

Interiorization of the Soviet model by the Old Believers' community in Buryat-Mongolia in the 1920-s

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Abstract: The research topicality is due to the necessity to analyze the strategies of adaptation, survival, resistance and coexistence of traditional communities under the new social reality of the 1920-s, when the basics of the Soviet model of development were laid. This will enable to significantly adjust the contemporary vision of the problems of Socialist modernization of the borderland national autonomy of the Soviet state. This article focuses on the features of interiorization of the Soviet model by the Old Believers. In the context of the conducted research, interiorization is interpreted as a complex social-historical and social-psychological process of assimilating the new social forms and economic relations, imposed by the Soviet power which was proclaimed in the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1923. This process led to changing the world outlook in compliance with the Bolshevik paradigm of Socialist society. The methodological tool of the research is everyday life history, focusing on the comprehensive study of the repeated, the normal and the habitual which constructs the style and way of living, their components and changes, including emotional reactions to the life events and motives of behavior. Besides, we rely on anthropological approach which allows focusing on the everyday life of the Old Believers, their emotional reactions and routine practices. The article reveals the specificity of the Old Believers' perception of the Soviet power and its economic measures, researches their reactions to the Bolsheviks' struggling against religion, analyzes their attitude to the Soviet modernization projects in the spheres of education and medicine, reveals the features of assimilating the Soviet novelties in economic, leisure and everyday practices, in marriage and family relations. It is stated that the actively developing Soviet construction, many trends of which contradicted the Old Believers' dogmas, caused diverse reactions ranging from negative perception to categorical denial and resistance. It is proved that the interiorization process in this group appeared to be difficult; only the youth accepted the new forms and relations. Interiorization was impeded by the closeness of the Old Believers' community, their isolation from the rest of the world, archaic traditionalism. The research demonstrates the necessity for the state (regardless of its political and ideological basis) to take into account the historical, socio-cultural and ethno-confessional features of individual regions and the peoples inhabiting them when choosing the means and elaborating the mechanisms of reforming the society. **Keywords:** Old Believers residing in the Trans-Baikal region, Soviet power, everyday life, modernization, interiorization, adaptation.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the humanities, the study of revolutionary transformations of the period of Socialism formation in the USSR is carried out both by the Russian and foreign researches at all levels – from developing ideology and determining the directions and mechanisms of modernization to perception of novelties in the society. For a long time, the traditional research perspective at the economic and sociocultural transformation processes was the “view from above”, from the heights of state policy; perception and comprehension of this phenomenon was constructed from the viewpoint of the modernization experiment, implemented from “higher-ups”. The reactions of traditional communities to social changes, their developing of the means of adaptation, co-existence or resistance was considered one-sidedly as a result of implementing the state policy to a socially and culturally amorphous organism. In the modern works on social history, the scholars tend to research interiorization of the Soviet model, the latter interpreted as a complex social-historical and social-psychological process of assimilating new social norms and relations. However, the specific features of these processes in the traditional nomadic, Old Believers' and ancient communities of a borderline national autonomy, like the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist

Republic, was not yet paid due attention in the historical literature, though certain aspects of the issue were dealt with in the works by historians and ethnographers.

Developing within the context of common national policy, the Soviet processes of modernization had their specific features in Buryatia – in terms of scale, depth and rate of transformations. The natural and geographic features of the region, its specific geopolitical position (close to the countries of Central Asia), weak communication links under the conditions of sparse dispersed zone, combination of various types of economic activity, abundance of natural resources and lack of capital for their development, underdeveloped industrial basis, innovative and personnel resources sharply differing from those in the center – all this predetermined the specificity of modernization transformations. The formation of a national autonomy of the Western Transbaikalia indigenes – the Buryats – in 1923 added a “national” tint to the process of economic modernization of the region. Buryat-Mongol Republic was to demonstrate the advantages of the new Socialist order to the oppressed national minorities of the tsarist Russia, and the success of the Socialist construction – to the peoples of the Oriental countries, especially the neighboring Mongolia, in order to involve them into the orbit of the Soviet economic and political influence. The borderline location of the Republic determined the different, compared to those in other national autonomies, approaches to Sovietization; the set of specific methods and means was tested in the traditional communities of Buryat-Mongolia for further employment in the Mongol world.

