preconditions for the emergence of the whole complex of the cultural sciences, including religious studies, prompted by the policy of Russian tsar Peter the Great; the second half of the 18th century and the study and description of the sources, the accumulation of historical and ethnographic materials, especially on the cultures of the peoples of Russia; the turn of the 19th century and the emergence of a critical approach to the sources, the transition from description to systematization and interpretation of materials. The article treats the four groups of texts associated with the studying of religion: firstly, the ethnographic descriptions, mainly about Siberian native cultures (Gregory Nowicky, Jacob Lindenau, Stepan Krasheninnikov, Johann Georgy); secondly, historical works, which in varying degrees of thoroughness mark out expertise in ancient religion, especially in the religion of the ancient Slavs (Vasily Tatishchev, Mikhail Lomonosov, Nikolai Karamzin); thirdly, the works on mythology and beliefs mainly in the form of dictionaries of mythology (Vasily Trediakovsky, Alexei Sumarokov, Gregory Kozitsky, Fedor Tumansky, Mikhail Chulkov, Mikhail Popov), and, fourthly, philosophical works (Dmitry Anichkov, Semyon Desnitsky and Andrey Kaisarov). Refs 10.

Keywords: religious studies, science of religion in Russia, Enlightenment, folklore, ethnography, natural religion.

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О НАЧАЛЕ ИЗУЧЕНИЯ РЕЛИГИИ В РОССИИ

Статья посвящена раннему периоду религиоведческих исследований в России. Автор выделяет три периода в ранней истории русской науки о религии: первая четверть XVIII в. — создание предпосылок для возникновения целого комплекса наук о культуре, в том числе исследований в области религии, вызванных к жизни культурной политикой Петра I; вторая половина XVIII в. — изучение и описание источников, накопление исторических и этнографических материалов, особенно о культуре народов России; конец XVIII — начало XIX в. — появление критического подхода к источникам, переход от описания к систематизации и интерпретации материалов. В статье рассматриваются четыре группы текстов, связанных с изучением религии: во-первых, этнографические описания, в основном о культурах коренных сибирских народов (Г. И. Новицкий, Я. Линденау, С. П. Крашенинников, И. Георги); во-вторых, исторические труды, которые с разной степенью компетентности исследуют историю религий древности, особенно религии древних славян (В. И. Татищев, М. В. Ломоносов, Н. М. Карамзин); в-третьих, труды по мифологии и верованиям, в основном представленные в виде мифологических словарей или иных описаний (В. А. Тредиаковский, А. Н. Сумароков, Г. В. Козицкий, Ф. О. Туманский, М. Д. Чулков, М. И. Попов), и, в-четвертых, философские сочинения (Д. С. Аничков, С. Е. Десницкий и А. С. Кайсаров). Библиогр. 10 назв.

Ключевые слова: религиоведение, наука о религии в России, просвещение, фольклор, этнография, естественная религия.

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* Подготовлено при поддержке гранта РНФ № 16-18-10083 «Изучение религии в социокультурном контексте эпохи: история религиоведения и интеллектуальная история России XIX — первой половины XX в.».

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The beginning of the study of religion in Russia is connected with the development of science as a whole, with the desire to get a systematic presentation of the history and geography of the country, with the study of cultures of its peoples, with the formation of new ideas about the role and place of human knowledge in general. The eighteenth century, which brought so many changes in all spheres of the life of Russian society, became the era of the origin of religious studies in Russia, united with the overall process of the creation of history, ethnography, linguistics and folklore studies. That, of course entailed the collecting of materials and the studying of religious beliefs and practice of the different nations inhabiting the Russian empire.

We define three periods in the early history of Russian science of religion: the first quarter of 18th century — the creation of preconditions for the emergence of the whole complex of the cultural sciences, including religious studies, caused by the policy of Russian tsar Peter the Great; the second half of the 18th century — the study and description of the sources, the accumulation of historical and ethnographic materials, especially upon the cultures of the peoples of Russia; the end of 18th — early 19th century — the emergence of a critical approach to the sources, the transition from description to systematization and interpretation of the materials.

