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ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ
имени М.В. Ломоносова

ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЙ ФАКУЛЬТЕТ

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**Язык, книга
и традиционная культура
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в науке, музейной
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Сборник научных статей включает 63 статьи, в основе которых лежат доклады ученых из семи стран, прочитанные на традиционной научной конференции археографической лаборатории исторического факультета МГУ имени М.В. Ломоносова. Работы посвящены проблемам языка, книжной, духовной и материальной культуры русского Средневековья (XV–XVII вв.), истории, культуре, современному состоянию старообрядческих общин в России и за ее рубежами.

Для ученых, специалистов гуманитарных дисциплин и самых широких кругов читателей, которых интересует история и традиции русского народа.

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Rogers Douglas

The Spaces of Old Belief in the Upper Kama (20th century)

The theme of space appears frequently in I.V. Pozdeeva's publications on the traditions and book culture of Old Believers (beginning with [1]). I first heard her lecture about space in a crowded train kupe in 1994, when I was a student beginning my first expedition to the Upper Kama of the Perm Region. When I later lived in the town of Sepych for nearly a year (in 2001), I brought my notes from that lecture with me. They helped shape my own questions about Old Belief, including about how it had – and had not – changed in the socialist period.

Resettlements in the Socialist Period

In the decades of serfdom and emancipation, the high number of villages, hamlets, and agricultural communities spread throughout the Upper Kama was one important factor in shaping local Old Believer communities (see [2]). The dispersed configuration of agricultural settlements had long been tied to the decentralized organization of local religious communities [3]. The twentieth century recast this entire arrangement of the countryside. Indeed, the movement of the rural population into cities, towns, and centralized villages was one of the most consistent dynamics of the Soviet period. In 1926, the Sepych rural soviet included 114 separate population centers – a conglomeration of villages, settlements, and scattered independent farmsteads. Their populations ranged from 6 to 150 residents; Sepych itself counted only 254. By 1972, there were but 29 population centers in the Sepych rural soviet. During my primary fieldwork in 2001, only 12 remained. Sepych had grown to around 1,400 residents, with just over 300 people in the remaining outlying villages.

The most intense waves of Soviet resettlement and centralization in the Upper Kama began with initiatives from above, as part of socialist plans to maximize productivity in the agricultural sector and transform the Soviet economy as a whole through urbanization and industrialization [4]. These campaigns differed markedly in method, from the violent removal of wealthy peasant families in the early 1930s to more gentle inducements in the 1970s. In many cases, in fact, younger rural residents needed little overt prodding from above to leave smaller villages and settlements for the very different kinds of communities to be found in centralized farming operations or growing socialist cities. Whether the result of forced resettlement, voluntary movement, or some combination thereof, all of these peregrinations unfolded within the general context of programs designed to increase state control over the means of production and more effectively redistribute resources throughout the socialist system.

In the Upper Kama, the influence of pre-Revolutionary agricultural communities on population patterns and movements had already declined somewhat by the beginning of wholesale collectivization in the fall of 1928. The Stolypin reforms of the early twentieth century and the hybrid state capitalist economy of the New Economic Policy (1921–1928) fostered the appearance, if never the entrenchment, of independent farmsteads (*khutory*) and some small experimental «socialist communes», the average size of which was a mere eleven households in the Vereshchagino district [5]. The collectivization campaigns of the late 1920s and early 1930s sought, in the ideal, to eliminate both farmsteads and the early, largely ineffective, socialist communes and to replace them with collective farms, in which land was to be held and worked communally by all members. By 1932, nearly all of the peasants in the Vereshchagino district had joined collective farms by one route or another. A small number steadfastly refused to join the collectives, and these independent farmers (*edinolichniki*) continued to live on their farmsteads, often with nominal membership in the collective farm or with only one member of a household registered in the collective farm. There was, at first, a far greater proportion of these *edinolichniki* in the Upper Kama than elsewhere in rural Russia, likely indicating a higher degree of refusals to join early collective farms among Old Believer merchants in the area (S.A. Dimukhametova, I.V. Pozdeeva, personal communication). The early Soviet household books for the Siva district, to the north of Sepych in the Upper Kama, confirm that these stand-alone farmsteads were home to only the eldest residents. In 1940, for example, there were only five remaining *edinolichniki* (down from scores in 1938) in the Siva district; their average age was nearly 68 [6].