The Republic was the territory of interaction between various ethnic and confessional groups which lived very close to each other but retained their own traditional way of living. In the Republic capital – Verkhneudinsk – interiorization of the new social forms and economic relations took place faster than in rural areas. This was due to not only the remoteness of some villages and uluses, but also a greater stability of traditional way of living in rural areas. Besides, many settlements (for example, of the Old Believers) were closed communities, primordially considering all novelties to be alien and inimical. That is why the same actions of authorities in an Old Believers’ settlement, a Buryat ulu and in the urban area of Verkhneudinsk, aimed at introducing novelties, were perceived differently and required elaborating specific measures for each individual case.

This article focuses on the features of perceiving the Soviet authorities and their measures by the Old Believers, emphasizing the issue of adapting the Socialist novelties at the level of everyday life, where the revolutionary transformations declared by the Bolsheviks faced the inertia of traditional social norms. The key objective of the research is to analyze the strategies of surviving, resisting and coexisting within the new social reality; this will enable to significantly adjust the contemporary vision of the problems of Socialist modernization of the borderland national autonomy – the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

The research focuses on the 1920-s – the period characterized by the rapid transfer from one economic state to another, transformation of the economic, political and social spheres, destruction of the traditional conceptions of the previous centuries. That was the time when the basics of the Soviet model of development were laid.

2. METHODS

The methodological tool of the research is everyday life history, focusing on the comprehensive study of the repeated, the normal and the habitual which constructs the style and way of living, their components and changes, including emotional reactions to the life events and motives of behavior. Besides, we rely on anthropological approach which allows focusing on the everyday life of the Old Believers, their emotional reactions and routine practices.

The source base of the research is the materials of the State Archive of the Buryat Republic. The key sources are reports on political and economic situation in the Buryat-Mongol Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, kept in the fund P-1 of Buryat-Mongol regional committee of the Russian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) (RKP(b)) / All-Union Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) (VKP(b)). These reports, compiled by the Joint State Political Directorate every two weeks and sent to the Party regional committee, were intended to study the attitudes of the population. Materials from one of the reports' sections allow revealing the features of perceiving the Soviet novelties and transformations by the most traditional Trans-Baikal community. A part of the used archive documents has been published; the majority of them are being introduced into the academic sphere for the first time.

The study of the features of interiorization of the Soviet model by the Old Believers' communities of Buryatia was greatly facilitated by the materials of expeditions undertaken in 1924–1927 by an Irkutsk ethnographer A. M. Popova to the regions of compact residence of Trans-Baikal Old Believers, in particular, to the settlements of Nadeinskaya (Kuytun and Bolshoy Kunaley), Tarbagatayskaya (Tarbagatay and Desyatnikovo), Mukhorshibirskaya (Gashey and Mukhorshibir) and Novo-Bryanskaya (Novaya Bryan and Mukhor-Tala) volosts (rural districts). These expeditions took place with the financial support of the Buryat-Mongol Scientific Society named after Dorzhi Banzarov and the Buryat regional committee of VKP(b). Besides, the ethnographer was assisted in collecting material by the head of Tarbagatay community of Belokrinitzkaya Hierarchy Amvrosey Fedotov (the would-be bishop Afanasiy). Materials of the field research, published as a cycle of articles in “Buryat Studies” Journal, and in 1928 as a book, contain a lot of information about the history, economy, folk medicine, and folklore of the Trans-Baikal Old Believers and illustrate their life, routines, attitudes and behavior in the studied period. This allows revealing the specific features of their adoption of new social and economic relations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background

The history of the Old Believers is connected with the church reform undertaken in 1650–60-s by the Patriarch Nikon and tsar Aleksey Mikhailovich. Having begun with insignificant, to the first glance, changes (two-finger crossing was substituted for three-finger crossing, low bowing was abolished), the reform soon affected all aspects of the religious and then cultural and everyday life of the Russian people, becoming the cause of schism of the Russian Orthodox Church. A lot of priests and laypeople opposed the plans of the tsar and the Patriarch. The proponents of the pre-schism confession – the Old Believers – made a stand for the doctrines and canonic provisions of the ancient Russian church. They did not form a single community or a church; there were many various persuasions, and during two centuries they divided into two main groupings: “Popovtsians” (a part of the Russian Old Believers professing worshipping with priests) and “Bespopovtsians” (those professing priestless worship).

