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**WHY IS THE TERM FOLK RELIGION
UNRECOGNIZED IN RUSSIA?**

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Abstract: Both folk and world religions always focus on Homo religiosus. As long as a person takes part in ritual ceremonies, such a person is certainly religious. Thus, the rite precedes the concept of “belief”. However, the concept of belief came forward in religious acts during the development of the Reformation. For example, in Japan, the folk religion was denoted by the term *minkan shinkō* “folk beliefs”. Therefore we can state that, in ancient times, folk religion brought people and communities together much better than the world religions separated from each other. Moreover, ancient religions played a consolidating role to a larger extent than ethnic languages. The reason is the syncretism of folk religion. The need for this publication is dictated by irreparable problems arising in Russian Ethnography. The author believes that no further progress in ethnology (socio-cultural anthropology) is possible unless the problem mentioned in the headline is removed from the agenda. Without bringing light to the problem or finding an appropriate solution, we will come to a standstill or pretend that the problem does not exist at all. The author of these lines does not incline to obtrude his own opinion. The goal of the publication is to provide a critical analysis of existing and a priori established opinions. Let us observe the bunch of views presented in Western sources (in which the problem seems to be much less severe, at least – much less vague), and then compare with the ones existing in Russia.

Key words: folk religion, anthropology, religion, ethnology, folklore, paganism.

“Ethnology possesses an uncomfortable property of being equally attentive to values of large and small peoples, superpowers and communities, world and tribal religions. Its focus to what is happening is non-standard, and its view of reality is specific. For in this ethnological reality the so-called world religions appear to be spread only in some parts of the world and are very young. The age of the early human cultures is 1.5—2.5 million years, whereas the world religions are only 1.5—2.5 thousand year old. Which means, consequently, that 99% of its history the world population was pagan, and only for a short time they (1%) enriched their lives with the truths of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. Thus, the title of a world religion can only refer to paganism, which has been widespread in different variations all over the planet from the Paleolithic to the present day” (Golovnev 2004, 33).

1. *Homo religiosus*: his beliefs and practice

V. A. Tishkov considers religion to be the key component of spiritual culture (Tishkov 1998, 12). He also notes that the division into *primitive* and *world* religions seems to be relative, because any religion includes similar phenomena (myth, ritual, symbol etc.). This is also true for the concept of *cult* that exists within early forms of religions as well as in world ones. What’s more, the opposition of “goodness – evil” in old and new religions is also universal. Studying religious concepts of the Altaic peoples, Uno Harva focused his attention on plots connected with the creation of the world, the earth and the people, with celestial deities, stars, elements of nature, belief in the existence of a soul, death and rites related with it, shamans, and festivals of sacrifice, which he considered the main (Harva 1939). Nevertheless, it is the *Homo religiosus* with his beliefs, cognition, and concepts that is in the center of the entire religious complex. Which gives grounds for discussion on religious plots within the framework of socio-cultural anthropology.

It is quite instructive to scrutinize the content of religion. Robertson Smith, who can be justly called the father of the theory of religion, believed that religion consists of two important blocks— rites and beliefs, — and that “religious institutions are older than religious theories” (Smith 1907, 20). Nobody ever asks a participant of a religious ceremony about their personal beliefs. The very participation is enough to consider such him or her to be a religious person. This view is shared by most contemporary religious studies scholars. S. A. Tokarev distinguished forms of religion that he understood as a “specific set of interrelated beliefs and rituals” (Tokarev 1990, 384). V. R. Kabo considered religion to be a “combination of two systems, the

system of rituals and the one of beliefs.” Within such system, “ritual is the first and the leading form of religious behavior” (Kabo 1989, 261). This concept is popular with western anthropologists who prefer saying *religious beliefs and practice* instead of *popular religion* (Cohen 1995, 289).

Some scholars think that beliefs are not the cause, but the consequence of the rite. “It is the action and the need of action that controls and determines a belief, not vice versa,” so to determine the type of religion “we are to focus mostly on rites, not on beliefs” (Radcliffe-Brown 2001, 182). Admitting the formula “religion = rite + beliefs” is correct, V. A. Tishkov also agrees that “rite precedes the shaping of religious doctrines” (Tishkov 2003, 88).

