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THE PROBLEM OF PRESERVING THE SINGING TRADITION OF THE OLD BELIEVERS OF THE SARATOV REGION

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Rezumat

Problema păstrării tradiției cântării bisericești credincioșilor de rit vechi din regiunea Saratov

Articolul este dedicat problemei unității tradiției staroverilor în cazul comunităților de diferite ramuri care au existat pe teritoriul regiunii Saratov în sec. al XVIII-lea – înc. sec. al XXI. Lucrarea se bazează pe studiul surselor de arhivă și materialelor de teren efectuate în perioada 2001–2022. În primul rând se arată specificul tradiției staroverilor, care vizează tendința de protecție, permițând totuși introducerea unor trăsături locale specifice, precum și pe principalele forme ale tradiției staroverilor din Saratov – monahală și parohială; se analizează dinamica dezvoltării acestor forme de tradiție; se remarcă reducerea tradiției staroverilor ai tuturor ramurilor în sec. al XX și înc. sec. al XXI. Analiza comparativă a demonstrat corelația dintre conceptele de *centru și periferie* în tradiția staroverilor din regiunea Saratov. Se arată că drumul lung de dezvoltare a tradiției studiate, împreună cu acțiunea mecanismului de protecție, a actualizat mecanismul adaptiv, reflectând procesele sociale complexe care au loc în societate. Cu toate acestea, mecanismele de adaptare, după cum arată practica modernă de cântare a staroverilor din Saratov, au vizat conservarea tradiției, ceea ce nu exclude formarea unor caracteristici specifice latente, dar irelevante ale tradiției.

Cuvinte-cheie: staroveri, cântări bisericești, tradiție regională din Saratov, periferie

Резюме

Проблема сохранения церковной певческой традиции старообрядцев Саратовского края

Статья посвящена проблеме единства старообрядческой традиции на примере общин разных толков и согласий, бытовавших на территории Саратовской губернии (области) в XVIII – начале XXI вв. Работа выполнена на основе документальных архивных источников и полевых материалов, собранных в 2001–2022 гг. В центре внимания – вопросы специфики старообрядческой традиции, нацеленной на охранительную тенденцию, однако, допускающую привнесение специфических локальных признаков; рассматриваются основные формы бытования саратовской старообрядческой традиции – монастырская и приходская; анализируется динамика развития этих форм бытования; отмечается редукция старообрядческой традиции всех согласий в XX – начале XXI вв. Сравнительный анализ показал соотношение понятий «центр» и «периферия» в саратовской региональной старообрядческой традиции. Показано, что длительный путь развития исследуемой традиции, наряду с

действием охранительного механизма, актуализировал и адаптивный механизм, отражающий сложные социальные процессы, протекающие в обществе. Однако, механизмы адаптации, как показывает современная певческая практика саратовских старообрядцев, были направлены прежде всего на сохранение традиции, что не исключает и формирования латентных, но нерелевантных ее специфических признаков.

Ключевые слова: старообрядчество, богослужбное пение, саратовская региональная традиция, периферия

Summary

The problem of preserving the singing tradition of the Old Believers of the Saratov Region

The article is devoted to the problem of the unity of the Old Believers' tradition on the example of communities of different branches that existed in the territory of Saratov region in the 18th – early 21st cent. The work is based on the study of documentary archival sources and field materials, collected in 2001–2022. The paper focuses on the specificity of the Old Believer tradition, aimed at the conservative tendency, at the same time allowing the introduction of specific local features. The main forms of the Saratov Old Believer tradition – monastic and parish; the main forms of existence of the Saratov Old Believer tradition are considered – monastic and parish; the dynamics of development of these forms of existence are analyzed; the reduction of the Old Believer tradition of all agreements in the 20th – early 21st cent. is noted. Comparative analysis demonstrated the relationship between the concepts of „center” and „periphery” in the Saratov regional Old Believer tradition. It is shown that the long development of the tradition under study, along with the protective mechanism, also gave rise to an adaptive mechanism reflecting the complex social processes occurring in society. However, as the contemporary singing practice of Saratov Old Believers demonstrates, these adaptive mechanisms were primarily aimed at preserving the tradition, which does not preclude the development of latent, but irrelevant, specific features.