The texts of 18th — 19th centuries, which in one way or another, treats the problems associated with the studying of religion, may be divided into four groups: firstly, there are ethnographic descriptions, mainly about Siberian native cultures; secondly, there are historical works, which with varying degree of thoroughness make expertise in ancient religion, especially in the religion of ancient Slavs; thirdly, there are works on mythology and beliefs mainly in the forms of dictionaries of mythology, and, fourthly, there are philosophical works [1, 24-72].

Peter the Great considered of the great importance the systematic examination and description of the Russian land, which began at his command in 1712. In 1720 the first research expedition was sent to Siberia, led by physician and naturalist Daniel Messerschmidt. Five volumes description of his seven-year expedition through the territories of the basis of the rivers Irtysh, Yenisei, Kamennaya Tunguska, Lena, Ob and Lake Baikal, contained in addition to information on minerals, flora and fauna, an invaluable information about the way of life of local people, including their rites and beliefs. The famous Kamchatka Expedition, the Great Northern Expedition, the expedition to the Urals, to the Volga region was launched from 1725 to the middle of the 40-es of the same century.

The first ethnographic work written in Russian was the essay “Brief description of Ostyak people, their customs and their treatment in a pious Orthodox Christian faith”, written in 1715, by Gregory Nowicky, Ukrainian Cossack former Mazepa associate, who was exiled in Western Siberia and participated there in the missionary expeditions in the lower basin of the Ob river to baptize the Khunty (Ostyaks) and the Mansi (Voguls). In his paper the entire chapter described the religious beliefs of the Siberian peoples. Nowicky’s judgments were of great interest. Novitsky described the beliefs of the Khanty’s and the Mansi’s, comparing them with polytheistic views of ancient civilizations, “with Babylon and the Hellenes”, indicating that the peoples of Siberia worshiped “gods in the likeness of birds, snakes, and mainly the bear”. He argued that the most archaic beliefs were associated with protective magic and manufacturing amulets. Of particular interest was his description of shamans, which he called “the servants of the lie”, attributing to them the desire to “get rich” [2, 48].

The Academy of Sciences gave the special instruction to the participants of the Great Northern Expedition which ordered, inter alia, to observe: “What is there in every nation the faith and whether they have any natural poetry”. One of the members of the expedition Jacob Lindenau wrote the book “On the Yakuts and their origin”, consisting of 25 chapters. The last chapter was devoted to religion he described shamans sacrifice, burial practice and belief in the afterlife, faith in Gods, and the mythology of creation and conception of celestial phenomena.

Stepan Krasheninnikov in his “Description of Kamchatka Land” not only described Kamchadals’ beliefs, but also made a very significant conclusions about the relationship of the rite with a related myth. For example, he drew attention to the magic value of Whale images made of grass — “part for fun” and “part for magic”, in order the real whales should be killed and eaten as the herbal ones”.

In the middle of the XVIII century Johann Georgy wrote in German the work “Description of all living in the Russian state people, their everyday rituals, beliefs, usages, clothing, housing, exercise, fun, faith and other memorability” (1776–1777). The book was divided into four parts; the first three have been translated into Russian. In the third part of the book there is a special chapter “On shamanic pagan law”. Georgy considered shamanism to be “the most ancient of faiths”.

The scholars of the first half of the 18th century, sought to put not only the political, but also spiritual history of Russia in the overall context of the world history, examining its culture as an integral part of European culture in general.

In the first academic works on religion, written or published in Russian, the idea of poly-confessional character of the Russian state was stressed and the religious beliefs and practices of the large and the small nations of the state were examined in comparison with the religions of classical antiquity. A special role in that belonged to the historical works of Vasily Tatishchev and Mikhail Lomonosov.

