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The Fabric of Old Belief

Vol. I

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THE FABRIC OF OLD BELIEF

Starobriadtsy – Traditions of Clothmaking, Dress, and Ritual from the 17th
to the 20th Century.

Two Volumes

Volume I

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1999

THE FABRIC OF OLD IRELAND

and the history of the country from the 17th

to the 19th Century

Two Volumes

Volume 1

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have many people to thank. First, I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Head of the Faculty, Dr. [Name], my supervisor, Professor [Name], O'Connell who has guided me through the writing of this dissertation. I thank him for his helpful explanations, advice, comments, and for his personal advice. And finally, I thank him for his encouragement.

In addition, I have had the help of Dr. V. [Name], a specialist in the field. Professor [Name] has provided me with a number of references and has helped me in many ways. He has also provided me with a number of references and has helped me in many ways.

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at any other university.

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Constance Dowling

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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SUMMARY

The theme of this dissertation is the relationship of textiles to Old Belief, a religious minority formed after the *raskol* or schism in the Russian Orthodox church in 1666/1667. Within this theme I also investigate the structure of Old Believer society and the relationship of religious discipline to the material and symbolic expressions of Old Belief.

Using the example of a textile factory still in existence in Moscow as illustration, I explore the progress typical of numerous eighteenth and nineteenth-century Old Believers from weaver to wealthy textile manufacturer. Although it may seem contradictory, in order to identify the reasons for this entrepreneurial success, much of my research was conducted in Old Believer villages in the Altai Mountains of southwestern Siberia in 1996, 1997, and 1999. In these isolated communities, Old Believer society changed at a much slower pace than in urban centres, allowing the researcher a view of Old Believer lifestyle and attitudes maintained in the past.

In the six chapters which follow the Introduction, I examine aspects of Russian and Old Believer history as well as ethnographic sources related to Old Belief which shed light on the role of cloth and clothing in Old Believer culture. These chapters aim to:

- identify the roots of Old Believer attachment to Russian tradition within the conflict which produced the *raskol* and identify the early adherents of Old Belief.
- survey the crown weaving communities in Russia at the time of the *raskol* and suggest parallels with Old Believer textile enterprise.
- outline the establishment of sanctuaries of Old Belief where religion and commerce intertwined and where an emphasis on the preservation of traditional crafts encouraged Old Believers to maintain the visual symbols, including ritual textiles, of their religious identity.
- trace the route of Old Believers from these refuges to Siberia and analyse the character of their society in the Altai Mountains, founded at the same time as their co-religionists were establishing textile enterprises in European Russia.

- examine the clothmaking skills maintained in these communities.
- confirm the significance of cloth and clothing as an essential ritual and symbolic element of Old Belief.

I conclude that apart from the orderly structure of Old Believer society, attention to traditional crafting skills such as spinning, weaving, and embroidery contributed to Old Believer entrepreneurial success in the textile industry. Their religious belief dictated that Old Believers maintain a lifestyle based on the sanctity of Russian tradition. As a result, in Old Believer communities, where visual symbols were an expression of religious correctness, families maintained and passed on to the next generation an expertise in textile crafts which allowed them to create ritual cloth and clothing. A view of the lifestyle of Old Believers in the Altai, unaffected by urban influence until the early twentieth century, sheds light on the relationship their co-religionists in European Russia had also once had to cloth and clothmaking.

ABBREVIATIONS

RGB OR	Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka, Moscow. Otdel Rukopisei.
RGADA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov, Moscow.
NIMTs GUOP	Nauchno-Issledovatel'skii Metodicheskii Tsentr, Moscow. Glavnoe Upravlenie Okhrany Pamiatnikov goroda Moskvy.
LMAB RO	Lietuvos Mokslu Akademijos, Biblioteka, Vilnius. Rukopisnoe Otdelenie.
Ch.	<i>Chast'</i> (Part)
f.	<i>Fond</i> (Archive)
F.	<i>Foliant</i> (Folio)
Kn.	<i>Kniga, knizhka</i> (Book)
T.	<i>Tom</i> (Volume)
Vyp.	<i>Vypusk</i> (Edition, Number)
PSS	<i>Polnoe sobranie sochinenii</i>

A NOTE ON CONVENTION

In this dissertation I use a modified version of the Library of Congress system of transliteration. Russian words in common English usage such as *boyar* are spelled in their accepted English form and not italicised. I have dropped the second 'i' from Russian names such as *Mariia* (Maria) or *Lidiia* (Lidia). When a plural is called for in the text, the nominative plural form of Russian nouns is used (*delo, dela; skit, skity*).

Terms related to Old Believer groups or concords are transliterated in their Russian form the first time they appear in the text (*belokrinitsey*). Thereafter I have anglicised such terms (Belokrinitsey).

Much of the source material in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 is based on video and audio recordings of interviews conducted in 1996, 1997, and 1999 with residents of Old Believer villages in the Altai. Citations from these tapes have been transcribed for purposes of quotation in this dissertation. While wishing to preserve the conversational quality of these interviews, repetition or linguistic idiosyncrasies have been eliminated in order to make the quotations more readable. When these citations are presented in the form of a question and answer dialogue, the interviewer is referred to as 'A' and the interviewee as 'B'.

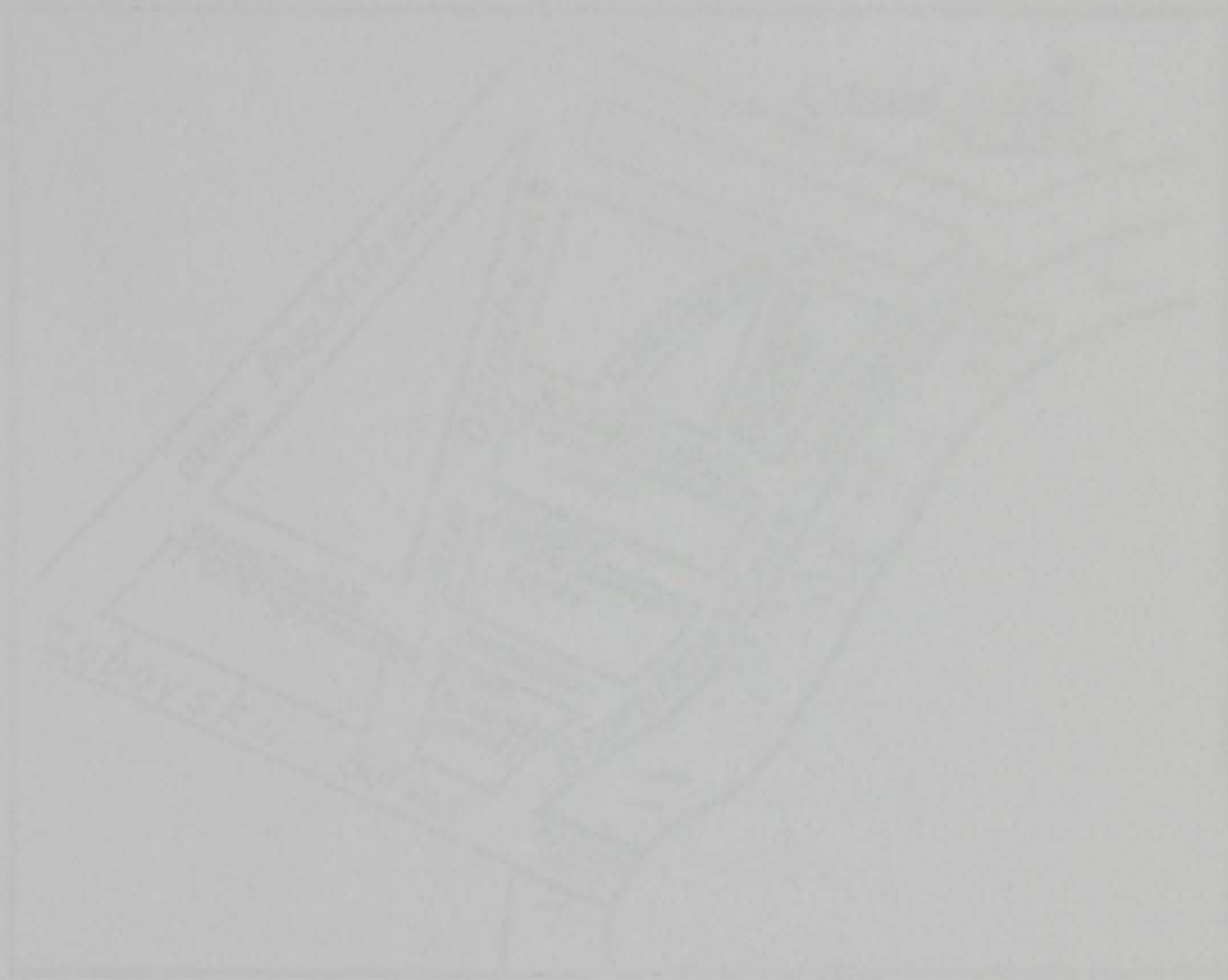
Not all, but many of the women interviewed were reluctant to be photographed. Others were concerned that their remembrances or stories would be repeated inappropriately. In order to protect their anonymity, I have used pseudonyms for each interviewee. However, the fictitious names and patronymics are based on genuine names of villagers, and I have left the date of birth beside the italicised fictitious names of real villagers (*Dar'ia Stepanovna* (1904)). When the citation is in dialogue, the names are also noted in this manner at the end of the dialogue.

For ease of reading, in the case of the document 'L'novodstvo, priadenie, tkachestvo v sele Bobrovka Vostocho-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti' ('Linenmaking, Spinning, and Weaving in Bobrovka, East Kazakhstan') to be found in Appendix A, the dialectical Russian in which it is presented has been transcribed into normal literary Russian for use in Chapter 5. All translations into English are my own.

In the case of pre-Revolutionary Russian texts, I have omitted letters no longer in usage, such as 'ѣ' at the end of nouns.

Unless otherwise stated, the contents of Volume II are photographs or video stills taken by myself.

The running time of the video which makes up Appendix B is approximately five minutes. It is based on footage taken by me in 1996, 1997, and 1999 in Bobrovka, East Kazakhstan and Verkh-Uimon, Republic of the Altai and is included to provide a glance of the landscape and of some of the traditional techniques of spinning and weaving practised by residents of these villages.



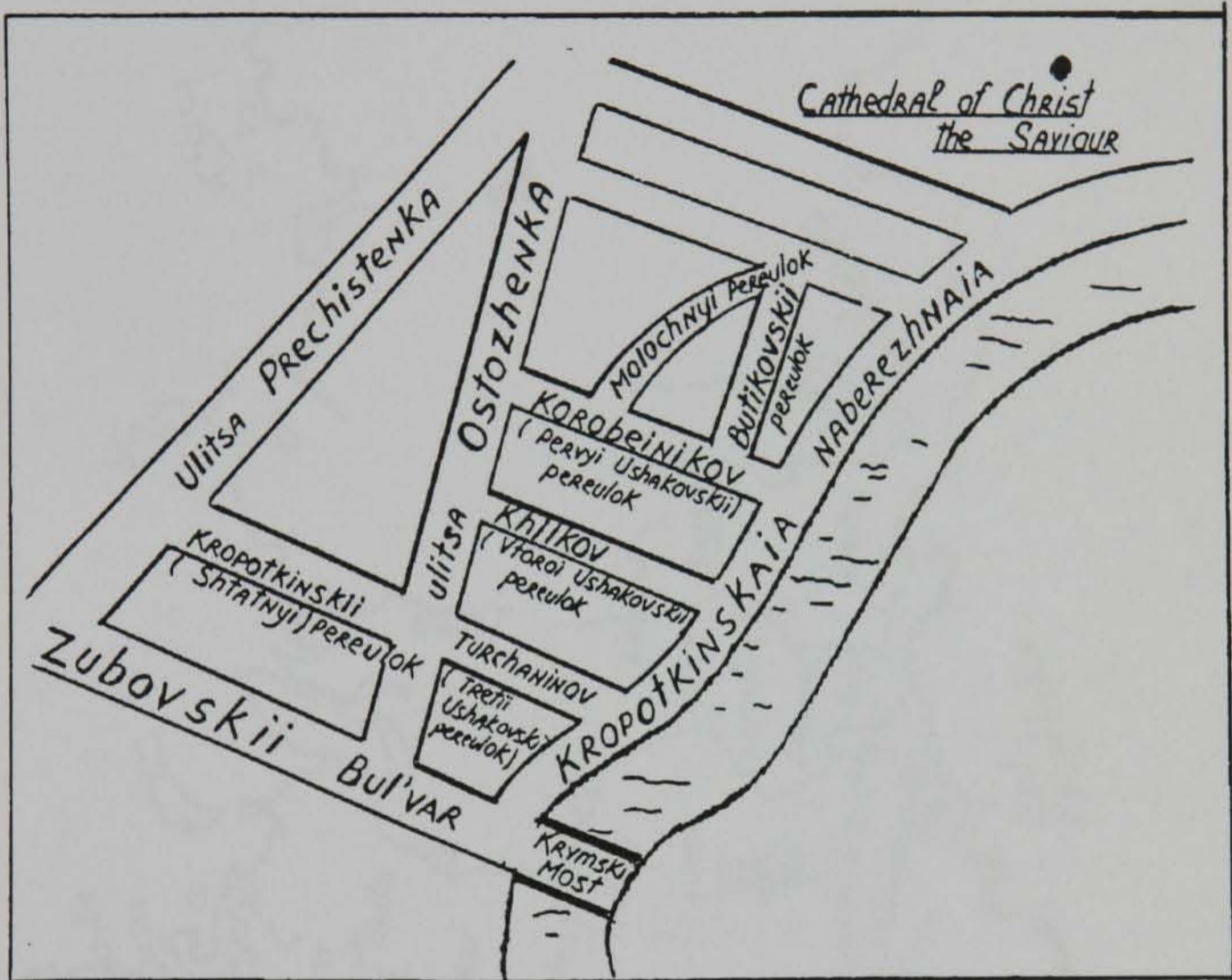
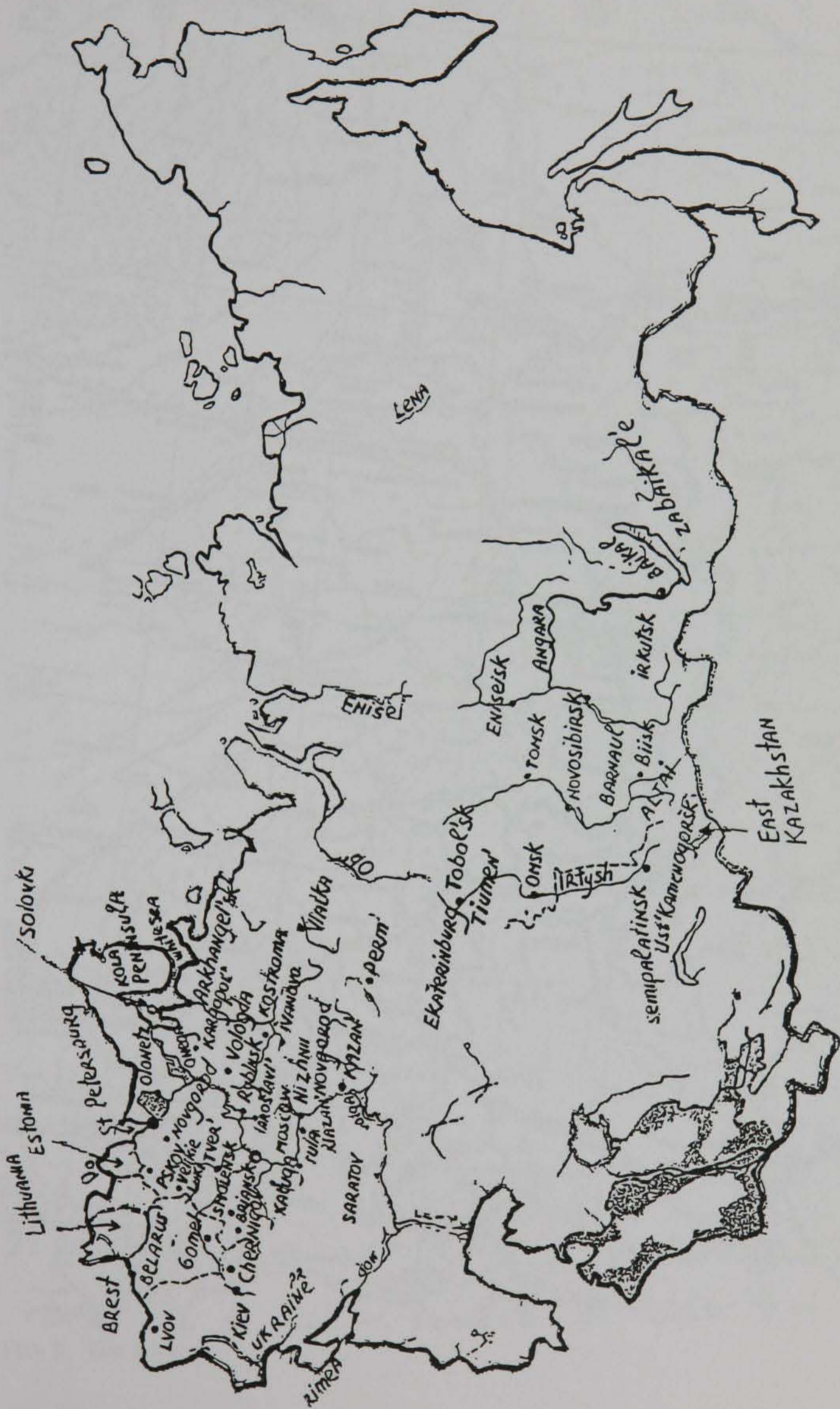


FIG. 1. Moscow, Ostozhenka

(Map by D. Tsiskarashvili)



(Map by D. Tsiskarashvili)

FIG. 2. Former Soviet Union



FIG. 3. The Altai.

INTRODUCTION

The Factory in Ostozhenka

It is a well documented page in Russian economic and social history that from the end of the eighteenth century, adherents of the religious minority of Old Belief were known for their involvement in private enterprise in Russia and in particular for their association with the textile industry.¹ By 1843 textile manufacturing accounted for nearly 80% of Old Believer industrial activity in the Moscow region.²

The Old Believers were schismatics from the Russian Orthodox church, whose origins as a dissident subculture in Russian society began in the latter part of the seventeenth century, following the church schism (*raskol*) of 1666/1667. These dissenters, who sought spiritual renewal in the ritual forms of pre-schism Russian Orthodoxy, fled to the frontiers of the Russian empire to escape persecution by the state and the official church. In their many hidden refuges they maintained a lifestyle based on the traditions of ancient piety handed down from their Russian fathers.

At the end of the eighteenth century Catherine the Great (1762–1796) liberalised the repressive laws against them. Old Believers began to return to Moscow which became the centre of their industrial activity. Although it seems a contradiction that people with ‘old beliefs’ would also be entrepreneurs – people who by definition are risk takers – numerous historians have cast light on this phenomenon, by identifying the socio-economic basis for their industrial achievements during this period.

In my own early attempts to investigate this relationship, I ordered a book in the Russian State Library entitled *Текстильное дело в России* (*The Textile Business in Russia*). Published in 1910–1911, it lists by region and type of cloth manufactured, all the textile enterprises in Russia at that time. An entry on page 216 referred to mills located on Pervyi Ushakovskii Pereulok (now Korobeinikov Pereulok) in Ostozhenka:

¹ Historians who have analysed this aspect of Russia’s economic history include A. S. Beliajeff, William Blackwell, Alexander Gerschenkron, Roger Portal, Alfred Reiber, O. Rustik, and P. G. Ryndziunskii, whose works are referred to below.

² Anthony Serge Beliajeff, ‘The Rise of the Old Orthodox Merchants of Moscow’ (Ph.D. diss. Syracuse University, 1975), 25.

И. Бутиков Товарищество Мануфактур (The I. Butikov Association of Textile Mills).³ (Plate 1).

I never imagined that the mills might still exist, but since the location was just a short walk from where I was staying, I could easily find out. To my surprise, a factory was still standing on the bank of the Moscow River in this central district of the city. Not only that, but as it had done when it opened in 1845, the factory was still producing cloth. In 1999 the mills make coarse calico for bedding linen, household towels, and unbleached cloth for a tyre factory.⁴ (Plate 2).

Since the publication of *The Textile Business in Russia*, the manufactory has been renamed four times. In 1927 it was known as the Москворецкая ткацко-отделочная фабрика (б. Бутикова) (Moscow River Weaving and Cloth Finishing Factory (formerly Butikov)).⁵ Sometime during the Stalin era, reference to the original owner was abandoned when it became the Ткацко-отделочная московская фабрика №. 2 им. В. М. Молотова (V. M. Molotov Weaving and Cloth Finishing Moscow Factory №. 2).

In the mid-twentieth century the factory had 1,500 employees working in three shifts. On the door of the security booth at the entrance to the yard of the premises, a plaque bearing the factory's lengthy name during this period remains intact: Министерство легкой промышленности СССР Межотраслевой научно-технический комплекс «Текстиль» Экспериментальное предприятие г. Москва (Ministry of Light Industry of the USSR, Multi-industry Scientific-Technical Complex 'Tekstil' City of Moscow Research and Production Enterprise). Because of ecological damage caused by dyeing works in the factory, this end of production was closed down and the number of employees shrank to 400.

Since 1991 the enterprise has been run by the Ministry of Industry of the Russian Federation. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, it became difficult for the factory to acquire cotton from Central Asia. As a result, at the present time the business employs only 60 workers, 25 of whom are weavers and the rest auxiliary staff. They work only

³ *Tekstil'noe delo v Rossii* (Odessa: Knigoizdatel'stvo Industriia, 1910–1911), 216. Ostozhenka is in the Khamovniki precinct of Moscow.

⁴ For this and subsequent information about the recent history and present status of the factory I am indebted to G. Ia. Kuz'minskaia and to L. L. Katkova, Assistant Director of the factory.

⁵ GUOP NIMTs, 'Istoricheskaia spravka na vladenie Ostozhenskoï staroobriadcheskoï obshchiny po adresu Turchaninov per., 4,' (1991).

one shift a day. Since the 1970s there have been plans to move the factory out of the city centre. These plans have not yet been realised, but a date has been set for 2001.

The impersonal sign which now hangs at the entrance to the administrative office gives no hint of the commercial, social, and cultural history encapsulated within the fabric of 'State Enterprise 'Tekstil'' and, like the other Soviet and post-Soviet era names, makes no reference to the origin of the mills: Министерство промышленности Российской Федерации. Государственное экспериментальное предприятие «Текстиль», (Ministry of Industry of the Russian Federation. State Research and Development Enterprise 'Tekstil').

The Butikov family who founded the factory in Ostozhenka were Old Believers. Even in outline form, the story of this family and its textile mills illustrates the rise from serf or artisan backgrounds to positions of influence in Russian urban society which became a pattern for many nineteenth-century Muscovite Old Believers. In the words of one historian, Old Believer textile manufacturers formed the core of Russia's bourgeoisie.⁶

Studies of the rural origins and religious affiliations of prominent Old Believer families detail the commercial acumen, cultural interests, and philanthropy which reflected the religious commitment of the leading Moscow merchants.⁷ Based on an underground network and a tightly monitored communal system of finance, many of these Old Believers acquired great wealth and social prominence, including personal or

⁶ Roger Portal, 'Muscovite Industrialists: The Cotton Sector (1861–1914),' *Russian Economic Development from Peter the Great to Stalin*, ed. and intro. William L. Blackwell (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 162.

⁷ See Valentine Bill, *The Forgotten Class: the Russian Bourgeoisie from the Earliest Beginnings to 1900* (Imprint: Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1975, orig. pub. New York: Praeger, 1959) for a history of the Morozov family. See Beliajeff, chapter 4, for an account of the Guchkov, Konovalov, Morozov, Riabushinskii and Soldatenkov families. For a wider but less detailed survey of these and other Old Believer merchant families, see *1000 let russkogo predprinimatel'stva: iz istorii kupecheskikh rodov*, comp. O. A. Platonov, ed. A. V. Duenko (Moscow, 1995). In 'Staroobriadcheskaia organizatsiia v usloviakh razvitiia promyshlennogo kapitalizma,' *Voprosy istorii religii i ateizma* (Moscow, 1950), P. G. Ryndziunskii analyses archival documents related to the Guchkov textile manufacturers. See also V. V. Kerov, 'Dinastii staroobriadtsev-predprinimatelei. Guchkovy,' *Staroobriadchestvo: Istoriia, traditsiia, sovremennost'* vyp. 2 (1995). Members of the Riabushinskii family have chronicled their own history. See Vladimir Riabushinskii, *Staroobriadchestvo i russkoe religioznoe chuvstvo* (Moscow and Jerusalem, 1994, orig. pub. privately published memoir, Joinville-le-Point, 1936), also *Torgovoe i promyshlennoe delo Riabushinskikh* (Moscow: Tipografiia Riabushinskogo, 1913). See also Iu. A. Petrov *Dinastiia Riabushinskikh* (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1997) and James L. West, 'The Rjabušinskij Circle: Russian Industrialists in Search of a Bourgeoisie, 1909–1914,' *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* band 32, heft 3 (1984) and idem, 'The Neo-Old Believers of Moscow: Religious Revival and Nationalist Myth in Late Imperial Russia,' *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 26, nos. 1–3 (1992).

hereditary titles. These honours brought them noble privileges and provided a 'transitional role between the bourgeoisie and the nobility'.⁸

I hoped that the continuing existence of the Butikov factory in the late 1990s would provide the opportunity to unravel this family's history enough to understand the reasons for its involvement not just in industry, but in the textile industry. It was a disappointment to discover that all the records of the factory had been destroyed by order of Stalin, when German forces reached the outskirts of Moscow in late 1941.

On the one hand, what we do know of the commercial and social life of the Butikovs provides an insight to the cultural traditions which governed the patterns of Old Believer life in nineteenth-century Moscow. On the other hand, the incompleteness of their story also provided a starting point for an investigation which led me from Ostozhenka to the Altai Mountains of Siberia in order to answer the question: How were textiles related to Old Believer life?

