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The Variation of Russian Festive Ritualism in Russian Ethnography*

This article deals with the shifts of focus of general versus local elements in traditional Russian festive rites, as seen in the works of 19th–20th century Russian ethnographers. Two periods are described. The first lasted from the 1830s to the 1970s; the second began in the 1980s–1990s and is ongoing. The first period falls into two stages. From the 1830s to the 1950s, ethnographers sought to disclose common features, and in the 1960s and 1970s, they were interested in both the general and the specific in Russian and Slavic (specifically Eastern Slavic) festivals. Studies of this period were based on a macro-approach in that they used a wide range of sources relating to Russian, Slavic, and other European ethnic groups. As a result, common elements of Russian ritualism and their spatial variations were revealed, and broad generalizations were proposed. During the second period, the geographic scope narrowed. Boundaries between regional and local variants of festive traditions were delineated both in synchrony and diachrony. The attention has shifted to common Russian versus local elements within separate festivals and their parts rather than groups of rites within the annual cycle as before.

Keywords: *Russian folk festivals, ethnography, Slavs, East Slavs, variability.*

Variability of folk culture became the focus of research in the second half of the 20th century, involving active use of the mapping method and area studies in linguistics, folklore studies, and ethnology (Problemy lingvo- i etnogeografii…, 1964; Problemy kartografirovaniya…, 1974; Arealnye issledovaniya…, 1971, 1977, 1978). The most large-scale projects included publishing of linguistic, ethnographic, and other types of atlases (Istoriko-etnograficheskiy atlas…, 1961; Dialektologicheskiy atlas…, 1969, 1986). The greatest progress in the study of variability in Russian folk culture was made in the field of material culture, such as agricultural tools, housing, and clothing (Russkiye…, 1967, 1970). Despite the long period of study, research of calendar rituals has not yet revealed similar important results. Certain achievements in the study of the variability of popular festivals (Chicherov, 1957; Sokolova, 1979; Narodnaya traditsionnaya kultura…, 2002; Fursova, 2002, 2003; Zolotova, 2000, 2002; Chernykh, 2006, 2007) rather suggest that we are still at the initial stage of understanding this aspect of the festive calendar.

This article discusses the history of studying variability of Russian festivals before the 1980s when the period of large-scale research projects on the subject ended. The main attention will be given to the studies that focus on common and local features of festive rituals, or analytical studies, as opposed to descriptive studies such as studies of local history, which provide regional description usually without local features and without comparison with other regions. Works that focus solely on identifying the common features in festive rituals (for example, by scholars belonging to the

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mythological school) will also be out of the scope of the present overview.

Despite the fact that it was relatively late when the problem of variability of Russian calendar rituals came to the fore of research, we can find descriptions of regional and local features already in the survey studies of the 1830–1840s, that is, from the very beginning of collection of materials on festivals. Thus, I.M. Snegirev pointed to the local distinctiveness of Russian festivals and rituals starting in Old Rus, explaining it by the different genesis and ethnic history of the Eastern Slavic tribes, their relationships with other ethnic groups, and the local features of Christian history (1837: Iss. 1, 3–4, 6–10). In fact, in the very beginning of Russian ethnology, Snegirev correctly identified the main areas of research into the reasons for synchronic and diachronic variation in festive rituals.

Considering individual festivals, Snegirev observed "some local deviations in the celebration of the Cheesefare Week from its general basic nature" (1838: Iss. II, 127). The regional features that he mentioned included the tradition in Siberia of making a ship out of sleighs nailed together with masts, sails, and guisers inside; a huge sleigh (by attaching several regular sleighs together), setting up a vertical-mast pole with a wheel on the top, on which a guiser would sit in Pereslavl-Zalessky, Yuryev-Polsky, Vladimir, Vyatka, as well as the Simbirsk and Penza Governorates; carrying a bull on sleighs tied together in Arkhangelsk; building snow towns in the Penza and Simbirsk Governorates, or singing carols in Yaroslavl (Ibid.: 127–136).