In his research Tatishchev relied on writing by Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, Plutarch, Tacitus, Cornelius Nepos, Pliny the Elder, Diogenes Laertius, works of Byzantine, Polish and German chroniclers, the works of orthodox Russian writers (for example, Dmitry Rostovsky and Feofan Prokopovich). In the contrast to the tradition of the Church, which has come down to Karamzin and some later historians, Tatishchev did not seek to portray the pre-Christian beliefs of Slavs in very gloomy colors.

Lomonosov included material on Slavic mythology in his work “Ancient Russian History”, in the chapters “On the manners, behavior and belief of the Slavonics” and on “On reign of Vladimir before his baptism”. Lomonosov proceeded from the concept of recognition of the antiquity character of Russian culture. He compared the Slavic mythology with ancient Greek and Roman mythology, considered important to find similarities between them, thereby introducing the Russian nation in the circle of the heirs of the classical traditions, emphasizing the historical unity with other European nations. He wrote: “The ancient polytheism in Russia was similar to the Greek and Roman. Who are well-known in the fairy tales Polkans (the combination of man and horse), but the Greek centaurs? The tsar of the sea is Neptune, is not he? And Chur (ancestor), put on the border between the pastures of, who is, but Terminus?!” [3, 253].

Later, at the beginning of the 19th century, Nikolai Karamzin in his “History of the Russian State” , just compared the Slavic and Greek pantheons, however, in contrast to Lomonosov, he pointed out, first of all, the differences between them. Karamzin believed

that the basis of the religion of ancient Slavs lay the veneration of “the only White God of heaven, which did not cost the temples”, to whom the exalted heavens are worthy of a temple, and who cares only about heaven, choosing the lower gods, their children to manage the land” [4, 92].

At the end of the eighteenth century, under the influence of the work “The Idea to the Philosophy of History” by Johann Gottfried Herder the concept of the unity of humankind was formed, on the one hand, and self-worth of each culture, on the other. Historical continuity and linkage with the classical Greco-Roman world ceases to be so significant, and interest in national traditions and features enhanced. That contributed to the studying of manners and customs, national languages and folklore. The emergence and formation of ethnography and folklore studies (anthropological studies), of course, had a decisive impact on the beginning of the serious research in mythological notions and rites of the Slavic and other peoples of Russia.

The romantic charm of the poems of Ossian, Karamsin was one of the first popularizers of it in Russia, resulted in a wide spreading of the interest to folk poetry, which for a long time have been treated just like the work of a “low genre”. One of the first who turned to the “natural poetry and mythology”, was Vasily Trediakovsky with his article “The opinion of the early poetry and poetry in general” (1752), and then Georgy Teplov, who published anonymously in 1755 an article entitled “Discourse on the beginning of the versification” and Alexei Sumarokov who published in 1759 year an article “On Kamchadal’s versification”. Sumarokov wrote that poetry existed “in the crudest nature” and that “the purest image of nature” might be found not only in Homer, Sophocles, Virgil and Ovid, but in the songs of the indigenous inhabitants of the Kamchatka Peninsula [5, 64].

Gregory Kozitsky (1724–1775), State-Secretary of Catherine II regarded mythology as the inherent ancients special holistic knowledge of the world, recognizing its necessity not only for understanding the images and meanings of ancient poetry, but also to re-create the true picture of the ancient natural science, history and philosophy. Kozitsky pointed to the importance of ancient mythology as a source of historical information. He translated into Russian Ovid’s “Metamorphoses” and wrote, that Greek mythology told us about the past If there “were no fables about ancient Trojans, Thebans, Athenians, Corinthians”, we would not know the history of that peoples as well as the history of native Americans or Siberian peoples.

Kozitsky under the influence of the French Enlightenment used the point of view of Epicurus and Lucretius on the causes of the polytheism: “The Fear and the hope originated from ignorance were the most severe kind of human tyrants, who made a great multitude of the gods” [6, 22].

