

EDUCATION AND POLITICS IN KRYASHENY PAGANS: CASE STUDY OF OLD TYABERDINO VILLAGE, THE REPUBLIC OF TATARSTAN

EDUCAÇÃO E POLÍTICA EM PAGÃS DE KRYASHENY: ESTUDO DE CASO DA VELHA VILA DE TYABERDINO, REPÚBLICA DE TARTARISTÃO

EDUCACIÓN Y POLÍTICA EN KRYASHENY PAGANS: ESTUDIO DE CASO DEL VIEJO PUEBLO DE TYABERDINO, REPÚBLICA DE TATARSTÁN

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ABSTRACT: Given the expedition materials received by the authors in 2014, the article reveals the educational, political, cultural, and psychological characteristics of the sub-ethnic group of Kryashen-pagans in the village of old Tyaberdino, the Republic of Tatarstan. The purpose of the article is to study the political and ethnocultural characteristics of the Kryashen pagans. The general historical research methods, including cultural-anthropological, historical-comparative, descriptive, and the process of complex analysis are considered to meet the aim of the study. The article demonstrates how paganism and Christianity are closely intertwined in the Kryashen calendar, festive and everyday traditions, folk beliefs, education, politics, and customs. The materials of this article can be useful for ethnologists, social and cultural anthropologists, historians, politicians, museologists and culturologists, and anyone interested in this topic.

KEYWORDS: Educational characteristics. Culture. Kryashen population. Politics.

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RESUMO: *Dados os materiais da expedição recebidos pelos autores em 2014, o artigo revela as características educacionais, políticas, culturais e psicológicas do subgrupo de pagãos Kryashen na aldeia da velha Tyaberdino, na República do Tartaristão. O objetivo do artigo é estudar as características políticas e etnoculturais dos pagãos Kryashen. Os métodos gerais de pesquisa histórica, incluindo cultural-antropológica, histórico-comparativa, descritiva e o processo de análise complexa são considerados para atender ao objetivo do estudo. O artigo demonstra como o paganismo e o cristianismo estão intimamente ligados no calendário Kryashen, nas tradições festivas e cotidianas, nas crenças populares, na educação, na política e nos costumes. Os materiais deste artigo podem ser úteis para etnólogos, antropólogos sociais e culturais, historiadores, políticos, museólogos e culturologistas e qualquer pessoa interessada neste tópico.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Características educacionais. Cultura. População kryashen. Política.*

RESUMEN: *Dados los materiales de la expedición recibidos por los autores en 2014, el artículo revela las características educativas, políticas, culturales y psicológicas del grupo subétnico de Kryashen-paganos en el pueblo del antiguo Tyaberdino, la República de Tartaristán. El propósito del artículo es estudiar las características políticas y etnoculturales de los paganos de Kryashen. Se considera que los métodos generales de investigación histórica, incluidos el cultural-antropológico, histórico-comparativo, descriptivo y el proceso de análisis complejo, cumplen el objetivo del estudio. El artículo demuestra cómo el paganismo y el cristianismo están estrechamente entrelazados en el calendario de Kryashen, las tradiciones festivas y cotidianas, las creencias populares, la educación, la política y las costumbres. Los materiales de este artículo pueden ser de utilidad para etnólogos, antropólogos sociales y culturales, historiadores, políticos, museólogos y culturologos, y cualquier persona interesada en este tema.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Características educativas. Cultura. Población de kryashen. Política.*

Introduction

The Kryashens are an ethno-confessional group of Tatars with a number of ethno-cultural characteristics: Orthodox faith and stable ethnic identity.

There are different versions of the Kryashens origin. The most widespread and well-grounded theory tells that the formation of the Kryashens on the territory of the former borders of the Kazan Khanate is associated with the mass adoption of the Orthodox faith during Christianization in the second half of the 16th century, after the conquest of Kazan by Ivan IV. This group is referred to as "newly baptized" in various documents (VOVINA, 2006). The second wave of baptism took place in the 18th century, after which this category of the population began to be called "newly baptized", and those who were baptized in the previous period were named "old baptized." However, a large number of "newly baptized" Tatars returned to Islam again in the 2nd half of 19th - early 20th century, while almost all "old

baptized" remained Orthodox. N.I. Vorobyov wrote that this is due to the fact that in the 16th century Islamic culture did not have time to penetrate into everyday life when the "old baptized" appeared, and some part of the population continued to adhere to traditional beliefs, thereby partly remaining "pagan". N. I. Vorobyov wrote about this in 1929: "Observing everyday life and even the language, one can say with a significant degree of probability that these Tatars were either not Muslims at all, or were so little in Islam that it did not penetrate into their life".

