

NATELA KUTELIA

CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS IN LAZ LANGUAGE AND RITUALS

Main part of the Lazians converted to Islam, but they preserved their language and ethnical integrity. It was the language that preserved Christian traditions, which are reflected, to some extent, in rituals too.

Theological terms “ghormoti” (god) and “trangi”, “tangri”, “tanri “(god) are separated in the consciousness of Lazians. “tanri” (god, deity, master, lord, devout) recorded in Orkhon-Yenisey Runic monuments of the 5th -7th centuries, and also in Manichean-Uygur texts, found on the territory of north-west China, is an old Turkish form and it is not supposed to be borrowed in Lazian from Turkish. Lazian “tangri” is related to Karaimian “tanri”. It is presumable, that an old Turkish “tagri” was adopted by Lazian from the Crimean Karaims in pre-Islamic period.

“Umki-seri” (Thursday), compared to Megrelian-Lazian “seri” (night), Georgian “seroba” (supper), is related to a great mystery of Christian religion “saidumlo seroba” (Last Supper) [N. Marr, Arn. Chikobava].