In addition to noting local differences in individual festivals, Snegirev came to more general conclusions, for example, in distinguishing two different areas of the Eastern Slavic world: the west (southwest)—the earliest area of Slavic customs and rituals, and the northeast—the later area, associated with the settlement of the Slavs on the eve of the emergence of the Russian State (1837: Iss. I, 3–4, 8–10, 21). This conclusion was confirmed by many scholars and is widely used today in historical linguistics and folklore studies (see, e.g., (Tolstoy, 1995: 50)).

Snegirev also noted some differences in the Christmas terminology, "Koleda in Southern and Western Russia is the eve of the Nativity Fast, which is better known under the name of Avsen or Tuasen in the Northeast of Russia" (1838: Iss. II, 28–29). Snegirev also observed the dominating custom of visiting houses with manger scenes and the star in "Little and White Russia", that is, in the Ukraine and Belarus, and the local presence of this tradition in Northern Russia (the Shenkursky and Velsky Uyezds) and Siberia (Ibid.: 54–56). Further, describing rituals of greeting the spring, Snegirev thus wrote, "Depending on the climate and locality, meeting and hailing spring falls at different times, and is done in different ways" (Ibid.: Iss. III, 12). Thus, in the Smolensk Governorate, people would "invoke" spring with a short song "Vesna krasna" (lit. 'beautiful spring') on the day of St. Eudokia and the Forty Martyrs, climbing on the roofs of barns or on the mountains; in the Buysky and Soligalichsky Uyezds of the Kostroma Governorate, at sunrise on Holy Thursday, people would wash up or immerse themselves in water, and then roll on the ground and climb on the roof of the house to sing a song in honor of the spring; in the Tula Governorate, this would happen starting from the Sunday of Doubting Thomas (the second Sunday after Easter), and in the Kaluga Governorate spring was hailed with round dances and the song, "Oh Dido, oh Lado!" (Ibid.: 12–14).

However, the main focus of Snegirev's study was the search for similarities among the Slavic, European, and Asian peoples, which can be attributed to his desire to outline the general trend of development of the rituals using mythology "as a basis for popular festivals" (Snegirev, 1837: Iss. I, 8, 54–215; 1838: Iss. II, III; 1839: Iss. IV). The following statements can serve as a good illustration of such an approach to individual festivals, "Despite local characteristics, the *Semik* is the same in essence, and from time immemorial is known over almost all of Great Russia…" (Snegirev, 1838: Iss. III, 101); "the location, climate, and customs of the inhabitants of Great Russia gave certain specific features to the Pentecost myths and games, although in essence they remained the same almost everywhere" (Ibid.: 133).

Another scholar, I.P. Sakharov, did not pursue the goal of identifying general and specific features in Russian festive rituals in his studies, but made an important theoretical observation concerning the description of the Avsen festival, which can be applied to many other festive events. According to Sakharov, who was critical of Snegirev's attempts to prove the existence of a unified structure of the festivals, "There is no place in the Russian land where all rituals would be done in the same way. In one place people would cook porridge, in another place they would sow grain, and in a third place they would go from door to door" (Sakharov, 1885: 3). Sakharov also pointed to substantial differences in the custom of "sowing grain" in Russia and in the Ukraine, and noted the local occurrence of the third element, "I know about the ritual of going from door to door only in two regions, the Kostroma and Ryazan Governorates" (Ibid.: 4–5).

At the same time, Sakharov paid great attention to the common features of the festivals. His description of the Day of St. John the Baptist can be a good illustration of that point, "Distinctive rituals of this festival are the following: bonfires, songs, games, jumping over the fire and nettle bushes, bathing at night in the dew and

in the daytime in the rivers, dancing around the *marina* tree and its immersion into the water, burying herbs, the belief about witches flying on the 'Bald Mountain'. The Kupalo and the Kupalo fires are better known in Great Russia, Little Russia and White Russia" (Ibid.: 85). However, Sakharov pointed out that "in the Little Russian villages, St. John's fires are associated with special rituals that do not exist among the Great Russian people. Here we see the nettle bush, doll, feasting next to the *marina* tree; here we can hear songs with the name Kupalo" (Ibid.: 90).

Differences in the Russian festive ritual complex were noted by A.V. Tereshchenko. It is interesting that he did so out of necessity, due to the variability of the materials he obtained. In the preface to the first volume, he mentioned "persistent obstacles in gathering information" and "difficulty in presentation", arising from the "excessive diversity on the same subject", including local versions and "altering one and the same ritual or game not only over the whole of Russia, but even in the same governorate—moreover, in one and the same uyezd; whatever is being done in one village is either out of use in another village of the same uyezd or is done in a completely opposite way" (Tereshchenko, 1848: Iss. I, p. V).