The Old Believers appeared in Trans-Baikal region in the 18th century. They were expelled from the western parts of the Russian Empire. The Old Believers were called Semeyskiye (“family members”) by the locals, as they came in large families with their property, unlike the single convicts. In Trans-Baikal region, the Old Believers settled in large groups, forming settlements and villages Tarbagatay, Kuytun, Kunaley, later Novaya Bryan and others on the territories of Mukhorshibirskaya, Tarbagatayskaya, Kunaleyskaya, and Urukhsaya volosts of Verkhneudinskiy district.

After the revolution and the establishing of the Soviet power in Trans-Baikal region, the Old Believers remained the most traditional, patriarchic, well-knit group, marked out of the rest Russian population. Due to the high birth rates, their numbers rapidly increased. It is impossible to trace the exact changes in the number of the Old Believers' population in the 1920-s, as this category was not distinguished in the statistics of those years, but was considered together with the rest of the Russian population. Nevertheless, one may determine the trend characteristic of the Old Believers' population. The data of the natural growth of the population show that the growth rate was high in the places of traditional residence of the Old Believers. For example, in Mukhorshibirskaya volost, where 70% of the population were the Old Believers, the growth rate was twice as high as on average in Buryatia. According to researchers, the overall number of the Old Believers in the Republic in the 1920-s was about 70 thousand people.

The Old Believers and the Soviet power: co-existence or resistance?

After the Civil war finished and the Soviet power was established, the Old Believers could not stay aside from the processes of building the new society, which were gaining strength. Due to the existing traditional system of the world outlooks, the main issue for them, just like during more than two and a half centuries before that, was the issue of interaction with power, now the new – Soviet – power.

By the end of the Civil war, the attitude of the Trans-Baikal Old Believers to the Soviet power was rather friendly, as they were freed from the counterrevolutionary regime of ataman Semyonov and the interventionists. However, after the establishment and strengthening of the Soviet power, and as the results of the increased antireligious propaganda, the attitude to the Communists started to worsen rapidly. The Old Believers started to blame the new power for negating the God, consequently, inclination to the devil”, and soon were convinced that “for the God-fearing Christians it is better to live in the woods with beasts and suffer indigence” than “to live in towns or red settlements under the authorities, having abandoned the God”. Strictly observing the main dogmas of their faith, the Old Believers did not accept the new authorities. They called the party members “servants of Antichrist”, “vessels of devil”, etc..

Conceding the coming of Antichrist, fearing the fatal meaning of the number 666, many Old Believers, even admitting the usefulness of various novelties, could not accept them. For example, most of them refused to join the cooperatives, as their members were given a record book with a stamp. The Old Believers got number 666 from the name of Lenin and from a five-pointed star. The headwear of the Red Army soldiers was associated with “the beastly image”.

The secret report of an authorized representative in Nadeinskaya volost of Verkhneudinskiy uyezd in 1925 stated: “The Old Believers are especially irreconcilable towards everything new, wherever it comes from; they are fanatically religious... the revolutionary trends had some influence on them too, especially on the poor, but the wealthy villagers are pillars and custodians of the church tales, the mouthpieces of the public opinion... Their darkness and ignorance are huge. They are enemies of a doctor and especially of an obstetrician...”. As for the public opinion, it was not for the authorities. Most of the Old Believers were “not very friendly” to the Communists, in many settlements “some strata of the population were even hostile”, but all of them had to accept the Soviet power following the Biblical words that “there is no power but from the God”. These strata were, first of all, the wealthy Old Believers and the ritualists. For example, in 1926 the reports of the Joint State Political Directorate stated that “the Old Believers' priesthood agitates among the population to turn it against the Soviet power”.

Influenced by the ritualists, the Old Believers repeated the legend about the end of the Soviet power, which was to take place in 1926: “In that year the Communists will vanish, the power will change – a ‘privident’ (president) will come, he will reign for thirty three years; the life will be dashing under him; after his death, someone will take the power for another three years and then such kind of time will start: the earth will not give fruit, nor the sky will give rain, the trees will dry, the beasts and cattle will wander and cry finding no food, and all that will be exactly as it was written in the Holy Scriptures”. During the preparation for celebration of the 9th anniversary of the October revolution, an Old Believer from the Staraya Bryan settlement, a peasant of average means Ivan Bolonyanskiy said to the local veterans of the partisan movement and representatives of the village Soviet: “You have only one this year left to celebrate, then you will not be able to – thus it is written in the Holy Scriptures”. A wealthy Old Believer from the Staraya Bryan settlement Semen Shitin said that “in spring 1927, the Holy Scriptures will come true”, meaning the overthrow of the Soviet power, an Old Believer Anfinogen Zaigraev added: “...the Communists will soon be finished”.