Key words: old believers, church singing, Saratov regional tradition, periphery

The Old Believer tradition is a complex multi-dimensional phenomenon with a long and dramatic history of its existence. Being the heir to the medieval, pre-reform era of the Russian Orthodox Church, Old Believers have managed to preserve the spirit and strength of the Orthodox faith, to bring to us the

sound of medieval chants, and to protect their rich culture of the past.

Two parameters can be singled out as the most important systemic features of the Old Believer tradition: stability and self-sufficiency. Due to objective socio-cultural factors, Old Believer community functions as a closed system, where information exchange with other cultures is very limited. The confessional isolation of Old Believers is an expression of the protective mechanism. Let us remember that Old Believers have always sought to settle in uninhabited places, removed from the gaze of the church and secular authorities. They isolated themselves in areas with a heterogeneous population, forming their own confessional neighbourhoods, and streets; their houses were closed to prying eyes, and the windows facing the street were tightly shut with shutters, up to the present time in everyday life they often use unconverted utensils, etc.

The Old Believer cultural system is oriented primarily not to the creation of the new, but to the reproduction of that which has the authority of tradition. That is why the ideology of Old Believers is consciously distinguishing its culture from the other culture – new, modern, post-reform, which, according to the belief of the bearers of the tradition, is borrowed, introduced, foreign, and therefore fundamentally wrong. In addition, the representatives of this or that Old Believer consensus assume the exclusive validity of their confessional version of the liturgical rite and doctrine in general. The principle of reproducing a certain confessional tradition inevitably cultivates the ideology of one's consensus, as well as the attitude that only this consensus inherits the concept of true Orthodoxy. Thus, Old Believers living in Saratov region realise their belonging to one confessional denomination of the region. For example, the adherents of the Pomorian branch of Volsk and Petrovsk support the concept of true Orthodoxy. Volsk and Petrovsk maintain close contacts with Saratov Pomors, but if this fails, they establish ties with Old Believers of a denomination close to their own (for example, with the Fedoseevtsy). A similar situation is characteristic of all other branches. Old Believers of different communities also turn to the representatives of their own denomination for the correction of rites, acquisition of religious literature, church utensils, crosses, etc. Thus, within the framework of a single confessional regional tradition there is an intensive process of communication between Old Believers, which indirectly confirms its unity.

Finally, the centuries-old practice of secret prayer and persecution of Old Believers for their religious beliefs could not but contribute to confessional iso-

lation in the life of communities. While experiencing great difficulties and the direct threat of extermination throughout their existence, the Old Believers, forced to transform to a greater or lesser extent, always retained the systemic features of their culture.

However, the Old Believers' reverent attitude to the inherited tradition fulfils not only a protective, but also a selective function in relation to possible additions to their liturgical practice. This mechanism allows a given cultural system to allow only those changes that do not have a destructive effect on this system. As the analysis of the current state of Old Believers' culture shows, the renewals present in their contemporary liturgical practice are not radical, they are local and very organic. It should be noted that the constant actualisation of the protective mechanism in this cultural system confirms the numerous studies by scholars of social groups that have found themselves in a foreign cultural environment: "We can speak of a special ethnic aggravation of cultures that have existed side by side and in interaction for a long time. Ethnic sharpness of development could be realised in the preservation of their own, sometimes very archaic forms and genres, and in the emergence (assimilation, transformation and structural integration) of new forms as the results of interaction, and, finally, in a special internal pulse, internal tension and intensity of traditional art, including its historically long-lasting productivity, which affirms and supports the ethnic (as well as national) identity of the people and their group" (Лапин 1995: 63-64).