There is also another theory, according to which the Kryashens are the descendants of the Orthodox population that lived on the territory of the Middle Volga region until the XIV century. However, no documentary evidence was found.

During the 19th century, pagan Kryashens lived in the Kazan province, which is documented. Nowadays, there are "unbaptized Kryashens", which are a small ethnic group of the Molkeev Kryashens in the village of Staroye Tyaberdino of the Kaibitsky region, the Republic of Tatarstan. This group of Kryashen pagans consider themselves Kryashens, having nothing to do with Orthodoxy, being unbaptized and worshiping pagan gods (SETIAWAN *et al.*, 2020).

Methods

The methodological basis of the research involves the study and consideration of the ethnic group of unbaptized Kryashens based on a polyparadigmatic approach. The work uses general historical research methods: cultural-anthropological, historical-comparative, descriptive, as well as the method of complex analysis. Also, the article uses quantitative and qualitative methods: discourse - a mass survey through questionnaires, participant observation, focus groups, and in-depth interviews.

This article is based on field materials from the ethnographic expedition of 2014. As part of the study, 100 Kryashens were interviewed, of which 52 were women and 48 were men. The study covered the Kaibitsky administrative-territorial region of the Republic of Tatarstan, which is conditioned by the compact residence of the Kryashens on this territory. There were 2 focus groups and 5 interviews with the representatives of the Kryashen population in the area.

The interviews with Kryashens - pagans in the Kaibitsky region of the Republic of Tatarstan provided unique information about their lifestyle, social identity, beliefs, origin, national language, family rituals and traditions.

Results and Discussion

Paganism is a mythological worldview associated with the worship of nature, worship of the spirits of nature, belief in magic, witchcraft, usually based on traditional beliefs, mythology and folklore of a particular people (ANICHKOV, 2009).

Kryashens - pagans live in the village of Staroye Tyaberdino, Kaibitsky municipal district of the Republic of Tatarstan. This group of Kryashens (the so-called unbaptized Kryashens or pagan Kryashens) consider themselves as Kryashens, having nothing to do with Orthodoxy, being unbaptized.

This area is bordered by the Chuvash Republic, where a local group of lower Chuvash (Anatri) lives, among whom paganism is very widespread. These intercultural interactions influenced the ethnic identity of the Kryashens of the Kaibitsky region, where 27% of respondents consider themselves Kryashens, 69% - baptized Tatars, 2% - Tatars, and 2% - Russians. This picture is conditioned by the geographical location, as well as the ethnocultural specifics of the area. Many respondents note that the Tatar population of the Kryashens is called Chuvash in the Kaibitsky region, because of the Orthodox faith, and the Chuvash call them Tatars, because of their linguistic peculiarities. It is worth noting that the cultural mutual influence of the Chuvash and Kryashen population on each other is very noticeable both in words and in the preservation of ancient pagan rituals (TITOVA *et al.*, 2017). It should be noted that the Kryashens separate themselves from both the Tatar and Chuvash population.

“It happened that Russians and Chuvashes call us Tatars, but they call us Chuvashes in Kaibitsy” (from the interview by a 54-year-old man, village Molkeevo, Kaibitsky district).

“We call our cemetery mazar, and mazar is translated as the burial place of saints from Arabic. And this is what the Azerbaijanis say, and this is a Turkic name in general, and we, the Kryashens, also say so. And the Tatars have the name zirat ... it turns out absolutely different.” (from the interview by a 54-year-old man, Molkeevo village, Kaibitsky district).

This group of Kryashens living in the Kaybitsky region identifies itself as "baptized Tatars", because the ethnonym "baptized Tatars" and "Kryashens" are synonymous words for this area, and this explains the high percentage of respondents in this region who call themselves "baptized Tatars".

The self-identification of the Kryashen pagans is also fragmented. In the village of Staroye Tyaberdino, Kaibitsky region, several families have survived, worshipping pagan gods, whom the locals call "chukynmagannar" - "unbaptized".