Reaction of the Old Believers to antireligious struggle of the Bolsheviks

The sphere of the state policy which caused extreme indignation and confrontation of the Old Believers was the struggle against religious attitudes of the population by atheistic upbringing, taking place during the 1920-s. As religion was the basis and determined all aspects of the economic, social and cultural life of the Old Believers, they resolutely made a stand for protecting their traditional values.

The Old Believers categorically refused to take part in the obligatory registering of religious associations, which started in Buryatia in 1923; they explained their position that “the canonic rules forbid to register the cult”. Responding to the active resistance of the most of the Old Believers’ confessions to submit information about themselves, the local authorities attempted to seal the temples of those communities which had not registered. These actions caused a still stronger indignation of the Old Believers, as they perceived imposing the “Antichrist’s seal” not only as the transfer of a cult building into the possession of the authorities, but also as damaging the sacral property, a direct threat to the sacred Orthodox faith. Taking into account the overall situation, threatening with a social outburst, the authorities had to retreat, and the sealed temples were returned to the believers. But this withdrawal was temporary. As early as in 1926 the local party and Soviet officials, using the threat of losing a temple as the main mechanism of pressing the Old Believers, started to register their communities *en masse*. The modern researcher are correct to say that “during registration, the communities had to sacrifice their traditional reticence and closeness of the religious-public life, which caused doubt in the compatibility of cooperation with power and the fundamentals of the ‘Christian faith’ and made the Old Believers thoroughly think over the consequences of their steps”. By 1 January 1930, 50 Old Believers’ communities were registered in the Buryat-Mongol ASSR, with the overall number of 22640 believers. This demonstrated an unambiguous desire of the authorities not only to bring the Old Believers’ communities under the total control, but also – in the nearest future – to completely eliminate religion from the everyday life of the Soviet citizens.

Ritualists were the most influential people in the Old Believers’ communities. They could baptize, receive confession of the dying, perform a funeral service. Ritualists and theologians enjoyed great authority and influence, were a significant power forming the public opinion, which caused not unfounded concern of the Soviet officials. The most zealous priests were watched by secret services. For example, an agent review informed that “a ritualist I. K. Pavlutskiy from Sharalday settlement has influence on the population, threatening with excision... in Nadeino settlement, ritualists Mikhail Khomyakov and Foma

Pavlov arranged a meeting, insisting on not burying those who smoke tobacco and are members of consumerist society”.

The religious rituals, social stratification, role of ritualists and theologians were quite strong, which made it necessary for the Soviet authorities to take active measures. At the conference of party officials from the Old Believers’ areas, which took place in July 1928, antireligious struggle was identified as “the key direction of Soviet work”, while ritualists and theologians were declared “the main evil”, in relation to which it was suggested to take “the most resolute measures to make them silenced”. The active practical implementation of the decisions of that conference started in the 1930-s.

Attitude of the Old Believers to economic measures of the Soviet power

Since their appearance in Trans-Baikal region, the Old Believers tried to arrange their households rationally. With them, they brought developed agriculture; they grew rye, wheat, barley, buckwheat, oats, and vegetables. Animal husbandry played an auxiliary role in their households. Virtually all contemporaries marked significant economic success of the Old Believers; they were very hard-working.

In 1920-s, the Old Believers continued to maintain and develop their households by all means. But many of them had negative attitude to various novelties. They considered land surveying, which started at that time, to be not God-pleasing: “it is a sin to measure land with various tools”. The triangulation devices installed in high places were considered by the Old Believers to be driving off the clouds, which caused droughts. It was thought to be sinful to use various machines – separators, harvesters, etc. The Old Believers, especially the elderly, thought that it is better “to till with the plough until death”.

Nevertheless, being good contrivers by nature, the Old Believers could not but notice the economic advantages of using various technical novelties. Following the advice of agronomists, they more and more often, especially in the second half of the 1920-s, purchased agricultural tools, and some even dreamt of a tractor. “A traktur (tractor – Author) cannot go in our mountains, that is too bad”, complained a villager of Zhirim settlement Arkhip Petrov.