Fedor Tumansky published in 1791 in St. Petersburg, with a dedication to Count Stroganov his translation of the book “On incredible things” written by the ancient follower of Euhemerus, whose name was Palaephatus believed that all the phenomena mentioned in the myths were once real, but later got a fantastic interpretation. Based on the principle of Euhemerism, Palaephatus explained that the Chimera — was a mountain-volcano, where lived a lion, goat and a terrible serpent; that centaurs were people so successful at riding on horseback, that in the eyes of others seemed fused with their horses in a single unit etc. Euhemeristic interpretation of mythology was very popular among the European writers of the Enlightenment it has been spared by Russian authors too.

The first Russian opus in systematization of mythological concepts was the “Brief mythological lexicon” by Mikhail Chulkov published in 1767. Five years later Chulkov prepared and published the “Dictionary of Russian superstition”, reissued four years later under the title “Abevega [ABC] of Russian superstition”. This dictionary is a systematic presentation of the mythology including the cosmological ideas, holidays, and the rites and rituals of Russians, Mordovians, Chuvash, Tatars, Kalmyks, Lapps, Ukrainians, the Don Cossacks, Kamchadals and others.

Of particular interest was distinguished by its size, the article “Faith”, which analyzed the mythological picture of the world, gave a comparative analysis of the archaic cosmogonic and animist beliefs. The beliefs of Siberian peoples were compared with the ancient myths. Chulkov’s Dictionary was interesting by the fact that there were described in details and with commentaries the religious belief of the Kalmyks, who professed Buddhism. Naturally, Chulkov called them pagans, but pointed out that they had temples. And the last book in this second group was the work by Mikhail Popov, which was released in 1768 in St. Petersburg, under the title — “Description of the ancient Slavic pagan mythology, collected from various scriptures, and annotated” .

Popov’s work was used and repeatedly quoted by the famous scientist in the Russian service, Doctor Matthew Guthrie, who was a member of London and the Royal Society of Edinburgh and a member of the Royal Society of Antiquities of Scotland. M. Guthrie wrote a great work of Russian antiquities, first published in French in St. Petersburg in 1795 with a dedication to Catherine II [7]. At the end of the 18th century Russian translation was made. Guthrie himself emphasized that his work was written under the influence of William Jones’s discovery, who pointed out that the mythology of European nations, including the Greek, dated back to ancient Indian mythology existed for many thousands of years and have been recorded by Brahmins in Sanskrit. His own research was devoted to the comparison of Russian rites and beliefs with the rites and beliefs of the European peoples (Greeks, Romans, Celt). Guthrie strongly emphasized the common roots of mythological concepts, similarities of rites and ceremonies, which, of course, in his opinion, confirmed the relationship of Russian culture with the cultures of other European nations. In particular, he mentioned an article published previously in Edinburgh, on the common veneration of spirits (Penates) by the Romans, Danes and Swedes. He compared their practice with magic of the Celtic Druids, and noticed that the Kupala festival was very similar to the corresponding ceremony held by druids, and even described by Cicero in a letter to his brother in Rome from a military camp in Brittany. Guthrie noted that the similarity of mythology might not associate with borrowings, but with a common origin. He wrote that if we assumed that the Russian, like the other peoples of Europe, had taken their origin in the East, it was clear that their mythology they brought with them, and not borrowed from the Greeks through Byzantium.

The third group of works that have appeared in the second half of the 18 early — in the 19th century showed the formation of a philosophical approach to the problems of the origin and early forms of religion, they outlined new directions that were developed in the future, during the academic maturity of the science of religion. They were the works by Dmitry Anichkov, Semyon Desnitsky and Andrey Kaisarov.