Although Tereshchenko noted a number of local features in the ritual complex, he often refrained from articulating conclusions that followed logically (for example, concerning *Semik* ('Green week'), Pentecost, Christmastime, or Cheesefare Week) (Ibid.: Iss. VI, VII). Sometimes, his conclusions failed to take into account local materials. Thus, upon describing many versions of celebrating the Day of St. John the Baptist, Tereshchenko made the following conclusion, "…the information collected on the Kupalo shows that its celebration was accompanied by lighting fires, jumping over fires, bathing, and collecting medicinal and protective herbs" (Ibid.: Iss. V, p. 95). The addition of the statement that in some places Kupalo was falling out of use, while in other places it was barely known (and this clearly referred to the Russian ritual complex, since Tereshchenko pointed out that "in the Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania" the Kupalo rituals were still in use in his time) (Ibid.: 96) is not very important, and makes it possible to say that Tereshchenko adhered to the evolutionary approach with its theory of survivals.

We can observe a similar picture in the study of E.V. Anichkov. Thus, listing similar elements of the Day of St. John the Baptist found among various European peoples, (lighting fires, hetaeric rituals, or customs associated with the relationship of godparents or sworn brotherhood), Anichkov pointed to different forms of completing the rituals: burial or drowning of a special doll (Marena, Kostroma, Kostrubonka) or a decorated tree (1903: 48). At the same time, Anichkov put the main emphasis on the common elements of the festivals, for example, while describing the rituals of the *Dozhynki* harvest festival, of Christmastime, etc. (Ibid.: 49–50, etc.). Highly appreciating the work of Anichkov, the well-known ethnologist V.K. Sokolova emphasized that he was mostly interested in the "common earliest elements whose remnants survived in various forms in the rituals of different peoples; he did not identify specific features of the Eastern Slavic rituals, their common and regional components" (1979: 8).

This trend continued in a number of studies of the Soviet period. Thus, in his monographic study on the Russian winter festivals, V.I. Chicherov aimed at detecting the presence of common structural elements in all festive and ritual actions. "Even a partial list of rituals performed on the above-mentioned days is characterized by a systematic repetition of the same actions", says Chicherov. "Games are repeated… which are similar to the Christmastime games: wearing masks, making bonfires, bathing, incantation against evil spirits, etc." (Chicherov, 1957: 20–21). Later, this aspect of the calendar rituals was deeply and thoroughly studied by V.Y. Propp (1963).

Chicherov pointed to the presence of both regional and local features in the Russian festivals. In some cases, such variability seems to be clearly secondary, as can be seen from the following examples he cited, "Variation between 'Kuzmodemyanki' and "Kuzminki' is manifold, but their essence is the same. The rituals of the Kuzminki are reminiscent of the wedding games" (Chicherov, 1957: 46); "The difference between the Pokrovki and Kuzminki, on the one hand, and Christmastime, on the other hand, lies not in the qualitative changes in actions, but in a greater variety of their performance on New Year's, in greater clarity of conducting them" (Ibid.: 64–65); "In their structure, the spring and summer fortunetelling coincide with the winter (especially with Christmastime) fortunetelling, and the only change is in the material that is used for prediction" (Ibid.: 85).

Variability became a significant addition in the descriptions of some festivals, particularly those belonging to the main winter cycle—Christmastime. Thus, speaking about the custom of baking *korovki* (lit. 'small cows') and *kozulki* (lit. 'small goats'), Chicherov observed their functional differences in the northern areas on the one hand, and in the central Russian and southern Russian regions on the other hand. Describing the "kutia" ritual meal, he pointed to the local features of that dish of grains in different regions of Russia. The *tolokno* oat flour also had specific regional features (Ibid.: 76–77, 81–82).