Although the Russian Revolution of 1917 brought an end to Old Believer dynasties such as this one founded on textile manufacturing, apart from the mills, there are other traces of the Butikov family in the neighbourhood of Ostozhenka. Considering the number of toponymic changes which took place after the Revolution, it is interesting that Butikovskii Pereulok, a side street adjacent to the factory, still bears the name of the family, despite the fact that it was removed from the mills. From the 1840s until 1917 the Butikovs lived within what was once an active Old Believer community. Since 1992, the *Ostozhenskaia staroobriadcheskaia obshchina* (Ostozhenka Old Believer Community) has gradually come to life again.

The family's first home in Prechistenka, the administrative region of Khamovniki precinct in which the factory is located, was acquired in approximately 1844, but no longer exists.⁹ However, two other homes once belonging to the family are still in existence but have new owners. Close to the factory at the corner of Molochnyi Pereulok and Korobeinkov Pereulok (formerly Pervyi Ushakovskii Pereulok) is a substantial two-storied house purchased along with other property by the Butikovs in 1880.¹⁰ (Plate 3). Not far away, on Kropotkinskii Pereulok (formerly Shtatnyi Pereulok), is an imposing mansion, designed by the architect Fedor Shektel' in 1901 for

⁸ Portal, 169–170.

⁹ Sergei Romaniuk, *Iz istorii moskovskikh pereulokov* (Moscow: Moskovskii rabochii, 1988), 132.

¹⁰ Romaniuk, 133.

a member of the Butikov family.¹¹ This monument to *ruskii stil' modern* (Russian art nouveau) is now the Australian Embassy.

In 1910, when the Butikovs still owned the manufactory in Ostozhenka it had 1,600 employees. The company had capital assets of 2,400,000 roubles, with an annual turnover of over 3,000,000 roubles per year. The factory made wool and wool-blend fabrics – blankets and block-printed cotton or woollen kerchiefs – as well as cottons and table linens.¹² Their cotton and woollen shawls were sold all over Russia and in Siberia.¹³ The company's Board of Directors were G. I. Mal'tsev, F. Ia. Lukhsinger, and A. I. Zimina, a granddaughter of the original owner and the woman for whom Shektel' designed the house in 1901.¹⁴

The factory and its good will were purchased in 1844 from a bankrupt merchant, A. T. Tarasenkov, who had owned a cotton weaving and finishing business there since approximately 1820. The new owner, Ivan Petrov Butikov, moved from the Goncharnaia Sloboda of eastern Moscow and reopened the factory in 1845. He had first been elected to the merchant guilds in 1839 and in 1841 was granted the right to take the name Butikov. Between 1845 and 1850 he became a Merchant of the Second Moscow Guild. His civic activities were numerous. He served as an inspector of rye flour and bought flour for the poor. He was treasurer of the Khamovniki branch of the Guardians of the Poor of Moscow from 1847 to 1852 and was an elected representative of the Merchant Society from 1858 to 1861.¹⁵

Whereas this entrepreneur was strict in his commitment to the Old Belief, he apparently lacked integrity in regard to the employment codes of the day. In 1850 there were 400 workers in the Butikov factory producing primarily cotton and wool blend materials, as well as shawls worth 293,500 roubles per year. In 1851 all the workers

¹¹ John Freeman, *Moscow Revealed*, with text by Kathleen Berton (London: Doubleday, 1991), 147–149; *The Twilight of the Tsars*, ed. Michael Raeburn, (London: South Bank Centre, 1991), 56, 60, 62–63; Romaniuk, 134.

¹² *Tekstil'noe delo*, 216; Louisa Yefimova and Rina Belogorskaya, comp., Olga Gordeyeva, intro., *Russian Kerchiefs and Shawls* (Leningrad: Aurora, 1985), 162.

¹³ There are three examples of printed and paisley shawls from the Butikov Mills in the collection of the Department of Costume and Textiles of the State Historical Museum in Moscow.

¹⁴ Freeman and Berton, 148; Romaniuk, 134; *Tekstil'noe delo*, 216.

¹⁵ GUOP NIMTs, *Istoriko-arkhitekturnye i gradostroitel'nye issledovaniia*, 'Korobeinikov per., ½, stroenie 1,' (1996), 9–12, 28–29; G. N. Ul'ianova, *Blagotvoritel'nost' moskovskikh predprinimatelei 1860–1914* (Moscow: Moskoarkhiv, 1999), table 37, no. 9. Advancement from the lowest merchant rank, the *meshchantsvo* (urban dwellers of low status, often artisans or craftsmen) to the third, second and first guilds in Russia was based on the capital resources of an individual. Once accepted in a guild, a merchant had to prove his financial ability to remain in that guild or he would move back to a lower one. Wives and children were also entitled to the privileges of membership in a guild. *Kalendar' moskovskago*

went on strike, in protest that new laws requiring better working conditions had not been implemented at the mills. From the workers' complaints it is clear that a great variety of fabrics were made in the mills, including block-printed cloth, silk blend lustrine, sateen, worsted wool, and cashmere which was used to make shawls. The workers' complaints covered a range of issues related to piece work, food payments, payment for repairing the looms, and lack of notification regarding new working conditions.¹⁶

The protesters were successful in achieving almost all their demands, which must not have affected the business significantly, since the owner's wealth and social standing increased quickly after 1845. By the time Ivan Petrov died in 1874 at the age of 74, he had been elected to the First Merchant Guild, indicating that he was a very wealthy individual.¹⁷

He was married to Praskov'ia Ivanovna. In the year the factory opened in Ostozhenka, one of their daughters, Maria Ivanovna, married P. E. Kulakov, a merchant of the First Moscow Guild and a *pochetnyi grazhdanin* (Honourable Citizen).¹⁸ Leading members of the commercial community could also receive the nearly noble title of *potomstvennyi pochetnyi grazhdanin* (Hereditary Honourable Citizen).¹⁹

Ivan Petrov's son, Ivan Ivanovich, was born in 1829.²⁰ In 1854, he married Anfisa Fedorovna Sokolova, a *pochetnaia grazhdanka* (Honourable Lady Citizen) born in 1836.²¹ When I. I. Butikov died at the age of 55 in 1885, he was not only a Merchant of the First Moscow Guild, but also a *potomstvennyi pochetnyi grazhdanin*.²² In 1863, he was one of 100 merchants with this hereditary title and was also the Honorary Treasurer of the Craft and Trade Schools in Moscow.²³ He was also a member of the board of the Moscow Merchant Bank from 1878. Both he and his wife carried on the philanthropic tradition begun by his father, giving money to schools, to charitable homes for widows and the poor, and to a society which cared for the children of criminals banished to

kupecheskago obshchestva na 1911 god (Moscow, 1911), 79–93.

¹⁶K. A. Pazhitnov, *Ocherki istorii tekstil'noi promyshlennosti dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii, khlopchatobumazhnaia, l'nopen'kovaia i shelkovaia promyshlennosti* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1958), 71–73.

¹⁷ RGB OR, f. 246, k. 136, ed. khr. 4, no. 50 (1874), 10. In parish records referring to this individual, the patronymic Petrovich and the earlier version, Petrov, are both used.

¹⁸ RGB OR f. 246, k. 103, ed. khr. 1, no. 89 (1845), 21.

¹⁹ For example, a merchant who had been a member of the First Guild for 20 years was eligible for this title. *Kalendar' na 1911 god*, 87–89.

²⁰ Ul'ianova, table 37, no. 1.

²¹ RGB OR, f. 246, k. 119, ed. khr. 1, no. 198 (1854) 199; Ul'ianova, table 38, no. 1.

²² RGB OR, f. 246, k. 138, ed. khr. 5, no. 50 (1885), 10; Ul'ianova, table 37, no. 9.

²³ *Istoriia Moskovskago kupecheskago obshchestva 1863–1913*, ed. V. N. Storozhev, t. 5, vyp. 1 (Moscow, 1913), 64.

Siberia.²⁴ In a portrait of Ivan Ivanovich which probably dates to the early 1860s, he is dressed in a European style frock coat and white tie. His beard is neatly trimmed and a gold watch chain hangs from his pocket. He would not be distinguishable from an English, French, or German businessman of the time.²⁵

In 1876, Ivan Ivanovich made an arrangement with the Moscow city government to rent municipal land closer to the river in Ostozhenka, where new premises and housing were built for the mills in the block between Korobeinikov Pereulok and Khilkov Pereulok (formerly Pervyi Ushakovskii and Vtoroi Ushakovskii).²⁶ In 1881 the mills had 220 hand looms and 432 mechanised looms powered by two 38-horse power steam generators. The factory produced 1,720 *arshiny* (ca.1,200 metres or 1,300 yards) of a variety of fabrics and 300 different types of shawls. There were 820 workers in the factory and the business had an annual turnover of 1,011,500 roubles. Of 104 cotton and wool producers listed in European Russia for that year, the Butikov mills were the second largest in turnover and number of workers.²⁷

The Butikov property had previously been the site of a popular spa, which included a large house built in the 1820s and extensive gardens for people 'taking the waters'. This house then became a school for girls. The house was remodelled in 1882 and became the Butikov family home. In 1911 the Society of former teachers of the school acquired the building from I. I. Butikov's daughter, Aleksandra.²⁸ It is now, and has been for many years, a kindergarten. Children's play equipment can be seen in the yard behind the house. (Plate 4).

Following the Revolution of 1905, new laws had liberalised the rights of Old Believers, making it possible for them to build churches openly outside their main religious centres.²⁹ In 1907 land from the Butikov estate was sold to the Riabushinskii family, Old Believers who financed the building of the Church of the Intercession of the Virgin on this site for the Ostozhenka Old Believer Community. (Plates 5 and 6). The church was consecrated in 1908, following a ceremonial procession of the cross. A member of the Riabushinskii family also donated a valuable collection of icons to form

²⁴ Ul'ianova, 65, 229, 233, tables 37 and 38, nos. 9, 11.

²⁵ *Istoriia 1863–1913*, t. 5, vyp. 1, facing page 264.

²⁶ GUOP NIMTs, 'Korobeinikov per.,' 12.

²⁷ P. A. Orlov, *Ukazatel' fabrik i zavodov evropeiskoi Rossii* (St Petersburg, 1881), 40.

²⁸ Romaniuk, 133.

²⁹ Roy R. Robson, *Old Believers in Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1995), 55–57.

the iconostasis of the church which was built in the style of Novgorod architecture.³⁰ In 1911 and 1914 the Butikov family and business donated two more strips of land to the community from their property adjoining the church.³¹

During the Soviet era, services ceased to be conducted and the church was closed on 15 October 1932. In 1992, the church and parish buildings were in what appeared to be a terminal state of dereliction. Sections of the exterior were crumbling and the interior had been altered to create an extra floor. There were no bells left in the church tower. (Plate 7). Within a year a plaque containing an official preservation order from the state appeared beside one of the church doors. Since then water has been pumped out of the flooded basement and the first steps have been taken to restore the frescoes which had been badly damaged when the church was used as a centre of biotechnology from 1966.³² (Plate 8).

Since September 1998, services are being conducted again in the church on Saturdays and Sundays and new bells are hanging in the tower. (Plates 9 and 10). Although the building is in a barely habitable condition, there are now a few people living in the hostel for parish clergy behind the church. These Old Believers are supervising the renovation work. They describe the church as having been for the 'elite' of the neighbourhood who found it more convenient to attend services there than travel across the city to their main religious centre.

In 1850 the number of Old Believers officially registered in Russia was 829,971. However, unofficial census reports consistently indicated that the genuine figures were much higher, particularly in certain districts, including Nizhnii Novgorod and Iaroslavl'. Rough estimates put the total number of Old Believers in the Russian empire in the mid to late-nineteenth century at 10% of the population, far above the official estimates of less than 2%.³³ From the beginning of their existence, Old Believers in Russia were looked on as a threat to the official Russian Orthodox church and to the authority of the state. As a result, they were at best considered ignorant and uneducated and at worst were tortured and put to death for what was seen as their seditious and dangerous hold on the populace.

³⁰ Romaniuk, 133; *Ezhegodnik Moskovskogo Arkhitekturnogo Obshchestva*, vyp. 2 (1910–1911): 16–17; *Tserkov'*, 42 (1908):430.

³¹ GUOP NIMTs, 'Turchaninov per., 4,' (1991).

³² *Sorok sorokov, al' bom ukazatel' vsekh moskovskikh tserkvei v chetyrekh tomakh, comp. Semen Zvonarev, t. 4: Okrainy Moskvy inoslavnye i inovercheskie khramy* (Paris: YMCA Press, 1990), 264.

³³ P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pecherskii), *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 2–oe izd., t. 7 (St Petersburg:

Perhaps in response to the government's campaign of persecution against Old Believers during the mid-nineteenth century, Russian literature which reported on Old Believer life was generally hostile to it. In an account of his visit to the mills in Ostozhenka in the early 1870s, one observer describes the factory owner as a 'coarse rustic' who provided sanctuary for Old Believers and their fugitive priests.³⁴ It is difficult to reconcile the author's description with the portrait of I. I. Butikov, a man with a hereditary title and considerable wealth.

If the reference was to his father Ivan Petrov in the last years of his life, it illustrates how quickly the merchant's son acquired the outward trappings of an urban and cosmopolitan lifestyle. However, underneath these outward signs of modernity, there remained an active commitment to the traditions of Old Belief, much of which was, of necessity, concealed. The visitor to the mills, who was escorted by an Old Believer, relates that in the factory on the bank of the Moscow River, religious services were conducted both at night and during the day for the workers and a fair number of 'eccentrics' who came from around the city. Old Believer priests met at the factory and had discussions with teachers and religious leaders of the Old Believer community.³⁵

Not only did the Butikovs organise religious services in their mills, they also had a domestic prayer room supervised by Ekaterina Afinogenovna Butikova, according to some sources, the second wife of Ivan Petrov.³⁶ At any rate, by 1869 Ekaterina Afinogenovna Butikova was in command of the prayer services and presumably living in the Butikov home near the mills.

In 1867 letters had been exchanged between members of the official church clergy about what they viewed as the shocking behaviour of Antonii Shutov, an Old Believer archbishop with close ties to the Butikov family. When one of his granddaughters wished to marry a third cousin, Ivan Petrov Butikov would not give his consent to the marriage, since the young people were directly related.³⁷ Representatives

Tipografiia A. F. Marks, 1909), 392, 400–405; Robson, 20–21.

³⁴ F. V. Livanov, 'Na Razsvete', *oчерki i razskazy iz byta raskol'nych'iago* (Moscow, 1875), 87.

³⁵ Livanov, 'Na Razsvete,' 87.

³⁶ Although one source indicates that Praskov'ia Ivanovna Butikova died, age 53, in 1865, it is curious that Ekaterina Afinogenovna Butikova is listed in a register of Guild Merchants and Honourable Citizens from 1862. Perhaps she was not a wife, but some other relation. Z. V. Grishna, V. P. Pushkov and O. D. Shemiakina, 'Personaliiia staroobriadtsev po dannym moskovskogo nekropolia,' in *Mir staroobriadchestva*, vyp. 2, *Moskva staroobriadcheskaia*, ed. I. V. Pozdeeva (Moscow, 1995), 134; *Istoriia 1863–1913*, t. 1, vyp. 2 (Moscow, 1913), 16.

³⁷ As spelled out in the *Kormchaia kniga*, the Byzantine Nomocanon known to Old Believers and studied in its pre-schism form, marriage between cousins is strictly prohibited. *Kormchaia (Nomokanon)*, *otpechatana s podlinnika Patriarkha Iosifa*, ed. M. B. Danilushkin (St Petersburg: Voskresenie, 1998),

of the official church took an interest in this case, since it was a 'marriage of wealth'. They were scandalised when Shutov found a priest in Guslitsa, an Old Believer community outside Moscow, who was willing to bless the marriage of the Butikovs' granddaughter.³⁸

It is therefore not surprising that a newspaper article describing a service conducted by Shutov in the private Butikov prayer room in 1869 was less than complimentary, reporting the event as 'outrageous'. Since Old Believers had to be circumspect in the practice of their religious rituals, it is curious that a reporter from the 'outside', a member of the official Orthodox church, was even allowed to observe the service. Perhaps he was an informant for the government. When the visitor and his party did not bow with the rest of the congregation at the appropriate time, the priest became hurried and apprehensive, presumably suspecting that there were informers present.³⁹ Apart from official monitors who worked for the state, this more insidious form of spying was commonplace in Old Believer centres where informers were frequently bribed by the authorities to provide information about the activities of their fellow Old Believers.⁴⁰

In the article of 9 August 1870 in *Moskovskie Eparkhial'nye Vedomosti* (*Moscow Diocesan News*) the observer recounts that the 8:00 a.m. prayer service in the family home on the bank of the Moscow River near Zachateisk Monastery was presided over by Ekaterina Afinogenovna Butikova and attended by up to seventy Old Believers.⁴¹ To reach the prayer room in the attic of the house, visitors had to go through the kitchen up two sets of narrow stairs. Here they came upon an anteroom hung with icons. They passed women gathered here and went up two steps to a second room, where three windows in the right hand wall looked out on the river. On the left side of the room many icons were hung to form an *iconostasis*. A little distance from the wall, a pink satin marquee was topped with an eight-pointed cross. In the centre were the Royal Doors.⁴² The northerly door was made of gold brocade with pink flowers. A few icons hung on hooks to the side of the Royal Doors. To the right and left were banners

1163–1164.

³⁸ F. V. Livanov, *Raskol'niki i ostrozhniki, Ocherki i razskazy*, t. 1, izd. 4-oe (St Petersburg: Tipografiia M. Khapa, 1872), 490; V. S. Markov, *K istorii raskola-starobriadchestva vtoroi poloviny XIX stoletii, perepiska prof. N. I. Subbotina* (Moscow, 1914), 843.

³⁹ Livanov, *Raskol'niki*, 491.

⁴⁰ Ryndziunskii, 200.

⁴¹ Livanov, *Raskol'niki*, 490–491.

⁴² The Royal or Holy Doors in the centre of the *iconostasis* are opened at varying points during the

mounted on staffs with eight-pointed crosses. In the middle of the marquee behind the open Royal Doors was an altar covered in pink satin. The service was conducted by a 70-ish 'pretender' archbishop, the same Antonii Shutov. He had a long, thick grey beard and was dressed in vestments of gold and silk, embroidered with crosses. The mitre on his head was trimmed with ermine and lavishly set with pearls. When the visitors arrived, the congregation of men and women were singing Psalm 102. A sort of whisper could be heard constantly in the room. When the priest blessed the congregation, holding double and triple-branched candelabra in his hand, they bowed. When he blessed them with the sign of the cross they bowed to the ground. The reporter was most scandalised by the behaviour of Ekaterina Afinogenovna. A stout woman of about 55, she interrupted the service at regular intervals, shouting, 'Stop, stop!' At one of her commands, the Royal Doors were parted and two small children came for communion. The reporter does not say who these children were. What he does reveal is his view that the ability of a woman to stop the holy service of an archbishop whenever and however often she wished was outrageous. Using what seems to be a reference to the family business, he compares this to the way in which the voice of the owner of a weaving mills could stop a warper at his work. Whereas a member of the Orthodox church would be banished to Tomsk province for such behaviour, the reporter suggests that the Butikovs and other Old Believers are happy with their church because they can do just as they please.⁴³

The reporter's only explanation for this 'disgraceful' behaviour is that the Muscovite Old Believers have purchased their priests. In 1869 the Butikovs were *belokrinitsey*, Old Believers who accepted priests consecrated by Old Believer bishops from Belokrinitsa in Bukovina, then part of the Austrian Empire.⁴⁴ The reporter suggests the reason E. A. Butikova was able to dominate the prayer service by issuing instructions to the priest was that 'to gratify their own pride', wealthy Old Believers simply bought their own priests from Belokrinitsa and told them what to do. However, following the persecution of Old Believers during the reign of Nicholas I (1825–1855), many of these

Orthodox Liturgy, allowing a view of the altar. A curtain hangs behind the doors.

⁴³ Livanov, *Raskol'niki*, 490–492.

⁴⁴ During the reign of Peter the Great, schismatics fled to Bukovina, then part of the Austrian Empire, where they practised their Old Belief with fugitive priests. Vladimir Anderson, *Staroobriadchestvo i sektantsvo: istoricheskii ocherk russkago religioznago raznomysliia* (St Petersburg, 1909), 210; Robson, 29–32. For an account of the priestly Old Believers' early search for a priesthood see S. A. Zen'kovskii, *Russkoe staroobriadchestvo* (Moscow: Tserkov', 1995), 433–438, 476. For an account of this search abroad see Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*. 7:32–50.

priests and their followers, including numbers of Belokrinittsy, had converted to *edinoverie* (united faith) a compromise approved of by the state and the Orthodox church.⁴⁵ According to the reporter, even priests who had once been archbishops for the Belokrinittsy adopted Edinoverie. Then they were free to recount how rich *raskol'niki*, 'who for the most part had come practically from hauling barges', had received them at home, saying to their domestics:

– Ничаго! Пушай подождет в передней. На наши денежки ведь живет. Купили, ну и можем значит распоряжаться как хотим.
'So what! Let him wait in the hall. After all he lives on our money. We have bought him, so we can do things as we please'.⁴⁶

Constant surveillance by agents of the state created the need for these secret prayer rooms.⁴⁷ However, despite the existence of such private forms of worship, the centre of religious activity for the Belokrinittsy was Rogozhskoe Cemetery, founded by *popovtsy* (priestly Old Believers) in Moscow in 1771, on the site of an existing Old Believer settlement.⁴⁸ Here Catherine the Great granted the Popovtsy permission to bury their dead and build hospitals for victims of the cholera plague which was sweeping the city at the time. Near Taganka in eastern Moscow, the settlement had been inhabited since the sixteenth century by hauliers who transported goods to the village of Rogozh' which later became Bogorodsk, subsequently Noginsk. Rogozhskoe Cemetery, also known as *Rogozhskiy bogadel'nyi dom* (Rogozhsk Almshouse) soon became more than a place for the dying. A high wooden fence with one entrance gate surrounded the complex. Inside was an entire compound where Old Believers built houses, hostels, poorhouses, orphanages, dining halls, libraries, and other buildings, in addition to their churches and chapels. In 1771 they constructed a wooden chapel, in 1776 a larger stone chapel, and between 1790 and 1792 the Cathedral of the Intercession.⁴⁹ In 1822 the centre had 35,000 parishioners. By 1825 this number had grown to 68,000.⁵⁰ Members

⁴⁵ Robson, 29–32.

⁴⁶ Livanov, *Raskol'niki*, 492.

⁴⁷ Riabushinskii, *Staroobriadchestvo*, 145.

⁴⁸ V. E. Makarov, *Ocherk istorii Rogozhskogo kladbishcha v Moskve (k 140-letiiu ego sushchestvovaniia: 1771–1911 gg.)* (Moscow: Resurs, 1995), 10–11; idem, *Ocherk istorii Rogozhskogo kladbishcha v Moskve (1771–1910)* (Moscow: Tverskaia staroobriadcheskaia obshchina, 1998), 2, 6–7.

⁴⁹ M. I. Lukina, 'Iz istorii Rogozhskogo kladbishcha,' *Staroobriadchestvo. Istoriia, traditsii, sovremennost'*, vyp. 2 (Moscow, 1995), 42–43; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:296–297.

⁵⁰ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:205.

of Rogozhskoe Cemetery maintained close ties to other Old Believer settlements outside Moscow, including those as far away as Siberia.⁵¹

By 1912 several printing houses in Rogozhskoe Cemetery were publishing Old Believer journals and a school had been established for Old Believer teachers. The community also had a choir of 100 singers who gave concerts of sacred music scored not by the five-lined Western European system, but by the notation of medieval Russian *znamena* or *kriukovye noty* (hooked notes) inherited from Byzantine sacred music.⁵²

As a community, Rogozhskoe Cemetery sheltered and assisted the priestly Muscovite Old Believer merchants commercially as well as spiritually. In 1843, 96% of Moscow's Old Believer industrialists were associated with this centre. After 1846, the community was dominated by the Belokrinitsy, who had established their hierarchy in that year.⁵³ In the same year three members of the Butikov family are registered in the Rogozhskoe Cemetery parish books as having received confession from a priest, presumably ordained by the new Old Believer archbishop from Belokrinitsa.⁵⁴ Since the Popovtsy had long sought a way to ordain their own bishops, their success in finding a diocese was a significant occasion in the religious life of priestly Old Believers. Until 1846 they had had no higher clergy, but only fugitive priests from the official Russian church to administer the sacraments. Parish books show that many parents brought their two and three-day old children to Moscow from outside the city to be baptised at Rogozhskoe Cemetery. Although there were Popovtsy who refused to accept the legitimacy of the new hierarchy, considerable numbers of *beglopopovtsy* (Old Believers who recognised priests who converted from the Orthodox church) did recognise the Austrian solution. The Belokrinitsy became the largest group of Popovtsy, representing half the Old Believers population (up to 10 million people) in 1917.⁵⁵

During the 1850s all Old Believer activity in Russia came under attack. Religious services were prohibited, Old Believer schools were closed, and the clergy were

⁵¹ E. E. Blomkvist and N. P. Grinkova, 'Kto takie bukhtarminskie staroobriadtsy,' chap. in *Bukhtarminskie staroobriadtsy* (Leningrad, 1930), 35; V. Makarov, 'Staroobriadcheskaia Moskva,' in *Moskva putevoditel'*, ed. E. A. Zviagintsev (Moscow, 1915), 182.

⁵² Makarov, 'Staroobriadcheskaia Moskva,' 183–187.

⁵³ Beliajeff, 26; Robson, 31.

⁵⁴ RBG OR, f. 246, k.126, ed. khr. 3, nos. 30, 53, 74 (1846).

⁵⁵ Anderson, 212–217; N. M. Nikol'skii, *Istoriia russkoi tserkvi*, 3-e izd. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1983), 327–328; Robson, 31–32; S. G. Vurgaft and I. A. Ushakov, eds., *Staroobriadchestvo. Litsa, predmety, sobytiia i simvoly. Opyt entsiklopedicheskogo slovaria* (Moscow: Tserkov', 1996), s.v. 'belokrinitskaia ierarkhiia'; Zen'kovskii, 476.

banished from their communities.⁵⁶ Despite their success commercially, it became difficult for Old Believers to keep any priests, whether they were from the Belokrinittsy or the Beglopopovtsy. For example, there are no parish records of Rogozhskoe Cemetery for much of the second half of the nineteenth century.

