

NORTHERN AND ARCTIC SOCIETIES

UDC: [398+304.2+930.2](470.11)(045)

DOI: 10.37482/issn2221-2698.2020.39.144

Oral Stories about the Mezen Churches as a Subject of Interdisciplinary Research*

© Natalia V. DRANNIKOVA, Dr. Sci. (Philol.), associated professor, professor

E-mail: n.drannikova@narfu.ru

Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov, Arkhangelsk, Russia

Abstract. The article analyzes oral narratives about the destruction of Orthodox religious buildings. Sources of the research are tests recorded during the folklore-anthropological expeditions of the Northern (Arctic) Federal University in the Mezen district of the Arkhangelsk Oblast (2009–2018). By the beginning of the 1930s, in Russia, the concept of “militant atheism” took shape and was approved, based on the idea of the counter-revolutionary meaning of religion and the anti-Soviet activities of believers. The object of our research is interdisciplinary. It is the subject of the study for oral history, folklore, social and cultural anthropology, and sociology. The sacrilege narratives are considered not so much as folklore or historical source, but as “a component of a local text ... whose function is not to “reflect”, but to “create” urban history, mythology, set the parameters for local identity.” A metanarrative is represented by the memories of the Mezen residents about the destruction of churches and the persecution of people for religious beliefs. It includes stories with the motives of dropping bells, punishment for the destruction of a church; desecration of cemeteries, the destruction of icons, the salvation of church property by the villagers, the conversion of churches to schools, granaries, clubs or stables, and repression against priests and parishioners. The research allows tracing the dynamics of mass representations. There was a gap in the cultural memory of the Mezen residents. The Mezen religious stories testify that, in the cultural memory of the Mezen, they were supplanted to the periphery and replaced by the Soviet period values.

Keywords: *religious stories, destruction, churches, punishment, sacrilege, interdisciplinary research, cultural memory.*

The history of the church includes the stages of its construction, the life of the parish, the destruction, the hidden existence, and restoration. The aim of our study is to analyze oral narratives about the destruction of the Mezen churches and the ideas of the local community associated with these events. To collect material, we developed a questionnaire, which included questions about the different periods of the churches’ existence and the religious life of the village, conducted a continuous survey when it was difficult to find respondents, using the “snowball” method. The work considered the borders of the Mezensky district of the Arkhangelsk Oblast in various historical periods. Mezensky district is the northernmost and largest area of the Arkhangelsk Oblast. It is located on the Winter coast of the White Sea¹. We chose it as a research area for several reasons. Firstly, it is of interest to an anthropologist because of its remoteness and inaccessibility.

Secondly, in the 19th — early 20th centuries, it demonstrated a high degree of stability and richness of the folk tradition. Thirdly, historically, the population of the region was engaged in ma-

* For citation:

Drannikova N.V. Oral Stories about the Mezen Churches as a Subject of Interdisciplinary Research. *Arktika i Sever* [Arctic and North], 2020, no. 39, pp. 144–159. DOI: 10.37482/issn2221-2698.2020.39.144

¹ Winter coast — the White Sea coast on the eastern coast of the Dvina Bay and the throat of the White Sea (from the mouth of the Northern Dvina River to Cape Voronov).

rine hunting and fishing, in which the church played an important role (blessing before fishing, prayers for success in fishing, donations after returning from fishing to God's share, buying icons for the church with funds received from the extraction of sea animals, the obligatory installation of vow crosses after returning from the sea, etc.). The applied methods of our research are observation, interviewing, conversation, recording oral statements, document analysis, photo, and video recordings, etc. During the collection of the material, in-depth interviews were conducted with residents of various settlements of the Mezen district. They were the primary sources of information collected. During the study, 60 people aged 40-90 years were interviewed. All respondents are divided into groups on the grounds related to the place of their residence and age. It is possible to conditionally divide respondents into three groups depending on their age. The first group consists of respondents born in the 1930s, the second in the 1940s-1980s, and the third in the 1990s and 2000s.

The sources of our research are field and archival material (folklore-speech data, archival documents², publications in scientific and local history literature, periodicals, and the Internet).

Oral stories about the ruin of shrines and places of worship are associated with specific historical events and loci. After October 1917, a radical reassessment of the religion's place in society occurred. In 1918, a decree "On the Separation of the Church from the State and the School from the Church" was adopted by the Council of People's Commissars³. In 1929, a circular letter "On Measures to Strengthen Anti-Religious Work" from the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks appeared⁴. As a result, by the beginning of the 1930s, in Russia, the concept of "militant atheism" took shape and was approved, based on the idea of the counter-revolutionary essence of religion and the anti-Soviet activities of believers.

The object of our research is interdisciplinary. The history of each church (the erection, the hidden life of the parish, the life paths of those who devoted themselves to church construction, its destruction, repressions of church attendants, and clergy) is studied by the local history. Local history is the practice of historiography, with the goal of constructing local historical memory.

