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ANTHROPOLOGY OF MIGRATION: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE DOUKHOBORS IN CANADA

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Abstract: Until recently, practically no attention was paid to the ethnic composition of the Doukhobors, since there has been established an idea of the Doukhobors as a special group of the Russian ethnos. Few studies mentioned about the ethnic heterogeneity of the Doukhobors, uniting not only Russians, but also the Mordvins, Poles, Gypsies, Tatars, Ukrainians, etc. Doukhobors' ideology contributed to the fact that in their communities as in a kind of melting pot, representatives of various ethnic groups became one. The Doukhobors believe in their special mission, considering themselves as a separate ethnos and requiring recognition of this position not only from the surrounding population, but also from the state authorities. However, despite many common characteristics of all Canadian Doukhobors that have arisen on the basis of a common religious cult and joint activities, one language (Russian) and genesis, Doukhobors of the Mordovian origin, long living outside their historic homeland, still remember about the ethnic roots, retaining some features of the traditional Mordovian culture.

Key words: Doukhobor, anthropology, Canada, migration

Introduction

For over 30 years Jovan Cvijić, travelling throughout the Balkans, developed the study on human geography, within which he analyzed the influence of climate and surrounding environment on anthropological building patterns. In psychological anthropology, Cvijić was the first to argue that humans are ecologically sensitive, and their social structure, occupation, endogamy or exogamy, migration are greatly influenced by the surrounding environment (Cvijić, 1987). Research and theoretical approaches of Jovan Cvijić had significant impact not only on the Balkan, but generally European and World socio-cultural anthropology. His methodology has been used in studies of the migration of the Russian Doukhobors to Canada, their social-political adaptation outside of the homeland.

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Anthropological aspects of Russian sectarianism until nowadays remain little researched sphere in its historical past and present. It is caused by multiple reasons among which not only specific methodical difficulties to collect relevant information from rather closed sectarian communities, but also the theoretical approaches of absolute denial everything positive in their existence, promoting “the fastest overcoming in minds of people of this ideological remnant of capitalism” (Klibanov, 1965, p. 32). The ethnic structure of the sectarian communities, especially their outer segments, including Doukhobor is even less studied. Usually representatives of the communities, believing in special mission, considered themselves as a separate ethnos and demanded recognition of it from the others, including the authorities. Nevertheless, this ethno confessional unification process is not fully completed, and among Doukhobors could be recognized members of different ethnic background and identity — mostly Russians, Ukrainians, Mordvins, Poles, Roman and even Tatars (Inikova, 1992; Sushkova, 2013).

Migration of the Doukhobors to Canada

In connection with the rejection of the state ideology Doukhobors were often subjected by the Russian authorities to persecution and deportations. In the late nineteenth century most of them had been forced to resettle in Canada. Immigration was carried out with the assistance of the English and American Quaker organizations and the support of Leo N. Tolstoy, donated for the relocation of Doukhobors fee for his novel “Resurrection”. From December 1898 to April 1899 four groups of Doukhobors departed to Canada. The second ship “Superior” with 1989 Doukhobors was accompanied by the son of the writer S. L. Tolstoy, who shared political and religious views of his father. At that time there have moved to Canada up to 7,500 people (Klibanov, 1965; Timkovsky, 1978; Tolstoy, 1978; Kazmina, 1998).



Figure 1a/b. Input of Leo N. Tolstoy to preserve their religious beliefs and culture and Doukhobors highly honor doctrine (Photo: Yulia Sushkova, 2004)

The manuscript collection of rare sources of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, contains lists of all immigrants among Doukhobors according to the official records of the Canadian customs, compiled by the representative of the same religious direction S. Lapshinoff. Among the Mordovian families, further surveyed during the field trip (2004), were: Vasilenkoff, Vanin, Gritchin, Zhmaeff, Kinakin, Kovaleff, Nazaroff, Konkin, Kurbatoff, Lahtin, Lezhebokoff, Lukianoff, Ozeroff, Ryazantseff, Salekin, Stupnikoff, Pozdnyakoff, Sherstobitoff, etc.