As wealthy merchants, Ivan Petrovich and his son Ivan Ivanovich Butikov became influential members of the Cemetery. In 1855 one or the other of them formed part of a delegation which travelled to St. Petersburg to discuss policy decisions affecting the relationship of the Old Believer community with the state. A secret document, sent from the Moscow metropolitan in 1856 to inform the Synod of this activity indicates that there were official church informants within the Old Believer community. The report states that after the journey to St. Petersburg members of the delegation gave their co-religionists the false impression that Rogozhskoe Cemetery would be granted special financial benefits by the government. This in turn had convinced members to resist governmental pressure to convert to Edinoverie.⁵⁷ True to his Old Belief, Ivan Petrovich did not convert to the state-sponsored religion and died a monk. He was buried in the Rogozhskoe compound under a headstone bearing his monastic name, Ilarii.⁵⁸

In 1876 his son, Merchant of the Moscow First Guild Ivan Ivanovich Butikov and his brother-in-law P. E. Kulakov, were elected *popечители* (trustees) of the cemetery, and served a two-year term of office.⁵⁹ When Anfisa Fedorovna Butikova died in 1890, the Rogozhskoe authorities moved quickly to confiscate the *kel'ia* (a monastic cell, but here meaning accommodation) where she had lived as a widow and which her husband had donated to the community. Shortly before her death she gave up her rights to the property. When I. I. Butikov donated the *kel'ia* to the cemetery in the year his father died (1874) he had signed an agreement that the donation was specifically for the use of the community and although the house bore his name, it was not his personal property. This was normal procedure in Old Believer centres which used the wealth of their members to improve the facilities of the community, which they were entitled to use, but

⁵⁶ Makarov, 'Staroobriadcheskaia Moskva,' 187–188. See also *Bratskoe slovo*, no.17, (1 Nov. 1889): 552–553.

⁵⁷ RGADA, f. 1183, Moskovskaia kontora Sinoda (Sekretnyi soveshchatel'nyi komitet po delam raskol'nikov i sektantov v Moskve) op.11, ed. khr. 148, l. 5.

⁵⁸ Markov, 843; *Tserkov'* 29 (1913):704. In the cemetery there are no Butikov family monuments or headstones to be seen. Cemetery staff explained that many such graves were destroyed after the Revolution.

⁵⁹ *Tserkov'* 29 (1913):725.

not inherit. The executor of Anfisa Butikova's will was Grigorii Ivanovich Mal'tsev.⁶⁰ The close bonds of Old Believer personal and business life are illustrated by the fact that G. I. Mal'tsev, presumably a relative, was one of three Directors of the Board of the Butikov Mills in 1910–1911, along with Anfisa's daughter, Aleksandra Butikova Zimina.⁶¹

Traditionally, Old Believers married not only within Old Belief, but also within their own community of Old Belief. The Butikov family was no exception. In 1893, sixteen-year old *potomstvennaia pochetnaia grazhdanka* (Hereditary Honourable Lady Citizen), Aleksandra Ivanovna Butikova married Pavel Pavlovich Riabushinskii, whose family were also parishioners of Rogozhskoe Cemetery.⁶² Both fathers were wealthy textile manufacturers.

Pavel Pavlovich's father had arranged the marriage which was not to last long. Although Ivan Ivanovich Butikov had died in 1885 long before his daughter's marriage, he had served with Pavel Pavlovich's father as an elected member of the governing body of Rogozhskoe. It is an illustration of the standing of the Butikovs in the Belokrinitsa Old Believer community that Pavel Mikhailovich, one of its wealthiest and most influential members, wished to marry his eldest son to Aleksandra Butikova. In 1894, he established his son and new daughter-in-law in a mansion on Prechistenskii Bul'var, built in the 1870s by S. M. Tret'iakov a few blocks from the Butikov factory and Aleksandra's family home. The house is now the office of the Russian Cultural Fund.⁶³

Shortly after their son Pavel Pavlovich Riabushinskii, Junior was born in 1893, the couple separated and divorced in 1901.⁶⁴ In that year Aleksandra married V. V. Derozhinskii, the manager of her family's factory.⁶⁵ To mark the occasion, she commissioned Fedor Shektel' to design the house on Kropotkinskii Pereulok. (Plates 11 and 12). The architect even designed the menu for a housewarming party which took place in the house on 6 February 1903.⁶⁶ At some point between then and 1910, Aleksandra married again. Her third husband was I. I. Zimin, also from a prominent

⁶⁰ RGB OR, f. 246, k. 6, ed. khr. 5, no. 888, 12.

⁶¹ *Tekstil'noe delo*, 216.

⁶² Petrov, 30–31.

⁶³ Petrov, 30–31.

⁶⁴ The couple could not divorce until after the death of Pavel M. Riabushinskii who disapproved of their separation. Since it was unacceptable to Old Believers, the divorce was an indication of the liberal views of the younger generation of Muscovite Old Believers.

⁶⁵ *Twilight*, 60.

⁶⁶ *Twilight*, 173.

family of Old Believer textile manufacturers, whose mills were in the Orekhovo-Zuevo region of Bogorodsk district in Moscow province, east of the city.⁶⁷ After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Derozhinskaia/Zimina house was used as the Department of Education. Lenin's wife, Krupskaja, worked in the building. At the time of writing, what became of Aleksandra, who was 40 years of age in 1917, is unknown as is the fate of her son, Pavel Pavlovich Riabushinskii, Junior. His father, Aleksandra's first husband, fled to Paris in 1920 and died in the south of France in 1934.⁶⁸

The Mills in Lefortovo

No more was heard of the Butikovs, Old Believer industrialists who had risen to the height of merchant society in Moscow. Along with other private textile manufactories in Russia, the Butikov Mills, which had been run by the family in Ostozhenka for over seventy years, were nationalised by the Soviet regime.⁶⁹ But in fact, this factory had not been the family's first weaving enterprise. The Ivan Butikov Mills had previously been located in the Lefortovo district of Moscow, in premises belonging to the Guchkov family who were also Old Believers involved in woollen, silk, and cotton weaving. Along with other fabrics, their finely crafted colourful woollen shawls were woven on jacquard looms introduced for the first time in 1823.⁷⁰

In 1839, while still living in Goncharnaia Sloboda near Lefortovo, Ivan Petrov Butikov became a Merchant of the Third Moscow Guild.⁷¹ As a member of the Third Guild, he had advanced from the *meshchantsvo* to reach the lowest rank of the Russian merchant community. Shortly after he moved his mills to Ostozhenka, he had become a Second Guild Merchant, an indication that his business and personal wealth had increased substantially.

His father, Petr Ivanovich Butikov, had established a weaving workshop in Lefortovo in or before 1820.⁷² The Butikov Mills produced patterned silk kerchiefs and shawls. There is an example of one of these kerchiefs in the collection of the Russian

⁶⁷ *1000 let*, 267–268.

⁶⁸ Petrov, 180, 194.

⁶⁹ M. V. Konotopov, *Istoriia otechestvennoi tekstil'noi promyshlennosti* (Moscow, 1992), 272–273.

⁷⁰ Yefimova and Belogorskaya, 21.

⁷¹ O. Rustik, 'Starobriadcheskoe preobrazhenskoe kladbishche (kak nakopialis' kapitaly v Moskve),' *Bor'ba klassov* 7–8 (1934), 72; L. Samoïlov, *Atlas promyshlennosti Moskovskoi gubernii* (Moscow, 1845), 21.

⁷² GUOP NIMTs, 'Korobeinikov per.,' 28–29.

State Historical Museum, identified by its trademark stamp from the Butikov Manufactory. The curators of the textile collection of the museum believe this shawl is more representative of eighteenth than nineteenth-century work. Such shawls were popular with merchant women who wore them with a Russian blouse and *sarafan* (traditional sleeveless robe).⁷³ This would suggest that the Butikov weavers had been weaving such patterns for a considerable time before 1820, either in Lefortovo or somewhere outside Moscow.

In the first half of the eighteenth century there were over twenty-five silk manufactories in Moscow. By the 1760s this production was concentrated in the eastern section of the city.⁷⁴ Many of the silk weavers were peasants who learned their skills in these manufactories, mostly owned by first and second guild merchants.⁷⁵ In addition, in the eighteenth century domestic serfs also wove silk for their owners in workshops set up on Russian estate lands.⁷⁶

Lefortovo became one of the weaving hubs of the city, and eastern Moscow became a training centre for weavers who would later move out of the city to villages such as Pavlovo and Orekhovo-Zuevo in Bogorodsk province. This became a textile-producing region dominated by Old Believer industrialists in the nineteenth century.⁷⁷ In some cases merchants who had provincial manufactories opened additional mills in the city later in the century.⁷⁸

Despite edicts issued by the Russian government between 1732 and 1769 designed to redress the complaints of large cloth manufacturers and registered merchants that the production of peasant weavers was competing with them in the marketplace, it was impossible for the state to monitor every household. Although it was illegal, many peasants kept unregistered looms in their homes for making silk ribbons, shawls, and braid as well as the wool and linen fabrics they needed for domestic use. By the late 1760s small-scale manufacturing on unregistered looms had reached significant

⁷³ Yefimova and Belogorskaya, 7, 162–163, plate 26. I would like to express my gratitude to L. V. Efimova, Head of the Department of Textiles and Costume in the Russian State Historical Museum and to O. G. Gordeeva, Senior Consultant of the Department, for kindly showing me this and other shawls in the museum's collection which show the Butikov Manufactory stamp.

⁷⁴ I. I. Kogan, 'Moskovskie shelkovye fabriki pervoi poloviny XVIII v.,' in *Staraiia Moskva* (Moscow, 1929), 134.

⁷⁵ Kogan, 128–129, 131–132; I. V. Meshalin, *Tekstil'naia promyshlennost' krest'ian Moskovskoi gubernii v XVIII i pervoi polovine XIX veka* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), 39–40, 54–55.

⁷⁶ Meshalin, 46.

⁷⁷ Meshalin, 76–78.

⁷⁸ Kogan, 132.

proportions in suburbs of Moscow such as Preobrazhenskoe and Lefortovo. Apart from merchants and landowners, weavers themselves also became owners of small silk-weaving establishments employing up to four people. These weavers were peasants or domestic serfs who rented working space from residents of the city.

In 1769 Catherine the Great abolished the weaving prohibition, making it legal for individuals to keep one or two looms.⁷⁹ As a result, many of the skilled peasant weavers returned to work in their own villages east of the city, where they were conveniently located near the trade routes of the Oka and Moscow Rivers, which led to the Volga and Siberia.

Two years later cholera struck Moscow. From the summer of 1771 to the summer of 1772, all manufactories in the city were closed down because of the plague which decimated the cloth weaving population. In one factory, 613 of 704 weavers died. When the epidemic ended, many new workshops belonging to domestic serf weavers began to appear in the city, replacing those which had been abandoned during the plague.⁸⁰ In 1773, approximately 40% of the peasantry of Moscow province was selling its woven goods in the marketplace.⁸¹

In 1775 freedom to manufacture cloth was granted to anyone who wished to do so.⁸² The majority of owners of new manufactories in Lefortovo in the first half of the nineteenth century were peasants who came to Moscow from the provinces.⁸³ Enterprising serf weavers were able to earn enough money to buy their freedom and set up independent manufactories. Some of these small enterprises were affiliated to the Guchkov Mills, founded in 1798 by Fedor Alekseevich Guchkov, a weaver from Kaluga province who had himself been a domestic serf. When his landowner released him to earn quit-rent in Moscow, he established a successful weaving business in the city and, at great expense, was able to buy his own freedom.⁸⁴ In the nineteenth century, as the mills grew larger, the Guchkovs ordered additional products such as shawls or ribbons from small semi-independent workshops whose owners were provided with housing by

⁷⁹ Meshalin, 46–51, 64–69.

⁸⁰ Meshalin, 71–73, 77, 81.

⁸¹ Meshalin, 31.

⁸² Pazhitnov, *Ocherki*, 27.

⁸³ O. Rustik, 'Staroobriadcheskoe preobrazhenskoe kladbishche (kak nakopialis' kapitaly v Moskve),' *Bor'ba klassov*, 7–8 (Moscow, 1934), 72.

⁸⁴ Beliajeff, 125, 146; Yefimova and Belogorskaya, 163.

the Guchkovs.⁸⁵ In the mid-1840s the mills gave out work in 600 different places, most of which were local.⁸⁶

The Butikov weavers probably followed the same route as hundreds of other serfs to Lefortovo, but they were among those who, like the Guchkovs, showed entrepreneurial initiative. Petr Ivanovich Butikov had been a domestic serf of Prince Cherkasskii.⁸⁷ Born in 1770, he links the Butikov family to the eighteenth century and to examples of the small silk-weaving enterprises which proliferated at that time.

The family, which received its freedom from Prince Cherkasskii in 1839, came from Dubrovo in Kolomna district of Moscow province.⁸⁸ The Butikovs did not forget their rural past. Ivan Ivanovich Butikov bequeathed money to the local peasants and money to build a village school in Dubrovo.⁸⁹

By 1843, the Butikov Manufactory, housed in Guchkov property in Lefortovo, employed 246 workers, producing 67,500 roubles a year of fabric. The range of materials woven had expanded to include cottons such as *mitkal'* (calico), *kholstinka* (gingham), *sarpinka* (printed calico) as well as shawls. The factory had 220 looms and 20 jacquard looms.⁹⁰

Petr Ivanovich Butikov passed the family business to his son, Ivan Petrov, before the mills were transferred across the city to Ostozhenka. When he died a year later in 1846, aged 76, Petr Ivanovich was a member of Rogozhskoe Cemetery, suggesting that the family had not recently joined this community.⁹¹

What is interesting about his relationship with the Guchkovs is that they were leading members of the other great Old Believer centre in Moscow, Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery, which was near their manufactory. This was the religious centre for the *bespopovtsy*, Old Believers who since the *raskol* had practised their Old Belief without priests.

At the end of the seventeenth century, as pre-schism priests reached the end of their lives, the need to find solutions to awkward liturgical issues contributed to the formation of Old Believer *soglasii* (concordats) which divided Old Believers into

⁸⁵ Ryndziunskii, 206.

⁸⁶ Ryndziunskii, 208.

⁸⁷ Rustik, 72. Mention is made of the relationship between the Butikov family and Prince Cherkasskii in a baptismal entry in RGB OR, f. 246, k.99, ed. khr. 1, no. 505 (1842), 51.

⁸⁸ Ul'ianova, table 37, no. 7.

⁸⁹ Ul'ianova, table 37, no. 11.

⁹⁰ Samoilov, 21.

⁹¹ Grishna, Pushkov, and Shemiakin, 134.

different persuasions.⁹² As it evolved, each concord established its own religious code and ritual forms to deal with the difficulty of practising Orthodoxy outside the dominant Russian church while still maintaining Orthodox traditions. Two main branches of Old Belief – the priestly and priestless – emerged shortly after the *raskol*.⁹³

Both in Lefortovo and outside the city, the Guchkovs actively recruited Old Believers for their own concord of Old Belief, the *fedoseevtsy*. Religious instruction was provided for Guchkov factory workers and Old Believer teachers ran a school for workers' children. Daily prayer services were conducted in the manufactories.⁹⁴ Workers who converted to Old Belief received higher pay.⁹⁵

By 1840, F. A. Guchkov's son, Efim, personally owned much of the property and commercial interests of the Preobrazhensk Old Believer Community.⁹⁶ Like Rogozhskoe, its priestly counterpart, Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery was established in 1771 to serve the religious needs of priestless Old Believers suffering from the cholera epidemic.⁹⁷ In just the same way, the centre developed into a commercial and religious community of Old Belief, providing hospitals, orphanages, poorhouses, rented accommodation, workshops, and kitchens for its members within the walls of the Cemetery.⁹⁸ Men in the community dressed in caftans trimmed with black braid. These had three gathers on the bodice and were fastened in front with eight buttons. They wore boots with heels. Without this attire they were not permitted into prayer services. Women dressed in black *sarafany*, black velvet or velveteen headbands, and black shawls. In everyone's hand was a *lestovka*, the Old Believers' prayer counter, literally a 'ladder'.⁹⁹

In the mid-1840s approximately 1,600 people lived in the community which was supervised and run by a hierarchy of leadership. A foreign visitor to the settlement reported that services in the Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery chapels lasted for ten hours.

⁹² The translation of *soglasie* as 'concord', suggested by Roy L. Robson, rather than the frequently used 'accord' seems more appropriate in that the latter indicates an official agreement or treaty, a misleading definition in the context of Old Belief. Robson provides a summary of these concords. Robson, 15, 29–38.

⁹³ See Zen'kovskii, 476–477 and V. Kelsiev, ed. *Sbornik pravitel'stvennykh svedenii o raskol'nikakh* (London: Trübner & Co., 1860), vyp. 1, vii–xxi, 171–174..

⁹⁴ William Blackwell, *The Beginnings of Russian Industrialization 1800–1860* (Princeton, 1968), 219–220; Rustik, 77; Ryndziunskii, 207.

⁹⁵ Ryndziunskii, 207.

⁹⁶ Ryndziunskii, 218.

⁹⁷ Kelsiev, vyp. 1, 3–12; 'Iz istorii Preobrazhenskago kladbishcha,' *Russkii vestnik*, 1–2 (1862), 750–754.

⁹⁸ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 216, 221; Ryndziunskii, 190–191.

⁹⁹ Kelsiev, vyp. 1, 5, 13. Traditionally made of leather, the *lestovka* is divided into sections of 'beans' or beads of rolled leather (linen or glass beads are also used) fastened to a leather band, joined at the ends to flat triangular pieces of leather.

Many parishioners also lived outside the complex. At least 162 of these Old Believers had their own prayer rooms, compared to only 18 known to exist in the homes of priestly Old Believers.¹⁰⁰

The community received its income from various sources. Significant assets were collected from its wealthy merchant members, many of whom came from the villages surrounding Moscow.¹⁰¹ A few also came from distant Old Believer centres such as Starodub'e, a community situated along the Polish border. In order to join, members without descendants had to sign over their estates to the community. Another source of income for the *Preobrazhenskii bogodel'nyi dom* (Preobrazhensk Almshouse), as it was called officially after 1808, were the legacies left to the community by Old Believers from all over Russia.¹⁰² In addition, as part of its commercial activity, the community made and provided for sale a range of devotional artefacts, including sacred books, icons, candles, woodcarvings, and metal crucifixes. Many of their icons were sent to Old Believer communities in Siberia.¹⁰³

The industrialists of the community operated an effective system for obtaining the skilled labour necessary to staff the weaving manufactories in Lefortovo. For example, the Guchkovs frequently bought the freedom of talented or experienced domestic serfs, their families, and even entire working groups for large amounts of money. The freed serfs would repay this sum by working in the mills in Lefortovo.¹⁰⁴

A less expensive means of obtaining labour was provided by the underground network of Old Belief. The textile manufacturers took advantage of the plight of runaway serfs or others wishing to escape poverty or famine in the countryside to find less skilled workers, whom they could convert to Old Belief.¹⁰⁵ The Old Believer community offered them a hiding place, new identities with forged passports, and sometimes moved them from one community to another outside the city, so that it became impossible for their owner or agents of the state to track them down. Orphans and pregnant girls found shelter in Lefortovo, where accommodation for the workers

¹⁰⁰ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 224; Ryndziunskii, 202, 210; August von Haxthausen, *Studies on the Interior of Russia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr, trans. Eleanora L. M. Schmidt (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 149.

¹⁰¹ Kelsiev, vyp. 1, 18, 22.

¹⁰² Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 217–218; Kelsiev, vyp. 1, 22; Ryndziunskii, 191, 193–194, 211.

¹⁰³ Ryndziunskii, 223.

¹⁰⁴ Ryndziunskii, 233.

¹⁰⁵ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 219; Ryndziunskii, 192.

was provided in property belonging to Efim Guchkov.¹⁰⁶ As a result, much of the Old Believer community in Preobrazhenskoe lived illegally in Moscow, but was protected by the umbrella of Old Believer connections.¹⁰⁷ This undercover network not only safeguarded an important source of labour, but also strengthened the numbers of Old Belief. In addition, Old Believers were attracted by the financial incentives offered by the wealthy community leaders to smaller manufacturers, who could borrow money from established merchants for commercial purposes for a period of years without interest.¹⁰⁸

As economic analysts have demonstrated, Old Believer merchants used the combination of textiles and trade to strengthen the bonds of Old Belief. This relationship provided not only commercial opportunity, but equally important, the opportunity to foster or create religious connections throughout Russia. One of the requirements of the Preobrazhenskoe leadership was that individuals who wished to start their own business had first to establish trading links in other parts of Russia, for example, Siberia, before being allowed to open their own manufactory.¹⁰⁹ Women who worked as agents for Siberian traders kept rooms inside the Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery compound. It was not unusual for both Muscovite and provincial merchants to give money to build these rooms. Merchants put their names on the *kel'i* and let them to agents who would help make business deals with visiting traders. As happened in Rogozhskoe Cemetery, in Preobrazhenskoe the rooms were ultimately the property of the community.¹¹⁰

Political and logistical factors also contributed to the entrepreneurial success of Old Believers. Because of their illegal status in Russian society, after the *raskol* Old Believers had been forced into hiding, often in frontier zones unsuited to agricultural activity. As a result, they turned to trade and manufacturing.¹¹¹ The isolation of these outposts helped create a spirit of co-operation and solidarity amongst Old Believers who sheltered each other and in addition, frequently masqueraded as members of the official church in order to avoid detection. This contributed to the inability of tsarist government agents to assess and register Old Believers to pay the double tax demanded of them.

¹⁰⁶ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 219–220; Ryndziunskii, 232–233.

¹⁰⁷ Ryndziunskii, 230.

¹⁰⁸ Rustik, 76.

¹⁰⁹ Ryndziunskii, 207–208.

¹¹⁰ Ryndziunskii, 213.

¹¹¹ Nikol'skii, 240–241.

During the reign of Catherine the Great Old Believers were exempted from military service and some other forms of tax, advantages which also contributed to the development of their entrepreneurial activity.¹¹²

The explanation provided by historians for the concentration of industrial activity in the hands of Old Believers has a psychological dimension as well. Analysis of their commercial traditions shows that as an 'interest group' the Old Believers were sober, secretive, independent, and resourceful.¹¹³ The traditions of discretion, discipline, industriousness, and obedience known to exist in their communities were fundamental to a society which had to survive under duress. Apart from the development of financial acumen, the development of these inner strengths helped Old Believers establish an impenetrable barrier not only around their religious culture but around their closely held enterprises as well. Inside this fortified zone Old Believers had the means and authority to control their own world, a world which varied from one community to the next, but in each case was structured according to its religious needs. As in the religious community of Old Belief where a hierarchy of chosen leaders supervised the behaviour of its members, in the manufacturing community of Old Belief the factory owner who bought the loyalty of his workers was also a spiritual guide and moral authority.¹¹⁴

From the 1840s, under the rule of Nicholas I oppression and persecution of Old Believers in Russia intensified.¹¹⁵ In particular, agents of the tsar exerted pressure on the Bespopovtsy, perceived as more radical and seditious than the Popovtsy, to convert to Edinoverie, a religion acceptable to the state.¹¹⁶ However, other pressures came from within the priestless Old Believer community itself.¹¹⁷

The most complex problem facing the community was the issue of marriage. Old Believer leaders from the Fedoseevtsy who dominated the Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery demanded adherence to the religious policy of non-marriage maintained by early adherents to this concord. In the monastic tradition, men and women were segregated in

¹¹² William L. Blackwell, 'Old Believers and the Rise of Private Industrial Enterprise,' in *Russian Economic Development from Peter the Great to Stalin*, ed. and intro. William L. Blackwell (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), 142.

¹¹³ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 228–229.

¹¹⁴ Ryndziunskii, 221.

¹¹⁵ Robert O. Crummey, 'Interpreting the Fate of Old Believer Communities in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,' *Seeking God: the Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia*, ed. Stephen K. Batalden (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 150–152.

¹¹⁶ Blackwell *Beginnings*, 224.

¹¹⁷ Ryndziunskii, 194.

the compound.¹¹⁸ This was not unusual, since traditionally, the Bespopovtsy were non-marrying. However, there were factions who saw this as unrealistic, particularly as their industrial enterprises began to flourish and they wished to have family members carry on the business.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the demands for non-marriage were selective and hypocritical, since leading members of the community such as the Guchkovs, did marry. As a result, during the 1840s more liberal members of the priestless community left Lefortovo to establish new communities, spreading the influence of Old Belief to other parts of the city.¹²⁰

During this period many Fedoseevtsy converted to other concords of priestless Old Belief and at any rate, the Fedoseevtsy in Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery were forced by the state to abandon their premises and give up their religion. As a community, Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery was virtually destroyed in 1847. Churches in the community were boarded up and icons removed. The Old Believer leaders were banished, including Fedor Guchkov who was forced into exile for refusing to convert to Edinoverie. Many were forced to join this state-sponsored religion.¹²¹ Even Fedor Guchkov's sons joined Edinoverie in 1853, having first left the Fedoseevtsy to join the *pomortsy*, another concord of priestless Old Belief.¹²² In 1854 the first Edinoverie church was built in Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery and in 1866 the centre became an Edinoverie monastery.¹²³

Although he was a member of the priestly community, perhaps this pressure from the state prompted Ivan Petrov Butikov to move to a section of Moscow which did not have the same concentration of priestless Old Believer activity and was therefore not under such intensive surveillance. Perhaps he was able to arrange advantageous financing from Rogozhskoe Cemetery to establish new mills in Ostozhenka. Or perhaps his business had simply grown too large for his premises in Lefortovo and when the opportunity arose, he bought the factory in Ostozhenka.

Whatever the reason for this move, the Butikov family followed the pattern of commercial success and social mobility common to many Old Believer manufacturers in Russia. At the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, as Old Believer artisans moved from the *meshchantsvo* to the merchant guilds, they used their

¹¹⁸ Kelsiev, vyp.1, 12–14; Ryndziunskii, 190, 216–217.

¹¹⁹ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 223; Ryndziunskii, 216,218.

¹²⁰ Ryndziunskii, 216–220.

¹²¹ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 225; Ryndziunskii, 195–196, 217–218.