The first Russian philosopher, who specifically addressed to the problem of the origin of religion, was Dmitry Anichkov (1733–1788). In 1769, he published in Russian and Latin languages, the first version of his doctoral dissertation “The argument from natural

theology of the beginning and the natural occurrence of worship". Dissertation was written in terms of the theory of natural religion, where religion was seen as a set of ideas that appeared in the human "nature" and did not require the authority of revelation and dogma. The source of natural religion was not a revelation, but an innate, inherent in human nature, a reasonable start. Thus, all the religions were acceptable only to that extent that was not in the contrary to reason. The basic principles of natural religion were as follows: firstly, there is a supreme being; secondly, it should be worshiped; thirdly, the best of his veneration is a virtue; fourth, offenses and crimes should be redeemed by repentance; fifth, there is a reward in the afterlife. Anichkov's paper was written under the influence of Hume ideas. Anichkov reworked his dissertation several times. In order to protect it he gave it a title "Philosophical arguments about the beginning and the incident of worship in different, and especially ignorant people". It addressed the problem of the origin of religion in the light of the theory of natural religion. Anichkov believed that the most important causes of the origin of religion are fear, fantasy and surprise. After Lucretius he spoke of the three stages in the development of ancient peoples, "when they live catching wild animals, when they begin to appropriate and tame animals and live in abundance herds of cattle and when they begin to live in farming and approved homes". According to Anichkov, fear was the cause of religion, "rustling of the wind in the night bush and trembling leaves of the tree is represented by some evil spirit" [8, 161].

In the middle of 1769 denounced by Archimandrite Peter Alekseev Moscow Archbishop Ambrose wrote a complaint on Anichkov's dissertation in the Church Synod, where Anichkov's work has been called "misleading and harmful to Christian law". November 9, 1769 the Synod issued a decision in which it stated that the Anichkov in his work had used the careless expressions, which could be misleading and harmed the Moscow University. Synod also spoke of the need to submit to the Senate a report about what measures might bring Anichkov "to life". Chebyshev, the Ober-Procurator of Synod, did not agree with the opinion of members of the clergy Synod and did not send the Anichkov's case to the Senate, where he could have sued on criminal charges of blasphemy. However, copies of his thesis had been gathered and publicly burned by the executioner in Moscow.

April 22, 1772 lawyer Semyon Desnitsky, Anichkov's close friend was made at Moscow University a lecture under the title "Legal reasoning about things sacred, saint and adopted by piety, with the indication of rights, which are protected in different nations", where developed the ideas of Anichkov dissertation .

In the first half of the 18th century a theory of natural law was spreading in Russia, the works of prominent Western philosophers and lawyers Hugo Grotius, Samuel von Puffendorf, Charles Montesquieu, William Blackstone, Cesare Beccaria and others were translated in Russian.

Desnitsky was the first who started the development of Russian law according to European standard he was the real founder of Russian law school, theoretically and institutionally. Semyon Desnitsky was sponsored by Empress Elizabeth to complete his studies gained at the University of Moscow in Scotland at Glasgow University, where he attended the classes of Adam Smith on Moral Philosophy and John Millar on Law. Having been made doctor of laws in 1767, he returned to read lectures at the Moscow University. Desnitsky was the first Russian professor to question the authority of Samuel von Puffendorf on legal matters and the first to introduce the doctrines of Adam Smith and David Hume to Russian students.

