

April 8, 2009

RUSS 324

Written Assignment #2: **What evidence (if any) do you see in the folktales that we have read so far of the survival of Russia's pre-Christian religions? Illustrate with examples from the stories.**

There are a great deal of elements in Russian folk literature based ^{on} ~~off~~ of Russia's pre-Christian religions, specifically paganism. Russian folktales reflect the pagan belief

ⁱⁿ ~~of~~ nature's sacredness and the importance of deities and idols. Many folktales also reference the pagan's ritual calendar. Several tales are about the relationship between

beings and nature, and the evil and good spirits that exist in the natural environment. For

example, in "The Pike with the Long Teeth", ^{Why is water evil? wrecks} water's evil spirit is illustrated and wrecks

havoc on people and surroundings. The ancient pagan character's Father Frost and

Adonis are mentioned in the folktales "Jack Frost" and "Adonis and Aphrodite". Adonis

specifically is a pagan deity in the sense that he died and was later resurrected. Adonis

was also born of a miraculous birth, something seen of most pagan and pre-Christian

deities. Another example of miraculous birth and "divine motherhood" is the story of

Mary, where she miraculously gives birth to baby Jesus. Many deities can be compared to

Jesus in this way, as they were born miraculously from a virgin. Some folktales mention

the pagan calendar of events. For example "The Pike with the Long Teeth" takes place

during St. John's, a pagan tradition. The connection between nature and beings and

strong survival of deities and calendars is strong evidence that Russia's pre-Christian

religions have carried on in folktales.

Actually, a Christian holiday (Feast of St. John the Baptist) has replaced a pagan midsummer holiday, Kupalo.