Although the collectivization drive was certainly heavily resisted, in and around Sepych as across in the Soviet Union, early collectivization did not seriously challenge the village-level and slightly larger units of organization that had long been the primary units of affiliation for peasants. In other words, establishing these first collective farms often did not involve the physical relocation of peasants to another village, but rather the reconceptualization of existing village boundaries and property relationships in an effort to reincorporate the small settlements and farmsteads that had cropped up along their edges.

Collectivization did, however, depend heavily on the massive, forced removal of peasant families from the local countryside altogether. Dekulakization – the deportation of «rich peasants» (kulaks) and any other families unfortunate enough to attract that label – hit the Upper Kama particularly hard [7]. Much of the intent of collectivization and dekulakization was not simply to move peasants into larger, collectivized villages, but to shift them out of the countryside altogether, into the labor-hungry industrial sector of the Soviet economy (some of it in labor camps). For the same reasons that the Red Army was drawn to the large grain stores of Sepych in 1918, the once-wealthy Old Believer peasants of Sepych and the surrounding areas were prime targets for district party officials seeking to fill deportation quotas in the early 1930s.

The young communists in charge of identifying and relocating kulaks in the Vereshchagino district found in the Sepych Uprising a convenient source of supporting evidence. Not for the last time in the Upper Kama, even peripheral participation in the violence of August 1918 returned to sow yet more violence. The deportation orders for E.Kh. Silkin and his family, for example, begin by listing their extensive property before the Revolution and their exploitation of labor by hiring help, then introduce as aggravating evidence Silkin's alleged role in the Sepych Uprising. Deported on June 22, 1931 amidst the drive to collectivize, Silkin was later arrested, tried, and shot in fall of 1937 – on the evidence of a counterrevolutionary career beginning with the Sepych Uprising and his prior dekulakization [8]. One elderly woman succinctly summarized the effects of dekulakization as follows: between those wealthiest families who were deported and those who hurriedly left of their own accord, «not a single one is left» [9]. Only a few in present-day Sepych remember direct relatives who were permanently deported, a consequence of the fact that the most common unit of dekulakization was the entire family rather than a single individual. Memories cluster, rather, around former neighbors and more distant kin; «Our kin [rod] are scattered all over Siberia», one friend told me. Thus were many of

the most established families of the Upper Kama eradicated from its older moral communities as one especially violent part of socialist efforts to make new ones.

A second major period of resettlement began in the Upper Kama in 1940, as it became apparent to regional planners (themselves responding to initiatives from further above) that still-extant individual farmers and farmsteads were interfering with plans to increase the collective farms' productivity. In late June of 1940, the regional party and executive authorities decreed that any village with fewer than ten households would be considered a farmstead (khutor), and its population forcibly relocated to a nearby village by late July (that is, within a single month!). Seventy households in the Sepych rural soviet, and just over a thousand in the twenty-six rural soviets of the Vereshchagino district, were slated for immediate resettlement. With no time for building new houses, the plans simply called for the peasant huts to be dismantled, transported, and reassembled back in the village. Fully implementing this effort proved impossible in many cases, particularly with the other demands on collective farm members during the summer months. As a result, the deserted buildings of former farmsteads often dotted the fields around collective farms for years to come, their residents likely having moved in with relatives or simply left the countryside altogether.

A third round of village resettlements came in the mid-1970s, again in conjunction with attempts to increase productivity in the agricultural sector of the Soviet economy. By this point, there were already few traces of older agricultural communities: the small village-based collective farms of the early collectivization period had given way to massive, multi-village farming operations. It was with these economies of scale in mind that the Council of Ministers' decree of March 20, 1974, «On Measures for the Further Development of Agriculture in the Non-Black Earth Zone of the USSR», foresaw the near complete disappearance of small rural villages by 1989.