The Old Believers’ attitude to the economic measures of the Soviet power was negative, in particular, to the kolkhoz development, which started in the Republic in the second half of the 1920-s. In 1927, there were 65 collective farms in Buryatia, while in the areas with the Old Believers population, where wealthy villagers strongly opposed collective farming, there were no collective farms at all. The Old Believers’ households ignored, and sometimes boycotted, the campaigns for collecting the unified agrarian tax. For example, in 1924/25 economic year, the agrarian tax collection in the Republic in general amounted to 103.4% by October 1, while in Verkhneudinskiy uyezd only to 84.76% of the yearly order. In that uyezd, especially in the areas where the Old Believers resided, almost 50% of the households did not pay the tax at all up to January; this was due to the high taxation rate and low procurement prices. The tax was not collected both because of the Old Believers’ aversion of the Bolsheviks’ economic policy, and the hesitant attitude of the peasants, saying “There is fighting between the followers of Stalin and Trotsky, we shall see who wins. If Trotsky wins, the tax will be withdrawn, as Trotsky is for the peasants, against the tax”.

Features of the Old Believers’ perception of the Soviet educational policy

The Old Believers diversely and not easily accepted the measures of the Soviet power aimed at broadening the school education and eliminating illiteracy. In 1919, professor of Irkutsk University A. M. Sellishchev, making a scientific-research trip round the Old Believers’ settlements, noted the omnipresent cases of negative attitude to school: at a meeting in Bichura, the speech of a school instructor was interrupted: “we don’t need that, we

have lived without school, and were safe and sound”; “old people do not let us study, ritualists will not let us into church”. Though protecting the patriarchal traditions, customs, rules and habits, the Old Believers often spoke negatively of their own traditional everyday life: “We are dull, dark, uneducated folks, you know – this is the Old Believers’ way of living”.

Despite the Old Believers’ aversion of the Soviet educational policy, during the 1920-s schools and literacy schools, reading houses, “red corners” and clubs were being opened in the Old Believers’ settlements. One may see how schools worked at that time from an archive document: “In Nizhniy Zhirim settlement, school was opened on October 1, 1921. In 1922-1923 there was little success increasing literacy. The Old Believers mostly consider studying to be a sin. There is no school building in the settlement, the school occupies a private house. At the beginning of the school year, there were 43 schoolchildren, and one teacher could not teach them all at once. He divided them into two groups. He taught the first group before noon, and the second – after noon. Because the teacher was so busy, he could not organize lessons for the grown-us. After Easter, many parents took their children from school to work in the fields. Just 10 pupils were left at school. Besides, once the wealthy beat up one of the literacy campaign activists – F. L. Kalashnikov, because the activists took merchant Ermolay’s house to organize the school there. Also, Kalashnikov brought a teacher from town, whom the parents gave money and food to teach their children”.

Not all Old Believers’ settlements had schools; where there were schools, there was a shortage of premises and teachers. Parents refused to let their children go to Soviet schools, considering it to be a sin to study at establishments where the Scripture and the Church Slavonic language were not taught: “our attitude to the Soviet power is good, but we will not go to it until it allows us to have our own schools”; “let their schools be, but they should teach the Scripture; now just singing and various funny things are taught there”.

The common attitude to schooling was expressed in “chastushkas” (humorous rhymes) popular with the Old Believers. This genre of folklore singing, most sensitive to the life events, contrasted education and religion, the Soviet power and the Old Believers’ way of living:

“The thread is black, the thread is black,
The thread is not twisted.
Communists write letters,
But I am not educated”.
“True, it is no good
To love a Communist,
One should take off the cross,
Never pray the God”.

A delegate of the 2nd Assembly of Soviets of the Buryat-Mongol ASSR A. Petrov, who represented the Old Believers of Verkhneudinskiy uyezd, posed the opinion that the Old Believers did not wish to join literacy campaign not only because of their faith, but also because of the lack of attention from the Republic government: “The Old Believers still have not shaken off their religious beliefs. The Old Believers have strong and stable households; they pay the major part of taxes. But they have almost no schools. ...at our place, there is not a single school for 900 people... If we had reading houses, literacy schools or other enlightenment establishments, then our younger generation would have gone there and acquired some knowledge”.

The youth clearly demonstrated desire to study, showing special interest to agricultural matters. “If we were educated, we would have known how to cultivate land,” said young people. Some dreamt of medical education: “...I would have studied to be a doctor and cured people; now our women go to shamans (healers) only”.