¹²² Ryndziunskii, 236.

¹²³ Ryndziunskii, 246.

handcrafting skills, trading experience, and Old Believer network to establish profitable manufactories.¹²⁴

The natural links between trade and textiles which could be transported along with heavier goods and traditionally represented the work of womenfolk in a merchant's family have prehistoric precedents.¹²⁵ The tradition of commerce associated with Old Belief is indicative of the artisan and merchant roots of Old Believers, the majority of whom had come originally from the *slobody* and *posady* (trading suburbs and artisan settlements) of Russia.¹²⁶ In Moscow these included weaving centres such as the Kadashevo and Khamovniki settlements where cloth was made for the crown's use. In the seventeenth century at the time of the schism in the Russian Orthodox church, members of the weaving communities, which were known to harbour schismatic sympathisers, had become wealthy and privileged merchants with their own outside interests in trade and commerce.¹²⁷

It has been suggested that the materialism of commerce weakened the religious commitment of the Old Believer industrialists during the course of the nineteenth century.¹²⁸ Whereas they may have displayed outward signs of secularisation, families such as the Butikovs maintained a commitment to their religion right to the days of revolution, actively supporting Old Believer centres such as Rogozhskoe Cemetery, while still maintaining their private domestic prayer rooms. They also continued to marry within Old Belief.

The Fabric of Old Belief

Studies of Old Believer communities which evolved after the schism and prospered in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries show that, although the circumstances of each community were unique, in general trade and industry were

¹²⁴ Portal, 182–183.

¹²⁵ Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *Women's Work: The First 20,000 Years*. (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), 168–171.

¹²⁶ Inhabitants of a *posad*, usually artisans, traders, and peasants were obligated to pay taxes or perform services for the state. These urban settlements were usually located near a fortress. *Dictionary of Russian Historical Terms from the Eleventh Century to 1917*, comp. Sergei Pushkarev, ed. George Vernadsky and Ralph T. Fisher, Jr. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), s.v. 'posadskie liudi'. Members of a *sloboda*, on the other hand, were free of ordinary taxes and obligations. They usually provided some kind of specific work for the state. Pushkarev, s.v. 'sloboda, slobody.'

¹²⁷ P. Smirnov, *Moskovskie tkachi XVII v. i ikh privilegii* (Tashkent, 1928).

¹²⁸ Blackwell, *Beginnings*, 224; Portal, 167–168; Alfred Reiber, *Merchants and Entrepreneurs in Imperial Russia* (Chapel Hill, 1982), 170; Ryndziunskii, 215.

fundamental to their survival. Apart from financial support provided by their co-religionists, the bonds of community, discipline, and industriousness have been cited as keys to this commercial success. There is ample evidence from geographically scattered Old Believer centres that from the early days of their existence, Old Believers were initiators of all kinds of commercial activity.¹²⁹ Resourceful and focused by their religious belief, Old Believers developed a system for dealing with adversity.

Some historians argue that without the ability to make commercial deals with the state, the Old Believers would not have succeeded in protecting their religious integrity. A case in point was the Vyg community, near Lake Onega in Pomor'e.¹³⁰ Commerce also provided the means of survival for Old Believers living in the Kerzhenets Forest north of Nizhnii Novgorod.¹³¹ Studies of the Vetka and Starodub'e Old Believer communities along the Polish border with Russia also illustrate a similar pattern of commerce and independence.¹³² While they were exploited by the Russian government to assist in the state's industrial or military expansion in northern Russia, the Urals, Siberia, and Moscow, Old Believers liked this arrangement. It allowed them to practise their religious rites and beliefs in a more or less safe environment.¹³³

Commenting on the fact that in general disadvantaged Russian social groups such as religious minorities, sectarians, and serfs played a significant role in the industrial development of Russia during the nineteenth century, one historian of Old Believer enterprise suggests that 'the relationship of ideology to entrepreneurship is unclear'.¹³⁴ Another economic historian examines the paradox of Old Believers'

¹²⁹ These works include Iv. Abramov, *Starobriadtsy na Vetke* (St Petersburg, 1907); Robert O. Crummey, *The Old Believers and the World of Antichrist* (Madison, Milwaukee and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970); E. M. Iukhimenko, *Neizvestnaia Rossiia* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, 1994); idem, 'Pervye ofitsial'nye izvestiia o poselenii starobriadtsev v Vygovskoi pustyni,' in *Starobriadchestvo v Rossii (XVII – XVIII vv.)* ed. E. M. Iukhimenko (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1994); T. P. Korotkaia, E. S. Prokoshina, and A. A. Chudnikova, *Starobriadchestvo v Belarusi* (Minsk, 1992); M. I. Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub'e XVII – XVIII vv.*, vyp. 1 (Kiev, 1895); Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7.

¹³⁰ See in particular Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 135–158.

¹³¹ The already cited work of P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pecherskii), a government official assigned to monitor Old Believers, is based largely on their activity in this part of Russia. See also Nikol'skii, 240–241.

¹³² Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 82–84.

¹³³ N. N. Pokrovskii, *Antifeodal'nyi protest uralo-sibirskikh krest'ian-starobriadtsev v XVIII v.*, (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1974); N. N. Pokrovskii, ed., *Novye materialy po istorii Sibiri dosovetskogo perioda*, (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1986).

¹³⁴ Blackwell, 'Old Believers and Private Enterprise,' 140; idem, *Beginnings*, 228. Other historians such as Reiber and Gerschenkron suggest that it was not the religious ideology of Old Belief, but rather its social structures which accounted for their entrepreneurial success. Reiber, 139–141; Alexander Gerschenkron,

dynamic business activity and their fanatical attachment to tradition. In his view, although Old Believers had to be prosperous to survive, there were no theological reasons for their capitalist development apart from the defensive response of a persecuted social group.¹³⁵

But setting aside theoretical and abstract analysis of this entrepreneurial activity for the moment, there is the material reality of a weaver, a skilled craftsman whose initiative was responsible for the creation of a weaving workshop which became a factory. Who was this weaver? Why was he an Old Believer and what did he know about cloth and clothmaking?

By the time the Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Cemeteries were established in Moscow in 1771, the culture of Old Belief was already well defined. Old Believers had spent the previous 100 years as religious refugees, sheltering from the persecution of state and church agents, while still maintaining a lifestyle they believed would lead them to spiritual salvation.

As I outline in Chapter 1, the codes of Old Belief were formed by conflicts which led to the *raskol* and by the Old Believers' search for spiritual renewal. The pattern of life in their communities was shaped by the desire of Old Believers to live according to a particular set of traditions which to them represented Russia's pious past, traditions which other Russians had been discarding since the time of the *raskol*.

Research into the ideology of Old Belief demonstrates that apart from their social and economic traditions, Old Believers maintained this distinctive material culture because it supported their religious rites. As a result, Old Believer centres outside Moscow, predecessors of the Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Cemeteries, became caretakers of a religious culture which surrounded its adherents with every form of traditional Russian craft. Icon painters, calligraphers, manuscript illuminators, bookbinders, woodcarvers, metalworkers, weavers, and needleworkers all served the devotional needs of the Old Believer community. It was an added bonus that the sale of their work contributed to the income of the community. While there were workshops for many of these masters in the larger communities, in every home women spun, wove, and

Europe in the Russian Mirror (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); Jo Ann Ruckman, *The Moscow Business Elite: A Social and Cultural Portrait of Two Generations 1840-1905* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 68-69.

¹³⁵ Gerschenkron, 35.

decorated the materials necessary for the expression of their spiritual beliefs. Was there something in the ideology of Old Belief which lent a particular significance to cloth?

Ethnographic sources provide the answer. Old Believers had a profound attachment to ritual textiles and clothing. These forms demonstrated the rejection by Old Believers of outside influences they perceived as heretical and confirmed their conformity to a traditional Russian lifestyle. Since textiles supported the rituals of Old Belief, textile crafts were carefully maintained in Old Believer communities.

The literature supporting this assertion is based primarily on research undertaken between 1895 and 1930, and again from the 1950s to the present time, but not in Moscow or in other nearby centres of Old Believer activity such as Guslitsa, Ivanovo, Pavlovskii Posad, or Orekhovo-Zuevo. Instead, Russian ethnographers, beginning with M. Shvetsova in 1898, have concentrated their research in the Altai Mountains of southwestern Siberia, where two closely related but separate groups of Old Believers settled in the mid-eighteenth century. Here they lived in virtual isolation until the early twentieth century and even longer in the most isolated cases.¹³⁶

In her study of the *poliaki*, Old Believers from Poland living in the Uba and Ul'ba River regions north of Ust'-Kamenogorsk in East Kazakhstan, M. Shvetsova documented the origins of this group in the Altai. She described their religious affiliations, economy, homes, handcrafts, and the traditional nature of their dress.¹³⁷ In 1920, A. M. Selishchev surveyed the community of *semeiskie* in the Zabaikal'e region of Siberia, Old Believers who came from the same European background as the Poliaki. He, too, reported that the dress of these Old Believers retained its traditional Russian character.¹³⁸ The Department of Textiles and Costume in the Russian State History Museum has a collection of traditional textiles gathered during expeditions to Old Believer villages in Zabaikal'e during the 1970s.¹³⁹ In recent decades F. F. Bolonev has studied the lifestyle of the Semeiskie. Included in his work is an article devoted to the traditions of spinning and weaving in their villages.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Vasily Peskov, *Lost in the Taiga*, trans. Marian Schwartz (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

¹³⁷ M. Shvetsova, "Poliaki" Zmeinogorskago okruga,' in *Zapiski Zapadno-sibirskago otdela imperatorskogo russkogo geograficheskogo obshchestva*, kn. 26 (Omsk, 1899).

¹³⁸ A. M. Selishchev, *Zabaikal'skie staroobriadtsy semeiskie* (Irkutsk, 1920).

¹³⁹ I. V. Makovetskii and G. S. Maslova, eds., *Byt i iskusstvo russkogo naseleniia Vostochnoi Sibiri*, ch. 2 (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1975).

¹⁴⁰ F. F. Bolonev, 'Priadenie, tkachestvo i viazanie u semeiskikh Zabaikal'ia (XIX – nachalo XX v.),' in *Etnografiia Severnoi Azii*, ed. G. I. Pelikh and E. M. Toshchakova (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1980).

In 1929-30, E. E. Blomkvist and N. P. Grinkova compiled a detailed ethnographic study of the lives of *kamenshchiki* (Old Believers in the Bukhtarma River valley of the Altai) who emerged as a distinct Old Believer group during the expansion of Russia's mining interests in the Urals and Siberia. The work of Blomkvist and Grinkova includes valuable photographic material of houses and interiors no longer in existence, as well as a survey of the clothing, and the embroidery and weaving techniques practised by the Bukhtarma Old Believer women.¹⁴¹ Each of these surveys emphasises the priority of dress as a ritual element in the devotional life of Old Believers.

More recently, ethnographers from Russian universities and museums in Siberia and East Kazakhstan have contributed studies dedicated to specific aspects of Old Believer clothing and textiles. For example, E. F. Fursova has documented the antiquity of patterns in women's shirts and headwear made and worn by Old Believers in the Altai, while L. M. Rusakova has analysed the archaic designs of their woven belts and embroidered linen towels.¹⁴² General surveys of Russian and Slavic traditional and ritual clothing as well as methods and techniques of clothmaking also provide material related to Old Believer communities within the larger context of Russian textiles.¹⁴³

Between 1953 and 1964, Professor K. V. Maerova conducted extensive research into the language and daily life of the Poliaki in East Kazakhstan. Her unpublished work also confirms the deep attachment of these Old Believers to ritual cloth and dress as a fundamental element of their religious expression.¹⁴⁴

In an attempt to find isolated communities of Old Believers where urban influence had been the least intrusive and where it might be possible to find some of the oldest clothmaking techniques still in use, I travelled with Professor Maerova to the Altai in the 1990s. We conducted interviews with descendants of both the Poliaki and

¹⁴¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova.

¹⁴² L. V. Ostrovskaya, ed., *Kul'turno-bytovye protsessy u russkikh Sibiri XVIII – nachalo XX v.*, (Novosibirsk, 1985); E. F. Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory russkikh krest'ianok Iuzhnogo Altaia vo vtoroi polovine XIX – nachale XX v.', *Izvestiia sibirskogo otdeleniia Akademii Nauk SSSR*, no. 9, vyp. 2, Seriya istorii, filologii i filosofii (1985); L. M. Rusakova, *Traditsionnoe izobrazitel'noe iskusstvo russkikh krest'ian Sibiri* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1989).

¹⁴³ G. S. Maslova, 'Narodnaia odezhda narodov russkikh, ukrainskikh i belorusskikh,' *Vostochnoslavianskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, ed. S. A. Tokarev, t. 31 (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1956); idem, *Narodnaia odezhda v vostochnoslavianskikh traditsionnykh obychaiakh i obriadakh XIX – nachalo XX v.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984).

¹⁴⁴ I am indebted to Professor Maerova for her descriptions and explanations of many aspects of Old Believer society in the Altai, for showing me photographs, drawings, maps, and other materials relevant to my research.

the Kamenshchiki still living in Old Believer villages there. In these interviews we used the same methods of questioning Professor Maerova had used 30 years previously. These were based on models devised by Tomsk University in the 1950s, aimed at elucidating as comprehensive an understanding of the lifestyle of the Old Believers as possible. Based on our interviews in 1996 with the oldest women in the village of Bobrovka, we assembled the document 'Льноводство, прядение, ткачество в селе Бобровке Восточно-Казахстанской области' ('Linenmaking, Spinning, and Weaving in Bobrovka, East Kazakhstan') (Appendix A), composed in the phonetic vernacular of women whose words were recorded on audio and video tape. In addition, we photographed examples of cloth woven and clothing made and worn by Old Believers in both communities. I use these materials as the basis for Chapter 5, 'The Weaving Tradition' and Chapter 6, 'The Old Dressers'.

Recent studies in Old Believer culture substantiate the importance of ritual symbols in defining the practice of Old Belief. Archeographers, for example, have demonstrated the devotion of Old Believers to books not only for their content, but also for the physical reality of a book itself.¹⁴⁵ In *Old Believers and Modern Russia*, Roy R. Robson suggests that the ritual forms of Old Belief, such as books, sacred spaces, icons, and even ritual prohibitions played a defining role in the culture and community of Old Belief. Through this iconographic view of the world, Old Believers created and expressed their social and religious values.¹⁴⁶ These symbols helped Old Believers maintain solidarity in a world they viewed as corrupted by forces of the Antichrist.¹⁴⁷

Similarly, in his essay *Raskol i kul'turnyi konflikt XVII veka* (The Schism and Social Conflict in the Seventeenth Century), Boris A. Uspenskii discusses the importance of language and sound as semiotic touchstones of Old Believer ideology. Since disputes over language lay at the heart of the *raskol*, Uspenskii supports the view that Old Believers did not distinguish between form and dogma, a fact which

¹⁴⁵ B. A. Uspenskii, 'Raskol i kul'turnyi konflikt XVII veka,' in *Izbrannye trudy*, t. 1, *Semiotika istorii, semiotika kul'tury* (Moscow: Gnosis, 1994), 346. Boris A. Uspensky, 'The Schism and Cultural Conflict in the Seventeenth Century,' trans. Stephen K. Batalden, in *Seeking God: the Recovery of Religious Identity in Orthodox Russia, Ukraine, and Georgia*, ed. Stephen K. Batalden (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 118; E. M. Iukhimenko, N. N. Pokrovskii, and I. V. Pozdeeva are Russian archeographers with long experience studying religious texts found in frontier communities of Old Belief. Zoja Jaroszewicz-Piereslawcew is conducting similar research in Old Believer communities of Poland. *Starowiercy w Polsce i ich Księgi* (Olsztyn, 1995).

¹⁴⁶ Robson, 9.

¹⁴⁷ On the significance of the fear of the Antichrist in the lives of Old Believers see Michael Cherniavsky, 'The Old Believers and the New Religion,' *Slavic Review* 25 (1966).

transformed not only words but also matter such as the details of clothing into ritual symbols of Old Belief.¹⁴⁸

In the Russian language Old Believers are referred to by an assortment of words, each with its own nuance. Originally called *raskol'niki* because of their schismatic or rebellious views, this pejorative label only disappeared from official usage at the end of the eighteenth century, but continued to be used throughout the following century.¹⁴⁹ Although *starover* translates literally as 'Old Believer' or 'Old Faithful' and has more polite overtones, the more commonly used Russian word for Old Believer, *staroobriadets*, used by Old Believers themselves, translates literally as 'Old Ritualist'. In fact, *obriad*, the Russian word for 'ritual', can be synonymous with 'dress'.

Костюм женщины сохраняется издавна. Вот «обряд» замужней женщины.
The women's costume has been preserved from olden times. This is the 'obriad'
(ritual attire) of a married woman.¹⁵⁰

Could we not therefore equally well call the Old Believers 'Old Dressers'? If they were upholders of the traditions of their fathers, of a specific religious culture which valued pre-schism religious texts and books, music, icons, sacred buildings, and textiles, was cloth and the way it was used not just as important to Old Believers as books and icons?

The circumstances of the *raskol* in Russia make clear the need Old Believers felt to maintain the ritual symbols of cloth and dress, but this attachment also explains much about the ideology of Old Belief. This ideology was dominated by the belief that spiritual salvation would be found not in ritual or liturgical innovation aligned with contemporary Greek Orthodox practice, but in the sacred traditions passed down from Russia's Holy Fathers. These traditions were contained in written words and on iconographic notice boards such as cloth and clothing which served to reassure the faithful by communicating messages of brotherhood. Since pre-history cloth and clothing have been used by individuals, tribes, interest groups, and nations as a means of identification. As a social marker, textiles can signify status, wealth, or fashion. They can tell stories or be thought to work magic.¹⁵¹ In the case of Old Believers we can add

¹⁴⁸ B. A. Uspenskii, 352–354; idem, (Uspensky), 123–125.

¹⁴⁹ Cherniavsky, 'Old Believers and New Religion,' 1; Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 197.

¹⁵⁰ Selishchev, 7.

¹⁵¹ Barber, *Work*, 147–163.

that these Russians preserved the forms of dress and use of cloth they believed were pleasing to God.

Old Believers valued the discipline of conformity since it contributed to their safety in a world which was hostile to their way of life and to their very existence. Self-control of the individual was a sign of loyalty to his community and defence against the perceived danger of 'outside' influence. In addition, the bonds of community were strengthened as Old Believers recognised those dressed 'in our way', an unspoken means of identifying who was safe and who was a threat. Like the holy books, for Old Believers the presence or absence of certain textiles carried as much meaning as the messages contained in the decorative elements of cloth.

The creation of cloth taught children the value of hard work from an early age. The preparation of plant or animal fibres, spinning, weaving, and stitching require both physical labour and inner resources, qualities of importance to Old Believers as they dealt with physical and psychological hardship. The making of cloth demonstrated the dedication of Old Believer women to a perpetuation of the manual skills, discriminating taste, patience, and discipline required to make and decorate textiles according to tradition. Old Believers admired finely made textiles not only for their beauty and aesthetic appeal, but also for the fact that they were correctly made, according to particular models. A finely woven piece of cloth, embroidered with archaic patterns, was a celebration of the spiritual meaning of tradition. That Old Believers considered this to be a sacred task is not surprising. In the creation of cloth, women passed on the traditions of their Old Belief.

As well as this, every stage of clothmaking involved ritual activity which was interwoven with the seasons, the social life of the community, and with family and holiday celebrations. Although Old Believers required many varieties of handcrafts to support their religious rituals and maintain their traditional way of life, none was more important or prevalent than clothmaking.

Old Believer communities formed in the Altai Mountains at approximately the same time as the first generation of Old Believer entrepreneurs were founding their textile enterprises in Moscow. The Butikov family provides an illustration of how the urban entrepreneurs soon adapted, at least publicly, their lifestyle to accommodate their role as cosmopolitan Russian merchants. However, in more isolated communities of Old Belief, where urban or non-Russian influences were avoided as anti-Christian this was not the case. Families continued to live as they had lived for generations, recreating the

traditional lifestyle they had inherited from their fathers. The existence of these remote communities at the end of the twentieth century offers a window to the past and an indication of how Old Believers had lived at the time their co-religionists were establishing textile mills in European Russia.

While the Butikovs and many of their Old Believer colleagues experienced the transformation in status from rural weavers to urbanised industrialists, their commitment to many of the rituals of Old Belief did not change. In this way, despite her wealth and social standing, Aleksandra (Butikova) Zimina remained connected to her co-religionists still spinning flax and weaving their own cloth in the Altai Mountains at a time when she was the director of a textile mills with 1,600 workers in Moscow.

As their history has shown, the commercial predominance of Muscovite Old Believer merchants was aided by their habits of discretion, resourcefulness, industriousness, sobriety, discipline, and support for one another, but in addition, the appreciation of craftsmanship inspired by religious belief, also prepared them for this role. The lifestyle and beliefs of inhabitants of Old Believer refuges in the Altai suggest how the Butikov family and their counterparts who disappeared from Moscow after the Revolution of 1917 were prepared for their role as textile entrepreneurs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In Chapter 1 'The Origins of Old Belief: A Search for Spiritual Renewal', I trace the conflicts which led to the *raskol* in the Russian Orthodox church from the point of view of traditional Russian culture and the schismatics' belief in a lost Russian piety. I examine how these conflicts defined the future culture of Old Belief and I identify the early leaders and supporters of Old Belief.

Chapter 2, 'Textiles and Trade', outlines the traditions of clothmaking in the crown weaving communities in Russia at the time of the *raskol*. I confirm that there were supporters of Old Belief from within these centres.

In Chapter 3, 'A Refuge for our Rights', I survey the origins of the first significant Old Believer communities and the religious traditions which defined these refuges and inspired their members to preserve their particular material culture, including traditional forms of dress.

The final three chapters rely on ethnographic research in Old Believer villages of the Altai as source material. Apart from published sources, this material is based on interviews, video recordings, and photographs taken during expeditions in 1996, 1997, and 1999. Chapter 4, 'In a Strange Land', traces the arrival of Old Believers with their

traditional culture in the Altai. I illustrate how the lifestyle these Old Believers maintained in the frontier emphasised social, religious, and economic values which prepared them for entrepreneurial activity.

In Chapter 5, 'The Weaving Tradition', I survey the clothmaking traditions practised by Old Believers in the Altai. These women were expert weavers who fully understood the clothmaking process. Their expertise helps explain the ease with which Old Believers would have been able to transfer their skills to the development of commercial enterprises at the end of the eighteenth century.

In Chapter 6, 'The Old Dressers' I investigate the ritual functions of dress and textiles used by Old Believers in the Altai to support their religious rites and beliefs.

This thesis is not an attempt to prove that Old Believers were better weavers than other Russians. Rather, it aims to shed light on the relationship between Old Believers and the textiles they made and used as a manifestation of their religious culture and to find in this relationship an explanation for their contribution to the textile industry in Russia.

CHAPTER 1. The Origins of Old Belief: A Search for Spiritual Renewal

Да Вы же глаголете, что сами себе погибели не хотите, и сего ради вас послушати и Никонову веру принять, отставя святых отец наших предание....Только судите сами себе, добрее вам будет, аще не будите превозноситься над отцы своими, да не удалится от вас спасение.

You say you do not want damnation, and so you accept and obey the Nikonian faith, abandoning the tradition of our Holy Fathers...But be your own judge. If you do not place yourselves above your Fathers you will be better off and you will not be deprived of salvation.¹

1.1 Prelude to the *Raskol*

During Russia's Time of Troubles (1598–1613) local outlaws joined foreign raiders in devastating the Russian countryside. Many Russians died of famine, families were divided by political loyalties, monasteries were looted and churches destroyed. But most threatening of all, a Catholic Polish prince had nearly usurped the throne of Orthodox Russia.²

It was during these years that the 'Lament for the capture and final destruction of the most high and radiant Muscovite state, for the benefit and instruction of the obedient' was composed by an unknown cleric grieving for the captivity and final destruction of the Russian state – the Orthodox vineyard which God had planted on Russian soil. Not only the Russian realm, but also the last stronghold of the Orthodox Christian world had been on the brink of collapse as anti-Christian temptations lured Russians away from religious grace. The punishment of God for these transgressions was at hand. Russian Christians had lost their way to salvation.³

Сушии в нем живущии царие, вместо лествицы к богу возводящеи спасительных словес, еже раждаются от книгородных догматов, приша богоненавистныя бесовския козни, волшбу и чарование, и вместо духовных людей и сынов света, возлюбиша чад сатаниных, иже отводят от бога и от неблазненнаго света во тму.

In the present [Russian] realm, instead of raising up a ladder of saving words to

¹ Inok Avraamii, 'Vopros – otvet star'tsa Avraamiia,' in *Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi XVII vek.*, kn. 2, ed. L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likhachev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1989), 514.

² Pierre Pascal, *Avvakum et les débuts du Raskol* (Paris, 1938; repr. Paris and La Haye: Mouton & Co., 1963), 2; Maureen Perrie, *Pretenders and popular monarchism in early modern Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1995), 201; Serge A. Zenkovsky, 'The Russian Church Schism: Its Background and Repercussions,' *Russian Review* 16, 4 (1957):39.

³ 'Plach' o plenenii i o konechnom razorenii prevysokago i presvetleishago moskovskago gosudarstva, v polzy i nakazanie poslushaiushchim,' in *Khrestomatiia po drevnei russkoi literature XI–XVII vekov*, ed. N. K. Gudzii (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe uchebno-pedagogicheskoe izdatel'stvo, 1962), 314–316.

God, people have accepted God-hating, devilish intrigues, sorcery, and bewitchment which spring from book-born doctrines. Instead of spiritual people and the sons of light, they have fallen in love with satanic creatures, who lead them away from God and from the chaste world into darkness.⁴

When the Time of Troubles had ended and a new political order emerged in Muscovy, a patriarch and a tsar ruled the country. They were father and son, Filaret and Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov. In the Byzantine tradition, in a 'symphony of powers' representing church and crown, the Romanovs attempted to stabilise the country and reclaim Russia's position as the secure leader of the Orthodox world, a position it had inherited after the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Turks in 1453.⁵

While the tsar took ostensible charge of Russia in 1613, his father, who spent eight years in captivity in Poland, was chosen Patriarch of Moscow, a position which had been vacant for several years. Filaret was a stalwart antagonist not only of the Catholic but also of the Uniate religion established in Poland and Lithuania after the Union of Brest between Catholics and Orthodox in 1596.⁶

By the time Filaret's grandson Aleksei Mikhailovich came to the throne of Russia in 1645, the country was politically stable and Moscow was a centre of Orthodox culture. However, the country was about to undergo a crisis of reform which would lead to the splintering of Russian society. This crisis had not only political and social overtones but in particular, religious significance as conflict between opposing groups of reformers led to the *raskol*, or schism, of the Russian Orthodox church.

