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'SHE HAS BECOME AN ISRAELI': WOMEN IN THE RUSSIAN SUBBOTNIK MOVEMENT OF THE 19TH CENTURY

The research focuses on the 'female segment' of the Russian Subbotnik movement – the religious phenomenon in Russia of the Modern Era. In archival documents of the 19th century, investigating the cases of the 'Judaizers sect', significant, and sometimes even key figures happen to be women born to Judaizing families or converted to the 'Jewish faith' after their marriage. They are representatives of the diverse regions and classes of the Russian Empire. They are sectarians acting primarily in their homemaking capacity: wives, daughters, mothers, daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law. At the same time they are convinced upholders of 'the Old Testament faith,' ready to sacrifice their well-being, ordinary lifestyle, and sometimes even the most precious — their own children and husbands for the sake of loyalty to the 'God of Israel'. The author examines different aspects of the lives of female followers of 'the Mosaic law': patterns and motives of conversion, position in the family, family and interconfessional relations, the role in Subbotnik communities and also the specific character of the fate of the female 'Russian Israelis' in the context of the anti-sectarian legislation of the empire. Analysis of sources shows that women played an important role in Judaizers' families and communities in the 19th century. They brought up their children in the faith, displayed perseverance in dealing with authorities and also prevented other members of the sectarian community from converting to the dominant confession. An investigation into cases of Subbotnik women represents both victims and actors who influence the life of other people, sometimes by rather harsh methods. Personal histories, the subject of the author's research, reflect on the one hand the particularities of female religiosity in Russian sectarianism, and, on the other hand, the peculiarities, tendencies, and problems of the Judaizers' movement during the reign of two Russian monarchs: Alexander I and Nicholas I. Refs 13.

Keywords: Judaizers, the Russian Subbotnik movement, women, female religiosity.

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«СДЕЛАЛАСЬ ОНА ИЗРАИЛЬТЯНКОЙ»: ЖЕНЩИНЫ В РУССКОМ СУББОТНИЧЕСТВЕ XIX ВЕКА

Исследование посвящено «женской половине» русского субботничества — религиозного движения в России эпохи Нового времени. В архивных документах XIX в., расследующих дела о «секте жидовствующих», в качестве значимых, а иногда и ключевых фигурантов выступают женщины, родившиеся в семьях иудействующих, либо обращенные в «еврейскую веру» после замужества. Это представительницы различных регионов и сословий Российской империи. Это сектантки, выступающие прежде всего в своей «семейной ипостаси»: жены, дочери, матери, невестки, свекрови. Но это и убежденные поборницы «ветхозаветной веры», готовые пожертвовать благополучием, привычным укладом жизни, а порой и самым дорогим — собственными детьми и мужем во имя верности «Богу Израиля». Автор рассматривает различные аспекты жизни последовательниц «Моисеева закона»: механизмы и мотивы конвертации, положение в семье, семейные и межконфессиональные взаимоотношения, роль в субботнических общинах, а также специфику судеб «русских израильтянок» в контексте антисектантского законодательства империи. Анализ источников демонстрирует, что женщины играли немаловажную роль в семьях и общинах иудаизантов XIX в. Они прививали веру своим детям, проявляли упорство в отношениях с властями, а также удерживали других членов сектантского социума от перехода в господствующую конфессию. В следственных делах субботницы представляются как жертвами, так и акторами, влияющими на жизнь других людей — иногда довольно жесткими способами. Микроистории, ставшие предметом исследования автора, отражают, с одной стороны, специфику женской религиозности в русском сектантстве, с дру-

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гой — особенности, тенденции, проблемы движения иудействующих в эпоху правления двух российских монархов — Александра I и Николая I. Библиогр. 13 назв.

Ключевые слова: иудействующие, русское субботничество, женщины, женская религиозность.

Researching history of 'the Mosaic Law sect', I set the objective to reconstruct biographies and portraits of the representatives of a little-known Russian religious movement of the Modern Era. But the attempted study featured male images and stories, as it dealt with leaders of the Russian Judaizers [1]. Subbotnik women were not the heads of sectarian communities; they differed from the members of the Russian mystical religious groups in that regard [2, p. 151–152; 3, p. 54, 113, 123–126, 211].

Does it mean that women were mere figureheads in the Russian Judaizers' world? What role did they play in the movement? How were the features of the latter reflected in the religious behaviour of the female 'Russian Israeli'? Can we discover peculiarities of feminine religiosity in this behaviour?