“... My father believed, as I did. We prayed to different Gods - heaven, rain, sun, earth. We are rural people raised by labor, and we were close to nature.” (from the interview with 57-year-old man, village of Staroye Tyaberdino, Kaibitsky district)

“... I had 5 brothers, all unbaptized were pagans. We didn't know how to pray, we hid. Father and aunt did everything on the sly. We didn't pray, at least I didn't see it.” (from the interview with 65-year-old woman, Staroe Tyaberdino village, Kaibitskiy district)

Unbaptized Kryashens tried to enter into marriages with unbaptized Chuvashes living in the neighborhood, because of similar ethnocultural characteristics and pagan beliefs. But there were also the marriages among fellow villagers with the representatives of the Orthodox Kryashens. It was strictly forbidden for men to be baptized in such marriages, however, there were the cases when it was allowed for women. Informants told about the cases when older men forbade their sons, and sometimes daughters, to be baptized (MUKHAMETGALIEV *et al.*, 2020).

Before me, there were 5 sons in the family, my mother asked my father to convert the next child to Orthodoxy, if she had a girl to be born. He did not agree, he was against it, so we never had anything Orthodox in our house. Mom kept the only cross, she hid it, and father found it and crushed it all with an axe (from the interview with 65-year-old woman, Old Tyaberdino village, Kaibitsky district).

My brother's wife forced the children to fast, hung icons, and even drove him to baptize being drunk. Then he threw out everything related to Orthodoxy, burned icons and buried Orthodox books. But it was all bad. He and his son died in a car accident. Probably, everything does not happen in vain and you have to pay for all your actions (interview, woman, 65 years old, Old Tyaberdino village, Kaibitsky district).

During the Soviet era, it was not customary to talk about their confessions. The Kryashens are pagans and were completely silent so that no one would find out about them, condemn and force them to be baptized.

“The Pope hid his faith because he was afraid that he would be baptized” (from the interview with 65-year-old woman, Old Tyaberdino village, Kaibitsky district).

The Kryashen pagans still have their cults and places of worship. One of the most significant is the old sacred oak, where all believers in pagan gods come to worship the oak and ask for help. A temple has been preserved - a cult place of pagans for various rituals in a clearing near an oak. Not only local residents (pagan Kryashens) come there, but also the adherents of pagan beliefs come from neighboring regions.

In 1999, when I started to build a new house, I sacrificed a rooster (*ətəch tubəgə*). It is customary to do this through the male line. I asked the gods for the construction blessings and built it. The Chuvash often go to this oak tree, maybe they make sacrifices - I don't know, but they are more religious than we are (from the interview with 57-year-old man, Staraye Tyaberdino village, Kaibitsky district)

Not far from the sacred oak, there is an old pagan cemetery of its own, where all the descendants of this local group are buried. There is a following sign at the entrance to the cemetery:

To you - our ancestors,
To you who died heroically for the faith of the Fathers,
To you - who kept the traditions of the hoary antiquity,
To the mortals - who saw the death of the immortal Gods,
Forever Glory to those who went into the Golden Svarga after them!

The cemetery is not large, basically all burials of the middle of the 20th century and many graves are without fences. There are no crosses in the cemetery, and there are tombstones made of granite or stone instead of crosses, and before their installation they put a wooden board with the information about the deceased. This cemetery has a tombstone with Arabic characters, which has not been dated or attributed yet. According to the legends, there are hidden jewels there with buried ancestors.

At present, many traditions and rituals have been lost for various reasons, the differences in funeral and memorial rites preserved most well. The deceased is buried in a coffin without a prayer and with certain music, with his head to the sun - facing east, thus, the monument was placed in the place where the head is located, when the Orthodox have a cross (a tombstone) at their feet. After death, it was customary to light candles, which they made themselves from wax. The commemoration was celebrated on the third, ninth and fortieth days, which also characterizes the Christian tradition.

“We lit candles like the Orthodox, but we made them ourselves - from wax” (from the interview with 65-year-old woman, Old Tyaberdino village, Kaibitsky district).

“There is no funeral service, there are no such differences. A person is not left alone in a coffin. Candles burn with no prayer. Nobody prays at the grave. The pagan faith is very logical in this regard, we are not touched, and we do not touch anyone” (from the interview with 57-year-old man, Staraye Tyaberdino village, Kaibitsky district).

The festive culture of the Kryashen pagans differs little from the Orthodox Kryashens. At present, the following calendar holidays are celebrated especially by unbaptized Kryashens

- Easter, Peter's Day (Pitrau), Trinity, Maslenitsa, and Semik (KHUSNUTDINOVA *et al.*, 2017).

“Semik is a pagan holiday. We go to the cemetery on Saturday during Semik, other villages visit it on Thursday. Many people stoked the bathhouse in the evening, and we started to stoke it in the morning to go to the cemetery clean” (from the interview with 65-year-old woman, Old Tyaberdino village, Kaibitsky district).