Chicherov wrote, that "parallels between the summer and winter fortunetelling reveal some typical traits:

a) preferential use of vegetation and the inclusion of fortunetelling into a ritual that is conducted independently of the spring and summer festivities; b) a variety of objects used by those who perform fortunetelling; incorporation of different kinds of fortunetelling into a special ritual complex in the winter festivities (Ibid.: 86). Describing the Christmastime and New Year's songs, Chicherov identified three types of songs: *koliada*, *ovsen*, and *vinogradye*. The first type is general Slavic; the second type is specific for Central Russia and the Volga region, while the third type distinguishes the Russian North. In the Southern Russian regions, people would sing various types of songs. Chicherov connected the area of the *ovsen* with the lands near Moscow, and the area of *vinogradye* with the territory of the Novgorod colonization. Describing the kinds of *koliada* singing, Chicherov identified a specific "Great Russian" ritual (the generalized type) that was different from other Slavic kinds (the differentiated type) (Ibid.: 116–122). Furthermore, outlining the circle of the zoomorphic imagery used by the guisers, Chicherov considered the horse (mare), the bull, as well as the chicken and goose (crane) to be the general Russian characters. At the same time, he considered the image of the goat, which had been previously viewed as common to the East Slavs, as a regional image (Western Russian and Southern Russian regions) (Ibid.: 196–198). Finally, he defended the specificity of the calendar rituals among the Russians compared to other Slavic peoples, including the Ukrainians and the Belarusians, which had not been observed in the scholarly works of the 1930s that viewed the Russian rituals as a distortion of Slavic texts (Ibid.: 232–234).

The study of Chicherov completed the initial very long phase of the first period of identifying the general and the specific in the Russian festive rituals. This phase is distinguished by an accumulation of materials and emphasis on the general as opposed to the specific. Nevertheless, many local elements were identified at that time, and the findings of that period still retain their relevance to this day.

After Chicherov, G.A. Nosova analyzed the variational features of Russian festive rituals using the materials of Cheesefare Week. She believed that this subject "is of great interest for solving some problems of ethnic genesis" (Nosova, 1969: 45). According to Nosova, "mapping the elements of the festival" makes it possible "to clearly identify the boundaries of variation in the rituals, and provides the opportunity for identifying their regional and local forms" (Ibid.: 45–46). In fact, the study of Nosova initiated the second phase of the first period in identifying the general and specific in Russian festive rituals and represented the first focused attempt to explore these aspects, which, however, was carried out using not a very rich array of materials. This study had the advantage of a wide use of the mapping method that made it possible to visually analyze the observed patterns compared to many similar studies.

Nosova identified two main complexes of Cheesefare Week rituals in the European part of Russia: Northern and Central Russian–Volga. The approximate boundary between them lay along the line "Pskov–Novgorod–Poshekhonye, then it passed through the northern districts of the Yaroslavl and Kostroma Governorates" (Ibid.: 48). The main area of the Central Russian–Volga complex comprised the central regions of European Russia and the Middle Volga region (the Governorates of Tver, Kostroma, Yaroslavl, Vladimir, Moscow, Kaluga, Ryazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Simbirsk, Samara, Saratov, and Penza). In its northwestern part, the geographic area of this complex included a large part of the Pskov Governorate and the southern parts of the Novgorod Governorate; in its northeastern part it included the Vyatka Governorate. A "mixed complex" began to appear to the north of Kursk–Voronezh. In this complex, "the leading role belonged to games of the military type ('gorodok', 'ikantsy'), fist fights, and various competitions in agility and courage", while in the Ukraine, the rituals with the "kolodka" ('wood block') were the main distinctive element of the Cheesefare Week games (Ibid.: 46, 50, 54).

According to Nosova, the parting ritual of the Cheesefare Week festivities, which constituted the core of the festival in the central regions, was missing from the northern complex. She believed that family and household rituals and, generally, rituals related to young people and newly married couples dominated in the northern complex as opposed to the Central Russian–Volga complex, which was dominated by agrarian themes. In its most concentrated form, the agrarian theme was manifested in the parting ritual of Cheesefare Week, which was carried out in different places in the form of undressing, destroying, burying, or burning a straw doll (Ibid.: 46, 48). Nosova suggested that the area of the parting ritual of Cheesefare Week could be compared with the area of the "ovsen songs", identified by Chicherov. In addition, Nosova pointed to the great similarity of Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian rituals, which involved the destruction of a straw man, to similar rituals of the West Slavs (Ibid.: 52, 54–55). The insufficient source base, which Nosova used for her research, did not enable her to highlight the correct key points in the identified Cheesefare Week complexes*. Nevertheless, the study of Nosova initiated a new phase in the understanding of the variability of Russian (and

*See the criticism of V.K. Sokolova (1979: 16–17).