The author of the 'Lament' made prophetic reference to the source of conflict within the Russian church, writing that satanic people who loved pride and evil and 'book-born' ideas had driven Russia to near ruin. Bloodshed and war had come as punishment. In his challenge to Orthodox Russians to seek salvation in the words of God, the author called on them to abandon the non-Orthodox influences brought to Russia by the realities of a changing political world.

In 1054, some 70 years after Christianity was adopted as Russia's official religion by Grand Prince Vladimir, the Great Schism divided the Christian world when the Byzantine church rejected the 'Latin' heresies of the Roman popes. However, in 1439 at the Council of Florence, the Greeks themselves chose *rapprochement* with the

⁴ 'Plach', Gudzii, *Khrestomatiia*, 315–316.

⁵ James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), 127.

⁶ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Bungay, Suffolk: Penguin Books, 1963), 104–105.

Catholics.⁷ When non-Christian conquerors then overran the Byzantine Empire, the traditional centre of Orthodoxy, in 1523 the monk Filofei of Pskov was among those in Russia who articulated the concept of Moscow as the Third Rome, a notion also found in *The Tale of the White Cowl*. This was written at the end of the fifteenth century, suggesting that Muscovy was now the last hope of creating the final Kingdom of the Holy Spirit, an Orthodox citadel never realised in either Rome or Constantinople. The passing of the white cowl and its golden salver from Constantinople to the Bishop of Novgorod symbolised the succession of Orthodox authority as it passed to Russia, the only state left which could defend the purity of Orthodoxy.⁸

After 1613, as a new leadership in Moscow asserted Russia's political influence with territorial and commercial expansion, it also tried to establish the correct course for the development of Russia's role as the remaining nation-protector of Orthodoxy. This was a controversial task, since it became a time for choosing between the old and the new in Russia and as a result, a time of divisive social conflict.⁹

In their attempts to rebuild an Orthodox society, Russia's rulers sought religious and moral guidance from two different sources. They looked both to their own spiritual traditions and to the Greek patriarchs and scholars who could help them reshape a religious culture diminished by war and destruction and weakened by lack of education and moral rectitude within the Russian church. When the concepts of reform espoused by these two sources of religious authority could not be reconciled, a schism divided the church. By the end of the seventeenth century, supporters of the schism, the *raskol'niki*, had formed the alternative religious culture of Old Belief.

Within the conflicts which led to the *raskol* are the seeds from which Old Believer society would develop – the ritual forms and practices Old Believers would preserve and those they would prohibit. Smaller in size than others cultivated on Russian soil, the vine of Old Belief had deep roots nourished by the inspiration of medieval Russian Orthodox spirituality. Although nothing foreign would be grafted onto it, carefully tended, Old Belief bore rich fruits containing the many-textured traditions of Russian culture. A few of its branches were dark and self-destructive, but the majority of

⁷ Ware, 80–81.

⁸ Serge A. Zenkovsky, ed. and trans., *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1963), 323–324. For further discussion of this theory see also Zen'kovskii, 30–40.

⁹ I. E. Zabelin, *Domashnii byt russkikh tsarits v XVI i XVII st.* (Moscow: Tipografiia Gracheva, 1869), 111.

its limbs were healthy and strong. As new generations of Old Believers took up the challenge of watching over the Orthodox vineyard, active communities of Old Belief, including the Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Cemeteries, provided support. The positive and constructive element of Old Believer culture found the means of survival in a hostile environment and dedicated itself to praising God in the 'correct' way.

In the Russian language, Orthodoxy (*pravoslavie*) literally means 'right-praising'. As the guardians of Orthodoxy, how were the tsar, the patriarch, and the Russian people to interpret this responsibility? Fifty years before the Time of Troubles and a century before the *raskol*, this question had been clarified by Russian church leaders who defined the way in which an Orthodox Russian should practise his Christian religion. The church fathers stipulated that apart from liturgical rites and rituals and pious conduct, the material symbols by which Russians expressed their religious devotion should include, among other things, certain forms of holy icons, books, and textiles. In the mid-seventeenth century, when attempts were made by Russian church leaders and the tsar to alter these rituals and symbols, numbers of clergy and their followers objected, believing that these changes heralded the demise of Orthodoxy and the end of salvation.

The interweaving of religious and commercial activity by Old Believers such as the Butikovs had its origins in the circumstances of the *raskol*. From the beginning of their history, it was necessary for Old Believers to develop habits of secrecy, discretion, mutual support, hard work, and above all, discipline in order to live in the way they believed would lead them to salvation. This included preserving the symbols of faith as they had existed before the *raskol*. In order to do this, Old Believers had to paint, carve, or cast the icons, copy and illuminate the sacred texts and music, weave and embroider the fabrics for vestments, ritual cloth, and dress which they believed were a demonstration of correct religious practice.

The future characteristics of Old Believer society are also evident in the constituency of its first leaders and followers. As weavers and merchants, the Butikov family represents a typical example of adherents to the Old Belief in the seventeenth century.

1.11 The Moral Authority of the *Stoglav* Fathers

In 1551, in the more benign years of his reign (1533–1584), Tsar Ivan the Terrible (Ivan IV), together with Makarii, the Metropolitan of Moscow, presided over a church council which came to be known as the *Stoglav*, or Council of One Hundred Chapters. The purpose of the *Stoglav* was to interpret matters of faith and morality for both the secular and monastic clergy in order to improve the quality of religious practice in Russia.

The *Stoglav* became the watermark of moral authenticity for the Old Believers who one hundred years later vehemently objected to the path of religious reform chosen for Russia by another partnership of church and crown – Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich.

The document produced by the Council consisted of ‘Tsar’s Questions’ which were addressed and answered by the various conclaves of church leaders who made up the Church Council in 1551. These covered a broad range of subjects relating to moral, liturgical, legal, economic, and in particular educational problems which had arisen since the introduction of Christianity in Russia.¹⁰ The *Stoglav* was an attempt to establish a basis for reform in Russian society which would be founded on Orthodox tradition. Equally urgent in the eyes of the authors was the need to protect Russian Orthodoxy from any heretical threats to its purity – whether pagan, Jewish, Moslem, or Latin. In the ‘Tsar’s Questions’ prohibitions are placed on a variety of rituals suggestive of pagan or non-Orthodox influence.

The *Stoglav* fathers repeatedly reminded the clergy of the sacred place of ancient tradition. For example, apart from Byzantine example, the spirituality of Russia’s great saints could be perpetuated through the imagery of accepted Russian iconography.¹¹ The *Stoglav* specified that icon painters should use as models icons of revered masters such as Andrei Rublev (d. ca. 1430) who used his own religious understanding to reinterpret

¹⁰ Jack Edward Kollmann, Jr., ‘The Moscow *Stoglav* (‘Hundred Chapters’) Church Council of 1551’ (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1978), 200–209.

¹¹ Prototypes for icons such as the Virgin Hodegetria (in the Hodegon Monastery in Constantinople) or Christ the Pantokrator (in St Catherine’s Monastery, Mount Sinai) existed centuries before Christianity came to Russia. Richard Temple, *Icons and the Mystical Origins of Christianity* (Shaftesbury, Dorset: Element, 1990), 92. See also *Treasures of Mount Athos*, B’ Edition, (Thessaloniki: Ministry of Culture, Museum of Byzantine Culture, 1997), 59. A seventeenth or early eighteenth-century Russian icon of the Pantokrator (Ruler of All) from Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery is in the collection of the Museum of Warmia and Masuria in Olsztyn, Poland. See Grażyna Kobrzeniecka-Sikorska, *Ikony staroobrzędowców w zbiorach muzeum Warmii i Mazur* (Olsztyn: Muzeum Warmii i Mazur, 1993), 43.

for the Russian church the meaning of early Christian hesychasm.¹² The *Stoglav* instructed that not only were holy icons to be carefully painted according to tradition and carefully handled afterwards, but also they must be created by men of high moral character. These men should be properly trained in their craft to follow the correct form for the representation of holy figures and the icon painter's own imaginative expression should not intrude.¹³

Sacred history was also represented on cloth, another religious art form inherited from the Byzantine church. From the eleventh century, icons, icon cloths, altar cloths, palls, banners, even entire *iconostases* (icon screens) were embroidered in Russian monastic workshops. Icon painters and manuscript illuminators provided the designs for this ecclesiastical embroidery and the dye blocks and dye for cloth which was block printed in the workshops.¹⁴ Many examples, such as the icon cloth (*podea* or *pelena*) of 'The Mother of God of the Burning Bush' now in the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg and dating from the late fifteenth or early sixteenth centuries, were embroidered with silk and gold thread.¹⁵ Others were beaded with pearls and other gems. The beauty of these cloths displays not only the skill of the embroiderers who made them, but also their discipline and dedication.¹⁶

¹² D. E. Kozhanchikov ed., *Stoglav* (St Petersburg: Tipografiia Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1863; repr. with an introduction by W. F. Ryan, Letchworth: Bradda, 1979), 151. Hesychasm (from the Greek word 'silence') was the mystical religious philosophy espoused by the Greek monks of Mount Athos and based on the practical teachings of early Eastern Christian mystics compiled in five volumes and known as the *Philokalia*. The hesychasts advocated a contemplative and silent form of prayer as a means of finding spiritual understanding. They believed that a vision of the Divine Uncreated Light would bring them into direct contact with God. This teaching influenced the monks and saints of Russia in the fourteenth century. Billington, 51; Temple, 53–57; *Treasures of Mount Athos*, 666; Ware, 75–76.

¹³ *Stoglav*, 152. On the significance of icons in the lives of Orthodox Russians see Nikolay Andreev, 'Nikon and Avvakum on Icon-Painting,' in *Studies in Muscovy, Western Influence and Byzantine Inheritance*, pref. Elizabeth Hill (London: Variorum Reprints, 1970), 37–38; Billington, 30–31; Foy de la Neuville, *A Curious and New Account of Muscovy in the Year 1689*, ed. and with an introduction by Lindsey Hughes, trans. J. A. Cutshall (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London, 1994), 26; Paul Muratov, 'The Traditionalism of Ancient Russian Art,' *Slavonic Review* 8, (1929–30), 267–268; Temple, 93–95; Ware, 41–42.

¹⁴ L. Yefimova and R. Belogorskaya, *Russian Embroidery and Lace*, trans. Alexandra Ilf (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 11.

¹⁵ This cloth belonged originally to the Monastery of St. Cyril of the White Lake. Liudmila Likhacheva, 'The Mother of God of the Burning Bush,' in *Gates of Mystery*, ed. Roderick Grierson (Cambridge: The Littleworth Press, [1994?]), 256; Liudmila Likhacheva 'The History of Embroidery Technique,' *ibid.*, 318–320. The ritual significance of an icon such as 'The Mother of God of the Burning Bush' was woven into the daily life of a Russian village. If a village was on fire, the inhabitants would carry this particular icon around the outside of their houses in the belief that it would protect their homes. See Pierre Pascal, *The Religion of the Russian People*, trans. Rowan Williams, with a foreword by Alexander Schmemmann (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), 17.

¹⁶ M. W. Alpatov and Olga Dacenko, *Art Treasures of Russia*, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., n. d.), 99, 132.

Visiting Russia in the sixteenth century, Sigmund von Herberstein noted the importance of icons.

No priest may recite his obligatory prayers without a sacred image. The same applies to laymen with the prayers they have undertaken.¹⁷

Holy icons formed the heart of a Russian's home as they stood in the *kiot* (icon corner), often with an embroidered icon cloth hanging below. A visitor displayed his respect toward the icons and thereby toward his host.

As soon as he enters the room the guest looks round for the icons, bares his head and crosses himself thrice according to their custom.¹⁸

Instructions were given in the *Stoglav* as to the correct gesture to use when making the sign of the cross, as it was specified and ordained by Russia's Holy Fathers.¹⁹

The *Domostroi*, a book of domestic etiquette for Russians was written in Novgorod around 1550, at approximately the same time as the *Stoglav*. Intended for the more affluent in society, it contained detailed information about how to maintain an orderly Russian household.²⁰ In addition, many of its chapters were devoted to proper conduct in church and during prayer. Although it was less overtly religious in nature, the *Domostroi* frequently echoed, almost *verbatim*, the words of the *Stoglav* in regard to religious matters.

Сице благословити рукою и креститися. три персты равны имети вкупе, по образу троическому. бог отец. бог сын. бог святыи дух. Не три боги, но един бог в троицы.

This is how to bless and make the sign of the cross with your hand. Put three fingers [thumb, fourth, and little] equal together in the Trinity form, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, not three gods, but one God in three.²¹

¹⁷ Sigmund von Herberstein, *Description of Moscow and Muscovy 1557*, ed. Bertold Picard, trans. J. B. C. Grundy (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1969), 89.

¹⁸ Herberstein, 41.

¹⁹ *Stoglav*, 106.

²⁰ Carolyn Johnston Pouncy, *The Domostroi* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 42–45.

²¹ *Domostroi*, (Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1882; repr. with an introduction by W. F. Ryan, Letchworth: Bradda, 1971), 38–39.

The *Stoglav* stipulated that anathema awaited those who disregarded such fundamental ritual practice.

Иже кто незнаменается двема персты. якоже и Христос да есть проклят.
Those who do not make the sign of the cross with two fingers [i.e. with the first two fingers raised] like Christ shall be damned.²²

Correct details of Orthodox worship, such as the singing of two rather than three 'alleluias' at a particular time during the liturgy were explained by the writers of the *Stoglav* as being founded on tradition approved by venerable Russian saints and miracle workers. Russians should not deviate from these forms.²³

Latin or other customs perceived as heretical were condemned. For example, the *Stoglav* advised Russians to identify themselves in a manner befitting Orthodox Christians. In particular, men were forbidden by the holy laws to shave their beards, a custom the *Stoglav* described as a 'non-Christian Latin and heretical tradition'.²⁴

In Muscovy, a man's beard was a sign of respect not only towards God but was also a sign of God's blessing.

At their [the Englishmen's] rising, the prince called them to his table, to receive each one a cup from his hand to drinke, and tooke into his hand Master George Killingworths beard which reached over the table, & pleasantly delivered it the Metropolitane, who seeming to blesse it, sayd in Russe, this is God's gift.²⁵

Adam Olearius, a visitor to Muscovy in the seventeenth century, observed the head covering of Russians when they were at prayer.

While listening to the chapters of the Bible, the Russians stand before their ikons with bared heads (for no one, not even the Grand Prince, is permitted in church with covered head, except for the priest, who keeps on the *skuf'ia*, or cap, in which he was consecrated).²⁶

²² *Stoglav*, 104.

²³ *Stoglav*, 148.

²⁴ *Stoglav*, 124.

²⁵ Letter from Henry Lane to Richard Hakluyt, 1589–90, in Richard Hakluyt, *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons, 1903), 333.

²⁶ Adam Olearius, *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, ed. and trans. Samuel Baron (Stanford, Calif., 1967), 252.

A newly tonsured priest was given a skullcap which he wore from then on and never removed.²⁷ Olearius commented on other regulations related to Russian clerical attire.

All these ecclesiastics, except for the archpriests and deacons, are allowed to wear neither trousers nor rings on their fingers. They may not wear linen next to the body, but only a wool shirt....The Patriarch may not wear a linen shirt either, but may use one of dark silk.²⁸

The *Stoglav* condemned the practice of bringing the shirt in which a mother had given birth into a church to be put on the altar for six weeks.²⁹ The authors also criticised the custom of cross-dressing as a pagan holdover from Greek tradition, writing that 'men should not deck themselves out in women's clothing and women should not array themselves in men's clothing, but each should have their own suitable clothes'.³⁰ While dressing up as animals, the dead, evil spirits, or witches which included this exchange of garments was intended to ward off evil or summon the spirits of the dead, it also had erotic overtones associated with ancient fertility rites.³¹ In other examples of the tenacity of pagan fertility rites, in some parts of Russia a white linen shirt was used in rituals of spring sowing and the shedding of garments was believed to contribute to the successful growth of flax.³²

One of the advisors to the *Stoglav* Council was Maksim Grek, a learned monk and scholar who came to Moscow from Mount Athos in 1518 at the invitation of Grand Prince Vasili III. In a direct acknowledgement of Maksim Grek's views, sought by Metropolitan Macarii on the subject, certain garments were prohibited altogether in the attire of Orthodox Russians who were instructed not to come to church services wearing skullcaps, 'a tradition of the cursed and godless Makhmet'.³³

²⁷ Pascal, *Avvakum*, 104.

²⁸ Olearius, 266.

²⁹ *Stoglav*, Kozhanchikov, 128.

³⁰ Kozhanchikov, *Stoglav*, 265.

³¹ Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 31–36; Maslova, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 116–18.

³² In addition to the belief that contact between the soil and bare flesh contributed to fertile growth, these rituals were thought to help flax grow well, by tricking the plant into believing the sowers had no shirts and needed linen. Women in the Olonets region took off a new white linen shirt during the ritual of sowing flax, while men removed their trousers. It was also the custom that a man of good reputation be chosen to sow flaxseed. He bathed and donned a clean, white linen shirt as a sign of his purity. When hemp was sown, men wore hempen trousers. Maslova, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 115–16.

³³ Maksim Grek, 'Poslanie k Adashevu o tafiakh,' in *Sochineniia prepodobnago Maksima Greka*, (Sviato-troitskaia Sergieva lavra, 1910; reprinted as Maksim Grek, *Tvoreniia*, Sviato-troitskaia Sergieva lavra, 1996), 1:242–245; *Stoglav*, 123.

Maksim strongly urged that tailors be forbidden to make alien garments such as turbans or Turkish caps. He advised parish priests not to give communion or let into the church any workers or their families who were guilty of producing these goods.³⁴ He also suggested that merchants who sold such non-Orthodox clothing be punished by the knout in the marketplace.³⁵

As in other cultures, in Russia traditional garments and other ceremonial textiles gave added meaning to rituals marking points of passage through the stages of man's earthly life. Belts which encircled the waist, caps which covered a woman's hair, and shirts embroidered with protective messages all figured in the ritual marking of birth, marriage, and death, while woven and embroidered linen towels also figured in the daily life and prayers of the Russian.

Nowhere is the attention to medieval Russian ritual and order more evident than in the chapters of the *Domostroi*. In addition to the original text, many instructions devoted to wedding ritual were added in the early to mid-seventeenth century.³⁶ The appropriate clothing and cloth to be used during a marriage ceremony are precisely designated for each participant and for each section of the wedding. Presentation of the multi-part traditional bridal head-dress involved several steps of preparation and was a key point of the ritual.³⁷

Like the *Stoglav*, the *Domostroi* indicates that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Orthodox Russians maintained customs and rituals where elements of pagan and Christian tradition intertwined. Nonetheless, Herberstein observed the Russian conviction that what had been sanctified by the Seventh Ecumenical Church Council in 787, well before Christianity came to Russia, 'should remain unchanged for ever'.³⁸

Although the Russian church had accepted the Byzantine model as a perfect religion, with no language in common, Russians became particularly reliant on tradition as they knew it. The translation of liturgical texts from Greek to Church Slavonic created barriers of understanding as the interpretation of language from one culture to another led to variations in teaching and ritual.³⁹ Because of this potential for discrepancy, the

³⁴ Maksim Grek, 'Poslanie o taffiakh,' 1:243.

³⁵ V. S. Ikonnikov, *Maksim Grek i ego vremia*, 2-oe izd. (Kiev: Istoricheskoe izsledovanie, 1915), 517.

³⁶ Pouncy, *Domostroi*, 40.

³⁷ *Domostroi*, 166.

³⁸ Herberstein, 91; Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 43-46; G. P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, 1st ed., 2 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, Oxford University Press, 1966, orig. pub. 1946), 1:179.

³⁹ A. N. Robinson in his commentary on the works of Protopop Avvakum in *Zhitie Avvakuma i drugie ego*

Stoglav council advised that holy books be corrected from good translations into Church Slavonic in order to avoid misinterpretation of the faith.⁴⁰

The books in question were sacred texts which had been translated from Greek into Church Slavonic and which were known to contain some errors.⁴¹ Concerned by this issue, since the sixteenth century, Russian rulers had invited foreign translators to help revise the holy books.

Maksim Grek was one of these scholars. Efforts to tackle the problem of poor translations were started by Grand Prince Vasilii III when he invited the theologian to work as a corrector. The fact that this was a sensitive and controversial task in Russia can be judged by the subsequent trials of Maksim for heresy and his long exile to a monastery in Tver', where he stayed until Ivan IV came to power and called him back to Moscow.⁴²

Greek scholars held influential positions in Muscovite society. Maksim was not only a corrector of liturgical texts, but also an outspoken writer and polemicist on religious and state affairs in general. He was critical of the Russian church, in particular the greed of the monasteries for land and wealth and the low moral standards of the monks and clergy. He was also critical of the fact that the Russians had in recent times begun to appoint their own metropolitans without Greek approval and of the grand prince's intention to divorce his wife.⁴³ However, the real reason for his arrest and imprisonment for heresy may have been his criticism that the Russian church did not show a proper understanding of the nature of Christ, a conclusion he would have come to as he examined the ancient texts.⁴⁴ When the Time of Troubles had ended and Russia's rulers again began to consider these problems of translation, a new generation of scholars was invited to Moscow.

sochineniia, ed. A. N. Robinson (Moscow: Sovietskaiia Rossiia: 1991), 346; Meyendorff, 44; Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974), 225; Fedotov, 2: 179; B. A. Uspenskii, 340–346, idem (Uspensky), 112–117.

⁴⁰ *Stoglav*, 95.

⁴¹ The prominent role played by semantics in the disputes which divided the religious community in Russia is emphasised by scholars of the *raskol* who focus their analysis on the details of grammar and lexical forms which caused significant differences of interpretation. B.A. Uspenskii, 335–346, idem (Uspensky), 108–117.

⁴² Paul Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 16–17.

⁴³ Ikonnikov, 456, 461, 486.

⁴⁴ Bushkovitch, 17.

1.12 Monastic Traditions and the Politics of the Patriarchate

Russia had inherited three forms of monastic life from the Byzantine church. In the cenobitic monastery monks gave up their individual property and freedom in order to follow the rule of their leader. In an idiorythmic community, monks brought their own property to the monastery. The *skit*, a small eremitic or hermit community supported the ascetic and mystical elements of Greek hesychasm, but was also suited to the Russian landscape. In the inaccessible forests of Russia, these religious refuges provided hermit monks isolation and independence from the control of either church or state authorities trying to force them to join larger cenobitic monasteries.⁴⁵

On the other hand, influential economically by virtue of their enormous landholding, industry, and wealth, the large monasteries were magnets for Russians who came to live and work on the land surrounding these commercial centres. Toward the end of their lives many people bequeathed their land to the monasteries and came to live as monks or nuns. In times of need, the monasteries provided safety, food, and medical care. Large monasteries such as Trinity-St. Sergius and Kirillo-Belozersk were also intellectual centres, where monks and scholars worked and studied and where the first Russian libraries were established.⁴⁶

Other monasteries such as Solovki in the White Sea, were virtual fortresses which lent them military and strategic importance. They were also used as places of refuge or exile, where enemies of the tsar were confined to prison. These included foreigners as well as Russians accused of heresy or other offences. As a result, large monasteries became centres not only of religious and economic activity, but also of potential political unrest. In addition, there were countless small and independent monasteries which came and went in the forests or on land beside a *posad*. They frequently harboured outlaws who resorted to violence when faced with interference from agents of the church or state.⁴⁷

For centuries monasteries in Russia had provided the country's main religious force, but in the sixteenth century a decline in the contemplative spirituality which had dominated Russian monastic traditions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

⁴⁵ Bushkovitch, 12–15; Kollman, 'Stoglav Council,' 404–405; Temple, 56.

⁴⁶ E. I. Zaozerskaia, *U istokov krupnogo proizvodstva russkoi promyshlennosti XVI–XVII vekov* (Moscow, 1970), 402.

⁴⁷ George Bernard Michels, 'Myths and Realities of the Russian Schism: The Church and its Dissenters in Seventeenth Century Muscovy' (Ph.D. diss. Harvard University, 1991), 269–70, 272, 298.

coincided with the rise of the Moscow patriarchate.⁴⁸ In addition, with the influx of foreign technocrats and merchants following the Time of Troubles, the focus of both economic and religious activity in Russia began to shift away from the monasteries and toward the patriarchal court established in Moscow in 1589.

When Filaret became patriarch in 1619, as the power behind the throne he was active in the politics of both state and church. He presided over visits of foreign delegations in Moscow, conducted daily prayer services for the tsar and his family, reorganised and oversaw the Moscow Printing Office, thereby deciding what could be published. Patriarch Filaret was even addressed as 'Great Sovereign', the same title used for the tsar.⁴⁹ To add to the wealth and power of the patriarchate he began the reorganisation of eparchies, imposed heavy tribute on parish churches, and banned bequests of land to the monasteries.⁵⁰

1.13 The White Clergy and the Patriarchate

Unemployment was a chronic problem for Russian priests who had no dependable source of income, but were given land to support themselves by a parish. They collected fees for services and prayers in a haphazard fashion, but they had to buy their own work permit. They also had to pay taxes, sometimes in extortionate amounts, to the local church officials. Their financial dependence on lay communities frequently forced them to abandon a parish. Some, ineligible to practise due to their widowed status, nevertheless retained their jobs, sometimes through bribery or because the communities who selected them found it more convenient to deal with someone familiar.⁵¹ Since the sixteenth century new taxes and harsh methods of collecting them had made life for many of these priests intolerable and drove them to wander in search of work. By the seventeenth century they were required to come to Moscow to discuss their job prospects at the patriarchal court.⁵² Some fled to Moscow to seek permission to

⁴⁸ Bushkovitch, 13–15.