The Old Believer tradition lives and develops, feeding on the rich medieval church art, which allows it not only to preserve the heritage of the past, but also to consistently renew it, creating new samples. In our works we have repeatedly considered aspects of Old Believer creativity on the example of the Saratov regional tradition (Полозова 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2016). It extends to practically all aspects of liturgical practice: its comprehension (for example, the creation of such outstanding monuments of Russian religious and social thought as the "Pomorian Answers" by brothers A. and S. Denisov, numerous polemical and hagiographic literature, the creation of new interpretations of saintly and theological works, the formation of texts justifying the correctness and truthfulness of ancient piety and of one's own denomination in particular, etc.), and performance (the development of temple construction, iconography, church singing art – new types of chants, the creation of Old Believers' editions of pre-reform and post-reform hymns, a substantial renewal of the corpus of spiritual verses, etc.). Thus, the Old Believers' reverent attitude to the inherited

tradition fulfils not only a protective but also a generative function, consistently renewing and developing pre-reform ethical and aesthetic attitudes. Along with this, within the framework of the tradition under study, we should also note a selective function in relation to possible innovations. This mechanism allows the Old Believers to allow only those changes into their liturgical life that do not have a destructive effect on the cultural system.

Undoubtedly, the Old Believer tradition, which has spread in all regions of Russia and abroad, and has taken root practically on all continents of the planet, is represented by a multitude of regional variants characterised by both typologically close (sometimes identical) and specific, local characteristics. "In both Russia and diaspora contexts, including Serbia, preserved elements from the 14th–16th centuries – such as liturgical chants, handwritten books, and ecclesiastical art – are actively used and symbolically valorized as markers of religious purity and tradition" (Иванић, Томин 2022). At the same time, its serious regional study has become relevant only since the end of the XX century. The generalisations presented in this article reflect the observation and study of the Old Believers' singing traditions of the Saratov regional tradition.

Saratov region has been one of the major Old Believers' centres up to the present time. During the 18th – early 21st century, influential and large monastic complexes (on the Bolshoy Irgiz River and Cheremshan Key) and communities of various Old Believers were formed on the territory of the province. Thus, along with the main branches of Popovtsy and Bespopovtsy, represented by Belokrinichniki, Beglopopovtsy, Pomors, Fedoseyevtsy and Spasovtsy, there were also extremely radical, as well as not very widespread Old Believers' branches whose specificity lies in some ritual rather than dogmatic aspects. All of the above-mentioned branches had varying degrees of prevalence and impacted the population of the region in different ways (Mihaila 2011: 351-358).

Saratov's Old Believers have a long history of existence, which begins from the time of the split of the Russian Orthodox Church in the middle of the 17th century. Consequently, Old Believers as an opposition movement existed in Saratov's regional tradition from the time of its inception. It actively developed over the following centuries and by the beginning of the 21st century retained a developed network of Old Believers parishes and communities in the territory of Saratov region.

Thus, the Saratov regional tradition is representative, it reflects the general processes that character-

ise the history of this denomination. On the territory of Saratov region there were large Old Believers' centres, representing two forms of tradition: monastic and communal-parish.

The monastic form is represented by the two most important spiritual and cultural centres of the Volga region – the Irgiz and the Cheremshany monasteries. These monasteries developed thorough traditions, including church singing, established scriptoria, icon-painting workshops, and a well-structured singing education process. Monastic liturgical singing was characterised by high professionalism, and local singers created new editions of chants, carried out textological work on editing books, and rewrote musical-theoretical manuals. In the Irgiz monasteries, the solemnity of the divine services promoted the development of the traditions of demestvo, as a result of which new variants of demestvo chant appear here, the practice of multiple chanting within the framework of demestvo is consistently preserved, and a considerable number of demestvo singers are created. The traditions of the Irgiz monasteries were actively and consistently developed in the Cheremshany monasteries. In the Saratov regional tradition, the monastic form of the Old Believers' existence extends to the end of the 18th – the beginning of the 20th centuries, and after the closure of the monasteries in 1918–1929 it ceases to exist.

