

NININS 2020**International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****"KORFEST" IN CHUKOTKA: ANTHROPOLOGY OF A MODERN CITY HOLIDAY**

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kulikomolon@mail.ru**Abstract**

The article raises the question of studying modern urban holiday culture and proposes an analysis of individual elements of the modern "invented" holiday by identifying traditional semantics. Koryushkin festival ("Korfest") is an example of a modern holiday that has grown out of the ice fishing competition. In the system of holiday culture of Chukotka, "Korfest" stands out for a number of signs. It is tied to a specific territory – the city of Anadyr and, at the same time, is positioned for tourists and migrants, like all-Chukotka. While not national, Korfest emphasizes the specifics of the territory and includes elements of indigenous culture. The article discusses the time of the festival, the meaning and attitude to the holiday in the context of ancient ritual practices and draws parallels between the invented, accepted and traditional. In particular, the time of the Korfest marks the natural onset of spring in Chukotka. The competitive part of the Koryushkin festival related to fishing, as well as numerous holiday attributes (posters, t-shirts, hats and scarves, bags) with the image of fish can be correlated with the cult. In the process of its transformation, the holiday acquired another meaning associated with the redistribution of material values. The empirical base of the study was ethnographic sources obtained by the author during interviews and observations, publications of local newspapers, texts of online forums and archival materials.

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1. Introduction

The smelt fish festival, or as it is called Korfest, began to be held in the city of Anadyr, the capital of Chukotka, in the very North-Eastern region of Russia, from the beginning of the 90s of the XX century. This is the first cultural event in the post-Soviet space of Chukotka over the past two plus decades managed to survive birth, transformation, flowering, dying and a new birth. In the modern culture of Chukotka residents, Korfest is a cultural marker of the territory. Despite its complicated history and non-national character, it is one of the region's most significant cultural events in popularity and legend.

Any holiday, its preparation, process, and time after the celebration is always characterized by a huge variety of motives, emotions and interpretations. Upon closer examination, it is a phenomenon difficult to analyze (Carmo Daun e Lorena, 2019). This difficulty can consist in a large number of points from which the researcher can look at the festival.

2. Problem Statement

A systematic study of urban holiday culture does not yet have an established scientific tradition (Alekseevsky, 2010), and ethnographic science continues to search for methods and approaches to studying the modern culture of residents of certain territories. This work is the experience of describing and analyzing an invented tradition (Hobsbawm, 2003) – a city holiday that has become a landmark for the whole region.

The festive culture of the inhabitants of Chukotka was studied mainly unidirectionally – through a description of the rites and holidays of the indigenous inhabitants – Chukchi, Eskimos, Evens (Vdovin, 1965; Thein, 1975). There are only a few works that study the modern forms of traditional Chukchi holidays (Vaté, 2005; Vaté, 2013). At the same time, the festive culture of Chukotka as a whole and in its local variants is a rather complicated set of various mass events that are held on the central square / street or in a cultural institution, and all residents of the settlement are invited to participate in it. As a result of rethinking the Soviet ideological holidays of the appearance in the 90s. new holidays and the way out of the ban on Orthodox holidays, the modern urban holiday culture has proved to be extremely colorful and multi-layered (Alekseevsky, 2009; Frolova, 2006).

Very generalized holidays of Chukotka can be divided into calendar-state (National Unity Day, March 8, May 9, etc.) and the main holiday (New Year), “professional” holidays widely celebrated in Chukotka (Fisherman's Day, Indigenous Day), Orthodox (Christmas, Easter), modernized traditional and folklore-sports holidays ("Erakor", "Nadezhda", "Kilvey"), local (City Day, Village Day). Korfest stands out in this classification. It did not replace any other holiday, was not attached to any particular date, and did not transform from a traditional or Soviet custom. Despite its modernity and “inventedness”, “Korfest” has a well-defined structure and set of elements, clear symbols and, when examined in detail, you can consider a number of ancient and traditional magic elements.

3. Research Questions

Koryushkin festival is a spring cultural and sports event, the central event of which is the competition for ice fishing of smelt. No specific date has been set for Korfest. As a rule, the last Saturday or Sunday of April is selected. Until 2010, Korfest was held on the ice of the Anadyr Estuary, which was previously cleared of snow. In recent years, one stage of the holiday (ice fishing) took place on the ice of the estuary, the other – entertainment one – on the central square of the city of Anadyr.

In general, according to the sequence of the Korfest, it can be divided into two main parts: at first – collective fishing and after – directly festive events, including games, competitions, distribution and sale of food, tray trading in souvenirs, a concert, awarding prizes to winners.