This view is called by historians "microhistorical". The studies of folklorists devoted to the study of oral stories about the punishment of sacrileges were completed by V.E. Dobrovolskaya, Yu.M. Shevarenkova, S.N. Shtyrkova, L.V. Fadeeva, A.B. Moroz, I.V. Vlasova, A.A. Panchenko, N.V. Drannikova et al. [1, Dobrovolskaya V.E.; 2, Dobrovolskaya V.E.; 3, Nizhny Novgorod Christian legends; 4, Shtyrkov S.N.; 5, Shtyrkov S.N.; 6, Fadeeva L.V.; 7, Fadeeva L.V.; 8, Shevarenkova Y.M.; 9,

² The archival sources of our research were folklore materials and documents stored in the archives of the Center for the Study of Traditional Culture of the European North of the Northern (Arctic) Federal University (fund 38), the archives of the Arkhangelsk Museum of Local Lore, the State Archives of the Arkhangelsk Oblast, the files of the Regional Office of the Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation for the Arkhangelsk Oblast Mezensky Municipal Archive.

³ Ob otdelenii tserkvi ot gosudarstva i shkoly ot tserkvi [On the separation of the church from the state and the school from the church]. *Sobranie zakoneny i rasporyazheniy pravitel'stva za 1917–1918 gg.* [Collection of Legalizations and Government Orders for 1917-1918]. Moscow. Upravlenie delami Sovnarkoma SSSR [Management of Affairs of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR], 1942, pp. 286–287.

⁴ RGASPI. F. 17. Op. 3. D. 723. L. 9–11.

Moroz A.B.; 10, Moroz A.B.; 11, Vlasova I.V.; 12, Panchenko A.A., 13, Drannikova N.V.; 14, Drannikova N.V.]

In modern humanities, anthropological and sociological research methods are actively used. Folklore is moving closer to anthropology, historical, and social (cultural), for which people in history and culture are important. Social anthropology involves looking at one's culture through the eyes of "others" and others through their own eyes. It is aimed at understanding the "other" person in gender, social, cultural, ethnic, national, estate, regional diversity. Since the objectives of the study were to clarify the knowledge and ideas of different population groups about the history of churches, the primary method was oral history. Portelli A. wrote that the main feature of oral sources was that they "brought us information not that much about the events of the past but about the meaning of these events" [15, Portelli A., p. 39]. Oral history testifies to people's perceptions of historical facts and circumstances, assessment from the standpoint of the present. The collection and study of oral sources made it possible to clarify the attitude to the destruction of the churches of residents, to reveal the level and content of their knowledge about the history of local churches. Respondents' knowledge and perceptions vary. The memories of the Mezen old-timers did not become the subject of separate scientific considerations. However, we can highlight several research areas with similar problems.

When completing research, one cannot but turn to the experience of historical and anthropological research by representatives of the French school "Annals" and its followers [16, Block M.; 17, Ginzburg K.].

The study of Soviet everyday life was carried out by I.V. Narsky, N.N. Kozlova and others [18, Narsky I.V.; 19, Kozlova N.N.]. The departure "into a small history" allows you to move from generalizing official schemes to small details and the specifics of collective memory.

The study of Soviet mass consciousness (the problem of "public sentiment") was devoted to his work A.Ya. Livshin, L. Viola, Sh. Fitzpatrick and others [20, Livshin A.Ya.; 21, Viola L.; 22, Viola L.; 23, Fitzpatrick Sh.]. Scholars engaged in the study of Soviet mythology because of ideology: A.A. Panchenko, N. Tumarkin, and others [24, Panchenko A.A.; 25, Tumarkin N.].

In the article, we use the terms "oral narrative", religious narrative, oral narrative, and the legend of God's punishment, the story of sacrilege [14, Drannikova N.V.; 26, Theoretical Milestones].

Religious stories are part of the local historical memory, the knowledge of which, in turn, testifies to the developed or undeveloped local identity of the communities. The material at our disposal is heterogeneous. It represents both "brief testimonies" and structurally organized narratives. The blasphemy narratives are considered not so much as a folklore source, but as "a component of a local text ... whose function is not to "reflect", but to "create" urban history, mythology, set the parameters of local identity" [27, Akhmetova M.V., Lurie M.L., pp. 146 — 147].

The cycles of stories about the destruction of churches and the destruction of church property are united by the theme of sacrilege, sin, and punishment for it. The pronounced didactic ori-

entation of these stories is expressed in the reproach addressed not to time or era, but the person himself. The leading motive of these stories is punishment or God's punishment. The narrator recognizes the destruction of the church as a terrible sin. He not only reproduces the situation of that time but also matches it with subsequent times and the future of generations [8, Shevarenkova Yu.M., pp. 67 — 69].