In the 21st century we observe the facts of the revival of monastic practice in these lands, but already in a modified form. The study of the current state of tradition in the region allows us to identify three parallel vectors of monastic life. The first is connected with the change in the confessional affiliation of the monasteries. Thus, two of the five Irgiz monasteries have now been restored, fully equipped and monastic life flows in them. However, the divine service here is conducted not according to the Old Believer canon of the Beglopopovtsy Church, but according to the rules of the official dominant Orthodox (New Believer) Church. These are the Irgiz Nizhne-Voskresensky monastery (in the New Believer status since 2005) and St Nicholas female monastery (restored in 2000).

The second vector is aimed at the revival of the Old Believer monastic tradition. Through the efforts of the highest Old Believer clergy of the Belokrinitsa (Popovtsy) branch and the local secular authorities, a decision was made to return some of the lands of the Cheremshany monasteries to the Old Believer community. Thus, in 2017, the most important spiritual centre of Russia of the late 19th – early 20th century, the male Holy Dormition (former Serapion) Monastery was legally revived. However, up to the

present time it has not been significantly developed and, therefore, cannot be regarded as an important spiritual and cultural centre as the Serapion Monastery was a century earlier.

Finally, the third vector is related to the emergence of new spiritual centres of Old Believer culture. Expeditionary studies of recent years have discovered such unique phenomena on the territory of the region, not far from the former Old Believer monasteries. For example, in 2022 in the Khvalynsk district of Saratov region we met a nun of the Beglopopovtsy branch, Fevronia, who, after getting a blessing, founded her own monastery in the small village of Podlesnoye in the Khvalynsk district near the former Cheremshany monasteries, where she conducts all divine services with the rare help of local Old Believers. Thus, the powerful monastic tradition that existed in Saratov Province in the 18th – the first quarter of the 20th century has been significantly transformed and forcibly reduced in the last century, and at present we find extremely modest evidence of the former rich Old Believer monastic practice.

The communal-parish form of Old Believers' existence in the region is represented by a developed network of various Old Believer denominations of both Popovtsy and Bespopovtsy persuasions. Large Bespopovtsy singing centres were the communities of Pomors and Fedoseyevtsy of Saratov and Samodurovka (Belogorny), Spasovtsy of Saratov, Volsk, Elkhovka, etc. In many respects, the communities of Popovtsy branches were oriented towards the monastery practice, from where priests, statute-makers and head-masters were invited, singing books and church utensils were sent. The most significant singing choirs in the region were in possession of the Beglopopovtsy of Volsk and Nikolaevsk, as well as the Belokrinichni of Saratov, Khvalynsk and Sosnovaya Maza.

The communal-parish form of life of Old Believers has its own specificity, which is also reflected in their church singing practice. Firstly, having strong clergy, here, unlike the Old Believer monasteries of the region, there were not so many well-trained singers, as well as no constant clergymen. Secondly, the communities did not have specially organised scriptoria, where local editions of chants could be recorded, as was the case on the Irgiz. Thirdly, with rare exceptions, no manuals on musical theory reflecting the depth of comprehension of church singing practice were created here. Fourth, manuscripts belonging to Old Believer communities in the region are much less likely to contain multiple chants (the presence of different melodic variants of a single liturgical text), as each community gravitates towards

its favorite and often the only variant of chants. Fifth, not all branches (first of all, the Bespopovtsy) managed to organise the process of teaching the art of singing, which in many ways contributed to the maintenance and preservation of the Old Believers' church singing culture.

In general, the Old Believer monasteries and community and parish centres of the Saratov regional tradition in the historical perspective form a tradition powerful in its roots and rich in cultural and ideological terms. In the 18th – early 20th century, Saratov's Old Believers largely occupied a leading position in the social life of the region, determining its economic and cultural activities. The special atmosphere of the sound of banner singing on the best Old Believers' choirs was a model of liturgical singing not only for the Old Believers, but also for the followers of the dominant Church.