Slavic) festive rituals, based not only on purposeful identification of general and specific traits, but also on new methodologies (the typological method and mapping method).

Nosova rightly believed that the "mapping of rituals around the entire annual cycle of the Russian agrarian calendar" would make it possible to outline the boundaries of the main complexes of the Pentecost–*Semik*, the Kupala rituals, as well as the rituals of the autumn and winter seasons. This could give good grounds for establishing "the initial areas where a certain ritual existed, its ancient ethnic nature" and make it "possible to trace the historical and cultural ties between the ethnic communities and to uncover the origin, meaning, and purpose of calendar festivals in a more profound way". Finally, this research goal would make it possible to conduct a comparative analysis of Eastern Slavic rituals with the Western Slavic and common Slavic rituals, and with the rituals of the European peoples (Ibid.: 56). These half a century old conclusions are important guidelines even today for further studies of festive rituals within any ethnic group.

In the introduction to his study of festivals, Propp (1963) expressed regret that Chicherov "had not studied the entire annual cycle of the peasants' calendar", but only the autumn-winter cycle. Propp believed that "the major spring festivals should be included into the scope of research" (2000: 15). Two decades later such work was done by Sokolova (1979). In addition to identifying the common Russian and regional features in the calendar rituals, she fulfilled the wish of Chicherov (Chicherov, 1957: 232–235) in identifying the features of Russian rituals against the background of the Eastern Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian) materials. Unlike her predecessor, Sokolova purposefully set that as a research goal. "Comparative juxtaposition of rituals among the Russians, the Ukrainians, and the Belarusians makes it possible to identify both their common elements, which may possibly go back as early as the common Slavic ethnic community, and various ethnic, regional, and local forms that rituals acquired in the course of the historical development of the Slavic peoples" (Sokolova, 1979: 7). Speaking about the problems of a comparative study, Sokolova pointed out the difficulties associated with the irregularity of materials deriving from different peoples and regions, and the confinement of the same elements of rituals to different festivals among the Russians and the Ukrainians, caused by different climatic conditions and specific features of historical development. Common elements, which "passed from one ritual cycle to another", attracted the particular interest of Sokolova. Unlike Propp, Sokolova pointed out that common elements occupied an unequal place in various ritual complexes, and some of them were multifunctional, that is, they performed different functions in different festivals, which needed to be taken into consideration with each ritual (Ibid.: 7–9).

Describing the Cheesefare Week festivities, Sokolova emphasized their specific development among the Russians in comparison with the Ukrainians and Belarusians, and identified the following essential elements of the Russian Cheesefare Week rituals: the parting ritual, customs associated with newly married couples, sliding down ice slides and riding on horseback, the festive meal (crepes), and commemoration of deceased parents. In addition to these rituals, Sokolova noted meeting Cheesefare Week as a local feature in the western and some southern Russian governorates (Ibid.: 11, 13, 16).

Sokolova identified two main types of parting rituals during Cheesefare Week: making bonfires and the farewell-burial of a ritual straw man. The first type was most common in the 19th–early 20th century, and was typically performed in the northern, central, and Volga regions. The farewell-burial ritual "consistently persevered" in the southern Russian regions and sometimes in the central (the Vladimir, the Moscow Governorates), western (the Pskov Governorate) regions, and Siberia. In some cases, a straw man was burned, which, according to Sokolova, was a survival of a wider tradition. As a local version, she mentioned the custom of making "family" dolls, which represented a kind of "family replication" of the Cheesefare Week festivities, in the Moscow, Kaluga, and Vladimir Governorates (Ibid.: 16, 25, 36). Sokolova agreed with the hypothesis of V.F. Miller, according to which the bonfires and the farewell-burial of Cheesefare Week were two distinct rituals. Sokolova considered the farewell-burial of the ritual straw man to be a chronologically earlier, "original" form among the Slavs and other European peoples. However, in her view, making bonfires was also an ancient tradition, which had great importance particularly for the South Slavs (Ibid.: 35–36).