A bonded tax policy in relation to the church preceded the closure of the churches. Churches were taxed heavily, by land rents. The struggle with the church became part of the policy of the Bolsheviks. Immediately after 1917, the arrests and executions of priests began, churches and monasteries were routed and plundered, icons were burned. In the twentieth century, the history of religion is characterized by the categories of “survival” and “resistance”, caused by the extreme cruelty and repressiveness of the entire Soviet modernist project. “Forced” secularization undermined the traditional foundations of religion. The churches in Mezen began to close in 1929. The last baptisms and weddings, according to the memoirs of old-timers, took place in 1930. One of the first to be closed, in 1931, was the Holy Epiphany Cathedral, located in the district center of Mezen. Its last pastor was Father Alexander Petrovsky. The closure of the church met with considerable resistance from residents⁵. The archive documents say: “A group of kulaks led by a priest is systematically campaigning”. In 1935 the churches in the village of Kimzhe and Dorogorsky were closed. In 1933 — in the village of Dolgoshelie and others⁶.

To collect the material, we used a questionnaire with open questions. Speech behavior initiates the presence or absence of religious consciousness in the narrator. The answers of the Mezenites demonstrate a rupture of tradition that arose because faith in the Soviet period of history acquired a secret character. Some of our respondents denied the existence of the institution of the church in the pre-revolutionary Mezen and its role in it. They said that the inhabitants of the Mezen district did not go to churches, that they were *unbelievers*, and *enlightened* people, thereby demonstrating the values of the Soviet period of history.

“Our people were enlightened”;

“In our time, they did not say anything. We had Soviet reality there; we lived in that. We joined the pioneers, the Komsomol, then went to work at the party. We thought that this should be done.”

(Record of A.K. Mitkina, b. 1951, the village of Zherd, Mezen district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by N.V. Drannikova, T.N. Morozova, A.S. Mysova, 2018) [FA NArFU, P. 641]

In her answer, the performer reproduces the sequence of the Soviet life cycle, using for this the features of the Soviet discourse (*Soviet reality; they believed that this should be done*).

Religious narratives are microhistories. Respondents aged 40 to 70 years, talking about the destruction of churches, often talk about this inappreciably and only state a fait accompli. The di-

⁵ Archive of the FSB RU in the Arkhangelsk Oblast. P – 15303, 13258.

⁶ Archive of the FSB RU in the Arkhangelsk Oblast. P – 5314, P – 6206, P – 1048.

dactic orientation, which is a distinctive feature of the stories of the older generation who witnessed the destruction of churches, disappeared from their stories.

<Did you have a church in the village?>

Yes, we did.

<What was it called?>

I do not know. In our time, it was already a club. But they told me how they dropped bells from the church.

<Did someone protest the closure of the church?>

I do not know — it was not my time.

(Record of A.K. Mitkina, b. 1951, the village of Zherd, Mezen district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by N.V. Drannikova, T.N. Morozova, A.S. Mysova, 2018) [FA NArFU. P. 641]

Often, our respondents during the conversation broadcast only incomplete information about the destruction/desecration of the church. Among them, women predominated. They all received information from their older relatives or fellow villagers who witnessed these events (grandmothers, aunts). Respondents said that before they did not understand the tragedy of what had happened. Destroyed or turned into clubs, churches, and desecrated cemeteries throughout their lives were the norm for them. Reevaluation of these events for some of them took place in the post-perestroika period when archives were opened, and many publications appeared on the “white spots” of Russian history.

Forced secularization undermined the traditional foundations of religion. Schools replaced the church in the Soviet period. In the churches, huts, reading rooms, and clubs were opened, warehouses and granaries were made. Most of the older generation, despite secularization, remained a believer. Believers in the village believed that in holy places, the devil seeks to do more harm to a man than in any other site, and he tries with all his might to “lead a man into temptation”. In their opinion, in a holy place, a person should be strict towards himself; otherwise, he will not be saved by the intercession of saints [28, Tarabukina A.V.]. For believers, the activities of the Communists began to correlate with the activities of the Antichrist, and the church buildings converted by the new government became “unclean”. The place, which was a saint for the older generation, turns after its desecration into the habitat of the Antichrist — a “holy” place for young people.

<Did you have an Old Believer church here?>

Yes. Then it became the club. “Holy” place for young people.

(Nore of Yu.P. Malygina, A.D. Malygin, the village of Koida, Mezen district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by N.V. Drannikova, N.M. Aseeva, N.N. Yankovskaya, 2010 .) [FA NArFU. P. 605]

Respondents whose memories date back to the 1940s — 1950s were able to recall the formulas of prohibitions and beliefs about churches that existed in their villages after their closure, e.g.: in the village of Longevity for schoolchildren were told that they could not attend a club built on the site of the church, because it will fall underground; that water rises at night in the churches

of Mezen and the village of Pogorelts; that the Mezen Komsomol members, turning the Holy Epiphany Church into a club, “danced on the bones”, representatives of the older generation refused to go to clubs and cinemas that used to be churches, etc. There was a ban in popular culture on constructing a new building on the site of churches and cemeteries. In the Soviet period, all these prohibitions were violated, therefore, according to locals, the builders could not establish a carousel in the territory of the former necropolis (Mezen), and the foreman who supervised the construction of the club on the site of the burnt church fell into the pit and died. [Edush T.V., 1969].