The sources of the research are archival documents containing the materials of the government institutions' bureaucracy of the Russian empire of the first half of the 19th century. Significant and sometimes even key figures of these 'cases' happen to be women, born to Judaizers families or converted to 'Jewish faith' after their marriage. They are representatives of the diverse regions and classes of the Russian empire (peasantry, tradesmen class, merchantry). They are sectarians acting primarily in their family keeping capacity: wives, daughters, mothers, daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law.

Sources provide us with some interesting microstories.

1. The Kotovs' story

It dates back to the 20-s of the 19th century. The main characters of the case, described in several documents [4–7], are two female Subbotniks — daughters-in-law in the house of the Kotovs, Ekaterinoslavl' merchants, who had passed away by the time of the investigation. The women, Agafya and Marfa, together with the rest family members were accused of belonging to 'Subbotnik heresy'.

Testimonies of the defendants provide contradictory information about the religious beliefs of all the relatives. Karp, Agafya's husband, merchant of the 3-d guild, declared that his parents were 'true Christians.' But quite a different picture was painted by the women. They claimed that they had been converted to the Subbotnik sect after the marriage by their parents-in-law. Later the older of them, Agafya, renounced her testimony against her husband's parents. However, some details suggest that her initial information was the truest.

Not a single time during the investigation did Agafya call her husband a Judaizer. And Karp himself claimed that even before the marriage his brothers and himself had performed 'all the Christian rites and duties'. Their eldest son, Ilya, called his mother a 'Dukhobor-Subbotnik' and his father — a 'Christian'. However, in the course of investigation it was discovered that the father of the family hadn't been confessing and receiving the sacrament for seven years. Karp explained that by the shortage of time due to his merchant business. Urged to do so by the police, he first promised to take the sacrament during the Lent, and then suddenly refused, saying decisively that he wouldn't go to church: 'as there is no time

on account of his commercial affairs'. Later he had to succumb to the pressure and 'turned himself to the Orthodox faith' during the Holy Week of 1822.

Marfa Kotova called her husband Dementij a follower of 'Mosaic Law' and her religious instructor. Indeed, in 1820 the tradesman Dementij Kotov was mentioned in the list of sectarians presented to the governor of Ekaterinaslavl'. But the governor's decree of 1822 stated that Dementij 'had practiced Greco-Russian faith and before his death had confessed and received the sacrament', while his wife had reneged on Christianity.

Analysis of the documents allows reconstructing the biographies of female Subbotniks. Agafya Kotova was born to Orthodox Christian parents in 1784; she got married at the age of 15. In her marriage she gave birth to 13 children, 9 of them died. The woman was illiterate, as her son Ilya signed the documents instead of her. It is very important for clarifying the reasons of conversion: she couldn't read the Bible, but at the same time during her second interrogation (despite her first statement) she insisted that she 'got herself attached to the Subbotniks faith'. According to her words, after 11 years of her marriage, she stopped attending church, confessing and taking the sacrament and started 'to observe all the rites of Dukhobor Subbotnik heresy'. To my mind, Agafya's conversion happened in her new family. And the further religious evolution of the newly converted could have happened during her contacts with the Ekaterinoslavl' sectarians. At that time Ekaterinslavl' was home to a large community of adherents of 'the Old Testament faith', and communication with Judaizers contributed to reinforcing the woman's belief. Just at the end of investigation 'the apostate' in fact confirmed that.

The sources point out the important religious role of Agafya Kotova in her family. It was she who was bringing up her children in the 'Mosaic doctrine.' Her husband was either a religiously indifferent person or was carefully concealing his beliefs. He did not consider (unlike his wife) it morally unacceptable to participate in church ceremonies. Probably, the most precious for him was his posterity and assets. While in case of exile — as a punishment for the crime — the children were to be removed from family, and the property would have been placed in trust.

Thus Agafya displayed much more religious zeal than her husband — whether he was a Judaizer or a Christian. During interrogation, realizing how her persistence might end, the woman expressed the readiness to part with her husband and be sent into exile with her teenage son and three little daughters, the youngest of them a newborn.

However, she didn't leave. During the Lent of 1823 Agafya Kotova joined the Orthodox Christian Church. It was a consequence of exhortation by a priest, appointed for this mission. Her son followed her. Finally the period of investigation was credited to the punishment for the former sectarian; in addition she was assessed 100 rubles fine. The Kotovs were subject to the unremitting supervision of the parish priest and the town police. In case of falling back into apostasy the defendants were expected to be treated with the utmost severity of the law.