Sokolova noted some less significant differences in the customs associated with newly married couples. Sleigh rides of young couples are known as a universal custom, while sliding down ice slides became widespread only in the North and in the central part of Russia. In the southern regions harrows were often used along with sleighs. Sokolova considered bride shows, wallowing in the snow, and kissing young married women by young men to be local customs (Ibid.: 38–41). The common Cheesefare Week sliding down ice slides and horse riding were even less variable. Among festive food, Sokolova primarily noted Russian crepes and Ukrainian dumplings, as well as local Cheesefare Week dishes in Siberia and in certain parts of European

Russia (*khvorost*—'angel wings', *pirozhki*—'stuffed bread pockets', etc.) (Ibid.: 43–47). Sokolova believed that guisers' plays during Cheesefare Week were not an original, but a local and fairly recent phenomenon, which became more widespread in the Southern Russian regions and partly in the Volga region (Nizhny Novgorod and the Vladimir region). Sokolova also considered the tradition of "storming a snow fort", widespread in Siberia and in some towns of European Russia, to be a local ritual; Sokolova connected its origins with the Cossack subculture (Ibid.: 49–52).

According to Sokolova, Ukrainian and Belarusian Cheesefare Week rituals in general were a transitional link between the Russian and the Western Slavic traditions. At the same time, the Russian Cheesefare Week festivities showed some features that were similar to the rituals of the South Slavs (making fires) (Ibid.: 67).

In the festival of greeting the spring (baking "larks", "hailing" the spring), Sokolova finds the elements of ritualism that obtained different forms and meanings in different regions. In the late 19th century, the main form of the ritual among the Russians was baking rolls in the form of birds ("larks") on the Day of the Forty Martyrs and baking "sandpipers" in the southern governorates, which were different in different places. At the bordering areas with the Ukraine and Belarus, singing *vesnyanka* spring folk songs was added to the festivities, which distinguished the Russian tradition from the customs of the western neighbors who performed these rituals separately. Depending on the region, the "hailing" of spring was done at different times. In some places (mainly in the western and southern regions), "larks" became the main object of ritual actions and later of various games. A less common form of greeting the spring was baking the *soroki*—forty balls of dough (Ibid.: 68–77, 82).

Sokolova thus concluded, "The development of ritual among the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians went different ways. In most of the territory inhabited by the Russians, the arrival of spring started to be celebrated only with baking of 'larks' of dough, which symbolized the coming of the spring; the *vesnyanka* songs were also addressed to them… The Ukrainians and Belarusians combined the greeting of the spring with later spring games; they would start to 'hail' the spring at different times" (Ibid.: 82).

Holy Thursday was distinguished by somewhat lesser variability compared to Cheesefare Week and other major dates of the festive calendar. In this respect Sokolova noted significant similarity of the rituals among all Eastern Slavic peoples. The most common custom of the festival was cleansing with water, which was performed in various ways (washing, dousing with water, or bathing) in different regions. In addition to bathing, this tradition took the form of cleaning the house for Easter. The preparation of Holy Thursday salt was a universal ritual, which differed in terms of local methods and details. The custom of cooking certain specific dishes and coloring eggs was closely associated with Easter (Ibid.: 101–110).

According Sokolova, the tradition of fumigation, widespread in the northeastern regions of European Russia (the Novgorod, Vologda, and Vyatka Governorates) and parts of Siberia was a more confined and later tradition compared to cleansing with water. Sokolova identified a similar geographic area for the ritual of delineating the magic circle. She argued that various customs associated with magical protection of domestic animals and preparation for agricultural works had a local nature, but some of them could have been earlier practiced in a wider area (Ibid.: 103–108).