⁴⁹ J. L. H. Keep, 'The Regime of Filaret 1619–1633,' *Slavonic Review* 38, 91 (June, 1960): 334–335; Meyendorff, 89.

⁵⁰ Bushkovitch, 20–21; Keep, 339–343; Donald Ostrowski, 'Church Polemics and Monastic Land Acquisition in Sixteenth-Century Muscovy,' *Slavonic and East European Review* 64, 3 (July 1986): 372–375; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 25–27; Zenkovsky, 'Church Schism,' 44.

⁵¹ Jack E. Kollman, Jr., 'The *Stoglav* Council and Parish Priests,' *Russian History/Histoire Russe* 7, 1–2 (1980): 76–79; Giles Fletcher, *Of the Russe Commonwealth* (London, 1591. Facsimile 1st edn. with variants Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 86–87.

⁵² Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 155.

work even temporarily.⁵³ Apart from being uneducated and impecunious, they were often drunk and belligerent.

I and many others have seen how drunken priests in Moscow were beaten with scourges as they lay in the gutter.⁵⁴

Education and religious knowledge did not play a part in the lives of the lower clergy as they struggled for survival in a countryside where there was an overabundance of clerics.

Of friers they have an infinit rabble...every city & good part of the countrey swarmeth ful of them.⁵⁵

The increasing power of the patriarchate in Moscow had done little to help the process of religious revival and education envisaged by the *Stoglav* fathers to improve the moral standards of either disorderly monks or illiterate priests.

They still have neither preaching nor discussion of religious questions...no one points out the true path to those who stray.⁵⁶

1.14 East Meets West in Muscovy

When Grand Prince Vladimir chose Byzantine Christianity as the official religion for his principality, he established a relationship with the Greek Church which was not to be broken formally until 1589, with the establishment of the Moscow patriarchate. In 1439 when the Byzantine church accepted doctrinal union with the Latin Catholic church at the Council of Florence, the relationship between the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches was profoundly changed. Shocked by what they saw as the betrayal of Orthodoxy, the Russians began to distance themselves from the authority of Constantinople. This was hastened by the fall of the Byzantine Empire to the Turks a short time after the Council of Florence, in 1453.⁵⁷ In 1448, the Russians established an autocephalous Russian church by installing their own choice as metropolitan, Bishop

⁵³ Kollman, 'Stoglav Council,' 467.

⁵⁴ Herberstein, 89.

⁵⁵ Fletcher, 87.

⁵⁶ Olearius, 251.

⁵⁷ Billington, 57-58; Ware, 80-81.

Iona of Riazan', conveniently explained to the Greeks by the Russian grand prince as a political necessity.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the Russian church leaders continued to have close ties with their Greek fathers. In particular, the Russians sought their advice in regard to the on-going book corrections. The maintenance of close ties was also favoured by the Greeks who were as anxious for financial and political support from Russia as they were to maintain a safe haven for Orthodoxy.⁵⁹ It therefore suited their cause to accommodate the Russian leaders in their efforts to preserve the purity of Eastern Orthodoxy.

On the other hand, by the beginning of the Romanov era, Muscovy had already assimilated and absorbed a considerable amount of Western culture. The guardians of Orthodoxy could not keep all Latin influence, religious or secular, from entering Russia and beginning what some perceived as the corruption of Orthodox Russian society. The Time of Troubles, like the Mongol rule before it, had deepened Russia's xenophobic commitment to Orthodoxy, but in fighting wars with Livonia and Poland or making alliances with Sweden or Germany, Russia was becoming involved with Western society. The beliefs and customs of this society challenged the traditional norms of Orthodox piety and ritual expressed in the *Stoglav*, *Domostroi*, and other books of religious instruction such as the *Kormchaia kniga*.

Apart from the military adventures of the Muscovite state, trade relations had been established between Russia and countries such as Germany, France, Italy, and England. Since before the Time of Troubles separate communities had been created in Moscow to buffer the local population from the non-Orthodox Christians living there, as Russians began to interact with both the Western and Greek merchants who lived in the city.⁶⁰ Only men who converted to Russian Orthodoxy were allowed to marry Russian women, yet the tsars themselves sent some of their young scholars abroad to study Western ways, and it was common for the court to be attended by German or English physicians such as Samuel Collins.⁶¹ Without its own system of effective education, in the mid-seventeenth century Moscow was dependent on foreign advisors who introduced

⁵⁸ Gustave Alef, 'Muscovy and the Council of Florence,' *Slavic Review* 20 (1961): 401; Michael Cherniavsky, 'The Reception of the Council of Florence in Moscow,' *Church History* 24 (1955): 353-354.

⁵⁹ Fletcher, 80-81.

⁶⁰ Samuel H. Baron, 'The Origins of Seventeenth-Century Moscow's Nemetskaja Sloboda,' in *Muscovite Russia, Collected Essays*, (London: Variorum Reprints, 1980), 2.

⁶¹ Billington, 88; Samuel Collins, *The Present State of Russia* (London: J. Winter for D. Newman, 1671), 'To the Reader,' n. p.

Russians to Western religious practices, technological expertise, artistic traditions, domestic habits, and dress.⁶²

Western influence also came to Russia through an exposure to Latin books and scholarship emanating from Ukraine and Poland. During Ivan IV's reign, Ivan Fedorov, a printer from White Russia, tried to establish a state printing office in Moscow, but such was the fear among the local clergy of innovation or Western-oriented publications, that rioters destroyed the office in 1565.⁶³ With the Union of Brest in 1596, some members of the Ukrainian Orthodox church accepted the authority of the papacy, although they would maintain their Orthodox rituals. The establishment of this Uniate church caused apprehension among Orthodox who did not accept the authority of Rome and increased the enmity between Russia and Catholic Poland.⁶⁴

During the reign of the first Romanov, Metropolitan Peter Mogila founded an academy in Kiev where both Latin and Greek were studied, along with literature, catechisms, and Western books.⁶⁵ The Orthodox clergy were exposed to Latin methods of teaching as well as to Western models of education not only by the academy, but also by the local Jesuit schools being established at the same time.⁶⁶ Lacking such higher education, the authorities in Moscow were often forced to seek the help of Kievan scholars when questions of translation or book publication arose.

The possibility that heretical literature would fall into Orthodox hands made the question of book corrections one of concern to Russian church leaders responsible for supervising the dissemination of newly printed materials.⁶⁷ For example, in 1629 two monks were arrested for heresy in Vologda for distributing inappropriate Ukrainian books and in 1628 a large number of suspect books which were found at a monastery near Nizhnii Novgorod were burned.⁶⁸

The fear that corrupt religious influence would creep into Russia from Latin heresies was compounded by Russian suspicions that the Greek church could no longer

⁶² Baron, 'Origins,' 3–4; Olearius, 279, Billington, 108–114; Donald W. Treadgold, *The West in Russia and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), vol. 1, *Russia, 1472–1917* 56, 73.

⁶³ Fedorov was more successful in Lvov, where he was able to publish a bi-lingual Greek and Church Slavonic primer in 1578, and in 1580 a Church Slavonic Psalter and New Testament which had been translated more from Latin than from Greek, illustrating the interest in classical studies which had developed in both Orthodox and Catholic communities close to Russia. Billington, 95, Iaroslav Isaievych, 'Greek Culture in the Ukraine: 1550–1650,' *Greek Studies Yearbook* 6 (1990): 108, 111.

⁶⁴ Billington, 104, 111; Ware, 104–105.

⁶⁵ Isaievych, 98; Treadgold, 57–60.

⁶⁶ Billington, 104–105; Pipes, 127; Treadgold, 59, 63–66.

⁶⁷ B. A. Uspenskii, 337, idem (Uspensky), 110.

⁶⁸ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 351–353.

be relied on to understand the nature of Orthodoxy when its leaders had themselves made apostate decisions by uniting with the Latin church. Even more worrying to the Russians in the context of book revisions, since the fall of Constantinople, Greek holy books had to be printed in environments hostile to Orthodox tradition. The Greek representatives in Moscow were treated accordingly with growing suspicion and even disdain. For example, Greek clerics were discouraged from conducting religious services or even from attending them for fear that their lack of understanding of the language would sully the services. Some were even sent to Russian monasteries for instruction in their faith.⁶⁹

Slavic Muscovy had become a meeting place for the Byzantine religious practice it had inherited and the Western customs introduced through its commercial and military relations. Whereas innovation, humanistic scholarship, and foreign advice were welcome and sought by the Russian rulers in their wish to secure their empire, their wealth, and their prestige, the price of modernisation was high as it impinged on the country's Orthodox religious traditions. Russian society became polarised between those, especially its rulers, who looked favourably on such Western and in some cases Greek innovations and those who saw this leaning as the heretical contamination of a sacred Russian tradition.

When the schism took place in the Russian church, schismatics rejected all outward signs of Westernisation. This included not changing their appearance. From 1698, when Peter the Great first ordered Russians to shave their beards, Old Believers denounced this departure from Orthodox tradition.

1.15 The Official Reformers: Tsar and Patriarch

Genuine enthusiasm for improvement in the practice of Orthodoxy was an important consideration for Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (1645-1676) when he came to power. A devout man, he was interested in the correction of religious texts started by Maksim Grek in the previous century. This work had continued under his grandfather, Filaret (1619-1633) and succeeding patriarchs, Ioasaf (1634-1640) and Iosif (1642-1652). After consulting Paisios, the visiting Patriarch of Jerusalem, the tsar asked for

⁶⁹ N. O. Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i ego protivniki v delo ispravleniia tserkovnykh obriadov* (Sergiev posad, 1913), 32; Olga Strakhov, 'Attitudes to Greek Language and Culture in Seventeenth-century Muscovy,' trans. Hugh M. Olmsted, *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 6 (1990): 127.

Greek scholars to be sent to Moscow.⁷⁰ While Aleksei Mikhailovich hoped to eliminate discrepancies and align the Russian church with Greek ritual practice, he was less concerned with administrative reforms within the Moscow patriarchate or life in the parishes and monasteries.

The tsar's confessor, Stefan Vonifat'ev was Aleksei Mihailovich's first religious advisor and the leading member of a group of clerics committed to moral and religious reform.⁷¹ Patriarch Iosif personally fell out with Vonifat'ev and began to turn the tsar against his confessor and the rest of the reformers who were based principally in the Nizhnii Novgorod region. When the patriarch died in 1652, this critical attitude was strengthened by Iosif's successor, the tsar's close friend Patriarch Nikon (1652–58), previously Metropolitan of Novgorod and Abbot of the royal Novospasskii Monastery in Moscow.⁷²

Nikon had lived for a time as a hermit monk in the north of Russia, worked with the provincial reformers near Nizhnii Novgorod, and held a variety of monastic posts before being summoned to Moscow by the future tsar. His administrative talents, his energy, and devoutness had won the respect of Aleksei Mikhailovich, Stefan Vonifat'ev, and Paisios who was a significant figure in the formation of both the tsar's and the patriarch's views of reform during the time he spent in Moscow in 1649.⁷³ However, the political overtones of Nikon's reform programme led to division among the reformers.⁷⁴

In 1653, one year after becoming patriarch, Nikon sent an epistle to the clergy, relating to a revised *Psaltyr'* (Psalter). The epistle called for changes in the number and kind of bows or prostrations to be made at the time of the Prayer of St. Ephrem. A second point instructed that the sign of the cross was now to be made with three fingers raised instead of two. Both of these issues had been addressed in earlier texts such as the *Stoglav* and the 1646 *Sluzhebnik* (Service Book) which designated the use of the two-fingered sign of the cross as the tradition handed down from the Holy Fathers. Pre-1653 Psalters had instructed which prostrations and how many should accompany the prayer.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Meyendorff, 99.

⁷¹ Philip Longworth, *Alexis: Tsar of All the Russians* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1984), 31.

⁷² Meyendorff, 40–41, 84–85.

⁷³ Kapterev, 104; Meyendorff, 98–99.

⁷⁴ Zenkovsky, 'Church Schism,' 43.

⁷⁵ Meyendorff, 43; B. A. Uspenskii, 332, idem (Uspensky), 106.

Nikon followed the first changes in ritual with others he claimed were to correct Russian variations from Greek practice as he had read them in Greek texts or in properly translated Church Slavonic manuscripts. These included the improper Russian custom of singing two 'alleluias' instead of three as the Greeks did at certain points in their service.⁷⁶

During the next few years the tsar convened several church councils to ratify the revisions he and the patriarch deemed necessary to conform to contemporary Greek rather than Russian tradition. As justification, they cited the approval received from the presiding Greek patriarchs. However, the reforms were not always consistent or based on genuine research, which is born out by letters exchanged between the Greek patriarchs and Patriarch Nikon when he sought their advice in 1653–1654. In some cases, for example in a letter from Patriarch Paisios of Constantinople, Nikon edited the content to suit his own purposes. Paisios had attempted to explain to Nikon that whereas some Russian traditions were deviations from the Greek, the Greek church authorities did not object to these local variations. The essential aim was to preserve the unchangeable meaning of the faith. He suggested to Nikon that there was no need be so rigid in his literal interpretations, as ritual was something which evolved over time and some ritual is never written down at all.

Although the impetus for liturgical reform had begun with Aleksei Mikhailovich, he passed the responsibility on to his dynamic patriarch whose power in Moscow had reached such a height that while the tsar was away leading his army in war, Nikon virtually ruled the country at home. While wishing to confirm that everything the Russians did was in line with the Greeks, the powerful Muscovite patriarch was theoretically on equal footing with the Greek patriarchs. In addition, the Russians were being courted for the financial protection they could offer the Greeks. The church leaders were anxious to humour Nikon and if he did not always take the advice he was given it was not allowed to create tensions between the patriarchs.⁷⁷

However, Nikon soon recognised that book corrections and internal improvements in the church were less likely in the short run to help him maintain his grip on political power. Far more effective would be the continuation of Filaret's plans to secure the wealth and prestige of the patriarchate and the aggrandisement of the

⁷⁶ Meyendorff, 45–46.

⁷⁷ Meyendorff, 131, 56–59, 48, 85, 89.

church through its outward, material symbols. As part of this programme, eparchies were replaced, their bishops transferred to distant communities. Taxes and other expenses became higher and more difficult for parishes to meet. Many priests lost their jobs, and along with mendicant monks, began a life of wandering in search of work. Some were given menial new jobs in different areas, while others were arrested and charged with civil as well as religious crimes.⁷⁸

Despite his authority and status in Moscow, six years after becoming patriarch, Nikon gave up his position. For eight years there was no patriarch as Nikon refused to allow the selection of another and the tsar was reluctant to defy his wishes, despite the fact that the Church Council of 1660 authorised the appointment of a new patriarch. Nevertheless, the influence of Patriarch Nikon was significant. By 1666 nearly all the reforms he had suggested for the church were ratified by the church councils which met in his absence and which, in 1667 formally deposed Nikon himself.⁷⁹

The same Church Council also condemned Nikon's opponents within the Russian church. Their fate was sealed by legal reforms which had also occupied Aleksei Mikhailovich during his reign.

In 1648 there were civil disturbances in Moscow and other towns, instigated by merchants and artisans who lived in the *posady*. Punitive financial demands had been placed on them by the state in its need to increase Russia's military budget. The *posadskie liudi* were also disenchanted with the taxes demanded of them by the Russian church.⁸⁰ Within a year of this unrest the tsar had signed a comprehensive new code of laws, the *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, which addressed some of the complaints of the townspeople. Their tax burdens were adjusted and they were granted the right to trade and manufacture, privileges which had previously pertained only to certain residents of the artisan quarters, such as the crown weavers, whose rights are described in the following chapter.⁸¹

The Russian church was put under the authority of the state by the establishment of a Monasteries Office and by a moratorium on further land acquisition. Nonetheless, the importance of the church in Russia was underlined by the harsh punishment

⁷⁸ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 44–47, 70, 155.

⁷⁹ Meyendorff, 59–64, 69.

⁸⁰ Pipes, 200–202; K. A. Pazhitnov, *Problema remeslennykh tsekhov v zakonodatel'stve russkogo absolutizma* (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk, SSSR, 1952), 33.

⁸¹ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 16–18.

designated in the code for anyone uttering blasphemous words against the church: execution.⁸²

1.16 The Zealots of Piety

While Aleksei Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon agreed on church reform, their approach began to conflict with the outlook of an eloquent group of priests committed to religious revival, popularly known as the *revniteli drevleblagochestiia* (Zealots of Ancient Piety) or *bogoliubtsy* (Seekers of God). The reform movement instigated by these churchmen began in the countryside near the Volga trading town of Nizhnii Novgorod. Because of the priests' close ties to the Russian court, their crusade also began to influence the church in Moscow and led ultimately to the division of the reform movement into a provincial and an urban faction. The rural zealots hoped to recreate the ethic of Christian humility espoused by medieval Russian saints such as Vladimir (d.1015), Theodosius (d.1074), Sergius of Radonezh (d.1392), Stephen of Perm' (d.1396), and Kirill of Beloozersk (d.1427).⁸³ Apart from these spiritual fathers, the zealots also relied on the words of Maksim Grek and the *Stoglav* to guide them in their mission.⁸⁴

The Time of Troubles, war, famine, plague, and internal unrest had strengthened people's need for religious faith but had not helped the Russian church to increase the positive influence of its monks and priests. One of the main themes of the *Stoglav* had been the need to educate better the Russian clergy. Without a means of implementation, this project was left more or less to fate until the 1630s when genuine attempts were begun by the Zealots of Piety to continue the search for what they saw as Russia's lost piety.⁸⁵

Foreign accounts of Muscovy in the years shortly after the writing of the *Stoglav* agree with the church fathers in describing a society violent and uncouth in both private and commercial conduct. Wives and servants were routinely beaten. Merchants were sly and deceitful.⁸⁶ The country was overrun with an impoverished and ineffectual clergy

⁸² 'Sobornoe Ulozhenie 1649 goda,' in *Rossiiskoe zakonodatel'stvo X–XX vekov*, t. 3, ed. A. G. Man'kov (Moscow, 1985), 85.

⁸³ Ware, 89, 93; Bushkovitch, 13; Zen'kovskii, 133–137.

⁸⁴ Zen'kovskii, 110–111; Zenkovsky, 'Church Schism,' 39.

⁸⁵ Zenkovsky, 'Church Schism,' 39–40.

⁸⁶ Fletcher, 115–116; Herberstein, 41, 52, 66, 82, 84.

and many Russians still clung to pagan customs. The superstitious practices of burning straw and calling up the dead or putting salt under the altar on Holy Thursday to give it curative powers for humans or cattle were criticised in the *Stoglav*.⁸⁷

The zealots reopened churches abandoned during the Time of Troubles and hoped to inspire an improvement in the Christian life of parishioners through the introduction of sermons and better religious education for priests. Following the instructions of the *Domostroi* for example, they preached Christian charity and justice for the weaker members of society.⁸⁸ Christians should visit people in prison, hospitals, monasteries, and hermitages, giving charity to the needy, the poor, or sorrowful according to their ability.⁸⁹

In the mid-seventeenth century the plight of priests in the Russian countryside was unenviable. As the power of the patriarchate in Moscow increased, it became more difficult for the lower clergy to find work. The reformers aimed to eliminate the immoral practices of priests who would, for example, sell a woman's confession to her husband for five roubles.⁹⁰

Archpriest Ivan Neronov, a leader of the Zealots of Piety was one of the priests most admired by Aleksei Mikhailovich for his inspiring sermons. However, the zeal of Neronov and his colleagues antagonised both their parishioners and less committed members of the clergy. Some of the zealots had even been in prison for skirmishes related to their insistence on preaching, which could be construed as heretical, or for their insistence on the practice of *edinoglasie* (singing one at a time). They advocated the elimination of *mnogoglasie*, where several clerics chanted different parts of the liturgy simultaneously to shorten the service.⁹¹ The reformers were also disliked for their

⁸⁷ *Stoglav*, 142.

⁸⁸ Zenkovsky, 'Church Schism,' 39; Zen'kovskii, 135.

⁸⁹ *Domostroi*, 31.

⁹⁰ N. O. Kapterev, *Patriarkh Nikon i ego protivniki v dele ispravleniia tserkovnykh obriadov* (Sergiev posad, 1913), 129.

⁹¹ A significant influence exerted by the monasteries in Muscovy was the rule of their services which had become more complex and elaborate as they adopted the liturgy of Jerusalem, replacing the earlier and simpler liturgy of Constantinople. These services had also found their way into the secular church and created a difficulty for parish priests and their congregations who found them lengthy, complicated, and hard to incorporate in their everyday church life. As a result, a means of shortening these burdensome services had become part of the priests' routine. The practice of *mnogoglasie* where several priests chanted or sang different sections of the liturgy at once shortened the services but while leaving nothing out made them garbled and incomprehensible. The desire of reformers to put a stop to this custom was a source of heated disagreement between the higher clergy and parish priests during the early years of seventeenth-century church reform. N. Gibbenet, *Istoricheskoe izsledovanie dela patriarkha Nikona* (St Petersburg, 1882/1884), 5; Zen'kovskii, 134–137; B. A. Uspenskii, 353–354; idem (Uspensky), 124–126.

condemnation; of the popular and satirical wandering mummers of Russia – the *skomorokhi*.

Neronov's assistant, Archpriest Avvakum, had, for example, outraged locals by driving away these entertainers, smashing their musical instruments and taking away their two large bears. He then compounded his disfavour by refusing to bless the son of a powerful boyar, Vasili Sheremetev. When Avvakum reprimanded the young man for being beardless and debauched, the boyar had the priest thrown into the Volga.⁹²

Beginning in 1636, through a series of petitions to the patriarchs and tsars these zealous prelates began to point out the terrible conditions in the churches, monasteries, and parishes of Russia. They wished to reiterate the moral lessons contained in the *Stoglav*, thereby strengthening and defending Orthodoxy from the perceived threats which surrounded it and the people from the anger of God which it seemed they now deserved.⁹³ In 1636 even Patriarch Ioasaf sent a memo to a government official voicing distress at the disorderly and undignified behaviour of people who went to church like bandits with iron-tipped sticks. He complained that they got into bloody fights and used foul language in church.⁹⁴

Petitions written to Patriarch Iosif in the 1640s show the anxiety of those who felt that Russians were offending and angering God in every possible way. Drunkenness, lewdness, brawling in bloody fights, talking during church services were all listed as examples of immoral behaviour. Also mentioned were drunken priests who chanted the liturgy six at a time so parishioners could not understand what was being said. Transgressions against parents and carrying holy icons while committing impious acts were also cited as abuses occurring outside the laws of decency in Russia.⁹⁵

However, as this reform movement gained momentum it encountered not only the disapproval of the uneducated rural clergy and their parishioners who resented interference in their accustomed activities, but also of the tsar and patriarch in Moscow who were occupied with Greek scholars and the correction of holy books. While some zealots were driven from their posts by angry locals, others were removed by Patriarch Nikon when he came to power, for overstepping their authority.⁹⁶

⁹² Avvakum, 'Zhitie,' in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 357.

⁹³ Zenkovsky, 'Church Schism,' 39.

⁹⁴ Kapterev, 127.

⁹⁵ Kapterev, 174–179; Bushkovitch, 55–56.

⁹⁶ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 49–50, 90; Zenkovsky, 'Church Schism,' 43–44.

Such tactics on the part of the patriarch in Moscow contributed to tension within the Russian church, where traditional arrangements of finance and authority were undermined by the expanding power of the patriarchate. When all the archimandrites of all the large Moscow monasteries were replaced between 1652 and 1658, able church leaders such as Aleksander, the Bishop of Kolomna and then Viatka, lost their positions. Jobs with lesser status or reduced circumstances were given to prelates in new eparchies, where they had to contend with a lack of trained clergy, unruly priests and parishioners.⁹⁷ Their replacements were sometimes clerical despots such as Stephen, Bishop of Suzdal' who subjected the local priests and parishioners to physical abuse and imposed heavy taxes on them. In some cases, the higher clergy were also responsible for vandalism such as desecrating the graves of local princes and defacing or removing sacred objects from churches. As well as this they began to interfere with long-established customs such as exchanging painted eggs at Easter.⁹⁸ Resentment increased as the religious authorities who supported Patriarch Nikon followed his orders to remove traditional altar cloths and private icons from churches and monasteries. In some cases gems were taken from the *oklady* (covers) which protected the icons.⁹⁹ Parish churches in Moscow whose priests were not considered supportive enough of the patriarch and his reforms were closed down.¹⁰⁰ Nikon also encouraged the abandonment of small *skity* and monasteries or forced their members to join larger establishments. As a result, when Nikon insisted that reforms be introduced, the loyalties of the priests and monks who were responsible for instigating change in their churches, monasteries, and parishes were often doubtful, but for reasons which had nothing to do with the liturgical reforms themselves.¹⁰¹

The objectors were led by Ivan Neronov who was at that time the preacher in Kazan' Cathedral in Moscow, having left his work in Nizhnii Novgorod to serve Aleksei Mikhailovich and his family. He was supported by Archpriest Avvakum, Archpriest Loggin of Murom, and by one archbishop, Paul of Kolomna. In a petition to the Tsaritsa Mar'ia Il'inichna in 1654, Neronov complained that the 'worldly' reformers who were 'worse than heretics' did not have the authority to make changes in church ritual since

⁹⁷ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 47–48, 70.

⁹⁸ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 101–103, 152, 185.

⁹⁹ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 184, 103.

¹⁰⁰ L. E. Ankudinova, 'Sotsial'nyi sostav pervykh raskol'nikov,' *Vestnik leningradskogo universiteta* 14 (1956): 58.

¹⁰¹ Ankudinova, 58; Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 86–93, 271–272.

they did not understand the essence of the laws of the Holy Apostles and the Holy Fathers.¹⁰²

A great source of anxiety for Nikon's critics was a belief that the 'worldly' book correctors chosen by the patriarch and tsar to work in Moscow might themselves have heretical intentions. There is no extant copy of the epistle sent by Nikon to his clergy in 1653. However, it would appear to have been the focal point for the first concrete objections raised by Muscovite clergy against revisions to the liturgy. It seems that as much as the content of the official reforms, it was the context and manner in which they were introduced which produced bitter opposition. It was not until ten or even twenty years later that many of the innovations suggested in the epistle were specifically criticised by the protestors.¹⁰³ In the interim, other grounds for protest, particularly against the authority of the patriarch, had had time to accumulate.