Discourse of tolerance, typical of the era of Alexander I, is sensed in the verdict of the town magistrate, confirmed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Softness of the legislation and its inner contradictions [8, p. 89–93] served as basis for the sectarians' attempts to maintain their confessional identity; this is well illustrated by Agafya's example.

What made 'the apostate' change her intention to go into exile? Probably, she did not appear to be ready to part with her children: she would have to lose them (not only her husband). During the history of Subbotnik movement we face two mutually contradicting

phenomena: zealous, steadfast upholding of the 'credo' with readiness to make 'the most horrific sacrifices' (that was typical of popular sectarianism [9, p. 25] and the ability to go underground, formally renouncing their views in critical situations. Judaizers quite often seemed to belong to the dominant confession — they were being baptized, they 'sanctified their marriage in church', confessed, took sacrament, but secretly 'followed Mosaic doctrine.' For a segment of the Subbotniks this double life was not a serious moral problem. Others, on the contrary, inspired like-minded people by means of uncompromising attitude to the authorities, being an example of persistence. Such combination of 'rigid' and 'flexible' behaviour models gave certain stability to the Russian Judaizers movement; it was a way of self-preservation for sectarians. Agafya demonstrates the readiness to follow both of these routes.

The rigid model of religiosity is symbolized by the youngest daughter-in-law of the Kotovs. Marfa was born in 1792 to the Orthodox Christian family, got married at 19 and had 3 children. An interesting piece of information about her was found in the case dealing with the Subbotniks of Ekaterinoslavl' (1819). Judaizers, according to the document, were attending the town synagogue on 'Jewish holiday, called the Day of Atonement.' Orthodox Christian townsmen stated that sectarians were regularly attending synagogue — almost every Saturday and even looked like Jews. Marfa's husband admitted, that 'his wife, being a Dukhobor, observes some Jewish rites, that is: celebrates Saturday and covers her oven with stucco on that day.' Perhaps, Marfa Kotova was one of those sectarians who communicated with Ekaterinoslavl' Jews. Apparently, the Kotovs belonged to the so-called Molokan-Subbotniks, whom local authorities only discovered in 1819. Right then the Ministry of Internal Affairs prescribed to the Ekaterinoslavl' administration to resettle followers of 'Mosaic law' to the Caucasus province. Among those sentenced to exile was Marfa. By that time her husband had died as an Orthodox Christian (maybe he decided to act like Karp worrying about the fate of his children?). The widow asked local police to let her go to the Caucasus together with her children. In connection with that Ekaterinoslavl' authorities made an inquiry to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This case was obviously so important that the minister brought it to the attention of the Emperor. Alexander I gave resolution with his own hand: to place Kotova's children with some honest people for upbringing. The Emperor ruled that from now on all the children of exiled Subbotniks should have been treated in the same way. It is noteworthy that, ironically, sons and daughter of the sentenced Marfa were placed with the family of their uncle Karp and his wife Agafya. The authorities, therefore, hadn't yet identified Agafya as a Subbotnik, and her husband — as a careless Orthodox Christian. Marfa's children were still being brought up in the faith of 'Mosaic law' by their aunt. Hence, in spite of close attention to sectarians in the first quarter of the 19th century, social control over them was not strict. Almost after a year of living in a place of exile, the heroine of our story, suffering severely from separation from her beloved children, wrote a heart-breaking letter to the Minister of Religious Affairs and Public Education, Prince A. N. Golitsyn. She pinned her last hope with him. Golitsyn sent her request to V. P. Kochubey, Minister of Internal Affairs. The response of the Minister was to be expected: 'on the request of a tradesman's wife Kotova… I have no right to impose any order, since both the exile to this location and leaving her children in Ekaterinoslavl' to the custody of honest people were the result of the will of His Imperial Majesty.' Unlike Agafya, her younger like-minded kinswoman was not willing to compromise on questions of belief.

2. The story of Tatyana Gulyaeva

This case went through the Caucasus regional court in 1830, during the reign of Nicholas I. A Stavropol Judaizer, merchant Ivan Gulyaev, was accused of subverting his wife and their children into his belief [10]. His wife Tatyana, the daughter of a wealthy merchant Tarasov, according to her own testimony had known neither letters nor 'Christian rules', except for 'The Lord's prayer' before the marriage. Tarasov, marrying her daughter off, was quite aware that his future son-in-law was a sectarian. However, neither his daughter's tears nor his wife's protests prevented him. Apparently, Gulyaev's faith didn't embarrass his father-in-law, guided by merely practical interests from doing so. No wonder that Tatyana Gulyaeva being brought up by such a father was religiously akin to 'tabula rasa.' After the wedding she developed incredible affection for her husband and curiosity to his faith which encouraged the woman to learn letters from her father's clerk and start reading the Bible. Tatyana's husband, according to her words, wasn't forcing her to observe 'Mosaic Law', and even kept his religious practices secret from her: prayed at night without a candle. And only after the birth of the first daughter, having assured his wife's love, he confided in her. What we see is a typical example of spiritual craving caused by the lack of full religious life in the past. The result of this thirst was a conversion: '*she has become an Israeli*.'