Sokolova suggested that the celebration of Easter showed similar trends. Yet, as opposed to Holy Thursday, there were considerably more differences between the Eastern Slavic peoples. As far as the ritual meals were concerned, Sokolova pointed out that the Ukrainians and Belarusians used the word "paska" for Easter bread, while the Russians called such bread "kulich", while "pascha" was made of farmer's cheese. Ukrainian and Belarusian Easter dishes included suckling pigs, while the Russians considered it a New Year's dish. There were also differences in Easter games. Rolling eggs was considered to be the most important game among the Russians and partly the Belarusians, but it was less common among the Ukrainians (Ibid.: 110–113). Another major difference was the lack of a common tradition of dousing with water among the Russians at Easter, whereas it was common among the Ukrainians. The customs of circle dancing and swinging on swings at Easter was widespread among the Russians. Swinging on swings was also known among the South Slavs. Easter games of young people near church were common among the Ukrainians. Commemoration of the deceased was performed on different days: on Radunitsa among the Russians (Tuesday after St. Thomas' Sunday), on Thursday of Easter Week or on Radunitsa among the Belarusians, and on Thursday of the Easter Week and later on the Monday of St. Thomas' Week among the Ukrainians (Ibid.: 114–122).

Some Russian Easter customs were local. This was the case with making bonfires near the church, which was widespread among the Belarusians and South Slavs. The so-called *vyuniny* (*vyunets*, *vyunishnik*) or "hailing the young couple" on the Saturday of Easter Week or on the Sunday of St. Thomas' Week were a regional tradition (in the Kostroma, Yaroslavl, Nizhny Novgorod, and Vladimir Governorates) among the Russians (Ibid.: 116, 134–141).

Sokolova pointed out that "Eggs, swinging on swings, circle dancing, and the ancestors' cult can be considered the main, typical, and to some extent specific elements of the earliest spring ritualism, transferred to Easter. They were shared by the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians; the local differences were more often manifested in details without affecting the essence. However, in addition the Belarusians had a special dragging ritual, which gave ethnic specificity to Belarusian Easter ritualism" (Ibid.: 123–124).

Sokolova argued that the basic elements of the cattle breeding complex (the ritual of feeding the cattle, ritual visitation of the animals, beating with willow branches, shepherds' walking around the herd, gift giving to the shepherds, etc.) in the rituals associated with St. George's Day, "are the same not only among all Eastern Slavic peoples, but also among the West Slavs, as well as among many non-Slavic European peoples". However, these rituals survived among the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, "not to the same extent, and evolved in different ways, including some other rituals, different in origin" (Ibid.: 180). Sokolova drew attention to the differences in St. George's agrarian magic: it appeared among the Russians in a minimal form, but played an important role among the Ukrainians and Belarusians. These rituals included walking around the fields, preparing a ritual meal, and rolling on the ground. Among the Russians, these rituals could have been mostly found in southern governorates, and were mostly performed on the Ascension Day. Unlike the Russians, the Ukrainians and Belarusians attached great importance to dew and water on St. George's Day. Serious differences can also be observed in the songs. The Belarusians had the greatest number of St. George's songs; the Ukrainians had less songs, while among the Russians, St. George's songs could only have been found in the border areas—in the Bryansk and Smolensk regions (Ibid.: 171–177).

With regard to the *Semik*-Pentecost rituals, Sokolova observed many differences both between the Eastern Slavic peoples and within the Russian ethnic group. The richest set of rituals was found among the Russians. This was caused by the fact that the rituals of the following Rusalka Week and some of the Kupala rituals fell on the *Semik*-Pentecost. The main elements of the *Semik*-Pentecost among the Russians included the decorating of houses, yards, and streets with birch branches and young birch trees; weaving birch branches and wreaths; *kumlenie* initiation rituals under birch trees; decorating a small birch tree and walking around with it and submerging it in the water; throwing wreaths into the water, and a common ritual meal of the girls (Ibid.: 206, 223). However, rituals in such a complete form were not found among all Russians, but only to the south of the line running along the Smolensk, Tver, Yaroslavl, Kostroma, and Nizhny Novgorod Governorates, the southern part of the Perm Governorate, and the Kazan Governorate, as well as Siberia. People would not walk around with a small decorated birch tree in the western areas (the Smolensk and Bryansk regions), and in the Tula, the Kaluga, the Kursk, and the Orel Governorates *kumlenie* initiation rituals of girls were supplemented with the "baptism of a cuckoo bird". In the southern areas, ritual farewell to *rusalkas* was timed to the day before St. Peter's Lent" (Ibid.: 207, 223).