However, not all Old Believers supported this viewpoint; the older generation dreamt of “their own” schools. An 86-year-old ritualist Nikifor Efremovich Kireev said: “at present, Antichrist was born and is reigning; blasphemy is everywhere; they build Antichrist’s establishments, clubs, reading houses, schools, and the like... What is it for? Do we, the Christians, need it? We need to pray the God”. The review of the oblast department of the Joint State Political Directorate “On political and economic state of Buryat-Mongol Republic” No. 2 of the first half of January 1926 informed: “Due to the presence of representatives of Old Believers – members of the Soviets – in Kuytun settlement of Nadeinskaya volost, there is a tendency to open schools (here schools teaching the Church Slavonic language are meant – Author). The present volost committee is composed of believers, they will allow us to teach our children, they display zealous concern for our community”.

By the beginning of the 1930-s, the school network in the Old Believers’ settlements became more developed; mistrust and hatred towards the “heretical” school mostly remained among the older generation only.

Sanitary-hygienic habits of the Old Believers and their attitude to scientific health-preserving practices

The specific feature of the Old Believers’ everyday life was strict observance of hygiene rules and cultish love for cleanliness. One of the Old Believers, recollecting his childhood, told: “The Old Believers are friendly and neat people. They live beyond the Baikal, that is, at the very border with Mongolia. A lot of people came there all the time: the exiles, the Chinese, various vagabonds. What a multitude of diseases was there at that time! Zillions of them! Scarlet fever, hepatitis, chicken pox, even leprosy and dysentery... Where could they get doctors in those places? How did the Old Believers manage? They establish hygiene rules: there should be separate tableware for the guests. (What if a guest is a tobacco-smoker? For the Old Believers, the greatest sin is to smoke tobacco (“to thurify to the demons”). A tobacco-smoker was considered a despicable, fallen person. “Do you know how many villages they burnt, the tobacco-smokers?”, my father often told me. Besides, it’s a shame that a stick juts out of one’s mouth). For example, in our house the guests’ tableware was always on a shelf: wrapped in a clean towel, sunshine washed. But – separate. We never ate out of it. And when a drop-in vagabond left, the door handles were fumigated with juniper smoke. Thus, they protected themselves against infection”. Such were the sanitary-hygienic norms elaborated by the Old Believers to exclude the risk of contamination when communicating with potential carriers of diseases, including the social ones, which were widely spread in Buryatia.

The Old Believers categorically rejected doctors; they treated themselves only with folk means, predominantly herbal. According to their conceptions, “herbs and roots were given to us by the God, while the metal means, the drugs from drugstores, processed by the German pharmacists, are unclean; it is a sin to take them, as they were invented by people”. Because of the rejection of scientific medicine achievements, the Old Believers had a high death rate among the newborns. However, those who survived were extremely healthy due to the “natural selection”. Rejecting the assistance of the official medicine, the Old Believers, nevertheless, accepted the assistance of Buryatian lamas, trusting them much more than the Russian “Nikonians” and “atheists”.

Turning to a doctor was considered to be a sin, according to the Scripture: “It is better to be unhealthy than to lapse into wickedness for one’s sickness”. Most of the Old Believers were treated by healers as late as in the 1920-s. The Old Believers especially opposed smallpox vaccination, considering it to be “Antichrist’s seal”. However, smallpox epidemics were rife and rampant among the Old Believers during the years of revolution, claiming

thousands lives. A. M. Popova noted that during her expedition "...in 1924 in Tarbagatay we happened to see how 4-5 coffins were taken from a single house in 3-4 days, or how children and adolescents got blind". To the questions: 'do not you pity your own children?' the answer was cruel, contradicting the loving attitude of the Old Believers to children: 'well, there are many of them, like puppies', or: 'they are suffering for our sins'; sometimes they answered: 'they will suffer here and be fine in the next world'." By the end of the 1920-s the attitude of the Old Believers to European medicine started to change, but folk medicine still remained in full power, and a healer was trusted more than a doctor.

Family and marriage relations: traditions and innovations

Since olden times, the Old Believers had hierarchical relations within a family, established as early as by "Domostroy". Their families were traditional, patriarchal, with a lot of children. In a large household comprising several houses, up to four generations of one family lived. A husband's supremacy over a wife was recognized. All issues of social life were resolved by men only, without any participation of women. Adultery, both of a husband and a wife, were strictly reproached. Inter-ethnic and inter-confessional marriages were forbidden. Communicating with the "Nikonians" was blamed. Due to the features of the morals and manners, related to the religious world outlook, the Old Believers did not mix with the Orthodox Russians and retained their specific characteristics, both moral and physical.