The motivation of Tatyana's conversion to the Subbotnik faith, which can be discovered in investigation materials, is quite interesting. Having read the Bible, she made a conclusion: the law was given to Moses by God himself and therefore it was sacred. According to her words, strict rules of the Law had inspired her to love it. These brief explanations are identical to the arguments provided by peasant-sectarians in the second half of the 19th century in more details. Judaizers justified the superiority of 'Mosaic teaching' by its divine origin, and the idea of the severity of the Law was often present in their thoughts. 'The Old Testament faith' aroused sympathy among commoners just because of scrupulous observance of all the rules perceived as righteousness. The ritualistic nature of the biblical commandments was quite consistent with the ritual dominant in the Russian popular religiosity. In addition, the severity of the Law might have been in sync with the ascetic tendencies in the traditional culture: its observers were considered spiritual zealots, servants of God even by some Orthodox Christians [11, p. 90–92].

The neophyte's 'Jewish faith' was reinforced by the persecution of her husband by a clergyman. During the interrogation Ivan Gulyaev was recalling the priest Ivan Timofeev, who 'with the spirit of meekness, without any insults' had been urging him to convert to Christianity. Being nudged by his mentor, Gulyaev had already purchased the New Testament. However, all the efforts of the preacher were ruined by another priest's misconduct. Archpriest Mikhail Yevseev 'developed a grudge against him not due to his faith but because of his failure to provide him with hewn boards to build a house free of charge.' He began persecuting Gulyaev and the nearly inverted sectarian asked his expostulator to leave him in his previous 'delusion'. The whole story made a deep impression on Tatyana.

Together with her husband Tatyana was bringing up the children in accordance with the 'rules of Mosaic law'. Six children were born to this family, one of them died. Parents took great care of the literacy of their children, and not only sons: daughter Marya was taught literacy since 6 or 7 years of age, which was in stark contrast to the education given to Tatyana. Also, unlike Tatyana's father, they gave their daughter the right to make deci-

sion on her fate when the issue of marriage came about. Marya got married to her co-religionist by her own free will, as she said during the interrogation.

The Caucasus regional court sentenced the Gulyaevs to exile to Siberia due to the following crimes: abandoning Orthodox Christianity, circumcision of baptized children, marrying off the daughter to a Subbotnik. Tatyana 'due to her callousness and her inclination to Judaism, is determined not to renounce Judaism and ready to take any punishment for that.' The Gulyaevs were ordered to give children to the custody of their grandfather and their estate was transferred to a trust. The court issued its ruling based on the Regulation of the Ministerial Committee dated February 03, 1825 on measures against 'Judaizers sect.' When the sentence was pronounced, Gulyaeva turned out to be pregnant; for that very reason the Stavropol police made an inquiry to the Caucasus regional court on the fate of a future child: was it to be baptized or given to its parents will? The defendant was transferred to a special house with her father being granted the right to be present during when she goes into labor. It was prescribed to baptize the infant. Tatyana could nourish the child and in case of her refusal it should have been given to the custody of Tarasov. Here a remark is needed. The case, brought forward by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1820s, exemplifies the Subbotnik-peasants from Voronezh village New Tchigla, who 'feeling disgust for their newborn babies who had been baptized… against their will, deprived them of breastfeeding, didn't care for them, parted with them indifferently and went … to Siberia' [12, p. 45 b.s.]. Thus, the cases of giving up babies baptized against the will of the followers of 'Mosaic law' were not unique, and the authorities did foresee the possibility of such a shocking abandonment, motivated by religious reasons.

The Gulyaevs were obliged to make a signed statement that they wouldn't circumcise their child: otherwise they would have been treated with the utmost severity of the law. However, the defendants didn't give any written promise due to 'their obstinacy.'