As a rule, one hour was allocated for smelt fishing competitions. The fishing ground was divided into sectors of 20 fishermen, who had the right to use two fishing rods and, accordingly, to drill two holes. The best fisherman was determined by the size of the catch and he got the main prize "Korfest".

The events of the second stage were held in parallel to each other, for which the venue for the celebration was divided into sectors. There were games in one, a concert in the other, and trade in the third. A mandatory element of the festival was the installation of yaranga – the traditional home of Chukchi, the performance of pop and then national groups, the preparation and treating everyone with dishes of the national Chukchi cuisine.

4. Purpose of the Study

In this article, we examined only one side of the modern city holiday – analyzed the semantic significance of “Korfest”. We made an attempt to connect the time of its holding, the meaning and attitude to the holiday with ancient ritual practices, to draw parallels between the invented, accepted and traditional.

5. Research Methods

The work used ethnographic, anthropological and general scientific methods. The empirical base of the study was field ethnographic materials obtained by the author through interviews, group informal interviews and personal observations. In total, 18 residents of the city of Anadyr aged 23 to 55 years of different nationalities were interviewed. Of these, 10 people were local residents, and 8 people arrived at different times in the city to work. All informants at different times were participants in the festival.

Archive materials, publications of the local newspaper and texts from the Internet also became a source material. Documents from the State Archive of the Chukotka Autonomous Region were necessary to restore the history and evolution of the holiday. A review of publications on the festival over the past 28 years from the district newspaper *Krainy Sever* (until 1993 *Sovetskaya Chukotka*) was reviewed and a part of the publications was also used as a source to refine the interview and the script for Korfest. Texts from “live magazines” (www.livejournal.com), from forums and local web-sites (www.anadyr.org; www.eastrussia.ru; <http://novomariinsk.ru>, etc.) were used as an Internet source. In the process of collecting the material, the features of this type of source were taken into account (Nazarova, 2007;

Shchetinina, 2009; Samsonova, 2009). They were more carefully processed: facts and descriptions of different authors were compared with data from direct interviews. Sources from the Internet, as well as interviews, were important for fixing the emotional perception of the festival and people's attitudes to the holiday itself and its contents.

The analytical part of the work included the selection of elements from the general holiday scenario, the study of details, the search for comparative material and semantic explanations.

6. Findings

Korfest and the magic of the sun

The site "Traditional and modern holidays of Chukotka" indicates that Korfest symbolizes Russian farewell to winter and a meeting of spring (Sadovskaya, 2019). Traditionally, Russian winter farewells take place on Maslenitsa holiday. However, according to the time of the celebration, this Orthodox holiday with folk roots precedes Lent, followed by Easter. In ancient times, Shrovetide was associated with the vernal equinox on March, 21. Korfest was held shortly before Easter and even several times it occurred to take place at the same time. Korfest lacks the most characteristic and stable elements of Pancake Week – pancakes and scarecrow burning. There are no direct parallels between Korfest and the tradition of Russian winter farewells, however, the very idea of Korfest as a holiday of changing seasons and a symbol of the onset of spring can be considered.

According to the climatic conditions, the end of April in the north-east of Russia characterizes the real beginning of spring, that is, melting snow, sun activity, rising air temperature. In the cultural traditions of various peoples, all of the above natural events were associated with the symbolic resurrection of the sun, renewal, the victory of heat over cold, light over darkness. Many elements in the holidays, one way or another, were associated with the "victory" of the sun. For example, wrestling is a game in which two people compete, a number of scientists associate that with a symbolic battle, in which the sun wins.

Korfest as a fishing cult

Initially, the Koryushkin festival was not so much a holiday but more a competition for the biggest smelt catch. In the newspaper *Sovetskaya Chukotka* dated April 9, 1991, the rules of the competition were described: "one smelt – one point, in the case of an equal number of spores, the weight of the catch is decided" (Korfest, 1991).

The common small-smelt (*Hipomesus olidus*), a ubiquitous fish in the Anadyr estuary, is as large as possible for its kind. Also, the Asian smelt (*Osmerus mordax dentex*) inhabits the Anadyr estuary almost all year round (Freshwater fish, 2001). There is no special fishing for smelt in the Anadyr basin and its stocks are underutilized. By recreational fishing, up to 40% of the spawning portion of the population is seized. According to statistics conducted in the 80s of the 20th century, in 1984 fishing smelt amounted to 0.3 tons, and in 1988 already 42.7 tons. With an average weight of 40 g, the maximum catch totaled about 1.1 million fish (Freshwater fish, 2001). Spring ice fishing gradually became a very popular occupation of the city residents and the fishing itself and determined the popularity of the holiday.

