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Cargo cult as a cultural concept

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Abstract

The paper shows that in modern research, the phenomenon of cargo cult is often not investigated as a cultural concept. It is shown that the belief that the technology of transportation and production of industrial goods for the Indians living on a subsistence basis was represented by a magical effect. In ethnography, the presence of a cargo cult allowed us to formulate hypotheses that mythological events had some material basis. However, this interpretation is very narrow and does not include consideration of the cultural component. Indeed, any new technology can be presented as a manifestation of magic in the most general sense. However, in this regard, it does not take into account the fact that the inhabitants of this region explained all the phenomena of life through magical influence, including those that do not relate to the manifestation of human activity, such as natural phenomena. In conclusion, the article concludes that the term cargo culture in its cultural aspect can simultaneously express the following assessment of actions: lack of understanding of the technology or methodology of the processes taking place; a waste of resources; the absolute impossibility of obtaining the desired result; an unattainable gap in development between the original and the copy, a misunderstanding of the causes and historical context of the phenomena.

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Keywords

Cultural concept, cargo cult, social institutions, ethnography, mythology.

Introduction

The culturological phenomenon of cargo cult (airplane worshippers) is of significant interest for explaining various phenomena and processes and has long ceased to be reflected only in studies in the field of religious beliefs of Melanesians. This term is widely used in psychology, philosophy, science, cultural anthropology, sociology.

In the most general sense, its independent study is of interest for determining the degree of intercultural communication between different civilizations and cultures. At the same time, the description of the cargo cult phenomenon as a complex phenomenon showed the degree of misunderstanding between the actions of the communication participants. No less significant is the study of this culturological phenomenon in order to understand in what situations even those considered advanced civilizations can be in the position of "Melanesians".

Main content

In the most general sense, the cargo cult represents the religious beliefs of the Melanesians, who imagine that the goods of industrial production of developed countries were created by the spirits of their ancestors and are intended to meet their needs.

However, the "white people" with the help of odd manipulations seized power over them. In the future, this cult is developed through the belief that by repeating the "magical" rituals of "white people" it is possible either to regain power over the power of material goods, or it is possible to get unhindered access to them by repeating the actions of "white people" who have access to magical knowledge.

Having become widespread during the Second World War, when a lot of cargo began to arrive on the Papua New Guinea boy to support the US army in the war with Japan. Some of these cargoes were delivered to the local population as material assistance to provide military bases or accidentally, as a result of incorrect cargo transportation.

As a result of receiving a significant amount of material benefits, the traditional cults of the area were forgotten and local residents began to worship airplanes bringing industrial goods such as weapons, clothing or canned food. That is, the necessary element of airplane worshippers was not just the addition of local religious cults, but their complete replacement. All this, on the one hand, testifies to the level of religious beliefs, which differ in a rather primitive nature – only the provision of material goods was required from the "deity". On the other hand, it says that the inhabitants considered themselves worthy of possessing all the benefits of civilization without participating in the process of economic exchange.

However, after the end of the war, cargo no longer arrived, which was the reason that the Melanesians began to imitate the actions of pilots and air traffic controllers by imitating the form of their activities. In particular, they built runways and airplanes out of wood, made headphones out of coconut halves. However, despite the fact that they actually completely repeated the actions of the "whites", the benefits did not return to them, which was the reason for their rejection.

At present, cargo cults have not actually been preserved, they partially exist among two tribes on the island of Tanna and have been further developed, according to which the prophet should return on a certain day, revive deceased ancestors, give youth and health, as well as untold riches. It should be noted that this cult is preserved by the efforts of the priest, who claims to be in constant communication with the prophet, and convinces the inhabitants of the island to expect him. Since various religious teachings have constantly carried out a mission on this island, its inhabitants are receptive to ideas

A common characteristic of all cargo cults was that they tried to recreate the functions of things

through external repetition and the direct participation of ancestral spirits in this. It was they who were supposed to send wealth to their descendants. At the same time, the beliefs themselves could differ – the ancestors could both include Messianic beliefs – that is, liberation from the influence of "white" people through the Messiah, which could include both a mythical character such as John Frum and the face of the Trinity God in Christianity - Jesus Christ. At the same time, the latter was supposed to appear to the Hmong people in camouflage at the wheel of a military jeep in the second coming and bring all sorts of benefits (according to another version – to take them to lands where there will be no death).