1.17 The Zealots and the Fear of Heresy

The first examples of organised heretical activity had not appeared in Russia until the end of the fourteenth century when a group of well-informed and articulate polemicists began to criticise the Russian clergy for practices such as taking money for ordinations. In addition, they raised questions about fundamental matters of dogma concerning the liturgy, prayers for the dead, and the necessity for priests at all. Known as the *strigol'niki* (the Shorn), in keeping with their name, they may also have advocated the shaving of heads and beards.¹⁰⁴

This heretical group was based in the Novgorod area and probably survived for no more than 70 years. However, they were followed in the late fifteenth century by a more radical sect advocating reform, the Judaizers.¹⁰⁵ While these heretics had been eliminated from Russia, they were thought to be responsible for the translation of prohibited books into Russian.¹⁰⁶ Tracts related to natural science, magic, astrology, and

¹⁰² 'Poslanie Neronova k tsaritse Mar'e Il'ichne iz Spasokamennago monasteryia, ot maia 1654 goda,' in N. Subbotin, ed., *Materialy dlia istorii raskola za pervoe vremia ego sushchestvovaniia*, (Moscow, 1874), 1:78–79.

¹⁰³ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 53, 133.

¹⁰⁴ Fedotov, *Russian Religious Mind*, 2:114–120.

¹⁰⁵ These heretics were actually connected to Tsar Ivan III's family through his daughter-in-law and were initially treated more leniently. This was disturbing to members of the clergy since the Judaizers criticised not only the same practices as the *strigol'niki* but probably even questioned the belief in a Holy Trinity. Billington, 73–4; Dmitrii Obolensky, *The Bogomils* (Twickenham, Middlesex: Anthony C. Hall, 1972, orig. pub. Cambridge University Press, 1948), 278–9; Bushkovitch, 15.

¹⁰⁶ Billington, 74.

alchemy or books of fortune telling and prophesy such as the *Rafli*, *Shestokryl*, *Aristotelevy vrata*, zodiacs, almanacs, astronomies and 'other collections of heretical thoughts and fiendish magical practices' devoted to these subjects were condemned by Maksim Grek and the *Stoglav*.¹⁰⁷

Despite the fact that Patriarch Nikon wanted his reforms to be as accurate as possible, he allowed certain individuals with suspect backgrounds to help carry out his plans. Arsenii Grek was a mysterious figure who came to Moscow from Kiev as part of a Greek delegation and stayed on to work as a corrector. His past was less than transparent and by his own admission he had, under duress, embraced different religions at different times. Like Maksim Grek and other correctors in the previous century, he had been imprisoned for heresy. However, when Nikon was still Metropolitan of Novgorod he had retrieved Arsenii from exile and later put him in charge of the book corrections in Moscow. This outraged critics such as Archpriest Avvakum who believed that Arsenii was revising the sacred books just for the sake of it.

Как говорил Никон, адов пес, так и зделал – «Печатай, Арьсен, книги как-нибудь, лишь бы не по-старому!» Так, су, и зделал.

So spoke Nikon, the hellish dog, and so he did: 'Print the books, Arsenii, some way or other, just not in the old way!' That is how it was and that is what he did.¹⁰⁸

It seems that Arsenii's Greek was not as good as Nikon thought and he was viewed with contempt by other correctors, such as Ivan Nasedka who felt the corrector was not only an unscrupulous opportunist, but a known heretic who should not be working on the sacred texts.¹⁰⁹ Another objector who supported Archpriest Neronov was Deacon Fedor Ivanov. During the Moscow Church Council of 1666, in defence of his objections to the book revisions, he petitioned the tsar, suggesting that Arsenii was a Jew who had made obeisance to the Pope of Rome. Nikon was so 'infatuated' that he brought the monk, 'a known heretic' out of exile and put him to work as a corrector. He made incorrect changes in perfectly good translations and then 'taught them to others'.¹¹⁰

His presence in Moscow was a source of controversy and resentment within the church. It was known that he was following not ancient texts as correct models, but

¹⁰⁷ *Stoglav*, 136, 140.

¹⁰⁸ Avvakum, 'Zhitie Avvakuma' in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 388.

¹⁰⁹ Meyendorff, 103–106, Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 134–135, 137–138, 154–156; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 289.

¹¹⁰ Subbotin, 6:41, 32.

books printed in Venice, Paris, or Rome around 1600, when under Turkish occupation the Greeks were not allowed to print their own religious works. In his petition of 1666 Deacon Fedor explained that ancient texts were not being used.¹¹¹ They may have been written in Greek, but not according to the ancient piety.¹¹²

As proof that the correctors did not understand what they were doing, Fedor pointed out that there were six versions of the 1655 *Sluzhebnik* printed in that one year.¹¹³ Other Russian churchmen such as Ivan Nasedka, Aleksander, Bishop of Viatka, the priest Nikita Dobrynin of Suzdal', and Archimandrite Feokist who tried to monitor the corrections understood that they were not based on proper models, but on a variety of non-Orthodox, potentially heretical sources – contemporary Greek, Latin, or even non-Christian.¹¹⁴

Their concern at the inadequacies of the reform process led them to the schismatic views for which they were condemned by the Church Councils in 1666/1667. For the next three centuries their followers and their descendants collected, restored, and copied the pre-Nikonian versions of the holy books and texts. These included, for example, the *Sluzhebnik*, *Psaltyr*, and the *Kormchaia kniga*, translated into Bulgarian in the ninth century. In 1653 Nikon's correctors altered the thirteenth-century Serbian version of this book used in Russia.¹¹⁵ Just as Old Believers in the seventeenth century adhered to the instruction of the *Kormchaia kniga*, *Domostroi*, and *Stoglav*, the words of these texts are repeated and analysed in contemporary Old Believer publications.¹¹⁶

Apart from liturgical ritual, Nikon's fascination with everything Greek included large-scale building projects such as the neo-Byzantine style Monastery of the New Jerusalem outside Moscow and a new patriarchal church in the Kremlin. He had eight-pointed crosses on churches replaced by the Greek four-pointed cross. In his desire to rid the Russian church of symbols which did not fully correspond to a Greek model, he also condemned any elements of architectural style he saw as Russian, whether folk designs or onion domes and tent-roofs on churches. He also wanted Russian ceremonial

¹¹¹ B. L. Fonkich, *Grechesko-russkie kul'turnye sviazi v XV–XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), 164–166.

¹¹² Subbotin, 6:41.

¹¹³ Subbotin, 6:22.

¹¹⁴ Meyendorff, 220; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 307; Zen'kovskii, 111–112, 205–207, 223–225, 234, 270–272.

¹¹⁵ Pascal, *Avvakum*, 151–152; Vurgaft and Ushakov, s.v. 'Kormchaia kniga'; Zen'kovskii, 212.

¹¹⁶ I. V. Levochkin, 'Domostroi: ego sodержanie i idei,' *Zlatostrui, staroobriadcheskii zhurnal* 2 (Riga, 1992): 27–29.

occasions to be performed just as the Greeks observed them. He insisted on the introduction of Greek vestments which differed considerably from the Russian.¹¹⁷

Paul of Aleppo, son of the Patriarch of Antioch, who was visiting Moscow in 1656, tells of Nikon's using the solemn occasion of the celebration of the feast of St. Peter, the first metropolitan of Moscow, to substitute Greek vestments for those used by the Russian clergy. He wrote that when the people saw Nikon in this new regalia, they were shocked and horrified.¹¹⁸

See how he has changed the dress of our bishops which they received by inspiration of the Holy Ghost from the time we became Christian. Does not the earth tremble at this act?¹¹⁹

Nikita Dobrynin wrote petitions of objection to Tsar Aleskei Mikhailovich, condemning the attire of Russians who had adopted non-Orthodox forms of dress and foreign customs. This was bad enough for lay people, he wrote, but even worse for the monks who 'are going to God's church and around the markets disgracefully and disrespectfully without their cloaks, like foreigners or vulgar drunkards'. He also complained that they had 'changed their monastic cassocks for wide foreign caftans, and instead of a *klobuk* (small monastic skullcap) they are putting some sort of a strange foreign-shaped likeness on their heads'. In the past this 'had not occurred on Russian soil and people did not have these foreign habits'.¹²⁰

However, despite the vehement protests of the dissenting clergy on the whole it appears that little popular objection was actually voiced at the time of their introduction to either the book corrections or the changes in ritual practice which were ratified during Patriarch Nikon's leadership of the Russian church. The Moscow Printing Office sold many of its new Service Books to the large monasteries where the changes were accepted without protest, as well as to interested people in Moscow generally.¹²¹ The changes which aroused real protest amongst the populace were those which affected their everyday customs and rituals and conflicted with their sense of tradition, propriety,

¹¹⁷ Billington, 133; Meyendorff, 39, 90; Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 131; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 285.

¹¹⁸ Meyendorff, 48–50.

¹¹⁹ Paul of Aleppo, *The Travels of Macarius*, ed. Lady Laura Ridding (London, 1836), 69.

¹²⁰ I. Rumiantsev, *Nikita Konstantinov Dobrynin ('pustosviat')* (Sergiev, 1917), 617; Zabelin, 110–111. A *klobuk* was a small monastic skullcap. Patriarch Nikon changed the form of the cap to make it wider at the top. It was referred to by Old Believers as 'horned' since it somewhat resembled antlers. See Commentary in Dmitriev and Likhachev, eds. *Pamiatniki*, 663.

¹²¹ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 145–149.

or even with their familiar routine. Nikon's behaviour in regard to the private use of icons particularly offended the sensibilities of Orthodox Russians.¹²² Western techniques and motifs introduced by Russian painters who were familiar with the work of Western European artists had begun to appear in Muscovite icons. For once, Nikon and the zealots concurred. This was a worrying trend. As the *Stoglav* fathers had explained, icons must follow accepted models.¹²³

Most likely for his own political reasons, between 1654 and 1657 Nikon censured certain personal icons owned by wealthy boyars and merchants which he deemed to be tainted with these Western innovations. He ordered the icons to be rounded up and taken from their owners or the churches where they were kept, carried through the city and then burned, not before the eyes had been poked out or the faces scraped off the boards. He maintained that these icons had been badly painted and with heretical intentions. It was the tsar himself who had to pacify the crowds of protestors by convincing Nikon that it was more appropriate to bury the icons in the ground than to burn them.¹²⁴

The reaction of Muscovites to the destruction of icons and to the locking of churches which housed them was a more emotive issue than disagreement over questions of grammar and liturgical modifications. Even the changing of the way to make the sign of the cross did not produce more than isolated and individual protests at the time, but the interference with holy icons was the source of profound public resentment against the patriarch and his high-handed ways. Mobs of Muscovites charged Nikon with iconoclasm and heresy. Frightened Russians saw his abuse of icons, no matter how they had been painted, as connected to the plague which was ravaging the city in 1654. The clergy who despised his reforms began to see Nikon as the enemy who was thwarting the efforts of Orthodox Russians to carry out God's will.¹²⁵

Archpriest Avvakum blamed Nikon 'the Apostate' for destroying 'the faith and the laws of the church' and for bringing God's rage upon so many Russians.¹²⁶ The combination of Nikon's unpredictable behaviour and his absence from Moscow during

¹²² Pascal, *Avvakum*, 293; Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 101, 103, 136.

¹²³ Ware, 42.

¹²⁴ John Stuart, *Ikons* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), 128–129; Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 136, 139, 141; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 288; Andreev, 'Nikon and Avvakum,' 40–41.

¹²⁵ Andreev, 40–41; Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 136, 139.

¹²⁶ Avvakum, 'Zhitie,' in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 353.

the plague caused disquiet in the city. When so many were dying, this was not the time for priests to desert their people.¹²⁷

In the mid-seventeenth century in Russia, it was popularly feared that the Apocalypse was at hand. Apocalyptic theories were advanced in literature being published and widely read in Moscow. These explained that before the world ended there would be the Second Coming of Christ. Before this the Antichrist would appear, first in spirit and then in the form of a person who would reign for three and a half years. Frightening natural events such as the plague and the eclipse of the sun in 1654 were seen as omens of God's anger and signs of the Antichrist. Enemies were those forces, individuals, or outside influences which came between the people and their ability to fulfil God's will.¹²⁸

Even the suggestion of heresy was consequently treated as a grave matter with potentially terrifying consequences. If the Latin church was gaining control over the Orthodox, then Orthodox Christians should prepare for the Day of Judgement and the end of history as they knew it. The year 1666 was calculated to be a fateful date, one thousand years after the apocalyptic number 666, when satanic forces would be unleashed and the Antichrist would appear.¹²⁹

A belief that the forces of the Antichrist were present in Russia motivated the actions of Old Believers in the coming centuries, driving some to commit suicide and others to flee to the most distant outposts of civilisation.

1.2 The *Raskol*

Each group of reformers hoped to strengthen the Russian church, one group politically, the other morally. Each group looked to Christian precedent. As they sought a renewal of an Orthodox Christian ethic in Russia, the zealots were guided in their mission by their own Russian traditions, their fear of angering God, and the Christian sacrifices of their holy saints. In contrast, supported by the tsar, the powerful, wealthy, and influential patriarchate in Moscow which had initially shared these views, gradually turned its back on old friends and began to seek reform in the detail of Byzantine ritual.

¹²⁷ Bushkovitch, 62; Longworth, *Alexis*, 101.

¹²⁸ Cherniavsky, 'Old Believers and New Religion,' 16, 24–25.

¹²⁹ Cherniavsky, 'Old Believers and New Religion,' 13–16., Billington, 138–139; Sergei Hackel, 'New Perspectives and the Old Believers,' *Eastern Churches Review* 1, 2 (Autumn 1966): 107; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii) *PSS*, 7:13.

For churchmen who began a reform campaign in harmony, it was a discouraging outcome, ending in the *raskol* of 1666/1667. Archpriest Avvakum blamed evil forces for separating the Nikonites from their brothers in faith.¹³⁰

Neronov, Avvakum, and the other protestors believed that Nikon was destroying Russian devoutness with bogus notions of tradition originating in Latin or corrupt Greek sources. They saw nothing wrong with the religious rituals handed down through the Christian church which had governed the spiritual and daily lives of Russians since the end of the tenth century. These had been sanctified by the *Stoglav* Council and Maksim Grek in 1551. Although he was an outsider in Russia, influenced by Italian religious thought and familiar with Latin scholarship, his contribution to the *Stoglav* makes clear that Maksim was advising Russia to look in the direction of its own great and pious saints for spiritual guidance.¹³¹ He condemned worldly 'false notions', 'geometric formulas', and 'Aristotelian philosophers' for drawing Russians further away from the simple, honest truth, the 'comprehension of piety' to be found in God's word.¹³²

Just as magic and sorcery were condemned for their non-Christian origins, if changes in religious practice were made based on knowledge gained from worldly notions emanating from the Latin West, it could only mean that people were trying to explain the ineffable, known only to God.¹³³ As Avvakum lamented in his discourse about the introduction of Western elements in Russian icon painting, why would 'poor Russia want foreign ways and customs!'¹³⁴

But in the context of a society changing under the influence of Western humanism, education, and commerce, spiritual renewal and political aspiration within the Russian church made for an awkward alliance. To some members of Russian society, the traditionalist views of the *Stoglav* fathers began to look old-fashioned and parochial. Even Aleksei Mikhailovich's own reign was divided between his traditional Russian first marriage and family life and a second marriage where Western culture and customs created a noticeable change in his lifestyle.¹³⁵ Together, Patriarch Nikon and the tsar promoted a new interpretation of Russian Orthodoxy. This model was also based on the importance of Russia's role as guardian of God's Orthodox vineyard, but biased towards

¹³⁰ Avvakum, 'Poslanie "otstu" Ione,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 211.

¹³¹ Ikonnikov, 516.

¹³² D. M. Bulanin, *Perevody iz poslaniia Maksima Greka*, (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984), 214.

¹³³ *Stoglav*, 264.

¹³⁴ Avvakum, 'Beseda chetvertaia' in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 418.

¹³⁵ Billington, 148–149; Kapterev, 107; Longworth, *Alexis*, 34–35, 211, 224–225.

a show-case religion and a domineering patriarchate in Moscow. Most offensive to their opponents, this church would be aligned with contemporary rather than traditional Greek Orthodox practice, known to be tainted with Western influence. The splintering of Russian society into two schools of thought regarding the correct form of Orthodoxy and two schools of thought regarding whether Russia should look to the new or the old, the East or the West, was echoed by the split which took place in the church itself.

In the early 1660s when Patriarch Nikon had left his post in Moscow, the tsar still hoped to settle the disputes within the church. Distressed by their destructiveness he treated the recalcitrant clergy sympathetically. Archpriest Avvakum was brought back to the capital from exile in northern Russia and discussions took place between the dissenters and the tsar who would even have allowed Nikon's opponents to keep the unrevised texts, if they would also accept the new.¹³⁶ However, although he recognised the moral authority of priests such as Neronov and Avvakum, the tsar could not reconcile this with the absolute authority of the Greek patriarchs.

The Church Council convened in Moscow in 1666 was conducted and attended only by Russian clergy who condemned their fellow churchmen for disobedience, for not accepting the corrected books and rituals, and for slandering the patriarchs. Those who would not recant were defrocked and sent to monastic prisons.¹³⁷

In the following year the Church Council was attended by two Greek patriarchs and many non-Russian bishops.¹³⁸ They took a stern line not only with Nikon who was condemned for giving up his position, but also with the dissenting clergy and their point of reference – the *Stoglav*. According to Archpriest Avvakum, the document of 1551 and all the traditional instruction it contained was dismissed by the Church Council. While the Greek patriarchs pondered the point, the Russian clergy leapt up 'howling like wolf pups' and began to 'vomit abuse on their Holy Fathers'.

«Глупы, де, были и не смыслили наши русские святые! Не ученые, де, люди были, чему им верить? Оне, де грамоте не умели!»

'They were stupid, our Russian saints', they said, 'and did not understand! They were uneducated people. Why believe them? They were illiterate!'¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Longworth, *Alexis*, 163–164, 166–167; Meyendorff, 65.

¹³⁷ Meyendorff, 68.

¹³⁸ Meyendorff, 69–70.

¹³⁹ Avvakum, 'Zhitie' in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 384.

As far as the official Russian church was concerned Russian Orthodoxy, based on Greek texts and ritual, had been upheld and sanctified through the reforms of the 1650s and 1660s. The reforms were ratified at the Church Councils of 1666 and 1667 which anathematised those who disagreed with them. Along with Archpriest Avvakum, other dissenting clerics were sentenced by the Council to await torture and death in the distant prisons of Pustozersk.¹⁴⁰

As set forth in the *Ulozhenie*, even amongst the higher clergy disputes could lead to death, a state of affairs Avvakum decried for its denial of Christian morality. Preparing to face his own sentence of death, he wrote from an underground dungeon that although 'the Tatar god Mohammed demanded the heads of those who did not obey to be cut off with a sword, Christ never commanded his disciples thus'.¹⁴¹

Russian churchmen called before the Church Councils of 1666 and 1667 had a choice. If they continued to object to the ratified reforms they would be excommunicated as *raskol'niki*, heretical schismatics. They would be exiled, tortured, and burned to death unless they recanted and returned to the official church, which some of them, including Archpriest Neronov, Bishop Alexander of Viatka, and Nikita Dobrynin (temporarily) chose to do.¹⁴² For the others, a difficult road lay ahead. Archpriest Avvakum, the priest Lazar', the monk Epifanii, and Deacon Fedor were executed in Pustozersk in 1682.¹⁴³

The *raskol* created the Russian subculture of Old Belief and defined its ideology. Rejected by the mainstream of Russian society, anathematised by the Russian church, and deprived of their right to an Orthodox hierarchy, where and how were its adherents to find salvation?

Inspired by their need to live within the structures of a Christian society, as they fled from persecution the *starobriadtsy* (Old Ritualists) or *starovery* (Old Believers) found a means of survival and sanctuary for the pre-Nikonian rites and rituals they revered. As they had been taught by Maksim Grek and the *Stoglav* fathers, Old Believers identified themselves and conducted their lives in a manner they believed was pleasing to God and which represented 'right praising'. Rejecting modification in religious convention as impure, Old Believers surrounded themselves with the traditional symbols of their faith.

¹⁴⁰ Avvakum, 'Zhitie' in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 385.

¹⁴¹ Avvakum, 'Zhitie' in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 387–388.

¹⁴² Meyendorff, 68; Zen'kovskii, 298–299

¹⁴³ Zen'kovskii, 399.

It has often been suggested that to Orthodox Russians dogma and ritual are indistinguishable. If that is the case, despite the fact that the reforms of the seventeenth century did not alter the dogma of the faith in any way, the changes were just as drastic in the mind of Old Believers as overt expressions of heresy.¹⁴⁴

The *starovier*'s overscrupulous attachment to his traditional ceremonies is not all ignorant superstition. His low-bred heresy is, after all, only an excessive ritualism, logically carried *ad absurdum*. His great reverence for the letter comes from the deep-rooted conviction that letter and spirit are indissolubly one, that, in religious matters, substance and forms are equally divine.¹⁴⁵

One of these forms was dress. Like the pre-Nikonian books, sacred music, holy icons, and devotional symbols of the liturgy, cloth carried its own iconographic meaning. People were blessed in their prayer clothing. They were baptised, married, and buried in garments which signalled piety and religious correctness. Even for everyday use Old Believers continued to wear traditional Russian clothing. In addition, ritual symbols were woven and embroidered into these textiles. They expressed the religious devotion of both maker and wearer as well as messages of identity, well-being, and protection.¹⁴⁶

Unlike the spoken word, the messages contained in ritual textiles required many hours of disciplined work to be realised. Yarn had to be prepared, spun, dyed, woven, embroidered, and stitched by the women who were responsible for passing on these symbolic forms. In order to make ritual garments or cloth in the correct way, Old Believers preserved the techniques of clothmaking known to them at the time of the *raskol*. In order to ensure that no outside or 'worldly' influence could make these symbols impure, they passed on their craftworking skills to new generations of Old Believers. As the *Stoglav* instructed, icon painters had to be both skilful and devout. In the same way, the care with which Old Believer women made and decorated cloth displayed not only their manual skills and patience, but also their religious devotion. In creating anew the signs of their faith, they reinforced their importance.

Like other Holy Fathers, Maksim Grek had emphasised the importance of dress as a symbol of faith. He reasoned that if Russians were to wear skullcaps like the Tatars

¹⁴⁴ Cherniavsky, 'Old Believers and New Religion,' 9–10; Fedotov, *Russian Religious Mind*, 1:179–181; Meyendorff, 44.

¹⁴⁵ Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *The Empire of the Tsars and the Russians*, translated and with annotations by Zénaïde A. Ragozin (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1896), 3:290.

¹⁴⁶ Barber, *Work*, 157.

or shave their beards like the Latins or dress in a Turkish boot, how, save for making the sign of the cross, would they be recognised as Orthodox Christians? Their dress should represent a visual and visible defence of their faith.

И сам также гнушаюсь, когда вижу на головах бритых православных, и от глубины сердца вздыхаю воистины, что христиане уподобляют себя христианоборцам туркам, не только тафиями, но еще и сапогами туркообразными и не можешь иных узнать, что они христиане, только узнаешь крестным знаменем.

And I myself abhor seeing the shaven heads of Orthodox Christians, and from the depths of my heart I truly sigh that Christians liken themselves to the Christian-fighting Turks, not only with their skullcaps, but even with Turkish boots and you are not able to recognise that they are Christians. You will only know by the sign of the cross.¹⁴⁷

In 1698 Peter the Great ordered men from Russia's upper classes to shave their beards. When he followed this with an *ukaz* (decree) in 1700 and another in 1701 ordering boyars, merchants, and other ranks of Russians to abandon their Russian clothing and dress in 'Hungarian' attire, it strengthened the conviction of Old Believers that he was the Antichrist. For refusing to follow his order, from 1716 Old Believers were obliged to pay a double tax and dress in a manner which would single them out as *raskol'niki*. In 1705, the tsar decreed that any Russian who wore a beard would be fined according to his rank. As far as clothing was concerned, fines were imposed not only on the wearer of Russian garments, but also on the tailor who made them.¹⁴⁸

Although social and church historians frequently refer to the *raskol* as one of the greatest tragedies in Russian history and one which impeded Russia's ability to modernise, there is another side to the tragedy.¹⁴⁹ Often treated as a dark, negative, and fanatical element of Russian society, in fact, as its origins suggest, Old Belief was nourished by a spirit of religious and social renewal. Its proponents sought reform within tradition. This positive energy was expressed in practical activity throughout the coming centuries.

At its worst, Old Belief was self-destructive. Although the extremism which drove Old Believers to mass suicide in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been

¹⁴⁷ Ikonnikov, 516.

¹⁴⁸ Cherniavsky, 'Old Believers and New Religion,' 31–35; G. Esipov, *Raskol'nich'i dela XVIII stoletia*, t. 2 (St Petersburg, 1861), 165. Lindsey Hughes, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 280–286.

¹⁴⁹ Billington, 123; Fedotov, 2:392; B. A. Uspenskii, 333, idem (Uspensky), 106; Zen'kovskii, 7.

tempered over the course of three centuries, contemporary Old Believer publications still promote a hatred of Patriarch Nikon, reminding their readers of the origins of the *raskol*.¹⁵⁰

The fact that Old Believer communities such as Ostozhenka are reviving and attracting new members at the turn of the twenty-first century is an indication of the survival instinct of a subculture which has existed outside the authority of official church or state since 1667. In the centuries following the *raskol* individual Old Believers such as the Butikovs not only made a contribution to the development of Russian industry, but also to the continuation of a particular Russian culture which the majority of Russian society was gradually abandoning.

As the examples of Moscow Old Believer society described in the Introduction demonstrate, Old Believers lived in closed communities not only to avoid contact with 'worldly' members of Russian society and to practise their rites according to tradition, but also to protect themselves from persecution. Their way of life forced discipline upon them. They were obedient to their fathers and secretive. They observed a system of mutual support which consolidated their numbers and their security, but they also helped the poor, those in prison, and the needy through their philanthropy. They provided religious education within their communities while they recruited new members for economic reasons. Most importantly, without being observed they could practise their religion as they saw fit. The discipline of their communities provided Old Believers with both spiritual and physical salvation.