Ritual appears to be the most used and universal term in relation to field of science we are focusing on. Sportsmen, traders, and students all have their own specific rituals. Ethnologists and specialists in religious studies would attempt to define this term. J. Snoek tried to bring light to the meaning with the help of a traditional western marriage example. He explains that it is generally a ceremonial consisting of certain acts: secular of religious marriage ceremony, reception, and wedding banquet. A single rite, which is performed during civil marriage, is a marker of the whole marriage. Rites include a transition from a bachelor to a husband, becoming a mother-in-law, responsibilities of registrar and witnesses, and a lot more (Snoek 1987, 59) (See Table 1). This, without any doubt, shows that rite studies belong primarily to the system of religious studies.

English	Meaning
rite	smallest unit
ceremony	group of rites
ceremonial	group of ceremonies
Rite	total cult
ritual	“role”, “part”

Table 1. *Ritual and related lexemes (by Jan Snoek)*

2. About the formula $R = r + b$ (*religion (R) = ritual (r) + beliefs (b)*)

Traditional beliefs are a person’s belief in supernatural, as well as established concepts of time and space. The closest in meaning to the

beliefs notion is *cognition, concepts, and religion*. “In broad scope, beliefs seem to be a person’s reaction to sacred” (Streng 1994, 770).

However, there exist other definitions. J. Middleton distinguishes three elements of religion: rite, myth, and magic (Middleton 1973, 500-508). It is evident, though, that the term *myth* may be substituted for a more comprehensive concept of *belief*, and magic is inherent to both *ritual* and *beliefs*. Thus, considering myth and magic independent elements within any form of religion is definitely artificial. Since beliefs mean believing in gods, deities, and spirits, *religion* and *belief/beliefs* cannot be equal, or we would just totally ignore the ritual that is one of the main elements of any kind of religion.

Advantageous position of the ritual can be traced while studying specific material. In Mesopotamia “religion was mostly characterized by its ritual and magic practices” through Sumerian and later periods (Afanasieva 1983, 445). In this case, ritual is not only an important element of religion of the masses; it is on a par with religion, carrying out its ideological function. E. V. Antonova, a specialist in rites and beliefs of primitive agriculturalists, was even more precise. She claimed that “sustainable part is not a religious doctrine, which doesn’t exist, but ritual practice” (Antonova 1990, 7). Yet, this approach is not a novelty at all. The Chinese writers did not write about religion. “They wrote about *li*, and the word is variously translated as ceremonial, customary morality, rites, rules of good manners, propriety. But the character by which this word is written consists of two parts, of which one refers to spirits, sacrifice and prayer, and the other originally meant a vessel used in performing sacrifices. We may therefore appropriately translate *li* as ‘ritual’” (Radcliff-Brown 2001, 185). Therefore, in ancient times ritual embraced all components now understood as religion.

I would like to notice that the author of those lines still favors the formula *religion* (R) = *ritual* (r) + *beliefs* (b). All other aspects, such as sacrifice, material object, flora, fauna, leaders, word, music, numbers, human, soul, body, esotericism, kinship, chromatism, water etc. appear to be derivative (Salmin 2016).

During the XVIth and XVIIth centuries (especially after the Reformation) during the struggle against the Roman Church, the term *religion* was substituted for the *belief system*. Eventually, religious studies scholars started to make hypotheses about the formation of beliefs, not rituals, putting the cart before the horse. Such a transformation took place, for example, in Japan. After the new collocation *minkan shinkō* (folk beliefs) was introduced in the 1890s, Japanese term for folk religion changed. In the decade after the late 1970s, the term was completely replaced decade by *minzoku shūkyō*, which literal meaning is conveyed by the closer English term *folk religion*. This change paved the way for broad comparative and cross-cultural studies (Kawahashi 2005, 453). Nevertheless, the term *religion*

is substituted for the term *belief* even today, for instance, by the religious studies scholars who work with Chuvash material. Take only one example. Dula Mesaros, a Hungarian researcher, called his collection of materials “A csuvas ösvallás emlékei” (Mészáros 1909). In Russian its title transformed into “Monuments of the old Chuvash faith” (Mesarosh 2000), although *ösvallás* means pre-religion, so the title should have been translated as the “Monuments of the Chuvash unreligion”, which is far not the same.

Since religion is an irrational phenomenon, it cannot have logic in a truly scientific sense. However, it is this quality of religion that “motivates behavior and helps to avoid the social chaos that would occur if the behavior of all members of the group was utterly rational” (Goode 1964, 15).

