

D. Tkachuk

*Research supervisor: G.M. Starodubets, Professor,
Doctor of Historical Science*

Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University

Language tutor: S.S. Kukharyonok

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE CELTS

The Celtic history occupies an important place in the study of the ancient world and the medieval Europe. Therefore, scientific interest in these barbarian tribes, especially in their religious beliefs, is growing. At the end of the 6th century BC when the Celts «appeared on the European stage, the formation of their religious beliefs had ended» [1, c. 234]. The aim of the paper is to determine a way of organizing economic and social political system in the Celts religious beliefs.

The Celtic religion satisfied the trends that prevailed in their society and in this regard the gods of the Celts had an archaic appearance. We can explain the fact that some of them related to hunting cult – Gallic gods Tsernunn (god with antlers), Morkus (boar), Wasp Agay (a bear); the others were associated with the domestic animals (God Mullah – a mule or a donkey; Damona – a patron of cattle; God Tavros – a bull) and some deities were associated with natural phenomena (Levtsytios – the god of lightning, Taranis – the god of thunder, the Romans identified him with Jupiter, Esus – the god of the forest vegetation). The Celts also believed in spirits, fairies, elves, monsters and they worshiped trees, source rock, etc.

To honour and satisfy the gods of the Celts, lavish ceremonies were performed in different seasons. The most important religious holiday was Samayin («a year-end»), which was on December, 31. On this day, the sacred fire was extinguished on the altar and a new one was lit, symbolizing the beginning of a new year. Among the major events there was the summer season eve opening on May, 1 – Beltayin, the beginning of a brighter season, a holiday of the God of Meadows. So these celebrations show us how devout the Celts were and they were willing to do everything to please the gods.

The Celtic burial had also a religious nature, symbolizing the end of the life cycle. The Celts performed the first burial immediately after the death, it was temporary: the soul hadn't separated from the body yet and «chose a house on the territory of the tribe, waiting for the next burial which was collective for all deceased members of the clan or tribe» [1, c. 300]. After the second burial the soul started its journey to the country of The Magician Mall – a country of youth and pleasure. Ordinary mortals formed a crowd there. Heroes, kings, who died in the battles, belonged to the elect and their graves were filled with everything necessary for afterlife.

Unfortunately, the Celtic beliefs, rituals and myths began to change after the Roman conquest of Spain, some parts of the northern Italy and Gaul, that ruthlessly

destroyed the Celtic priests especially Druids as the protectors of the original Celtic culture. These factors have led to «the loss of their Celtic identity, including the religious aspect, and that, in turn, put an end to their way of organizing economic and social systems» [2, с. 94].

So, the life of the ancient Celts and their economic activity were reflected in the images of various mythological characters that were actually defenders of their craft.

LITERATURE

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