In order to worship, the followers of the cargo cult could, in addition to imitating airplanes, perform such actions as performing ritual dances in order for the ancestors of the Payuta people to return by rail or carve models of cassette recorders out of wood in order to talk to deceased ancestors. Cults could have real-life prophets (for example, Vovoka, the prophet of the Payuta people), priests (Mkvati in Southern Rhodesia) and high priests (for example, Nambas in the cult of John Frum).

In modern research, it is often customary to reduce the phenomenon of cargo cult to Arthur C. Clarke's third law, according to which any sufficiently developed technology is indistinguishable from magic. Indeed, the belief that the technology of transportation and production of industrial goods for the Indians living on a subsistence basis seemed to be a magical action. In ethnography, the presence of a cargo cult allowed us to formulate hypotheses that mythological events had some material basis.

However, according to the author, this interpretation is very narrow and does not include consideration of the cultural component. Indeed, any new technology can be presented as a manifestation of magic in the most general sense. However, in this regard, it does not take into account the fact that the inhabitants of this region explained all the phenomena of life through magical influence, including those that do not relate to the manifestation of human activity, such as natural phenomena.

On the other hand, the cargo cult has another culturological feature – through the use of this category, any unproductive actions of people who do not understand the essence of the process are described. Cargo culture can be confidently called the inclusion of the Russian education system in the Bologna process and the application of the methods of public administration of the national economy that have developed in other countries. According to a number of researchers, the same term defines modern scientific methods when using quantitative tools they try to describe personality characteristics, such as "socionics". In the modern scientific literature, it is through this cultural concept that the attitude to a number of studies is determined– such as neuro-linguistic programming in psychology [Roderique-Davies, 2009]

Conclusion

Thus, the term cargo culture in its cultural aspect can simultaneously express the following assessment of actions:

- lack of understanding of the technology or methodology of the ongoing processes;
- waste of resources;
- the absolute impossibility of obtaining the desired result;
- an unattainable development gap between the original and the copy;
- misunderstanding of the causes and historical context of phenomena.

Also, the example of a cargo cult is a useful concept for all actors in the socio-economic sphere who copy the institutions of public life without taking into account all the factors that determine the success of its development in the environment where it developed "naturally".

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Карго-культ как культурологическая концепция

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Аннотация

В работе показано, что в современных исследованиях зачастую явление карго-культа не исследуется как культурологическая концепция. Показано, что вера в то, что технологии транспортировки и производства промышленных товаров для индейцев, живущих натуральным хозяйством, представлялась магическим действием. В этнографии наличие карго-культа позволило сформулировать гипотезы о том, что мифологические события имели некоторую материальную основу. Однако такая трактовка является весьма узкой и не включает в себя учет культурологической составляющей. Действительно, любая новая технология может быть представлена как проявление магии в самом общем смысле. Однако в этом отношении не учитывается тот факт, что жители данного региона все явления жизни объясняли посредством магического воздействия, в том числе такие, которые не относятся к

проявлению деятельности людей, такие как природные явления. В заключении статьи делается вывод о том, что термин карго-культу в его культурологическом аспекте может выражать одновременно следующую оценку действий: отсутствие понимание технологии или методологии происходящих процессов; бесполезную трату ресурсов; абсолютную невозможность получения желаемого результата; недостижимый разрыв в развитии между оригиналом и копией, непонимание причин и исторического контекста явлений.

Для цитирования в научных исследованиях

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Ключевые слова

Культурологическая концепция, карго-культ, социальные институты, этнография, мифология

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