The deeper we sink in the history of humankind, the more similarities we find in the religions of different peoples. The closer to us, the more distinct is the difference between the religions confessed by various ethnic groups inhabiting the globe. Deepening inconsistency, as well as the emergence of powerful religious and ideological structures intensively contradicting one another leads to misunderstanding, discomfort, and confrontation on religious grounds. Besides, low-numbered ethno-confessional communities are oppressed, low-numbered peoples are assimilated by more numerous ones, all this with power and force. At the same time, cultures and peoples are vanishing, causing irreparable damage to the development of humanity. The most civilized societies are at the same time the wisest; their lifestyle skillfully combines the old and the new. This can be said about the Japanese and South Koreans, as well as Scandinavians.

Thus, religion seems to be an extremely complex system. It can unite and divide peoples. Taking roots in the deepest past, it is an ever-renewing mechanism that allows and promotes the maintenance of ethnic identity.

The original religion of the people is the life-affirming force, the center around which the key life challenges are set. The axiom “there is no people without their religion” has recently become even more convincing. Let us recall another thesis — “the people is dead without their language.” It is language and religion that shapes peoples, religion being a prevailing factor. But for never worshipping the common gods, a huge number of related peoples, for example, in North America, could merge into a single ethnic group, though dialects they spoke were pretty close. The Greeks spoke different dialects, however, an Aeolian, a Dorian, and an Ionian would always understand they represented the same people, whatever poleis they belonged to, whatever tyrant governed them. The force that united them was their original religion, vague memories of shared objects of worshipping, their faith and their gods. For the Hellenes, for example, they were Zeus and Jupiter. The

history of the Jews can also prove the opinion that when it comes to formation of the nation the role of religion is greater than the one of language. Phoenicians, Moabites and other neighboring Semitic tribes spoke relatively similar languages that differed even less than the dialects of Greece. However, it is the cult of Yahweh that made Jews a nation in the proper sense of the word, having singled them out from the others (Müller 1887, 61-62). Thus, although religion and language are entangled, the language is the garment the religion puts on, i.e. language is a means of expressing religious self-consciousness. Studies have shown that the traditional lifestyle of the Adygs shared more common features than their language (Bgazhnokov 1978, 22). The same will be true for the Chuvash. Upper and Lower dialects of colloquial Chuvash are much more diverge than the variations of traditional rites and beliefs. If people do not use their mother tongue but still share the same faith and worship the same gods, it is not beyond self-preservation, however the maintenance of language proficiency without exercising their people's religion will inevitably lead to the complete disappearance of their ethnic identity.

3. Folk religion in religious studies

The more consistent we are in what we mean by a particular term, the better we can understand. To avoid discrepancies, it is necessary to design a well-developed set of precise technical terms specialists can use. This is true for religious studies scholars as well (Snoek 1987, 187). At the same time, it is crucial to remember that "to be obsessed with definitions means to show the weakness of methodology" (Tishkov 2003, 231).

First, let us define our approach to the term *paganism*. Of all definitions, this one appears to be the most acceptable: "paganism should be understood as the complex of religious beliefs, which were firstly shaped along with the development of the producing economy, i.e., agriculture and farming on the territory of one of its primary locations, namely, in Ancient Western Asia; later, these beliefs were closely connected with ethno-cultural history of Indo-European, Iberian-Caucasian, Afro-Asiatic, and, apparently, of Finno-Ugric peoples" (Arutyunov 1982, 154-155). Thus, the definition of paganism as "religious antithesis of Christianity that denies monotheism", given by religious studies specialists seem to be correct (Zabyako 2005, 113).

The term *paganism* is known to be semantically related to the Latin word *pagan*, which derivatives are *pāgānicus* "rustic", *pāgānus* "rustic, peasant, simple", *pāgānālia* "festival of sowing." Early Christians used it to describe the old, ingenuous lifestyle of peasants who kept on worshipping Roman gods Magliocco 2004, 307). Later, the terms *paganism* and *pagan* were acquired by missionaries and got a number

of derogatory synonyms *pogan'* (scambag), *svinia* (swine), *nechistyj* (literary — unclean) that sound rather offensive. Followers of official religions think of the peoples who still take part in their old rituals as *pagans* and *pogan'*. Let us recall one of the historical chronicles that tells the story of Russian troops going on a campaign to the Middle Volga. There the people of other faith are referred to exclusively as *pogan'*. The following passage describes the events of 1508 near Kazan: "At that time the wicked czar left the stronghold and settled in the fields with all his princes, noblemen, pagan townfolk and those people who came from afar. They set up their tents and lived there as they had their pagan festival. To them came the Cheremis, the Tatar, and the Chuvash people. For long days, they stayed there, drank, enjoyed themselves and made trade. Russian troops attacked the pagans, killed a great many men and captured all who were left alive" (Lyzlov 1787, 96).