Many families were resettled entirely, the number of each of them was often higher than a dozen people, which was typical for the Mordovian large patriarchal families. Another interesting fact that among the Doukhobors were traditions, according to which the leaders could give the names arbitrarily, focusing on the characteristics of a family. In this sense, it is no coincidence that the origin of such common Doukhobor families as Novokshonoff, Pereverzeff, etymologically, ascending to the concepts of “novokrescheni” (the term used for the New-Christianized), “perevertsi” (the term used in relation to the people who changed their religion). Quite often these terms have been used in regards of the Mordovians in the materials of the Russian office at the time of their Christianization. Apparently, because of this the Doukhobor leaders began to give those surnames to the members of the Mordovian families. The

Doukhobors with surnames Novokshonoff and Pereverzeff in the survey answered that they indeed have Mordovian roots (Mokshina, 2005).

Since the relocation, the history of Canadians of Mordovian origin was inextricably linked to the Doukhobor movement. Belonging to the Doukhobor faith brought together representatives of different nationalities within a single religious culture. The leaders of the Doukhobors in Taurus, then in the Caucasus, tried to consolidate them not only on the basis of religious worship and rituals, but also the legal customs that regulated personal, property, matrimonial, land and other relations. People of other ethnos were taught the Russian language in which worship was conducted. The multiethnic composition of the Doukhobors had to create an atmosphere of ethnic tolerance. Moreover, because of the idea of entitlement and belief in its special mission, the Doukhobors considered themselves as a separate ethnos, demanded recognition from others, including from the authorities (Inikova, 1992).

The example of the Mordovian Doukhobors confirms that ethnic identity is very strong in people, and that ethnic traditions have a significant impact on the formation of a common religious identity. Practice of application of folk customs among the Doukhobors of the Mordovian origin can also be traced in the activities of the individual representatives, which have determined and determine the development of this movement up to the present time.

Customary Law and the Commune

The basis for the preservation of the faith and strengthening the order, the guarantee of social normative order among the Doukhobors was the commune. Comprehension of the importance of the communal organization for the Russian Doukhobors, the Canadian authorities adopted a set of measures on order to accelerate their assimilation. Relevant to this issue, Canadian P. N. Boykin told me a few stories from the life of his grandfather Ilya Yakovlevich, whose mother was a “aboriginal” Mordovian. In these memories he essentially presented the history of the Doukhobors settlement in Canada, because his family played a significant role in this process. Arriving in Saskatchewan in 1899, Doukhobors demanded from the Canadian government the preservation of their commune, which was considered as the basis of their livelihood and strengthening of faith. The government was confident that with the abolition of the commune will be much easier to assimilate the Doukhobors, on the contrary, was anxious to strengthen in them the concepts on the conduct of individual farms. Both sides were adamant, the government began to force the Doukhobors to leave land granted to them for the agricultural usage. Then their spiritual leader P. V.

Verigin decided to resettle the Doukhobors from Saskatchewan to British Columbia where he purchased land from his German friend Hiram Landis (Sushkova, 2012).

The tradition of communal lifestyle was typical for both Russian and Mordovian peasants. In Canada a community-based model has achieved the unique, specific for Doukhobors features. The smallest unit of their settlement in British Columbia Doukhobors considered “village”, consisted of two large two-storey communal houses. It was one community for the agricultural equipment distribution. So, a pair of horses, wagon, sledge, plough, harrows, and other farming utensils belonged to the village, although the garden was cultivated by each house separately. In the community house, as a rule, have been placed from 35 to 50 people, and even more. Settling in the houses was carried out by the families. Mordovian large patriarchal families were placed together in Canada in the communal houses. About the inhabitants of these houses other Doukhobors stated that they are inhabited by the Mordvins, speaking in an incomprehensible language to others. For example, according to Mordvin Arina Kanyakin, she and her husband lived in a community house with the parents-in-law Kinyakin, her husband's brother Ivan and his wife Tanya and their two children. Together with them were Alex and Nastya Krasnikoff, their son Alex and daughter Nastya with her husband and two children, Michael and Uliana Stushnoff with three children. In another community house there have been living families Lahtin, Wasilenkoff, Lezhebokoff, Chernenkoff, Zhevotkoff. In the next house there were placed the families of Kuznetsoff, Kurbatoff, Lezhebokoff, Shlyahoff.