The information received by us is incomplete. We can distinguish settlements where the tradition of the religious narrative is better preserved than in other settlements of Mezen, e.g., in the village of Koida and Kimzha. It can be explained by the fact that Koida was the center of hunting and fishing marine industries. Its inhabitants were the organizers of the Ustinsky fishing related to the catch of seals⁷. The standard of living in this village was higher than that of villages located in the agricultural part of Mezen. The number of Koida residents repressed for their faith was much higher than in other Mezen villages [29, Za veru Khristovu]. Also, in the Mezen district, Koida is the most inaccessible village, there were two faiths in it — Nikonians and Old Believers, with separate churches. In Kimzha, the church was closed later than in the other Mezen district villages, and, like in Koida, there were Old Believers and Nikonian churches, and for many years there was secrecy, which was the most passionate kind of Old Believers. The village was somewhat isolated from local authorities, as it was located across the river, unlike other Mezen villages.

Stories about the destruction of churches and the persecution of believers in the folklore and speech practice of the older generation form a metanarrative. Still, the degree of its destruction is so high that it makes one think. It includes stories with motives: dropping bells, punishment for the destruction of the church; the desecration of cemeteries, the destruction of icons and their use on collective farms or as household items, the salvation of church property by villagers, the conversion of churches to schools, granaries, clubs, stables, and repression of priests and parishioners. We recorded one of the most detailed stories about the destruction of the church in the village Koida from P.E. Malyginoy in 2010:

<The heroes felt like icons, you know how many were there, they threw them away, chopped them for firewood, such scoundrels. It was not scary to cut the icon in halves. They watched, watched, it was what they said about the old time. The severity was it. So many icons were broken, so many values! They broke everything, took off the domes! The bells were so big; we were sitting on zvoz⁸ and watched how these bells were lowered from above.

How not to punish! Nobody died with his death. Who drowned ...? The Lord is not an ordinary man — he will order, not today, so tomorrow, he will find him. Why did the churches go bank-

⁷ Ustinsky (Ustinsky) fishing — fishing on a section of the sea between the mouths of the Mezen and Kuloy rivers.

⁸ (B) Zvoz — a sloping floor made of logs, which makes it possible to drive a horse-drawn cart to the second floor of the house.

rupt, and now you need to build? We must get everything in the village. Where to get these icons? They broke the same; they broke themselves. The word could not be said against the authorities. We had a man on Kanin, in the evening a ditty, joking like this: "With Tsar Nikolashka, you are not lying on the blood. And now, under socialism, you have to sleep, like everyone else." So the next day, a boat came in an instant and was taken away with an end, no one had heard. They sold their own; there were no strangers here; their skins were corrupt. And now you think a little corrupt? Same. You are caressed, stroked, and left; right there, they are pressed to the nail. It was and is>.

(Record of P.E. Malygina, b. 1927, the village of Koida, Mezen district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by N.V. Drannikova, N.M. Aseeva, N.N. Yankovskaya, 2010.) [FA NArFU. P. 605].

The respondent remembered details of the ruin of the church, which demonstrates her emotional and tragic perception of the event she witnessed. She negatively assesses what happened. The behavior of the local patriarchs violated traditional behavioral norms and prohibitions. Talking about the destruction of the church, the performer uses an invective (there were *such scoundrels*). Story of P.E. Malyginoy contains several motives: incl. the denunciation motif, which is realized with the help of graduation: *"They watched, guarded, what they say about the old time ..."* The text has the genre features of the legend of God's punishment, which ends with an aphorism: *"The Lord — not just a man — will order not today — so he will find tomorrow."* The performer uses repetitions of *"(the bells) so huge," "no one died with her death,"* which reinforces her emotionally-tragic perception of the ruin of the church. Respect for faith and its religiosity is manifested in the use of augmentations: *bells are huge, zvoz are so huge*. A conversation with us is for her a continuation of her inner monologue. She uses rhetorical questions and exclamations: *"Why the churches have been ravaged, and now it is necessary to build? Where to get these icons?"* Repetitions reinforce her indignation by blasphemy: *"They broke the same, they themselves broke"*.

Answering our question about whether there were icons in their house, the respondents recall that they rode them from the mountains, that they used them as tabletops and lids for barrels (There were *such good planks!*), Dirt was paved with them, many talks about how parents and grandmothers tried to save church property and hid it in their houses, that in many houses parts from the iconostasis and the frames from the icons that were used for the photographs were preserved, that the bells were taken away for re-melting (*Bells, icons were thrown away I remember: my mother ran, dragged everything home*). Stories about the salvation of church property by older relatives and its further use by children and grandchildren demonstrate a different correlation between Soviet and traditional symbolic systems in the minds of performers.

Tales of the destruction of churches abound in pejorative verbs: they threw, ravaged, burned, broke, chopped, dragged, etc.

And there were some bells! ... Then they decided to remove the bells. Abandoned them right on the ground!