In conclusion, Sokolova identified three complexes of the *Semik*-Pentecost ritualism among the Russians: the main "Central Russian–Volga–Siberian" complex, the Southern Russian complex (as a specific version of the main complex), and the Northern complex (Ibid.: 223). The most minimal ritualism was in the north of Russia: people there would only decorate their houses with young birch trees and visit the cemeteries. As far as the Belarusians and Ukrainians are concerned, the former had some elements similar to Russian ritualism (weaving birch branches and *kumlenie* initiation rituals), while the latter had some customs associated with vegetation and *rusalkas* (Ibid.: 207, 223).

According to the study of Sokolova, great variability distinguished the Day of St. John the Baptist (or Ivan Kupala)—one of the most important annual festivals in Europe. In spite of the common basis of the festival among the East Slavs, its elements among the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians in the 19th century survived unevenly: the most archaic elements survived among the Belarusians and to a large extent among the Ukrainians. A bonfire was the focal point of activities among the Belarusians on the day of Ivan Kupala, and in addition to the bonfire the Ukrainians used a tree, which can be connected with the Russian *Semik*-Pentecost ritualism (Ibid.: 228–230, 249).

The rituals associated with the Day of St. John the Baptist among the Russians were minimal, and were reduced to picking herbs, bathing, and searching for flowering fern. John's fires are known mostly from the areas bordering with Belarus and the Ukraine. Dousing with water and ritual meals made of cooked grains among the girls were of local nature. In the north of Russia, people would certainly go to the *banya* for a steam bath, weave various flowers and herbs into the *banya* birch whisks, and then tell fortunes using them (Ibid.: 242–246).

The last festival studied by Sokolova, was St. Peter's Day, which was celebrated on a large scale by the Belarusians and Ukrainians, whose Peter's ritualism was close to the rituals of Ivan Kupala and Pentecost among the Russians (*kumlenie*). Among the Russians, special rituals of this festival were performed only in the southern governorates, such as customs of "guarding the

sun", protection from the evil spirits (beating on oven dampers, frying pans, etc.), ritual theft in gardens, and making blockades on the roads with stolen harrows, carts, logs, etc. (Ibid.: 252–254).

Speaking about the tendencies in the development of the spring-summer calendar rituals among the Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians, Sokolova came to the conclusion that there was a common early basis behind the all traditions, but in the course of history, "rituals diverged sometimes very substantially, were transformed and were understood in different ways, were supplemented by a variety of new elements, which were often not ritualistic in their origin". As a result, different "preservation degree of rituals and different combinations of their elements created different ethnic and local versions" (Ibid.: 261, 267). Sokolova noted that "ethnic and regional specificity" was manifested to the greatest extent in the most important annual festivals. In addition to the New Year's ritual cycle, similar among all Eastern Slavic peoples, the Cheesefare Week festivities and the *Semik*-Pentecost stand out among the Russians, and Ivan Kupala among the Ukrainians and Belarusians (Ibid.: 261).

Thus, the monograph of Sokolova concluded the first period of research into variability of Russian (and Eastern Slavic) calendar ritualism as a part of the generalized studies covering the territory of Russian, Slavic, and other European peoples. In addition, studies identifying common Russian and local elements in individual festivals began to appear in the second half of that period. In the future, such projects will continue and will take the form of studies of a generalized nature focused on a single festival rather than on the group of festivals, as had been formerly the case.

An important outcome of the first period of studying the common and specific traits of Russian (and Eastern Slavic) calendar rituals was identification of the main elements of the festivals, their versions (types), and the distribution of these versions over the general Russian geographical space. At the same time, such a macro-research approach obviously could have not succeeded in defining clear boundaries of regional and local versions of festive traditions even at the synchronic, not to mention the diachronic level. The latter is possible only in a smaller-scale territorial scope of research. This trend, which can be defined as areal or regional, has been developing since the 1980–1990s, and comprises the studies of general and specific traits in Russian festive rituals (Fursova, 1998, 2002, 2003; Zolotova, 2000, 2002; Narodnaya traditsionnaya kultura…, 2002; Chernykh, 2006, 2007), which will ultimately provide a more detailed picture of the variability of Russian (and Eastern Slavic) calendar rituals not only of the 19th–first third of the 20th century, but also of the earlier periods.

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