As is well known, every regional tradition in the spatial dimension has its centre and periphery. Limitrophic (border) territories are traditionally considered the most vulnerable in terms of preserving cultural regional features, they are more susceptible to updates and here the processes of change are more dynamic. In the centre (core) of a given regional tradition, the dynamics of cultural change should be less noticeable. The centre is more oriented towards a stable state, while the periphery is more mobile.

Let us consider the above-mentioned on the example of the current state of the Old Believer communities of the Saratov region. The peripheral communities tend admit features which are generally not peculiar to the Old Believers' tradition much more often: for example, the active use in the performing singing practice of folklore manner of intonation with the use of such characteristic techniques as glissando, parallel thirds, word breaks, etc. In our opinion, these additions are largely determined by two factors. Firstly, the strong influence of folk-song performance tradition in these peripheral zones (and not necessarily the Russian one: for example, Ukrainian singing traditions are quite strong in many villages of the Volsky district, which was caused by the resettlement movement and subsequent adaptation processes in the region). Secondly, the assumption of uncharacteristic performance traits is caused by the low level of preparation of singers on the Old Believer kliros, as well as the mentors of the congregations. As a rule, peripheral Popovtsy communities do not have their own priest – he comes to the community 1-2 times a year and conducts the divine service. A similar situation is often found in Bespopovtsy congregations, where a mentor comes several times a year from Saratov or

another large settlement in the region. As a result, the congregation, without an experienced mentor and, as a consequence, without parishioners who are well versed in the statutes of the service, all the ritual norms, and singers who know *znamenny* notation and are able to sing by hooks (*neume* notation), gradually assimilates those performing traditions that are dominant in the region. For example, such a situation is currently observed in many villages of the Volsky and Pugachev districts, where Old Believers often turn to the liturgical singing practice of the official Orthodox Church, adopting chants, learning chants from New Believers, etc. Thus, modern performance practice in a number of peripheral Old Believer communities of Saratov region gradually seems to take on features that are foreign to this singing tradition: a folklore style of performance (remember that in Old Russian church singing art, the successor of which is the Old Believer singing tradition, the areas of the church and the secular were consistently distinguished, and its own linguistic vocabulary, strict and detached from the open emotionality ethos of liturgical chants, was developed and consolidated), and a strict and unchanged ethos of liturgical chants.

At the same time, the study of the Old Believer tradition shows that the concepts of 'centre' and 'periphery' do not always fit into the framework of the geographical and administrative division of the region. On the example of the Saratov regional tradition, we can distinguish two main administrative and hierarchical levels of the rootedness of the Old Believer tradition. The main centre of the community-parish form of Old Believers in the province is Saratov, which has great cultural and historical traditions. During the 18th – the first quarter of the 20th century the Old Believers' influence on the life and development of the city was very significant. Over the above-mentioned period, Saratov was inhabited by quite a few rich Old Believer families and trustees – adherents of the old faith, using their funds to erect Old Believer chapels, equipping them, purchasing for them church utensils, books, and icons. In addition, the large population of the city also contributed to the formation of a representative number of Old Believers.

The second level of administrative centres of the province, in which large and influential Old Believer communities functioned, are the county towns of Volsk, Nikolaevsk (now Pugachev), and Khvalynsk. It should be noted that not all district towns of Saratov region played the role of Old Believers' centres, and a number of district centres of the region did not host Old Believers' communities. For example,

in Balashov district, which formed later, in the last quarter of the 18th century, there were other widespread religious movements, such as the Molokans.