The first part of the Koryushkin festival, related to the fishing competition, as well as numerous holiday attributes (posters, t-shirts, hats and scarves, bags) with the image of fish can be correlated with the fishing cult.

British historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote that the peculiarity of “invented” traditions is the response to new situations, but they can take the form or content of past situations. Invented traditions are the contrast between constant change and innovation in the modern world and attempts to keep past traditions unchanged (Hobsbawm, 2003). The fishing section of Korfest refers to the traditions of achieving fishing success through the organization of a certain sequence of actions (Anisimov, 1969; Basilov & Sokolova, 2002; Gracheva, 1993).

Actions may vary and may not even contain explicit magic: the content of the cult is not universal and varies (Iarzutkina, 2012). For example, at the beginning of the fishing season, some Turkic-speaking peoples usually arranged a treat from the first fish catch, to which they invited their neighbors and relatives in the hope of further luck (Demidov, 1963; Iarzutkina, 2012). The producing nature of these actions consists in their systematic nature (annually at the same time) and the allocation of the object of fishing (fish, a certain type of fish).

The Koryushkin festival, as the name implies, was dedicated to smelt fish and throughout the holiday, its role as a central figure was emphasized. The competitive nature of the festival, prizes and sharing food (the modern version in the form of an open cafe on the square), dressed in a systematic style and tied to the richest in terms of industry, are symbolic forms of preserving good luck and increasing wealth.

Great Korfest Potlach

In the process of collecting information, we noticed that “Korfest” was often perceived by the participants as a celebration where a person could receive very good prizes, could see pop stars and taste national dishes for free. In general, according to reviews, “Korfest” was a “rich” holiday and was associated with the ability to receive some benefits free of charge. So, for the first place in the competition in the early 2000s, they gave a car, an apartment, a snowmobile. This turned out to be important and distinguished Korfest from other public events. After reducing the funding allocated for Korfest, one could find the following phrases in the reviews: “Korfest is no longer Korfest”, “there is no one to look at, no one to listen to, the prizes are cheap”, “we went to yaranga, in one there was no talk and didn’t see it), and in the other there was a bare empty table on which they ate what they brought with them,” or a folklore version presented by one of the participants in the celebration:

“Ah Korfestushka you are our Korfest,
Who ruined you ...
I didn’t dance, I didn’t drink ...
What was on the stage – you don’t understand ...
There was no beginning, no end
Lam tsa tsa tsa, dream tsa tsa ” (Forum, 2010).

The situation of various forms of mass donation (prizes, performances of pop stars, entertainment, food) during the holiday can be compared with the so-called potlach – a traditional ceremony of the

Indians of the Pacific coast and northwest America, during which one of the representatives of the tribe organizes a celebration and distributes property to the guests. The meaning of this ceremony is to gain influence and gain prestige through giving. The “giver” gains symbolic power, as those who donate become its debtors (Moss, 1996). The festivities themselves represent feasts, fairs, auctions and solemn gatherings, at which shamanistic ceremonies and ritual dances often take place. In domestic ethnography, potlach was defined as “a manifestation of the so-called prestigious economy, the essence of which was the constant circulation of excess product”, in foreign science it was described as “recklessly excessive generosity”. On the whole, we can call it a social phenomenon, based on the gratuitous redistribution of accumulated wealth (Babenko, 2015).

The idea of Korfest as a holiday where you can receive generous gifts, as a way in which wealthy people can share their wealth with the population, adds additional meaning to it. Korfest thus personified the establishment of public relations between the top (regional authorities) and the inhabitants of Chukotka by giving values, entertainment and food.

7. Conclusion

For several years, "Korfest" was not carried out by decision of the district government. The expectations of the holiday among the population were contradictory. On the one hand, opinions were expressed that “every year is the same thing” and complaints about “too small gifts”. On the other hand, quoting one of the forum participants: “Chukotka, folk, traditional, beloved and always long-awaited holiday“ Korfest ”must live” (Forum. 2007). In 2019, the holiday on the ice of the Anadyr Estuary was revived. The symbolic meanings consisting in producing good luck, meeting the sun and symbolic change of seasons in Anadyr, steady ceremoniality and symbolism, as well as the importance of “Korfest” in the process of establishing public relations between the government and people, were, in our opinion, key to its revival and sustainability in the memory of the inhabitants.

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