<And what year was it before the war?>

And for a long time, it was; for a long time, not.

<Did you see how it happened?>

Well, we were small, we were witnesses, we remember. I lived not far from here; we had a house of our own.

(Record of A.E. Payusova, b. 1925, the village of Kimzha, Mezen district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by S.B. Adonyev, I.S. Veselova, Yu.Yu. Marynicheva, 2007)

For respondents who witnessed the closure of the churches, the memories are eschatological, and the villagers who took part in these events are endowed with the characters of the “other world” in their stories. They are called *starvations, drunkards, anti-Christ, villains (the villains still had their villains), pests*. The Komsomol members were especially successful in sacrilege.

Most of the locals do not remember the name of the church in their village, but at the same time, some villages still have memories of congressional feast days. However, their calendar coincidence is most often not associated with the name of the church (*<Did you have a church in the village?> Yes, we did. <In whose honor is it named?> I do not know*) [Syumkin N.I., 1961].

We drew attention to the fact that among representatives of the middle generation of Mezenes (40 — 70) there are metatexts about religion, but they often lack religious consciousness. Memories of the church are not part of the cultural memory of the Mezen, except for the village of Koydy and Kimzhi. But the work of the Mezen local historians in the late 20th and early 21st centuries made a part of the educated local population interested in the history of their churches and proud of their architectural appearance.

This club is a former church. It was built at the beginning of the nineteen hundred ... there, yes, the second, probably a year or so. And before that, there was an old one, where we have a water pump. We have photos. The club also has a drawing, one man painted with a pencil. People said the church was beautiful. Now they are no longer alive. They said that they could not throw a hat to the ceiling, that is, it was high, there were two floors large. The decoration was good, beautiful, but it turned out that everything began to close.

(Record of A.A. Chikina, b. 1956, the village of Zherd, Mezen district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by N.V. Drannikova, T.N. Morozova, A.S. Mysova, 2018.) [FA NArFU. P. 641]

The respondent contrasts the beauty of the destroyed church to its modern, dilapidated state. It is transmitted with the help of hyperbolas (*they could not throw a hat to the ceiling*) and gradations (*the decoration is good, beautiful*).

In narratives, there are many “formulas of authenticity”: *I remember: mother ran, old women spoke, people spoke, I heard, etc.* Various repetitions and dates reinforce the authenticity of what is happening.

Few of our respondents were able to reassess their previous views on religion. Among them, residents of the village of Koida, about which we wrote above, predominate. There we had to hear the statement that *“now those who left everything in the old fashion should*

be awarded orders and medals ... Previously, they lived under pain of death, but they kept everything ...". (Record of A.I. Malygina, A.I. Malygin, the village of Koida, Mezensky district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by N.V. Drannikova, N.M. Aseeva, N.N. Yankovskaya, 2010.) [FA NArFU. P. 605].

The performer considers the protection of religious beliefs and the preservation of church objects in a totalitarian state a feat.

Despite the invaluable nature of most of the stories in our archives, some of them contain the motive of God's punishment, which, according to the performers, eventually overtakes not only the person who committed the sacrilege, but also his descendants.

<And what does the Lord turn away?>

She'll flap it, so, if you tell, say, a lie to me, you can't do it, you can't do it. In truth, you have to go, in truth, in truth.

<And if you tell a lie, then the Lord will punish you anyway?>

Does not matter.

<Not you, so your children will be punished?>

After all, the Lord says: "I am not Afonka — I will order it quietly. Quietly, I'll order it, not suddenly, not immediately. Here it is. If the Lord is, we don't know if he is, if not. "

(Record of A.E. Payusova, b. 1925, the village of Kimzha, Mezen district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collected by S.B. Adonyev, I.S. Veselova, Yu.Yu. Marynicheva, 2007)

The performer uses the proverb "*The Lord — not Afonka — will order slowly*", which gives her speech credibility. The people involved in the ruin of the churches, in her conviction, were engaged in unrighteous deeds and violated God's commandments. Her speech has many repetitions. She says twice: "*You can't do this, you can't do this*", *I order, I order, in truth, you must go, in truth*. The blasphemers and scammers, she believes, violate the ninth commandment of Christianity, "Do not bear false witness against the neighbor". It was felt that in the conversation, she continued the internal monologue, which she had begun long before the meeting.

The destruction of religious buildings continued in the Mezen district throughout the entire existence of the Soviet period of the state. At the end of the Soviet regime in the early 1980s, the chairman of one of the local village councils decided to demolish the chapel, which, in her opinion, occupied an "extra" place in the village. Two young collective farmers participated in the demolition of the chapel. One of them died shortly afterward, the second paralyzed. Residents explain what happened with the punishment that followed the disrespect of the shrine, although in Soviet times, the chapel was used as a club. The plot includes a motive of repentance — the mother of one of the blasphemers installed a memorial cross at the site of the destroyed chapel. Thus, the cited text indicates that the plot about the punishment of the sacrileges has retained its functionality to this day.