After the sentence of the regional court the case of the Stavropol Judaizers was being considered in the Council of Ministry of Internal Affairs. Minister A. Zakhrevsky offered to release the married couple from the investigation and trial and instruct the local police to oversee them so that they wouldn't subvert others. He didn't find elements of the crime in their behaviour. One gets the feeling that Zakhrevsky used the rhetoric typical of the reign of the previous monarch, though new times had come. As a result the Council of Ministry of Internal Affairs approved the sentence of the Caucasus regional court.

3. The Case of Moscow Judaizers

The cases of the Kotovs and Tatyana Gulyaeva are the stories of victims. The main characters of them are relatively young women, who act mostly as wives and mothers, ready to part with their families; they are being prosecuted by the authorities, and they are suffering from all kinds of hardships. In the document under consideration we face a different kind of women. They are actors rather than victims; they influence the fates of the people close to them, using sometimes quite harsh methods. In the case of the Judaizers of the village of Gora, belonging to the Moscow Eparchy (1828) [13, p. 133–169], a patriarchal, well-organized and perfectly informed community of sectarians, standing against the missioners expostulations, is brought to the researcher's attention.

Women in this story are acting mainly as the elders of the family — as mothers-in-law and grandmothers. One of them is a peasant Matryona Matveeva. When her daughter-

in-law expressed her readiness to convert to the Orthodox Christianity, Matryona unambiguously warned her: 'if you do this, I will not be alive but you will not survive as either'.

Another character, the widow Stepanida Afanas'eva, made all the younger members of her family, attempting to leave the Subbotnik community, tremble. Stepanida's anger was directed against her daughter-in-law and grandchildren. The missioners' report says: '…Stefanida Afonas'eva got the son and the daughter of widow Akulina Kozmina, her daughter-in-law, the one who had joined the church (while her son and her daughter seemed to consent to joining the church as well) so upset that they have been sobbing and vowing to attend the church to console their mother. However, being wary of Afanas'eva, their grandmother, they are pleading with their mother to wait and see what is going to happen to them down the road. And Afanas'eva has been harassing the said Kozmina with her young daughter because of their joining the church so harshly that she will not let them share meals with her, and, on top of that, she blasphemously threw away an icon they had placed in their cabin.' The pressure from this woman on her younger relatives is felt throughout the case, and the missioners proved to be powerless against it.

Both women were close to the Subbotniks, who played a key role in the sectarian groups. Matryona Matveeva was a sister of the mentor of one of the Tula communities; Stepanida Afanas'eva was a wife of a fiduciary manager of the estate of Gora village, who patronized the local Judaizers using his position. These female Subbotniks had obviously high status in families and religious collectives.

Conclusions

The sources presented show that women played a significant role in families and communities of the Russian Judaizers in the 19th century. They were convinced upholders of 'the Old Testament faith,' ready to sacrifice their well-being, ordinary life style and sometimes even the most precious — their own children and husbands for the sake of loyalty to 'God of Israel.' They were not inferior to men in their religious zeal and firmness, and sometimes they were clearly superior to their own husbands in that regard. They brought up their children in faith, learned 'the Mosaic law' from the like-minded sectarians and probably from Jews. Subbotnik women displayed perseverance in dealing with authorities, and also prevented (sometimes by harsh methods) other members of sectarian community from converting to the dominant confession. That partially makes the patterns of religious behaviour of the female 'Russian Israeli' similar to the practices of representatives of the other Russian religious dissent groups.

Women's stories represent micromodels of the Subbotniks movement, and, in a wider sense, those of sectarianism of the 19th century with all its features, tendencies and problems. This is, for instance, an issue of religious conversion: role of the Bible in it, motives for joining 'the Mosaic law', significance of family and other people in this process. It is obvious that one of the patterns of the spread of the movement was the marriage between a female Orthodox Christian and a male sectarian. In a patriarchal society, institute of husband's and parents-in-law's authority a woman was amenable enough for adopting a new doctrine. And contacts with other Judaizers in the community as well as local Jews as well strengthened neophytes' faith and boosted the evolution of their religious practices.

This is a problem of religious ignorance of the commoners, as well as of the inefficiency of the government methods of fighting religious dissent. This is an issue of the survival

strategies of sectarians in the context of the confessional policy of the empire. Documents point out the evolution of the government's attitude to religious dissidents — from 'indulgence' to severe measures — during the first third of the 19th century.

Finally, immersion into women microstories reveals some traits of female religiosity as a specific phenomenon. This is, on the one hand, emotionality, trust and readiness to relay another's experience without verification (we have met almost no examples of intense spiritual quest, present in 'male' cases), on the other — rigorist coloring, harshness and the special role in spreading religious knowledge and practices within family as well.

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