In the families of Old Believers, entertainment was limited; the violators of strict rules could be excommunicated or anathematized by a ritualist. Having a meal together with the heterodoxes was forbidden. The Old Believers did not smoke and almost never drank alcohol.

The Old Believers zealously protected and maintained the principles formed for centuries. However, in the 1920-s, under the influence of the general social-economic changes in the country and the personality liberation, the marriage and family relations started to be significantly changed.

The Soviet regime created a new form of marriage, performed independently by the mutual desire of a groom and a bride. However, most of the Old Believers did not recognize the state registration of marriage, considering it to be "Antichrist's seal", a sin, etc. Even at the end of the 1920-s there were cases of forced marriages. The bride's parents asked for bride price; wealthy families sometimes paid as much as 100–150 rubles.

The property and land plots were rarely divided in the Old Believers' families; as a rule, they were inherited through the male line. However, under the influence of Socialist novelties, divisions of property became rather frequent, which caused large family troubles aggravated by ideological confrontations between family heads and youths. More and more often in the Old Believers' settlements, the youth, having assimilated the new outlook, attended reading houses, sang revolutionary songs, got used to smoking, diverged from observing fasts, attending temples and praying houses, and started to resist parental power. The youth started to form their own views, they dared to criticize their parents' actions and express their own thoughts in public.

As a result of activities aimed at liberation of women, there started reevaluation of the role of women, especially the young ones, in the family, marriage, and society. It was hard to reject the ancient precepts, such as "a woman's path is from a kitchen corner to a threshold", "a hen is not a bird, a woman is not a person". Nevertheless, there appeared village activists, komsomol members, delegates, etc. among women. For example, on October 27, 1925, there was a meeting of women peasants of Novosretensk settlement of Okino-Klyuchevskaya volost of Troitskosavskiy aymak with the following agenda: "1. Elimination of illiteracy among women; 2. Electing delegates for a volost conference to be held on November 1,

1925". First, the participants listened to a report by the representative of Okino-Klyuchevskaya committee Fedotov, who explained "the importance of education for those living far from the center and the town, those still in the darkness of ignorance, and that it is easier for a literate person to improve the household" and urged the women to attend literacy schools. As for the first issue, the participants resolved: "we, the present at the meeting, realize that literacy brings more benefits for every person and, not to remain in darkness and ignorance in future, we will take all measures to eliminate illiteracy; we pledge ourselves to attend literacy schools and involve everyone with low consciousness". As for the second issue, Fekla Kornevna Grigoryeva and Evdokia Ivanovna Petrova were unanimously elected delegates for the volost conference.

The traditional society was not ready for such changes and did not want to accept a woman of the new type. For example, "in Desyatnikovo settlement, at an organizational meeting of a Settlement Soviet two women peasants were elected the Soviet members; for that they were ridiculed by their husbands' relatives". Those women who expressed active living position and wished to "cast off the chains of family slavery" faced deprecation and mockery of the villagers, confrontation of relatives, were exposed to attacks and beatings by their husbands, threats to be turned out of home.

At the end of the 1920-s – beginning of the 1930-s, a small fracture of women started to reject the traditional Old Believers' clothing, changing a kichka (headdress) for a shawl and making their dress shorter. However, even these changes were condemned by the Old Believers. Anyway, these were individual cases, while the majority of women continued to be under the influence of the clergy and were fearful of sins, especially women with children, as it is written in the Scriptures: "the sins of parents will fall on their children".

Religious tradition and the Soviet novelties

Due to the high level of religiousness and traditional character of the Old Believers' community, many Socialist novelties were not supported by the Old Believers. They continued celebrating church and folk holidays, opposing the Soviet ones: "Laypeople, do not observe the new rule and work at holidays, as the God will send hail and destroy all your crops".

The Old Believers made a stand for preserving the religious way of living, especially as regards burying the dead. For example, in Nikolskoye settlement, ritualists refused a Communist father not only to perform a funeral service for his daughter, but also to bury her in an Orthodox cemetery. Finally, she was buried, but without "any religious rites". Characteristically, the father-Communist regretted greatly about that, which demonstrates the preserving inertia of religious traditions, even among the rural party activists.