Village united in the plots. For example, a plot “Plodorodnoye” (“Glade”) consisted of eleven villages. Separate plots of the Doukhobors to this day are called “Mordovian” and their inhabitants “Mordvins” (for example, plot “Lugovoye”). Other parts — Passmore, Salmo even officially have unique Mordovian titles, associated with traditional Mordovian mentality (Table of the Doukhobor villages, 2005). So, the etymology of the plot “Passmore”, without a doubt, dates back to the Erzya-Mordovian words “Paz” (“God”) and “Moro” (“song”), associated with pre-Christian traditions of worship, accompanied by singing and prayer (Erz. *Pazmoro*) addressed to one or another pagan god. Many Doukhobors, living in these areas (Sherstobitoff, Novokshonoff, Ryazantseff, Ozeroff), answered on my questions about their ethnicity that they have Mordovian background.

The head of the commune was the leader of the Doukhobors, who coordinated all of their business and looked after the development of various aspects of life of its members. It regulated many matters of welfare and religious cult. Doukhobors, gave advices and instructions, the execution of which was personally supervised. The first leader in Canada was Peter V. Verigin (the Lord), whose last name took and pass on now all Doukhobors' leaders.

Family relations had patriarchal basis. The head of the family was the oldest male, usually the father, father-in-law whom the Doukhobors called an “old man”, and women were ruled by the mother or mother-in-law, respectively called an “old lady”. The old man was the main manager of family affairs. The head of the family was the guardian of the customs, the holder of the home rules. He controlled all aspects of domestic life. Especially they watched the children and youth. Girls and boys according to the Doukhobor morality had to dress and behave very modestly.

Mordovian long-lasting Doukhobor tradition was the introduction by the groom customary payment (Mord. *Pitne*) for the bride. This practice conflicted with the Doukhobor idea of marriage, when both parties were treated equally and nobody should give any money except for a small wedding gift made with own hands. But fathers, according to elderly respondents, persistently demanded payment for their daughters and took it secretly from the leaders who regarded such actions as forbidden. There have been cases when as payment for the bride the families took cows, other domestic animals, pieces of property. People were saying in these situations that the wedding rituals were Mordovian. In conversations about the past George Kinakin asked me about the credibility of the Mordovian custom, which he learned from his father, to organize marriages between mature girls and young boys (Sushkova, 2012).

In Canada Doukhobors preserved a lot of traditional ideas about marriage, in particular the time, when the marriage was arranged by parents, often against the will of the girl. For example, in the village Brilliant there was fixed the Mordovian song about old traditions of marital relations. The words in the song were slightly distorted, and the analysis shows that this song is composed on the basis of Moksha-Mordovian language, and its main motive is anxiety about the choices needed to be made in life. The song is reflecting the situation for the Doukhobors to move to another country — Canada, which is very far from the Mordovian Motherland. The ideal of the Doukhobor family was considered a couple with many children.