Kara for the sacrilege is equivalent to the crime committed, our performers believe, e.g., a person who took the domes from the church fell into the mud and crashed to death, a man who

cut down a vow cross for firewood returns without a hand from the front and soon dies, the team leader who supervised the construction of a new the house of culture on the site of a burnt church, falls during the laying of the foundation in the foundation pit and dies, at the village activist who took the crosses off the domes, the coffin lights up after death, after the church was destroyed in the village, a fire starts, all the heads of the village club (the former church) died early. Let us cite the following text as an example.

Dropping the bells along with faith and destroying the top of the church, the atheistic azapoles adapted the remaining structure to the new socialist House of Culture. Who knows, maybe in punishment for the deed "on a hot summer day on July 27, 1931, when most of the azapoles were in distant hayfields, a fire occurred in the village. There was practically no one to extinguish it ...". Half of the village — and this is 58 residential buildings — was left homeless.

(Record of I.V. Borisova, b. 1972, the village of Azapolye, Mezensky district, Arkhangelsk Oblast; collect. by N.V. Drannikova, 2019)

If a person is punished for sacrilege, consider the Mezen, then for the restoration and salvation of the shrine, he receives a reward. We have at our disposal a story recorded in the village of Bereznik about the fact that a man who had pain in his legs decided to restore the cross sawn for fire by his fellow villager. After that, he not only recovered but also lived up to 90 years [O.U. Vlasova, 1973].

Before the closing of the churches, there were necropolises around each of them, on which the honorary inhabitants of the village and clergy were buried. After scolding the cemeteries, the graves were devastated, and skulls were used as visual aids in school lessons. Talking about how classmates played with skulls found near the church, one of our performers laughs (F, 59). The respondents, referring to old-timers, say that Komsomol members removed the bells in their villages during the community workday on April 22 (on the birthday of V.I. Lenin) and Easter.

In the Mezen district, all churches were closed; faith in the Soviet period became secret and acquired a non-confessional character. Respondents recall that they were forbidden to believe in God at school (in particular, they checked whether schoolchildren wear crosses, etc.). The blow to the institutions of traditional religion was so great that religion was forced into an uncontrolled space. In the Mezen villages, mixed forms of religion have survived, existing in the form of beliefs and at the level of everyday behavior. E.g., it is widely believed that patrimonial icons cannot be returned from home and that a person who violates this prohibition can be punished.

After conducting a study of the Arkhangelsk religious story, we concluded that the ideology of the Soviet era led to the fact that people lost respect for the culture of their ancestors, the cult of the ancestors, which was the basis of folk culture, was destroyed, as evidenced by the desecration of church graves, necropolises and the subsequent loss of memory of these events. The responses of our respondents demonstrate that the stories about the destruction of the churches have lost their relevance, that the breaking of the cultural tradition was ensured by decades of an-

ti-religious activity, silence by the older generation of Mezenes and insufficient educational activities of cultural and educational organizations and individuals.

We concluded that in the settlements where there were secondary schools, the degree of destruction of the cultural and historical tradition was much stronger than in the villages where there were elementary schools, or there were none.

Different generations of performers demonstrate different value orientations. The generation that witnessed the destruction of the churches, the desecration of the church is recognized as a sin. The storytellers not only reproduce the situation of that time but also combine it with subsequent times and the future of generations. Tales of the sacrilege of younger generations (primarily those born after 1940) have lost this value; they reproduce the values associated with the Soviet period of life, which denied religion and attributed it to the field of superstition and prejudice.

The undertaken research allows us to trace the dynamics of mass representations. Religion cannot be torn off from all social and cultural experiences of people. Religious narratives are part of the cultural memory of the local community. Still, their analysis indicates that they were supplanted on its periphery and replaced by the values of the Soviet period. In contrast, the emergence of new religious objects actualized the need for some residents to obtain information about the history of churches. The study led to the conclusion that local museums, teachers, textbooks, cultural and educational institutions do not have a significant impact on the knowledge of residents of the Mezen district about their culture.

Acknowledgments and Funding

This article was financially supported by the Russian Federal Property Fund and the Government of the Arkhangelsk Oblast in the framework of the scientific project No. 18-412-290002 p_a “Narratives on the destruction of Orthodox churches and places of worship in the modern folk tradition of the Arkhangelsk region”.