Planners hoped to begin this process by resettling 170,000 families across the Soviet Union in the five-year period between 1976 and 1980. This time, the planned resettlement was not carried out nearly as swiftly as the elimination of independent farmsteads in the 1940s. Services such as schools and medical stations in rural villages, painstakingly built in earlier times to educate and care for even the most remote Soviet citizens, were steadily shut down. Massive resources were pumped into construction projects to build houses for those moving to larger rural centers from villages designated «unpromising» (neperspektivnyi).

In and around Sepych, many villagers again left for the cities, and abandoned peasant huts and outbuildings again covered the landscape for a time. One by one,

these structures were dismantled, their territories plowed into new fields. In 1976, State Farm Sepych's official plan included a list of fifty-two population centers in the enterprise's purview. According to the plan, which meticulously projected a closing year for each, forty-eight of those villages were to be closed by 1989 (the target date set by the Council of Ministers' decree). Remaining would be only Sepych itself, a large and as yet unnamed village that would combine the neighboring villages of Dëmino and Krivchana, and the remote Upper Lysvy, which was home to its own separate logging enterprise (Iespromkhoz). Based on the population figures given for each village, the plan projected the gradual relocation of 1,198 villagers and 355 families.

When the Soviet period came to a close, State Farm Sepych had fallen short by around a dozen villages in its efforts to fully centralize the once highly dispersed population. Nevertheless, the very fact that the movements and residence patterns of people in and around Sepych were now being planned and coordinated – if not always successfully – by a mammoth state enterprise speaks to the scope of the transformations that had taken place over the course of the Soviet period.

Spaces of Faith and Generation

From the perspective of residents of the Upper Kama, these resettlements were central to the refiguring of generations in the socialist period. For those who remained in the Upper Kama throughout the Soviet period, an important distinction grew up between the centralized villages toward which younger generations had gravitated and the more remote villages in which older generations had often been born and sometimes still lived. Younger generations usually moved first, for their labor was more important in the grand enterprises of Soviet agriculture; many then commuted to take care of their parents or grandparents back in their home villages. In these more remote villages, further from the prying eyes of the socialist state, elders often practiced the prayers and rituals of Old Belief with a greater degree of impunity. This pattern was repeated over the course of the twentieth century, such that elderly residents of outlying villages in the late Soviet period had often themselves relocated from still further-flung villages in their youth.

S.A. Moshev, born in the now-abandoned village of Teplenki, recalled that he walked twenty kilometers to work at the Machine Tractor Station in Sepych each Sunday for fifteen years, returning to his home village every Friday evening to visit his wife and family. He and his wife, now elderly, live in Sepych itself [10]. If, in the official Soviet terminology, «unpromising» villages such as

Teplenki were «closed», it was not uncommon to hear townspeople in Sepych say that a village had «died», or, indeed, that the countryside had died. «The villages died . . . like people in the war», reflected one elderly woman I knew. The association between Old Believer elders, themselves preparing for death, and the disappearing villages of the countryside around Sepych was as available and potent as the association between laboring youth and the centralized divisions of State Farm Sepych.

This was not, however, a forgotten landscape. «They herded us like livestock», reflected one acquaintance in Sepych, as he pored over a list of population centers in 1926 that I had obtained from the local museum. He promptly challenged his wife to a competition over who could locate more of the villages on the list; each of them confidently placed well over half of the 126 villages enumerated, despite the fact that no more than a dozen still stood. As the attention they and others lavished on my photocopies suggests, nearly seven decades of forced and voluntary resettlements had not entirely erased the numerous pre-Soviet villages from the landscape – or the memories of the elders who had lived in them. Rather, this geography of steadily disappearing villages continued to serve as a grid for the formation of moral communities in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods, although neither in the ways it had in the post-emancipation period nor, to be sure, in entirely the ways envisioned by the architects of socialist resettlement.