Offering a broader scope, let us mention that Muslims call the *pagans* of the Hindu Kush *kaffirs*, i.e. infidel. We will also add some more definitions taken from the books published before the Revolution of 1917. There we can find *giaour* (another word for *kaffir*) and *tuzemec*, i.e. *native* in Russian. Thus, for a follower of world religions a *pagan* seems to represent a narrower concept than a *non-believer*. Now in colloquial speech and in the media sectarian movements akin to *The Great White Brotherhood* can also be referred to as *pagan*.

Therefore, G. V. F. Hegel was right when he wrote that such words as *pagan* and *idolater* "are outdated and considered unacceptable because of the contempt they express" (Hegel 1977, 372). S. A. Tokarev severely criticized the usage of the word *paganism*. He wrote, "Nothing can be said about the habit to designate certain concepts as *pagan religions*, *idolatry* etc. They belong to the lexicon of missionaries, not scientists" (Tokarev 1990, 24). B. A. Rybakov, who called his monographs "Paganism of ancient Slavs" and "Paganism of ancient Russia", was precise in admitting this vague and unclear word lacking any scientific meaning (Rybakov 1994, 3). Today, the term *pagan* is not popular not only with orientalists, but also with a majority of the researchers of the West. David Lewis, who studies the religions of the peoples of Russia, also considers the term *paganism* (as well as the term *primordial religion*) provisional and operational (Lewis 2001, 39).

Traditional religion and *folk religion* are also used as synonyms for *paganism*. Based her conclusion on her Russian material studies, it is T. A. Bernshtam who equated *traditional* with *folk*, though she herself preferred the term folk religion (Bernshtam 1992, 7, 117-184). N. I. Ashmarin, who focused on Chuvash material, would also use the term *folk* within the mentioned. He described *achana chýke kýrtni* as a rite of passage that "gave a child initial exposure to the circle of folk religious ceremonies" (Ashmarin 1929, 166). However, there are still some nuances left. I remember that in 1992, just before I started the

defense of my doctoral dissertation “Folk religious and ritual system of the Chuvash”, the chairman of the expert dissertation committee M. Gromyko reproached me for using the term *folk* in relation to the traditional rites. “Aren’t those who attend church services the folk too?” he asked. No doubt, the remark is reasonable and should be taken into account. Italian journal “Studi di Sociologia” once devoted an entire volume to a discussion of the place religion takes in society. The discussion was both relevant and instructive (Nesti 1988, 396-400; Prandi 401-406). It was stated that modern religion seemed to have lost many characteristics it used to have in the past, particularly when it comes to the meaning of the folk religion concept. Thus, the historical approach to the study, capable to highlight evolutionary convergence and divergence of different contexts, becomes inevitable. At least, a researcher has to equate the terms *folk* and *peasant*.

The term *religion* is often used with the adjective *traditional*, which implies not genetic, but social memory. It would not be an exaggeration to notice that the life expectancy of a people is equal to that of its religious culture. If traditions vanish, religion disappears; if religion is neglected, a certain people passes into oblivion. “A people needs traditions as a tree needs roots; without them they are not a people, but an amorphous crowd gathered for a moment,” Jerzy Szacki said (Szacki 1971, 34). It is through traditions that “accumulation, collection, and — what is crucial — stereotypization of experience and further transmission of stereotypes” is carried out (Chistov 1987, 108); simultaneously, traditions of a society are reproduced (Chistov 1982, 27). At the same time, “we must finally drop the idea that “tradition” is necessarily something conservative, rigid, something to be overcome” (Chistov 1986, 110). Tradition helps a people survive. Thus, it is necessary that as many folks share it as it is possible. According to Y. Semenov, tradition and ritual play a huge role in ancient religions, which, however, lacked a unified doctrine. Therefore, they should therefore be called traditional ritual religions (Semenov 1985, 227).