Along with administrative centres that hosted strong and influential Old Believers' monasteries and parishes, a number of territorially peripheral, but ideologically and culturally key Old Believers' centres were formed in the province, such as the villages of Boltunovka (Ulyanino), Elkhovka, Samodurovka (Belogornoye), Sosnovaya Maza (Khvalynsk district and Cherkasskoye (Volsk district) and Cherkasskoye (Volsk district) and many others. These villages, peripheral from the administrative point of view, were extremely important for the Old Believers, because here the Popovtsy or Bespopovtsy instructors performed services, and ceremonial divine services were regularly held, attended by a large number of Old Believers from this village and from the surrounding territories. These communities had their own temples and chapels, liturgical books, including singing books, the clergy were equipped with experienced and competent singers, and the traditions of pre-reform worship were carefully preserved. Consequently, the qualitative parameter of such Old Believer centres is not the administrative principle of territorial organization, but primarily sporadic, reflecting the history of settlement of the region: very often these villages were formed as secret settlements of Old Believers, and therefore were formed on the administrative periphery (e.g., the modern Old Believers of the village of Belogornoye believe that their own village, Belogornoye, is located on the administrative periphery of the region. Belogornoye village believes that the village received its original name – Samodurovka – due to the fact that its founders settled secretly, without the permission of the provincial authorities). The Old Believers have always chosen the places most remote from administrative supervision (hard-to-reach areas of Siberia, the Urals, the Volga region, etc., as well as foreign countries) to create their zones of influence in order to freely practice pre-reform rites. Therefore, the concepts of 'centre' and 'periphery' do not always work from the point of view of the administrative factor; on the contrary, to a greater extent, the Old Believer centre turns out to be the villages geographically remote from the administrative centre. Consequently, the administrative parameter in the Old Believer tradition is not relevant in our case.

The Saratov regional Old Believer tradition appears as a unified but diverse society characterised by common ideological and aesthetic attitudes aimed at preserving the liturgical practice of pre-reform Russia. The long path of historical development of

the tradition under study, along with the action of the protective mechanism, naturally actualised the adaptive mechanism, reflecting the complex social processes taking place in society. In this regard, is it possible to consider the Saratov regional Old Believer tradition unique, or, on the contrary, committed to a common and unshakable ritual canon developed in the Russian Middle Ages? Let us consider this phenomenon on the example of the monastery form of the Saratov Old Believers.

As is well known, by the heyday of Old Russian singing culture, local singing schools had already developed. Along with large monastic and regional schools there were also less independent and original ones. In spite of the fact that we know practically nothing about the development of church singing art in Saratov in the pre-reform period, nevertheless, the traditions of singing culture existed here as well, as the city was inhabited and had its own equipped churches and choir rooms. Therefore, by the period of the initial history of the Old Believers we can speak about the existence of local liturgical-singing traditions.

From the second half of the 18th century, when the Irgiz monasteries began to be built, a wave of Old Believers from Vetka (the territory of Poland, where the Old Believers formed large settlements at the end of the 17th century) rushed to the Saratov Volga region. Accordingly, the future Irgiz settlers brought with them the highly developed cultural heritage of Vetka, which is confirmed by the common design of manuscript books and numerous testimonies of contemporaries. Consequently, the Irgiz monasteries initially had to combine local singing traditions (since very soon the majority of singers in the monasteries consisted of Old Believers from the surrounding villages) and Vetka's singing traditions. In addition, Old Believers from other provinces lived in the Irgiz monasteries in small numbers. This is the first serious stage of adaptation and assimilation of different, though close cultural traditions.

Very soon, from the end of the 18th century, the Irgiz Old Believer monasteries began to function as the religious centre of the region. The authority of the monasteries was won not only by the active ideological work of the monastic inhabitants, but also by the splendor and solemnity of the divine service, in which the art of church singing took an important place. From rare archival documents we can establish that the Irgiz singers did not seek to create their own school of singing, different from other Old Believer monasteries or communities. Thus, in a letter from the abbot of the Nizhnevskresensky monastery Nicanor to Prince Golitsyn, where he writes

about the most literate singer of the monastery, Gavriil Filippov, we find the following lines: "and the singing and ritual is invariably in all the churches (Moscow, St Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Kazan, Vysokovskaya desert. – I.P., A.Ch.) is produced..." (Последние 1872: 296). Thus, Nicanor points to the common character of the Old Believer singing tradition.