The greatest resistance of the Old Believers was caused by substituting the church rites with new Soviet traditions, based on revolutionary values and ideals: celebrating birthday instead of Angel's day, naming the newborns not according to the book of saints but with new names, symbolizing the revolutionary events and ideas. However, by the end of the 1920-s the new forms of celebrating, the Soviet ceremonies and rituals started to be actively introduced into the life of the Old Believers' communities. For example, "...in Bolshoy Kunaley settlement, a daughter of the Village Soviet secretary Fokey Vasilyev was named with the name Lidiya, which is unusual for the Old Believers, without any participation of ritualists... Before a vast assembly in a club, speeches were made, parents were congratulated, presents were given. The speeches were aimed against the ritualists. Christening was announced nonsense and fraud. Religious old men and women were outraged and shocked by such sacrilege. But they could do nothing".

The comprehensive social-historical and social-psychological process of assimilating new social forms, economic relations and value conceptions, dictated by the authorities in compliance with the Bolshevik paradigm of Socialist society, was characterized by a wide specter of reactions of the population to the Soviet novelties. These processes, similar to the rest part of the Soviet Union, in Buryat-Mongol ASSR were activated gradually, not only due to the later finishing of the Civil war and foreign intervention, but mainly due to the ethnocultural and economic specificity.

The Old Believers – socially and culturally closed community in Buryat-Mongolia – were a tightly united ethnic group, which since the moment of the church schism and up to the Revolution selflessly defended its world outlook from powerful pressure of the official church and the Tsarist government, and after the Civil war in the same zealous manner defended its centuries-old principles from the novelties of the Soviet power. Their closeness, cult of unique traditions and customs, “labor solidarity, social unity, strict morals and independence” continued to determine the specificity of the interactions of the Old Believers’ communities with the new – Soviet – power. At first the new power was perceived by many Old Believers as the power capable of bringing order to the life of the local community and to remove the hardships of the Civil war, but with the activation of antireligious propaganda their attitude to the “godless power”, “Antichrist’s servants” became deeply negative, bordering with categorical negation and fierce confrontation. The strengthening authorities started to use administrative levers for attacking the Old Believers’ communities, and the methods of antireligious struggle became more and more aggressive, which increased the Old Believers’ aversion of the Soviet atheistic regime and facilitated the popularity of opposition attitudes.

The active Soviet construction, many trends of which cardinaly opposed the Old Believers’ dogmas, caused resonance escalation of eschatological anxiety in the world outlook of the Old Believers, especially the most orthodox ones. More and more often they reasoned about the end of the world and the Doomsday. In this connection they started to more sensitively perceive the theses of the “God’s” (“clean”) and “Antichrist’s” (“unclean”) spaces.

Adaptation to the Soviet novelties, as a rule, was accompanied with rejection of the new social reality by an orthodox religious community, as well as with institutional and individual resistance. The socially and culturally closed community of Old Believers, which during a long time elaborated their own sanitary-hygienic norms and habits, categorically refused to accept the Soviet healthcare practices based on European medicine. The same was the reaction of traditional Old Believers’ communities to the Soviet modernization projects in education, in economic, leisure and everyday practices, in marriage and family relations. The interiorization process appeared to be much more complicated in the Old Believers; the new forms and relations were assimilated mainly by the youth. Interiorization was impeded by the closeness of the Old Believers’ communities, their isolation from the rest of the world, archaic traditionalism.

In the 1930-s, the position of the Old Believers, their attitude to Soviet modernization projects the communities of forcedly changed. When new revolutionary experiments – collectivization, industrialization and cultural revolution – started, cardinal measures were taken to destroy the traditional Old Believers’ way of living. As a result, “...a wave of collectivization made a breach, which caused a drastic reconstruction of the economic and cultural setup”. However, neither in those years nor later the Soviet novelties managed to completely destroy the traditional way of living of Trans-Baikal Old Believers.

4. CONCLUSIONS

During the long period of confrontation with the autocratic state and the official church, the Old Believers elaborated their own strategies and tactics of survival, which they attempted to adjust to confrontation with the Soviet power and its novelties. The conducted research showed that the more traditional and conservative a community, the harder its members, especially the most orthodox ones, perceive novelties, the stronger they oppose and resist these novelties. The practice of implementing the Soviet modernization projects of the 1920-s showed that the state (regardless of its political and ideological basis) must take into account the historical, socio-cultural and ethno-confessional features of individual regions and the peoples inhabiting them when choosing the means and elaborating the mechanisms of reforming the society.

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