Terms *pre-Christian* and *old* were sometimes used to describe the denotative meaning of the discussed matter. For instance, L. P. Karsavin favored a collocation *everyday religiosity*. However, all these terms are equally unsuitable just because they make Christianity a starting point. For this reason, Immanuel Kant distinguished between natural and Christian religions (Kant 1964, 199, 212, 270).

In Anglophone science, folk religion is described with such epithets as folk, ordinary, original, natural, old-timer, traditional, pagan, popular, ethnic, peasant, primordial, pre-Christian, non-Christian, native, aboriginal, primary. William Christian insists on confining to the terms folk religion and peasant religion (Christian 1995, 371-373). Researchers of the ancient religious traditions of Japan (Kitagawa 1968; Hori 1968) use the terms folk religion and folk shinto. Discussing its

similarity with the archaic and primitive religions of the peoples of the world, researchers of the primordial Japanese religion, notice that it differs from Buddhism or Confucianism and is difficult to determine. Modern Japan still tends to develop its ancient religious traditions. Andras Róna-Tash distinguishes “Chuvash popular religion” (Róna-Tas 1995, 497).

In Russian scientific literature, there still exists a bunch of terms, the conceptual range of which is too wide and too vague. *Everyday religion, archaic religion, primordial religion, folk religion, own religion of the people, ethnic religion* can be used as synonyms; words *native, natural, original, national, traditional, rural, pre-industrial, ancient, old* are also allowed. They all have both positive and missing nuances. All of them form synonymic and semantic sets.

Nevertheless, I believe that the most acceptable term is folk religion, which is as accurate as other currently existing ones. Its advantage is that it is clearly perceived by scholars all around the world. Everyone can understand such terms as *folk-belief, folk-custom, folk-etymology, folk dance, folk music, folk culture*. Words with the stem *folk* has already come in the language and are not generally confusing, for instance, tradition-based *folk (or pop)* music that has a long history. However, some researchers find it necessary to clarify the terminology and sometimes write *traditional folk religion* (Newall 1995, 37).

Don Yoder (Yoder1974, 2-15) devoted a special article to the history and approaches to defining the term *folk religion*. He highlights two aspects the *folk religion* concept. The first represents the idea the Germans called the *religiöse Volkskunde*, which can be translated as *the religious dimension of folk-culture* or *the folk-cultural dimension of religion*. The second implies the anthropological study of syncretism of two forms of religion at different stages of civilization development.

The term *religiöse Volkskunde* was invented in 1901 by Lutheran pastor Paul Drews. He was engaged in research, as he himself put it, of “the religious life of the people” in all of its aspects. Naturally, religion as a system is presented at both levels of the culture hierarchy: official and popular. As Don Yoder writes, since it is impossible to state definitively where and when the term *folk religion* was first used in English, it can be assumed that it was modeled from the German *Volksreligion*. One of the earliest attested use of the English term *folk religion* was in the study “Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion” written by Joshua Trachtenberg (1939). Then came academic courses in folk religion taught at various universities around the world— by John Messenger at the Indiana University or Don Yoder at the Pennsylvania State University. There is no doubt that among other issues *folk religion studies* focus on strained relations between high (or official) religion and the *folk religion*. It is because the academics who research official religions constantly try to narrow

down the content of *the folk religion* to the concept of superstition, whereas the concept of *religion* is used in relation to the institutional religion.

However, it is impossible to form such compounds as *folk-rite* (фольк-обряд) and *folk-beliefs* (фольк-верования), because these English and Russian stems simply cannot be combined.

The term *folklore* and its derivatives are much older. Of course, we do not mean religion as a folk genre; we are talking about the terminological designation of ethnic religions in contrast to the world one. For the same reason, Russian terms *folklore religion* and *religious folklore* cannot be thought of as equivalents to the English term *folk religion*. They are synonymous to the term *folk religion* in particular sense, however gave narrower meaning. *Folklore religion* designates a folk part of the religion, whereas *religious folklore* — religious part of the folklore. Meanwhile, the Finnish school of comparative religion studies traditionally adheres to the methodology within which the concept of religion is equated with the concept of folklore (Anttonen <http://>). That also makes sense. In the *Oxford dictionary of world religions*, edited by John Bawker, folk religion is defined as the appropriation of religious beliefs and practices at a popular level, broadly expressing deep religiosity and existing naturally in most people (Bowker 1997, 350).