To learn to live in Soviet or post-Soviet Sepych – whether as child, husband or wife from out of town, or visiting ethnographer – was gradually to assimilate the history of resettlements as a basic part of getting around. Long after they had been plowed over into fields or become clusters of abandoned and decrepit houses, many villages continued to serve as sites of navigation through the countryside. Veteran tractor and combine drivers could rattle off the names of former villages for many kilometers around; directions to everything from picnics to cow pastures relied heavily on knowledge of an earlier geography of dispersed settlements. The many walks and tractor rides I took along the packed-dirt roads crisscrossing the Sepych rural administration were often accompanied by running commentaries on which villages stood where, which socialist modernization drive had transformed them from populated settlement into pasture or hayfield, and who the last residents had been. I learned to recognize the spots where villages were likely to have stood, nestled in the bends of streams or between copses of pine and birch. Occasionally, I was told, a potato cellar from a long-abandoned village would turn sinkhole under the tall meadow grass, pulling in a tractor axle during July mowing.

In nearly all cases, stories about these invisible villages included stories about Old Believer elders who had continued to live there after their children had moved to a more central village or to Sepych. Space and Old Belief remained deeply intertwined. For these older generations in the Soviet-era Upper Kama, this spatialization of generations is particularly evident in *sinodik-pomianik* manuscripts from the twentieth century. *Sinodik-pomianiks* were lists of the dead to be prayed for, cataloging the baptismal names of deceased elders according to village-based community to which they belonged. One lengthy *sinodik-pomianik*, written largely in the 1960s and given to archaeographers in 1979, provides a useful example. Each page is carefully divided into four columns giving baptismal name, date of death, month of death, and «notes». «Notes» often included patronymic names or years of death (unlike days and months, years were not necessary for determining when to hold memorial services). The first several pages of the manuscript, entitled «spiritual fathers», contain lists of names and dates with no specific village affiliation. They are presumably all or most of the spiritual fathers of either the Maksimovskie or Dëminskie concord (in this case, it is not conclusively clear to which group this manuscript belonged). The remaining pages organize deceased elders by village. In all, thirty-two villages and hamlets are covered in the fifty manuscript pages.

The entry for the village of Batalovy, for instance, reads in part as follows [11]:

Timofei	6	April	1902
Vassa	11	August	
Elena	26	November	
Andrei	1	April	1924
Marfa	4	July	1946
Anastasia	8	December	
Anna	9	December	
Irina	11	May	1939
Tat'iana	21	January	

After the many pages of dead cataloged by village, there follow lists of the names of still earlier adherents to the faith, including ancient church fathers and the Old Believers from the Pomortsy monastic settlements in the north who traveled to the Upper Kama in the early eighteenth century: «Grigorii, Avvakum, Gavriil. . .» [12].

Of the thirty-two villages mentioned in the manuscript, only around ten were still extant in the mid-1970s. It is unclear precisely when the village of Batalovy was abandoned. Its name does not appear in State Farm Sepych's plan for the future resettlement of outlying villages in 1976, meaning that it was likely already empty at that point, several years at the very least before the manuscript was discovered by archaeographers. In the *sinodik-pomianik*, however, several generations of Old Believer ancestors from Batalovy were remembered and placed among the ranks of page upon page of the dead from neighboring villages, the spiritual fathers of the Upper Kama, the first Old Believer settlers from the north, and the ancient church fathers. Part of the task of living generations of Old Believer elders was to maintain relationships with all of these inhabitants of the other world, to pray for their salvation, and to prepare themselves to join them after death. A note on the cover of one *sinodik-pomianik* reminded younger generations of just this: «Write me in here too, when I die, and leave it to my kin» [12]. In the Soviet period, writing oneself into history through manuscripts – a significant element of the creation of Christian textual and moral communities – also meant writing oneself into a rapidly shifting organization of space. It meant recalling those whose villages existed for younger generations as points in a less and less populated landscape.