A new stage of forced adaptation in the Irgiz monasteries comes in connection with the necessity to adopt the monastic status of the Edinoverie in the second quarter of the 19th century. The monasteries were subjected to forced reorganisation, the former inhabitants were expelled to their places of permanent residence, and edinovertsy monks from other provinces were resettled in the monasteries. Archival data show that only in the Spaso-Preobrazhensky monastery the main core of monks and novices were natives of the Irgiz Old Believer monasteries and Old Believers of Saratov region (ТАСО, 135, 1, 9991, 51-62). The Sredne-Nikolsky nunnery was inhabited by a group of nuns from Maksakovsky nunnery of Chernigov diocese (ТАСО, 135, 1, 9991, 75-79). The most heterogeneous is the composition of the inhabitants of the Nizhne-Voskresensky monastery, where Old Believers from Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vladimir, Kazan, Kaluga, Kostroma, Nizhny Novgorod, Orel, Simbirsk regions, Moldova, etc. were resettled (ТАСО, 135, 1, 9991, 1-5). Thus, in the reorganised Irgiz monasteries in the nineteenth century a new wave of adaptation of different regional traditions set in. The change of abbots and clergy in the monasteries should entail the penetration of new trends and traditions into monastic practice¹.

From the middle of the 19th century, after the ruin of the Irgiz Old Believer monasteries, Cheremshany monasteries were established in the north of Saratov region. Considering themselves a 'branch from the root' of the Irgiz monasteries, the Cheremshany monastery inhabitants relied on the Irgiz traditions in their worship and organisation of monastic life. However, in addition to the inhabitants from the Irgiz, many Old Believers from the whole Saratov region, as well as from neighbouring provinces and the Rogozhsky cemetery in Moscow came to the monasteries. Therefore, initially Cheremshany Old Believers represent a diverse mix of various regional (but not confessional!) traditions. In addition, it should be taken into account that the Cheremshany monasteries had very close contacts with the outside world, and the monasteries themselves were not a closed dormitory, but chapels and temples open to all Old Believers of Khvalynsk and the region. Thus, adaptation processes must have

characterised this stage in the historical development of Saratov Old Believers, which is confirmed by analysing the content of the chanting manuscripts of the Cheremshany monasteries.

As a brief historical and cultural excursion has shown, the Old Believers of the Saratov regional tradition did not represent a closed and unchanging geographical and administrative entity. This regional tradition was formed as a result of the simultaneous imposition of several factors: ideological, political, economic and social, which constantly triggered adaptation processes. However, the mechanisms of adaptation, as the modern singing practice of the Old Believers shows, were primarily aimed at the action of the protective mechanism, which does not exclude the formation of latent, but irrelevant specific features of the regional tradition under study.

In any Old Believer regional tradition there is a combination and assimilation of different regional traditions within the framework of Old Believer culture. At the same time, the local Old Believer tradition (in our case, Saratov's Old Believer tradition) will be at the core of the adaptation process, while the influence of introduced elements in the liturgical practice, as a result of complex migration processes, cannot be excluded. The contemporary singing practice of some Saratov Old Believer communities shows that migrants, participating in the worship service, contribute to the introduction of their own (community-specific) manner of singing and intonation, and in some cases, new chants. "Migration is always embedded in a rich polyphony of meanings and complex facets, most often reflecting its political, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions" (Branîște 2016: 18-23).

Thus, the Saratov regional Old Believer tradition is an organic synthesis of its various regional and confessional variants, where the local features undoubtedly dominate, subordinating the newly introduced elements, while the latter colour and renew the tradition sanctified by centuries.

Notă

¹ Archival documents show that many migrants, who had been clergymen of other monasteries, also became clergymen on coming to Irgiz. For example, monk Felagrius, who came to the Sredne-Nikolsky monastery from the Vysokovsky Uspensky edinoverstny monastery, "was at the clergyman's service and at the clergyman's wing" (GASO, 135, 1, 8536, 1, 5).

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