No doubt, the derived term *folk religion* may first seem unusual and even grating on the listener's ear. However, one can hardly count the number of Russian scientific terms derived from English. V. A. Tishkov, for instance, actively uses English (Latin — to be precise) word *primordial* in the meaning of "original, initial." I am sure that soon Russian ethnologists/anthropologists and specialists in religious studies will be familiar with the term *folk religion* for reasons beyond the author's of these lines wish and control.

Writing about the syncretism of folk religion, researchers are not mistaken. Indeed, in everyday life folk religions incorporate elements of many religions. In other words, orthodox religions (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) are entangled with folk religion. Worshipping their God, Christians, for instance, still believe that certain relics have the right to exist. Muslims keep on saying several times a day, "There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet," simply to protect themselves against the evil eye and repel the genies. A Buddhist believes that to attain Nirvana human desire must be subdued, yet he is also afraid of numerous spirits he seeks to manage. A Hindu acquires the highly spiritual religious concepts of fate and reincarnation, but still believes that *rakshasas* and ancestors inevitably affect the life, therefore one needs to manipulate and control. What is more, folk religions, positively, produce other popular beliefs. Many elements of folk religion are also present in social life, industry,

and trade.

It was necessary to pay so much attention to the terminology as in Russian there is still no term equivalent to the English collocation *folk religion*. Despite the fact that the term *folk religion* is widely used in Anglophone researches, the level of these scientific works, both in the West and in the East, should be assessed as elementary. For example, Indian researcher H. S. Bhatti testifies that theologians, philosophers, and historians whose primary concern is the study of Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim religious traditions, have completely overlooked the area of folk religion. Those who are engaged in the study of folk materials (for instance, in Punjab) confine themselves to highlighting the aesthetic value and diversity of folk art and folklore, whereas the universal feature of folk religion in India is the belief in deities and ancestors (Bhatti 2000, 14-15).

Another term that is directly connected with our subject is *l'ethnologie religieuse*. It was introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss at the Symposium held in the United States in 1952 (Lévi-Strauss 1958, 348, 349). In Russian edition, Vyach. Vs. Ivanov uses two translations of the term: *ethnology of religion* and *religious ethnology* (Lévi-Strauss 2001, 332, 333). Unfortunately, in English translation *l'ethnologie religieuses* was, in one case, substituted with *a vague study of religion* and — in another case — the term was omitted altogether (Lévi-Strauss 1953, 548). English “ethnology of religion” (Barna 2004, 211), in German is “religionsethnographische Untersuchung” (Paulson 1958); the collocation is similar to the “ethnography of childhood”, the “ethnography or ethnolinguistics of home”, or the “ethnology of music.” According to N. L. Zhukovskaya (Zhukovskaya 1977, 172) and V. R. Kabo, this scientific area should be called *ethnographic religious studies* and considered to be a branch of general ethnography. “It studies the origin and early forms of religion or the religion of a primitive, pre-class society, as well as the religious life of class societies” (Kabo 1988, 106). In our private conversations, V. R. Kabo would say that the ethnographic study of religion belongs to ethnography, thus it should be studied on the ethnographic material. Recently, the term *ethno-religious studies/ethno-religious studies* has become widely used. It follows the pattern of the already existing terms such as *ethnopedagogy*, *ethnolinguistics*, *ethnopsychology*, *ethnosociology*, *ethnophilosophy*, etc. In general, it may describe a study of experience connected with folk rituals and beliefs, which is the task of general ethnology (cultural and social anthropology). Of course, if we imply that the term *folk religion* refers to the field of study, then we, in turn, we have to imply that the terms *ethnographic religious studies*, *ethnology of religion* and *ethnoreligiology* are the names for the science that studies this material.

4. Conclusions

Wise religious scholars and politicians cherish the hope of rapprochement between different types of religions, which now exist in the world, on the principles of universal values. Thus, simultaneous studies of both early forms of religion and world religions are to distinguish these common grounds. At the same time, ethnologists and religious scholars must adhere to the principles of accuracy and fundamentality in their researches.

However, nothing has changed in Russia. Russian ethnographers, historians, and religious studies scholars still replace the international term *folk religion* with such vague words as *paganism*, *religion*, *superstition*. What is it: a sanction on the Western world by default or self-isolation in science? The scientists themselves have no answer, but for some who just remark, "I don't like this term."

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