References

1. Dobvol'skaya V.E. Neskazochnaya proza o razrushenii tserkvey [Non-Fairytale Prose about the Demolition of Churches]. *Slavyanskaya traditsionnaya kul'tura i sovremennyy mir: Sb. mater. nauch.-prakt. konf.* [Slavic Traditional Culture and the Modern World: Proc. Sci.-Pract. Conf.]. Moscow, SRCRF Publ., 1997, iss. 2, pp. 76–88.
2. Dobvol'skaya V.E. Neskazochnaya proza o razrushenii tserkvey [Non-Fairytale Prose about the Demolition of Churches]. *Russkiy fol'klor. Materialy i issledovaniya* [Russian Folklore: Materials and Researches]. Saint Petersburg, Nauka, 1999, vol. 30, pp. 500–512.
3. Shevarenkova Yu.M., ed. *Nizhegorodskie khristianskie legendy* [Nizhny Novgorod Christian Legends]. Nizhniy Novgorod, KiTizdat Publ., 1998, 168 p. (In Russ.)
4. Shtyrkov S.A. Nakazanie svyatotattsev: fol'klorny motiv i narrativnaya skhema [Punishment of Sacrilegers: Folklore Motif and Narrative Scheme]. *Trudy fakul'teta etnologii* [Proceedings of the Faculty of Ethnology]. Saint Petersburg, EUSP Publ., 2001, vol. 1, pp. 198–210.
5. Shtyrkov S.A. Rasskazy ob oskvernenii svyatyn' [Narratives about Sacrilege of Sacred Places]. *Traditsionnyy fol'klor Novgorodskoy oblasti. Poslovitsy i pogovorki. Zagadki. Primety i pover'ya. Detskiy fol'klor. Eskhatologiya (po zapisyam 1963–2002 gg.)* [Traditional Folklore of Novgorod Re-

- gion. Proverbs and Sayings. Riddles. Signs and Beliefs. Children's folklore. Eschatology (According to the Records of 1963–2002)]. Saint Petersburg, Tropa Troyanova Publ., 2006, iss. 3, pp. 208–230.
6. Fadeeva L.V. Rasskazy o poruganii svyatyn' v istoricheskoy pamyati severnorusskoy derevni (konets XX — nachalo XXI veka) [Narratives about the Sacrilege in the Historical Memory of the North Russian Village (The End of the 20th — the Beginning of the 21st Century)]. *Chelovek i sobytie v istoricheskoy pamyati: Sb. st.* [Man and an Event in the Historical Memory: Collection of Academic Papers]. Syktyvkar, ILLH Komi SC UB RAS Publ., 2017, pp. 89–103.
 7. Fadeeva L.V. Rasskazy o razorenii svyatyni v sovremennoy ustnoy traditsii Pinezh'ya (K probleme spetsifiki syuzheta i zhanra) [Narratives about the Destruction of the Relics in the Modern Oral Tradition of Pinezhye (On the Problem of Plot and Genre Specificity)]. *Lokal'nye traditsii v narodnoy kul'ture Russkogo Severa: Mater. IV mezhdunar. nauch. konf. «Ryabininskie chteniya-2003»* [Local Traditions in the Folk Culture of the Russian North: Proc. 4th Int. Sci. Conf. "Ryabininsky readings 2003"]. Petrozavodsk, KSC RAS Publ., 2003, pp. 123–126.
 8. Shevarenkova Yu.M. Issledovaniya v oblasti russkoy fol'klornoy legendy [Research in the Field of Russian Folklore Legend]. Nizhniy Novgorod, Rastr-NN Publ., 2004, 157 p. (In Russ.)
 9. Moroz A.B. Razrushenie tserkvey v sovetskiy period: dva vzglyada [Demolition of Churches in the Soviet Period: Two Views]. *Historia mówiona w świetle nauk humanistycznych i społecznych* [History Spoken in the Light of Humanities and Social Sciences]. Lublin, 2014, pp. 187–195.
 10. Moroz A.B. Ustnaya istoriya russkoy tserkvi v sovetskiy period (narodnye predaniya o razrushenii tserkvey) [Oral History of the Russian Church during the Soviet Period (Folktales about the Demolition of Churches)]. *Uchenye zapiski Rossiyskogo pravoslavnogo universiteta ap. Ioanna Bogoslova* [Scholarly Notes of the Russian Orthodox University of the Apostle John the Theologian]. Moscow, 2000, iss. 6, pp. 177–185.
 11. Vlasova V.V. Izmenenie kul'turnogo landshafta v sovetskiy i postsovetskiy periody: sel'skie khramy i kladbishcha (na primere Respubliki Komi) [Changes in the Cultural Landscape during the Soviet and the Post-Soviet Periods: Rural Temples and Cemeteries (on the Example of the Komi Republic)]. *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta* [Tomsk State University Journal], 2018, no. 432, pp. 74–85. DOI: 10.17223/15617793/432/9
 12. Panchenko A.A. Pochemu rodilsya chert: syuzhet o kommuniste-svyatotattse, novorozhdennye monstry i granitsy religioznoy didaktiki [Why Was a Baby Devil Born: The Legend about a Blasphemous Communist, Monstrous Births, and the Limits of Religious Didactics]. *Studia Litterarum*, 2018, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 252–287. DOI: 10.22455/2500-4247-2018-3-2-252-287
 13. Drannikova N.V. Kul'tovye ob"ekty Arkhangel'ska v sovremennykh gorodskikh legendakh [Arkhangelsk Cult Buildings in the Contemporary Urban Legends]. *Fol'klor v kul'ture povsednevnosti: sb. st.* [Folklore in the Everyday Culture: Collection of Academic Papers]. Moscow, SIAS Publ., 2019, pp. 231–241.
 14. Drannikova N.V. Razrushenie pravoslavnykh tserkvey i kul'tovykh sooruzheniy v povestvovatel'noy traditsii Arkhangel'skoy oblasti [Demolition of Orthodox Churches and Cult Buildings in Modern Folklore Tradition of Arkhangelsk Region]. *Traditsionnaya kul'tura* [Traditional Culture], 2020, no. 2. (in-print)
 15. Portelli A. Osobennosti ustnoy istorii [The Peculiarities of Oral History]. *Khrestomatiya po ustnoy istorii* [Oral History Reader]. Saint Petersburg, EUSP Publ., 2003, pp. 32–51.
 16. Blok M. *Apologiya istorii ili remeslo istorika* [Apologia of History or Historian's Craft]. Moscow, Nauka Publ., 1986, 178 p. (In Russ.)
 17. Ginzburg K. *Mify — emblemy — primety. Morfologiya i istoriya* [Myths — Emblems — Clues. Morphology and History]. Moscow, Novoe Publ., 2004, pp. 6–50. (In Russ.)
 18. Narskiy I.V. Kak kommunist cherta rasstrelyat' khotel: apokalipsicheskie slukhi na Urale v gody revolyutsii i grazhdanskoy voyny [How Communist Wanted to Execute the Devil: Apocalyptic Rumours at Ural During the Revolution and Civil War]. *Slukhi v Rossii XIX-XX vekov. Neofitsial'naya kommunikatsiya i «krutye povoroty» rossiyskoy istorii* [Rumours in Russia of 19th–20th Centuries. Unofficial Communication and Sharp Turns of Russian History]. Chelyabinsk, Kamennyy poyas Publ., 2011, pp. 231–255.
 19. Kozlova N.N. *Gorizonty povsednevnosti sovetskoj epokhi. Golosa iz khora* [Horizons of the Soviet Era Everyday Life. Voices from Choir]. Moscow, Institute of Philosophy RAS Publ., 1996, 216 p. (In Russ.)