An important factor of choosing by the Mordvins Doukhobor religion was intermarriages. Often there were cases when Russian Doukhobors took wives of the Mordovian origin, and, vice versa. One of the authoritative researchers of Doukhobors, activist of this movement I. A. Popov (1956) in his book (the section “Why among the Doukhobors were people from the Finnish tribe”) wrote: “... Doukhobors lived, for the most part, among the tribe, called “Mordvins”, and they eventually turned a close relationship with the Mordvins... Doukhobor girls got married with Mordovian guys, Doukhobor guys took as wives Mordovian girls. Other families even began to go to the Doukhobors’ meetings. When according to the Manifest of the tsar Alexander I Doukhobors from all over Russia began their resettlement in Tavria, they were joined by families of the Mordovian ethnicity. Many of them for a long time continued to speak Mordovian language and even sing songs passed from generation to generation. Many years later, when Doukhobors already lived in Canada, among such ordinary Doukhobor surnames as Ozeroff, Vasilenkoff, Stupnikoff, Lukianoff, Kurbatoff whose grandparents were able to speak and even sing in the dialect of the Finnish tribe called “Mordvins” (Popov, 1956, p. 19).

The Doukhobors by their ideological views are pacifists. In protest against the violence they adhere to the restrictions on the consumption of meat and dairy products, with a sinful thing to do considering not just the use of milk and butter, and mainly, the fact that offspring from cows should be sold for slaughter, and this is considered an indirect involvement in the killing of animals. The Doukhobors in the past followed a number of other restrictions (refusal of salt, lamps in the houses, usage of kerosene). Along with these restrictions in the community, Doukhobors practiced simplification of life. At one time men ceased to shave, and growing beards. They also followed the custom not to use a towel after washing hands and face. However, these prohibitions did not survive for long. Crimes in the community happened quite rarely.

Nowadays the Doukhobors increasingly becoming a part of Canada, get an education, moving beyond the original areas of settlement, where they work and organize an independent business or jointly with Anglo-Canadians, practice intermarriages. Doukhobor families are individual farms. The communal relations mainly appear in the maintenance among the Doukhobors senses of reciprocity, solidarity in solving social or economic problems. The Doukhobors have been granted by the Canadian government the right not to be subject to military service, to register acts of civil status (birth, death, marriage), to take the oath in the courts on bread, salt and water according to their traditional ceremonies. For the preservation of traditional way of life Doukhobor

communities are called as a “separate country”, “state within a state”. Many Anglo-Canadians explain the Doukhobor phenomenon by healthy lifestyle, high spirituality, care about people around them.

Conclusion

Doukhobors – Russian peasant religious group, who held a prominent position in the eighteenth century, which for direct individual revelation denied all external authorities, including the Bible. The reforms of Patriarch Nikon and the opening of Russia to the influence of the West by Peter the Great determined the creation in Russia of the opposition manifested including the rapid growth of the mystical, not only rational, but also associated with the Evangelical religious group.

Doukhobors deny the authority of both the Church and the state, relying on private revelation, supplemented by parables, and songs that are passed orally and called the “Book of life” or “Life book”. They do not recognize the priests and the sacrament, considered to be the only ceremony meeting at which worshippers say the chant or sing monotonously, sitting at the table with bread, salt and a container of water. As a multicultural ethnic community, which included in its ranks not only the Russians, but a lot of the Mordvins, Ukrainians, representatives of some other ethnos, unified by the religious cult, the group of the Doukhobors gradually got ethnic features, perceived themselves as a distinct ethnic group (people), considering own confession for the ethnonym.

Doukhobors have created a unique culture, which reflects their worldview, retain a sense of communality. They highly honor doctrine and input of L. N. Tolstoy, in memory of which they constructed two monuments: one in Saskatchewan and the other in British Columbia (Museum of Doukhobors). Russian Doukhobors, having moved more than a century ago in Canada, having gone through the difficult process of adaptation, became now an integral part of Canadian society, without losing the characteristics of their religious cult. They continue to develop the ideas of freedom, peace and hard work, largely based on the teachings of L. N. Tolstoy, who himself admired his religion, called Doukhobors the people of the XXV century and the greater part of his earnings he gave to their future triumph on earth.

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