Chukchi Cosmology

According to the Chukchi belief there are several worlds, one above another. Some reckon there are five such worlds, where others say seven or nine. There is said to be a hole under the Pole Star, that forms a passage from one world to the other, and through this hole shamans and spirits pass between worlds. Another way to reach other worlds is to take a step downwards in the direction of the dawn. There are also other 'worlds' in the 'directions' of the compass: one under the sea and another small, dark 'world' which is vaguely described as being 'above', and is the abode of the female kele-birds. Some of the stars also are distinct 'worlds' with their own inhabitants. The sky, they say, is a 'world' too, and it touches our Earth at the horizon, where there are gates at four points. When the wind blows, these gates are believed to be opening.

Glossary

Polaris - a bright star close to the North Pole; also known as the Pole Star

Kele - an evil spirit in Chukchi mythology

© 2017 EducationPerfect
English Content
www.educationperfect.com

(Adapted from *Aboriginal Siberia*: A Study in Social Anthropology. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914.)