20. Livshin A.Ya. *Nastroeniya i politicheskie emotsii v Sovetskoj Rossii v 1917–1932 gg.* [Sentiments and Political Emotions in the Soviet Russia of 1917–1932]. Moscow, Rossiyskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediya Publ., 2010, 344 p. (In Russ.)
21. Viola L. Counternarratives of Soviet Life: Kulak Special Settlers in the First Person. In: Alexopoulos G., Hessler J., Tomoff K., eds. *Writing the Stalin Era*. New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, pp. 87–99. DOI: 10.1057/9780230116429_6
22. Viola L. *The Unknown Gulag: The Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements*. Oxford University Press, 2007, 278 p.
23. Fitzpatrick Sh. *Tear Off the Masks!* Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2005, 352 p.
24. Panchenko A.A. *Kul't Lenina i sovetskij fol'klor* [The Cult of Lenin and Soviet Folklore]. *Odissey. Che-lovek v istorii: Vremya i prostranstvo prazdnika* [Ulisses. Figure in History: The Time and Space of a Holiday]. Moscow, 2005, pp. 334–366. (In Russ.)
25. Tumarkin N. *Lenin zhiv! Kul't Lenina v Sovetskoj Rossii* [Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia]. Saint Petersburg, Akademicheskij proekt Publ., 1997, 285 p. (In Russ.)
26. Hakamies P., Honko A., eds. *Theoretical Milestones: Selected Writings of Lauri Honko*. Helsinki, Suomalainen Tiedekatemia Publ., 2013, 338 p.
27. Lur'e M.L., Akhmetova M.V. Rex ex machina v lokal'nom narrative. Rasskazy o proезде Khrushcheva cherez Bologoe [Rex ex Machina in Local Narrative. The Stories About Khrushchev Trip through Bologoe]. *Russkij politicheskij fol'klor. Issledovaniya i publikatsii* [Russian Political Folklore. Research and Publication]. Moscow, Novoe Publ., 2013, pp. 146–171.
28. Tarabukina A.V. Kategorii prostranstva i vremeni v mirovospriyatii sovremennykh «tserkovnykh lyudej» [Categories of Space and Time in Modern “Church People” World Perception]. *Russkij fol'klor: Materialy i issledovaniya* [Russian folklore: Materials and Researches]. Saint Petersburg, Nauka Publ., 1999, vol. 30, pp. 186–198.
29. Suvorova S.V., ed. *Za veru Khristovu: Dukhovenstvo, monashestvuyushchie i miryane Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi, repressirovannye v Severnom krae (1918–1951)*. *Biograficheskij spravocnik* [For Christ Faith: the Russian Orthodox Church Clergy, Cloisterers and Laity. Bibliographical Tool Repressed in Northern Krai (1918–1951)]. Arkhangelsk, Pravoslavnyy izd. Tsentri Publ., 2006, 683 p. (In Russ.)

Received on January 24, 2020