Desnitsky had negative attitude toward serfdom and absolutist order, and spoke for limiting the autocracy. In “The idea of the establishment of the legislative, the judiciary and the penal system of the Russian Empire” (1768), he proposed to reform the public administration, in legal proceedings, etc. In “The legal reasoning about the beginning and the origin of marriage ...” (1775) Desnitsky opposed the provisions of the primordial existence of the monogamous family. He expressed the idea of the importance of economic benefits in the event of a family, denounced gender inequality in contemporary society. “The legal argument about the different concepts of what the notions of the property are” (1781) was devoted to the justification of the historical origin of property. According to Desnitsky, there was no private ownership in the early history of humankind. Its emergence and development, and the right to its alienation associated with the development of animal husbandry, agriculture, crafts and trade. Considering the development of society, Desnitsky believed that mankind in its development made a few steps (hunting, animal husbandry, farming, trade), the highest of which is the “commercial”, linked with private ownership, which is higher ownership. In “The Word of the direct and immediate method to learn jurisprudence” (1768) Desnitsky linked the emergence and development of the law with the emergence and development of private property. In the same work Desnitsky quite clearly said, that the word “God” was associated with fear and in Russian language, just as in Latin, the fear gave origin to the idea of God among primitive people. He repeated after Roman poets: *timor primos in orbe fecit deos*.

In the essay “Legal reasoning about things sacred, saint and adopted by piety, with the indication of rights, which are protected in different nations” (1772), Desnitsky argued that the religious beliefs of the ancient peoples have arisen as a result of ignorance fear, imagination and giving to objects of the nature of human qualities. He analyzes the sacred objects — fetishes; compared objects, revered sacred by pagan Romans, by ancient Christians and that revered sacred in Russia; objects, revered as saint by the pagan Romans and by ancient Christians with what considered as such in the Russian tradition and the piety of the pagan Romans, ancient Christians and Orthodox piety and show their identity. Thus Desnitsky was ahead of the development of the science of religion for a hundred years. Very similar descriptions can be found in the texts of early phenomenological approach to religion, for example, by Nathan Zöderblom [9, 7–8].

The third book on religion, pertinent to the third period of the history of the study of religion in the 18th century in Russia, is — a guide “Versuch einer Slavischen Mythologie in alphabetischer Ordnung”, written in German by Andrey Kaiserov and published in Göttingen in 1804. In Russian, this work under the title “Slavic mythology” was first published three years later. It is interesting, that, Kaiserov, although he studied in Göttingen with Schlotzer, also visited Scotland. In his Göttingen dissertation “On the liberation of serfs in Russia” (Dissertatio inauguralis philosophico-politica de manumittendis per Russiam servis), which was devoted by the author to the Emperor Alexander I, Kaiserov analyzed the various arguments against serfdom and notice that they are not new, but not known in Russia. He argued that serfdom retards progress in agriculture and delays the development of industry and trade, preventing proper circulation of money, but also inhibits the intellectual development of the Russian peasants. His position on the question of the genesis of religion in general, and the religion of ancient Slavs in particular, of course, was based on the theory of natural religion of David Hume. Kaiserov wrote: “The history of mankind shows us that before even the man did not know the art of making the

images of the gods, he was surprised by the world around him. It became the first time he philosophized about the marvelous universe: the sun, the water, the wind seemed to him to be the features of the higher nature. Amazement turned into respect and worship. Do not you think that the same had the Siberian peoples, as well as Persians and the Peruvians?" [10, 16].

So, we may conclude that there was a close link between Russian and European Enlightenment, which was vividly expressed in creative works of Semyon Desnitsky and Dmitry Anichkov, their creative works were the first attempt to establish the rational philosophical concept of religion in the Russian thought. Further formation of Russian science of religion is due to the overall process of development of the humanities in Russia in the 19th century, and above all, the development of anthropology, ethnography and folklore studies.

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Для цитирования: Shakhnovich M. M. At the Origin of the Study of Religion in Russia // Вестник СПбГУ. Серия 17. Философия. Конфликтология. Культурология. Религиоведение. 2016. Вып. 4. С. 135–143. DOI: 10.21638/11701/spbu17.2016.415

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For citation: Shakhnovich M. M. The Origin of the Science of Religion in Russia *Vestnik SPbSU. Series 17. Philosophy. Conflict studies. Culture studies. Religious studies*, 2016, issue 4, pp. 135–143.

DOI: 10.21638/11701/spbu17.2016.415

Received: 11.05.2016

Accepted: 16.06.2016