Resettlement also radically transformed the circles in which those older townspeople and villagers who took up the practices of Old Belief moved. Although councils of elders remained based in villages and small groupings of villages throughout the Soviet era, resettlement and centralization steadily reduced the number of these communities. The net result, by the end of the Soviet period, was far fewer councils of elders and therefore fewer pastors. During the 1990s, there were only a handful of elderly pastors in place to challenge those new outsiders who began to vie for the religious allegiances of townspeople. Resettlement of large portions of the population also advanced a process that was likely underway to some extent even before the Soviet period: the rupture of the original association between Maksimovskie and Dëminskie factions and particular geographical sub-regions of the Upper Kama. The schism between Maksimovskie and Dëminskie in 1888 had much to do with the post-emancipation fortunes of the agricultural communities in which Maksimovskie and Dëminskie were based. As villages were closed and their populations moved in the Soviet period, there soon came to be both Maksimovskie and Dëminskie councils of elders in most larger villages, each group conducting separate services, electing its own pastors, and offering baptisms and funerals to different members of the younger generation of their faction in that village. Religious affiliation does

not appear to have influenced trajectories of resettlement; after all, most people moved during their laboring years, long before the age at which they might have considered devoting their energies to the active practice of Old Belief [13].

In sum, the reorganization of the populated landscape was a central pillar of the socialist organization of economy and society in all of its multiple modes: official and unofficial, violent and voluntary, planned and chaotic. Resettlement – especially the resettlement of youth – was clearly and directly tied to socialism’s characteristic labor shortages and central planners’ perpetual attempts to overcome them through the further rationalization of production and redistribution. Family relationships, labor patterns, religious practice, and, indeed, consciousness of local history itself stretched out across the material landscape in a generational gradient, radiating outward from the ever-expanding center of Sepych.

The socialist period drastically rearranged the spaces of the countryside of the Upper Kama, but the way in which that rearrangement was understood by local Old Believers remained closely tied to very local practices connected with the intersection of faith, family, land and space.

Notes

This article is adapted with permission from *The Old Faith and the Russian Land: A Historical Ethnography of Ethics in the Urals*, first published by Cornell University Press in 2009.

1. *Pozdeeva I.V.* Vereshchaginskoe territorial’noe knizhnoe sobranie i problemy istorii dukhovnoi kul’tury russkogo naseleniia Verkhov’ev Kamy // *Russkie pismennye i ustnye traditsii i dukhovnaia kul’tura* / edited by I.D. Koval’chenko, 11–39. Moscow, 1982.
2. *Pushkov V.P.* Revizskaia Skazka 1795 g. po sel’tsu Sepych kak istochnik po istorii staroobriadtsev Verkhokam’ia // *Mir Staroobriadchestva*, v. 5 / edited by I.V. Pozdeeva, 41–74. Moscow, 1999; *Pushkov V.P.* Zemlia i liudi Verkhokam’ia vo vtoroi polovine XVII – nachala XVII v. // *Traditsionnaia kul’tura Permskoi zemli*. Mir Staroobriadchestva, v. 6 / edited by I.V. Pozdeeva, 33–63. Iaroslavl, 2005; *Pushkov V.P.* Grafskie novatsii i krest’ianskie traditsii // *Traditsionnaia kul’tura Permskoi zemli*. Mir Staroobriadchestva, v. 6 / edited by I.V. Pozdeeva, 239–270. Iaroslavl, 2005; *Chagin G.N.* Krest’ianskaia sem’ia Verkhokam’e v kontse XVIII – nachale XX v. // *Staroobriadcheskii mir Volgo-Kam’ia* / edited by G.N. Chagin, 31–40. Perm, 2001.
3. *Pozdeeva I.V.* Kompleksnye issledovaniia sovremennoi traditsionnoi kul’tury russkogo staroobriadchestva. Rezul’taty i perspektivy // *Zhivye traditsii: Rezul’taty i perspektivy kompleksnykh issledovaniia russkogo staroobriadchestva*. Mir Staroobriadchestva, v. 4 / edited by I.V. Pozdeeva, 12–20. Moscow, 1998.
4. I have relied a great deal on the excellent local histories of the Vereshchagino district published by V.G. Mel’chakov through the Vereshchagino department of cultural affairs:

Mel'chakov V.G. Vereshchagino – Zapadnye Vorota Urala. Perm, 1993; Mel'chakov V.G. Vereshchagino: Istoriia goroda i raiona. Perm, 1994; Mel'chakov V.G. Vereshchagino: V trude i v boio. Borodulino, 1996; Mel'chakov V.G. Vereshchagino: Prodolzhenie istorii. Borodulino, 1998. I have also drawn on the local history research presented in Klimov E.F. Tragediia: Istoriia sudeb liudei i dereven' staroverov: Sokolovskii kraj (Region) v sostave trekh sel'sovetov: Sokolovskii, Sergeevskii, Nifoniatskii. Period 1918–1998 gg. 80 Let. Sokolovo, 2003; as well as the staff of the Vereshchagino and Sepych local history museums and S.N. Ponosov. See: *Bezgodov A.A. Sud'ba Verkhokamskoi derevni v XX veke na primere Koniatskogo sel'skogo obshchestva Sivinskogo raiona (po vospominaniim zhitelei, pokhoziaistvennym knigam i periodike) // Traditsionnaia kul'tura Permskoi zemli. Mir Starobriadchestva, v. 6 / edited by I.V. Pozdeeva, 291–300. Iaroslavl, 2005; for part of the story I tell here from the perspective of a single village in the Upper Kama.*

5. Mel'chakov cites a figure of 134 farmsteads in the Vereshchagino region by 1926, 110 from the era of the Stolypin reforms and 24 from the NEP period. *Mel'chakov V.G. Vereshchagino: V trude i v boio. Borodulino, 1996.*
6. Permskyi kraevoi kravedcheskyi muzei, f. 18742, dd. 60, 72.
7. On the specific course of dekulakization in the Upper Kama and the Urals, see: *Mialo Kseniia. Oborvannaia nit: Krest'ianskaia kul'tura i kul'turnaia revolutsiia // Novyi Mir v. 8, 245–257, 1988; Ural i Sibir' v Stalinskoi politike / edited by Papkov S., Teraiana K. Novosibirsk, 2002; Politicheskie repressii v Prikam'e 1918–1980 gg., 71–76 / edited by Leibovich O.L. Sbornik dokumentov i materialov. Perm, 2004.* Many of the techniques of resistance and avoidance to collectivization documented by scholars such as Lynn Viola are well attested in Sepych, among them killing livestock, burying valuables, and self-dekulakization. See Viola Lynne. Peasant rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the culture of peasant resistance. New York, 1996. PermGANI, f. 641/1, op. 1, d. 15543, t. 1, l. 59; t. 3, l. 28, 41.
8. Arkhiv Arkheograficheskoi laboratorii MGU, Video Archive 1995 #6; Arkhiv Arkheograficheskoi laboratorii MGU, Video Archive 1994 #1.
9. Interview with N.V. Litvina, Arkhiv Arkheograficheskoi laboratorii MGU, Video Archive 1995 #9.
10. ORKiR NB MGU. PV 1419 [1], l. 10 r. For other village-based lists of the dead, see ORKiR NB MGU, PV 1423, 2005 and 2049.
11. ORKiR NB MGU. PV 1419 [1], l. 41 r. These names correspond to the genealogy of spiritual fathers in the early Upper Kama.
12. ORKiR NB MGU. PV 1423, 1 r.; *Rukopisi Verkhokam'ia XV–XX vv. iz sobraniia Nauchnoi Biblioteki Moskovskogo Universiteta imeni M.V. Lomonosova / edited by E.A. Ageeva, N.A. Kobiak, T.A. Kruglova, E.B. Smilianskaia. Moscow, 1994.*
13. Communities of Maksimovskie and Dëminskie Old Believers also spread, along with some of the rural population, to the urban district center of Vereshchagino.