These holiday traditions are of great importance for the Kryashen pagans, because many have their origins in ancient pagan cults.

Thus, the traditional culture of the Kryashens-pagans has much in common with the Kryashens, however, a number of features have survived and continue to be observed, namely the worship of pagan gods, which fundamentally distinguishes them from the Orthodox Kryashens.

The study of the ethnic group of the Kryashen pagans was presented in the works of both pre-revolutionary and Soviet researchers.

In the pre-revolutionary literature, special studies of the Molkeevsky Kryashens are associated with the re-Islamization of the baptized Tatars, which A. Galbansky carried out, making missionary visits and making important reports on them. The missionaries N. I. Ilminsky, M. A. Mashanov, E. A. Malov, whose works introduce not only the customs and rituals of the Kryashens, but also their religious beliefs, also studied the life and culture of the Kryashens of that period. However, none of them considered the culture of the Kryashen pagans in detail.

During the Soviet period N. I. Vorobyov was one of the first scholars to study the origin of the Kryashens thoroughly. He raised questions about the ethnogenesis problems of the Turkic-speaking ethnic groups of the Volga region. According to N. I. Vorobyov, the Kryashens preserved their ancient way of life almost entirely and can, to a certain extent, serve as an example of the way of life that the Tatar people had before the Russian conquest. Vorobyov classifies the Kryashens as a group “isolated from their own people through baptism” (VOROBIEV, 1929). He sees the reason for the differences between the Tatars and the Kryashens, both in their different origins, and in the various cultural influences under which these groups were for more than three centuries (BARTH, 1989).

At the present stage, the ethnic identity of the Kryashens is growing, the ethnocultural Kryashen movement is reviving. In the collection of articles "Molkeevsky Kryashens" D. M. Iskhakov (1993) covers various aspects of the history of traditional culture of the Molkeevsky Kryashens, their dwellings, traditional costume, mythology and folklore, song traditions, ritual

cycles, and dialect peculiarities. The works of the Kryashen leaders also occupy a special place. G. M. Makarov (2001) is the author of various Kryashen song collections, as well as one of the prominent figures in the study of Kryashens and Kryashen culture, who considers ethnocultural processes, as well as linguistic components of the language. The head of the executive committee of the board of the republican public organization of the Kryashens of Tatarstan, L. D. Belousova publishes interesting facts and information from the life of the Kryashen pagans on the pages of the Tuganailar newspaper. However, the pagan Kryashens remain a poorly studied ethnic group.

Summary

The culture of the Kryashen-pagans of Staroye Tyaberdino village, the Kaibitsky region, the Republic of Tatarstan is quite exceptional and unique.

However, a significant layer of the traditional culture of the Kryashen-pagans was erased during the Soviet era, and the Orthodox Kryashen environment had a great influence on this living with the Kryashen-pagans on the same territory (TITOVA, 2016). Christian rituals performed by neighbors became an integral part of the spiritual life of the Kryashen pagans and were reflected in the celebration of traditional Christian holidays. Despite this, a few representatives of unbaptized Kryashens continue to preserve customs, rituals and traditions, sacredly believe and worship pagan gods, performing pagan cults. These phenomena occur, firstly, as a tribute of respect and reverence to their ancestors, primarily men, because it was forbidden to accept Orthodoxy along the male line, rather than women. Secondly, the borderland with the Chuvash Republic contributed to the conclusion of marriages between the Kryashens pagans - pagans and Chuvash -, which helped, albeit in part, the pagan culture.

The considered pagan rites of the unbaptized Kryashens, told by the informants, are very interesting, although many of them are almost not carried out anymore. Currently, some of the most pronounced pagan traditions are still in use: the worship of the sacred oak, as well as funeral and memorial rites associated with their own production of candles, and certain funeral rituals in their own pagan cemetery.

Conclusions

Having studied the historiography of the issue under consideration, one can come to the conclusion that, despite the study of the Kryashens by various authors, there are few works about the “Kryashens-pagans”, some of them are even fragmentary.

In the context of world globalization, when the interaction of neighboring peoples has a strong influence on each other, it is becoming more and more difficult to preserve identity for small local representatives of one or another ethnic group (TITOVA *et al.*, 2019). It should be noted that at present the ancient pagan traditions and rituals have been lost for various reasons. The festive tradition of the Kryashen pagans almost does not differ from the Orthodox Kryashens, they celebrate the same holidays. However, pagan Kryashens still use special funeral and memorial rites. Besides, it is strictly forbidden to accept Orthodoxy through the male line, however among the Kryashen pagans, but there are concessions on the female line.

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