Who were the *raskol'niki* who supported the views of the Zealots of Piety and shared their commitment to live outside the laws of church and state?

1.3 *Raskol'niki*

Sympathisers joined Old Belief because they objected to the liturgical and ritual changes, but throughout the next two centuries, Old Belief attracted adherents for other reasons as well. Monks and priests resented bureaucratic interference from the Moscow patriarchate with the independence of their monasteries or parishes, members of the lay community were disaffected by high taxes, loss of employment or trading privileges. In addition, the *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* of 1649 institutionalised the concept and reality of

¹⁵⁰ 'Nikon,' *Staroobriadets*, 6 (June '97): 1-2.

serfdom in Russia. The laws bound artisans to the town and peasants to the land, creating a new category of potential fugitives – runaway serfs whose landlords were not confined by any statute of limitations for their return.¹⁵¹ Bound together under the mantle of Old Belief, eclectic elements of society found refuge under the leadership of inspirational figures who suggested the alternative of life outside not only the official church but also on the run from the authority of the state.

The first Old Believer leaders died for their objections to the official church reform. Until his death in 1682, Avvakum wrote letters, epistles, and even his autobiography while in prison. These circulated within the Old Believer community.

In his writing, the Old Believer monk Avraamii expressed his eschatological fears that the spirit of the Antichrist was present in Russia.¹⁵² On numerous occasions this fear spurred Old Believers to commit extremist acts of their own devising. As many as 20,000 schismatics may have burned to death in mass suicides before the end of the seventeenth century in order to save themselves from a world they saw as overrun with heresy.¹⁵³ In general Archpriest Avvakum supported these extremists, saying that they ‘do a good thing and with a fervent heart depart in eternal bliss’.¹⁵⁴

However, greater numbers of schismatics chose to continue on, seeking salvation in perpetuating the faith and traditions of their forefathers.

1.31 Wealthy Sympathisers

The *Povest’ o boyaryne Morozova* (*The Story of Boyarynia Morozova*) recorded by a loyal servant, recounts in detail the martyrdom of an Old Believer whose social status in Moscow as the widow of a wealthy boyar related to the tsar placed her in the court’s inner circle. During the early 1660s Archpriest Avvakum spent many hours in discussion with Boyarynia Morozova. As her spiritual father, he stiffened her resolve to suffer for her belief in the correctness of the old rites. She died in prison in 1676.

Although Boyarynia Morozova and her sister Princess Urusova were wealthy, high-ranking, and well-known members of the Russian court they did not shrink from expressing their hostility towards the tsar and his involvement in and promotion of the

¹⁵¹ Pipes, 104–105.

¹⁵² Avraamii, ‘Vopros – otvet Startsa Avraamiiia’ in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 517; Zen’kovskii, 271–272.

¹⁵³ Hackel, 113.

¹⁵⁴ Avvakum, ‘Poslanie ‘otstu’ Ione’ in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 210.

Nikonian reforms. When Aleksei Mikhailovich invited Feodora Morozova to attend his second wedding in 1671, despite pressure from the tsar she refused to go, pretending that she was unwell. Her real concern was that at the service she would have to honour the tsar, whom she now considered as treacherous as Nikon.¹⁵⁵

Dosifei, a pre-Nikonian priest who spent three years among the Don Cossacks preaching the Old Belief came to Moscow in 1670 and administered the vows of the church to Feodora.¹⁵⁶ He conducted services according to the old rites for the women who lived in her house where she had established a religious centre for opponents of the reforms, including nuns, *iurodivye* (holy fools), and others associated with Archpriest Avvakum and the monk Avraamii.¹⁵⁷ Only when her own fate and that of her sister were sealed in 1672 with their incarceration in a dungeon in Borovsk, did she send her disciples away to safety. Many of them had connections with schismatic communities in the north of Russia or in the Don River Cossack settlements established by schismatic priests such as Dosifei who managed to avoid arrest.¹⁵⁸

Apart from Boyarynia Morozova and Princess Urusova, Princess Khilkova was also sympathetic to Old Belief. Her priest, Prokofei, was banished from Moscow when she declared herself a schismatic.¹⁵⁹

There were some boyars who flirted with Old Belief, but they had for the most part given up their attachment before the Church Council of 1666, presumably dropping their interest as it became too perilous to support Nikon's opponents.¹⁶⁰ However, one of the earliest schismatic *skity*, established in 1656, was inhabited by boyars who rejected the Nikonian reforms. Although it did not survive for very long, the *skit* was in the Kerzhenets River forest north of Nizhnii Novgorod which by the end of the seventeenth century had become the first centre of priestly Old Belief.¹⁶¹

A missionary for Old Belief named Ivan Dement'ev studied the old service books with a hermit monk Filaret. He took the books to Moscow from Novgorod when the monk died, introduced Prince Ivan Khovanskii to the books and read them with

¹⁵⁵ *Povest' o boyaryne Morozovoi*, ed. A. I. Mazunin (Leningrad: Nauka, 1979), 132.

¹⁵⁶ *Povest'*, in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 459. See also commentary, 676.

¹⁵⁷ Fedotov, *Russian Religious Mind*, 2:316–343; Rumiantseva, 206.

¹⁵⁸ V. G. Druzhinin, *Raskol na Donu v kontse XVII veka* (St Petersburg, 1889), 74.

¹⁵⁹ Druzhinin, 83.

¹⁶⁰ Ankudinova, 68.

¹⁶¹ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:35.

him.¹⁶² In 1682 Khovanskii played a prominent role in the *strel'tsy* (musketeers) uprising associated with the aspiration of Old Believers to regain control of the Russian church.¹⁶³

The revolt was quashed and many of the *strel'tsy* and adherents of Old Belief, including Nikita Dobrynin, were executed for sedition. Following the rebellion, Aleksei Mikhailovich's daughter, the regent Sof'ia, introduced tougher measures to rid the country of Old Believer sympathisers.¹⁶⁴ In 1685 all schismatics and those who harboured them were declared criminals. A variety of punishments were introduced to discourage adherence to Old Belief, including fines, confiscation of property, monastic imprisonment, beatings, torture, and death at the stake.¹⁶⁵ Old Believers fled from Moscow to the hidden refuges where they could find protection and a haven for their beliefs.

1.32 The Forest Elders

An element of religious fanaticism feared by the authorities in Moscow existed in rural Russia. Rebellious and ascetic figures such as the monk Kapiton had attracted followers to his monastic settlements in the forests of the upper Volga River around Iaroslavl', Nizhnii Novgorod, and Kostroma in the 1630s and 1650s, before the serious disputes within the church had even begun. Kapiton's main objection to the church was to its wealth, but included in his preaching were heretical suggestions echoing the views of *strigol'niki*, that both the priesthood and the holy sacraments were unnecessary. In 1634 Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich had personally granted the monk permission to establish a *skit*, but by 1639 Kapiton's radicalism forced Patriarch Ioasaf to abolish the community where both monks and nuns had been living. The patriarch ordered Kapiton confined 'for correction' at a monastery in Iaroslavl'. However, he escaped back to the

¹⁶² Druzhinin, 234.

¹⁶³ Lindsey Hughes, *Sophia Regent of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 76–77, 122–123; Zen'kovskii, 407, 412.

¹⁶⁴ The *strel'tsy* were the military corps whose service was hereditary. Since they often had time to trade as well, they had affiliations with the *posadskie liudi*. The *strel'tsy* revolt of 1682 involved many supporters of Old Belief. Ankudinova, 61; Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 21–22; Georg Michels, 'The Place of Nikita Konstantinovič Dobrynin in the History of Early Old Belief,' *Révue des Études Slaves: Vieux Croyants et Sectes Russes du XVII siècle à nos jours*, 69, fascicule 1–2 (1997):23; Pipes, 100; Zen'kovskii, 407–410.

¹⁶⁵ Hughes, *Sophia*, 122–124; Zen'kovskii, 412–413.

forest, where his ascetic lifestyle of constant prayer and fasting continued to attract followers until his death, apparently in the early 1660s.¹⁶⁶

The legacy of charismatic and reclusive figures such as Kapiton was widely known to Russians who respected them for their feats of endurance.¹⁶⁷ When disputes in the church began in the 1650s, Kornilii, one of the early fathers of Old Belief in the north of Russia, sought out Kapiton in his hermitage and was influenced for the rest of his life by his mentor's asceticism.¹⁶⁸ Kapiton's convictions anticipated not only the leanings of schismatics who would adhere to the priestless concords of Old Belief, but also one of the extremist splinter sects of Old Belief, the *khlysty* (Flagellants).¹⁶⁹

Some of Kapiton's followers burned themselves to death, a precedent which numbers of Old Believers followed as they fled from what they perceived as an anti-Christian Russian state. When Old Believers died at the hands of the state, the government in Moscow feared that the name of Kapiton would be invoked. After Boyarynia Morozova had starved to death in a dungeon in Borovsk, local officials were reminded by the tsar of the dangerous consequences of her death. Word was sent to bury her in the forest, 'otherwise the *kapitony* and the *raskol'niki* will find her body and take it like the relics of holy martyrs and they will start to say that many miracles are happening'.¹⁷⁰

As they went to their deaths, condemned protestors denounced the authorities. A group of schismatics captured near Saratov in 1689 included the outspoken elderly monk Larion who did not mince his words. 'What tsars do we have? They take away the cross! Those are the real heretics'.¹⁷¹

1.33 Women and Old Belief

The nuns associated with Boyarynia Morozova and her sister were not the only women who objected to the reforms. At the Convent of the Ascension in Moscow bitter arguments and even fights broke out among the nuns over changes in ritual practice. The

¹⁶⁶ Ankudinova, 62; Bushkovitch, 54; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 62–63, 448; Rumiantseva, 207, 220–21; Zen'kovskii, 144–456.

¹⁶⁷ On the significance of the *podvig* (heroic feat of endurance) in the Russians' understanding of Christianity see Pascal, *Religion of Russian People*, 33.

¹⁶⁸ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 33–34.

¹⁶⁹ Pascal, *Avvakum*, 369; Ankudinova, 62; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:35.

¹⁷⁰ 'Povest', ed. Mazunin, 151.

¹⁷¹ Druzhinin, 85.

protestors joined together to follow services conducted according to the old rites.¹⁷² This convent was renowned for its textile crafts. At one point during the seventeenth century, all the fine textiles for the court were made in the convent. The work was supervised by Tsar Mikhail's mother who lived as a nun in the convent.¹⁷³

In the countryside there were women who lived as religious hermits and supported protests against the authority of the Russian church.

А старца де Еупраксея у них в пустыне была и жила особо в келье, от них версты с три, а видел де он Вавило ее на лесу тому 3 год, а ныне она где, про то он не ведает.

And he says that the elderly nun Euprakseia was with them in the *pustyn'* (religious wilderness) and lived separately in a *kel'ia*, about three *versty* from them, and he, Vavilo, saw her in the forest a year ago but as to her whereabouts now, that he does not know.¹⁷⁴

Avvakum refers to the adherence to Old Belief of numbers of women, not to mention his wife Markovna who supported him throughout his life. Following him in exile, she did not complain.

«Долго ль-де, протопоп, сего мучения будет?» И я ей сказал: «Марковна, до самыя до смерти». Она же против тово: «Добро, Петрович. И мы еще побредем вперед».

'Will this torment be for long, Archpriest?' And I said to her, 'Markovna, until death itself'. To which she replied: 'All right, Petrovich. We will trudge on further'.¹⁷⁵

Included in the ranks of women associated with the beginning of the *raskol* were a mixture of nobles, peasants, and artisans. Although less than half these women were relatives of the tsar, boyaryni, or princesses, proportionally this number still reflects greater participation in the *raskol* by women from the upper levels of society than their male counterparts.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Ankudinova, 59.

¹⁷³ Zabelin, 660.

¹⁷⁴ 'Dokumenty posol'skogo, tainogo i razriadnogo prikazov o raskol'nikakh,' *Gosarkhiv, razriad* 27, d.259, l.9, quoted in V. S. Rumiantseva, *Narodnoe antitserkovnoe dvizhenie v Rossii v XVII veke* (Moscow, 1986), 225.

¹⁷⁵ Avvakum, 'Zhitie,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 47.

¹⁷⁶ Ankudinova, 59.

1.34 The Early Leaders

After objecting to the liturgical changes introduced in Moscow in 1654, Bishop Paul of Kolomna was exiled and imprisoned in a monastery on Lake Onega where locals who heard of his objections to church reform may have been convinced that the old rituals should not be changed. Bishop Paul died in mysterious circumstances, apparently at the hands of Nikon's henchmen.¹⁷⁷ He was the only pre-Nikonian bishop permanently associated with Old Belief. There would not be another Old Believer bishop until the establishment of the Belokrinitsa hierarchy in 1846. As pointed out in the Introduction, the Butikov family and many other Old Believer merchants and industrialists joined the Belokrinitsy whose religious centre was the Rogozhskoe Cemetery in Moscow.

Few of the original Old Believer leaders were from the gentry or the aristocracy, but there were exceptions. Two of the most active Old Believer leaders outside Moscow in the late seventeenth century were from a noble family. Andrei and Semen Denisov were brothers, descended from princes of Povenets on the north shore of Lake Onega. Influenced by the example of Kapiton, Andrei, who lived as a hermit monk in his younger years, was a founder of the Vyg Old Believer Community as well as a prolific writer. Semen later joined him at Vyg and among other works about the history of Old Belief, wrote the hagiography of its early fathers and martyrs, the *Vinograd rossiiskii* (*The Russian Vineyard*).¹⁷⁸

The monk Iov was the son of an aristocratic Lithuanian who had met and impressed Filaret when the future patriarch was imprisoned in Poland. In Russia, Iov spent his long life alone in prayer and contemplation moving from one *skit* to another. As word of his presence spread followers sought out this spiritual father. In Moscow he was ordained a priest, then went to live in Tver' province where he was besieged by followers. Twice he moved to more isolated *skity* and finally fled to the Olonets region after the Church Council of 1667. In 1672, he left for the Don River, bringing ten elders and several novices with him. Although two other Old Believer leaders, Kornilii and Dosifei, came to the Don River for a short time, Iov was the first dissenting priest to settle there permanently. He became a focal point for many Old Believers who came to live among the Don Cossacks. He refrained from speaking out against the official church, but continued to use pre-Nikonian service books and to attract the attention of

¹⁷⁷ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 29; Zen'kovskii, 218.

¹⁷⁸ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 33, 62–62, 96.

schismatics who heard of his religious fervour. He lived by the tradition of forest elders and wilderness monks of earlier centuries.¹⁷⁹

The personal charisma of fervent preachers such as Archpriest Avvakum or the conviction of reclusive elders such as Iov were appealing to people who looked to their spiritual fathers for the reassurance that in the practice of 'right-praising' they would find salvation. The *Domostroi* reminded Russians of the importance of such guidance. The faithful should seek out 'a good spiritual father, a lover of God, prudent and sensible, and sure in his faith, and courteous'. He should also 'not be indulgent nor a drunkard, nor a lover of money. He should not be ill-tempered'.¹⁸⁰

In the 1640s like other rural zealots, the priest Grigorii Ivanov, a friend of Archpriest Neronov, preached moral reform in Iaroslavl' district. Because of his outspoken criticism of the low moral standards he saw around him, he was forced by his antagonists within the church to leave his parish. In the 1650s he and his followers founded a religious colony in the vicinity of the Volga which attracted other like-minded zealots. Small settlements such as these established a prototype for future Old Believer communities.¹⁸¹

For the most part, the clergy who drew followers to Old Belief came from the ranks of the lower secular or monastic clergy, and in particular from provincial towns such as Novgorod, Pskov, and Nizhnii Novgorod, near which both Avvakum and Nikon were born. The rural zealots were particularly active around the upper Volga region and gained many supporters as well as opponents in their attempts to improve the standard of moral and religious practice. As they were banished by the patriarch and tsar to rural towns or monasteries in the far north or Siberia, the zealots had the opportunity to proselytise in new districts against the reforms taking place in Moscow. Their message appealed to peasants and *posadskie liudi* in the towns and trading quarters, who identified with them in background and may have been already hostile to the Moscow church authorities for their interference in established parish or monastic activity. Like an underground railway, sympathetic contacts crucial to the survival of Old Believer communities in future years were established around the country between the priests and their supporters.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ Druzhinin, 69–71, 74.

¹⁸⁰ *Domostroi*, 17–18.

¹⁸¹ Zen'kovskii, 90, 139–40.

¹⁸² Pascal, *Avvakum*, 447–445, 452; Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 33–34, 73; George Bernhard Michels, 'The Solovki Uprising: Religion and Revolt in Northern Russia,' *Russian Review* 51 (January

From the beginning of its existence Old Believer society was mobile. The leaders who founded monastic settlements frequently had to move again, either because their *skity* were discovered and destroyed by agents of the state or in some cases because they felt their settlements had become too big and well-known for their own peace of mind.¹⁸³

For example, in the 1650s, when Archpriest Neronov was exiled and imprisoned near his birthplace in the Vologda region by Patriarch Nikon, he continued to communicate with sympathisers through letters and petitions.¹⁸⁴ When Nikon ordered him to be sent further away, he became a monk, escaped from imprisonment on the Kola Peninsula, sheltered at the Solovki Monastery and then found his way back to Moscow, helped along the way by sympathisers.¹⁸⁵

While the clergy connected to the rural Zealots of Piety were thrown into prison, urban priests such as Kuz'ma from the Church of All Saints in Kulishki who supported the old rites, fled from Moscow. He led twenty families to safety along the Russian border in the Starodub'e region of Chernigov Province.¹⁸⁶ Threatened with more intense persecution during the regency of Sof'ia Alekseevna, in 1685 some of these settlers moved closer to the Lithuanian border and established another Old Believer community on Vetka, an uninhabited island on the River Sozhi, then part of Poland.¹⁸⁷

Other strongholds of Old Belief developed in the Kerzhenets Forest near Nizhnii Novgorod, in the Cossack settlements of the Don River and in the Olonets region north of Lake Onega, where in 1694 the leaders of several *skity* joined together to form the Vyg Old Believer Monastery. The influence of these leaders spread throughout the remote territory of northern Russia.¹⁸⁸

During the 1680s and 1690s Old Believers fled beyond European Russia to Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Bukovina, part of the Austrian Empire. The inaccessible, unsettled territory of Siberia was also attractive to Old Believers.

In their first communities, the fugitives lived under the authority of a pre-Nikonian priest or *starets* (religious leader). But with few pre-Nikonian priests or churches, the difficulty of administering the sacraments was the most critical point of

1992): 3, 7–9, 11; Druzhinin, 73–74.

¹⁸³ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 59–62; Druzhinin, 68–75; V.S. Rumiantseva, 198–207.

¹⁸⁴ Meyendorff, 41.

¹⁸⁵ Ankudinova, 63.

¹⁸⁶ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:33–34.

¹⁸⁷ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 169; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:34–35; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 444.

¹⁸⁸ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 33; Druzhinin, 74–75.

discussion for the Old Believer leaders. Citing the rule of Grigorii the Theologian Avvakum suggested that 'in case of need it is possible to give communion to oneself'.¹⁸⁹

Such views anticipate the disputes within Old Belief which led to the division between the Popovtsy whose members accepted the concept of a priesthood, and the Bespopovtsy who relied on a *nastavnik* (spiritual father) to conduct their religious rites.

1.35 The Solovki Monks

Apart from the *strel'sty* uprising, a grave dispute between the Russian church and one of the most powerful, influential, and independent monasteries in Russia led to an armed uprising. When Abbot Il'ya of the Solovki Monastery put the newly revised service books he had received from Moscow under lock and key, he also insisted that the other monks deny the validity of Patriarch Nikon's reforms. This led to an armed rebellion which lasted from 1668 to 1676 when the monks were finally defeated by forces of the state.¹⁹⁰ While many of the surviving monks were committed to Old Belief and some were responsible for founding schismatic communities soon after their defeat, recent studies suggest that a general resentment and hostility towards the official church rather than rejection of the new service books may actually have sparked the insurrection. Peasant support for the monks against the church in Moscow, uneasy personal relations between the monastic leaders and the patriarchate, or between the patriarchate and the political prisoners living in exile at the monastery all contributed to the rebellion. In particular, the Solovki monks wished to remain independent of the patriarch's attempts to control and discipline them.¹⁹¹ On the other hand, the founders of the Vyg Monastery were deeply influenced by the monastic and cultural traditions of the Solovki monks.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Avvakum, 'Poslanie "otstu" Ione,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 211.

¹⁹⁰ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 18–20; I. Ia. Syrtsov, *Vozmushchenie solovetskikh monakhov-starobriadtsev v XVII i XVIII stoletii* (Kostroma: Tipo-litografiia F. A. Fal'k, 1888), 20.

¹⁹¹ Michels, 'Solovki Uprising,' 1–15; Ankudinova, 67.

¹⁹² Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 64; E. M. Iukhimenko, 'Starobriadcheskaia stolitsa na severe Rossii,' *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, 1994), 9.

1.36 The Mainstream of Old Belief

From the beginnings of the *raskol* the predominant group of schismatics derived from the lower clergy, the *posadskie liudi*, and from the Russian peasantry. Prosperous merchants from, for example, Velikie Luki and the Olonets region were also known to have joined Old Belief in the early years.¹⁹³ Archpriest Avvakum described the supporters he knew as simple, hardworking people. They were craftsmen, merchants, members of the lower clergy, or peasants, rather than fugitives or criminals, although some parish priests were known to have joined the *raskol* because they were too poor to buy the new service books.¹⁹⁴

The clergy who joined the rural zealots in the early days of protest were from trading towns such as Kostroma, Kolomna, Nizhnii Novgorod, and Vologda. By 1657, protestors against the liturgical reforms had grouped together in Kostroma and by 1666 there was a wide following in the town. Adherents of Old Belief in Murom and Kargopol were protected by their colleagues in the *posad*.¹⁹⁵ By the 1670s there were refuges for Old Believers, including local *strel'tsy*, in numerous villages which had become trading quarters near Moscow and Nizhnii Novgorod.¹⁹⁶

Apart from providing an escape route for fugitives, the Volga trade route between Kostroma and the Nizhnii Novgorod region made it easy for the dissenters to establish contacts with one another and spread the word of protest. There is recorded evidence, for example, that an artisan from Nizhnii Novgorod travelled to Iaroslavl' where he learned about the protests against Patriarch Nikon's reforms, then travelled on to Kostroma, presumably spreading the protest as he went. Other runaway peasants in the area followed the teaching of Kapiton.¹⁹⁷ Many who fled to the Don River hermitages were helped by the ancient and well-trodden road which refugees had used in the past.¹⁹⁸

In Novgorod and Pskov there were *raskol'niki* from all levels of the artisan and trading population as well as the peasantry.¹⁹⁹ In some cases nests of dissenters of up to

¹⁹³ Ankudinova, 60–61.

¹⁹⁴ Ankudinova, 57.

¹⁹⁵ Ankudinova, 60.

¹⁹⁶ Ankudinova, 61.

¹⁹⁷ Ankudinova, 61; Rumiantseva, 203.

¹⁹⁸ Druzhinin, 68.

¹⁹⁹ Rumiantseva, 198, 207.

forty men and women practised a more radical form of protest, conducting their own religious services and adhering to the sort of asceticism practised by Kapiton.²⁰⁰

As they did in late nineteenth-century Moscow and still do in Siberia and elsewhere, the Old Believers found safe places to use for prayer, where they could practise the old rites covertly. Some *posadskie liudi* had parishes of *raskol'niki* in their homes, and a *strelets* from Belevo, Semen Tret'iakov, 'had three buildings put in his yard for the *raskol'niki*'.²⁰¹

In 1654 Nikon closed some churches in Moscow whose clergy did not support him and rumours spread through the markets that the patriarch was bribing parish priests to use the new Service Book. Since these were parish churches in the merchant communities, it is not surprising that traders as well as their clergy were incensed.²⁰²

The church in Moscow was aware that miraculous stories about the supporters of Old Belief were broadcast by the *posadskie liudi*.²⁰³ Anonymous letters, pamphlets or satirical drawings of church leaders were pinned up on gates and passed around in the markets as well as in the cathedrals.²⁰⁴ It was not difficult for Old Belief to gain a foothold in towns such as Iaroslavl', Nizhnii Novgorod, or Kostroma where there were many *posadskie liudi* and where there was a transient population.²⁰⁵

И пошел с Москвы в Новгородцкои уезд, и жил в Новгородцком уезде в лесу в Невьих мхах, переходя в розных пустынях...и кресное знамение вображал двуперстным сложением, как он научен изо младенчества, для того что и отец его умре в том же учении.

And he set off from Moscow to the Novgorod region and lived there in the forest in Nev'ii Mokh, moving around to different hermitages...and he made the sign of the cross in the two-fingered manner, as he had learned in childhood, because his father had died in the same teaching.²⁰⁶

The artisan and trading quarters had a mixed and fluid population of merchants and vagrants who moved from place to place bringing news and information with them.

²⁰⁰ Rumiantseva, 203–204.

²⁰¹ Ankudinova, 61.

²⁰² Ankudinova, 58–59.

²⁰³ Ankudinova, 60–61.

²⁰⁴ Rumiantseva, 206.

²⁰⁵ Ankudinova, 61.

²⁰⁶ *f.* 159, *op.* 3, *d.* 1947, *l.* 13, no. 16, 1683 g. oktiabria 2. – *Sysknoe delo novgorodskogo prikaza o 'raskolouchitele' iz Pskova startse Varlama, Rossprosnye rechi startsa Varlama po vypisi, Dokumenty novgorodskogo prikaza o raskol'nikakh*, quoted in Rumiantseva, 239.

Apart from word of mouth, books provided a link between all schismatics and their spiritual fathers. The unrevised texts acquired value in and of themselves.

А купит де он те книги в пустыни у новгородцов посадцких людеи... которые ныне в Великом Новгороде за раскол сожжены.

And he would buy these books, he says, in the hermitage from the *posadskie liudi* of Novgorod...who have now been burned to death in Great Novgorod because of the *raskol*.²⁰⁷

In a register of *raskol'niki* recorded in the Kerzhenets Forest in 1721 when the Old Believer community was under attack by the state, fugitives listed as arrivals in the previous century included runaway soldiers and peasants.²⁰⁸ Also included in the list were a scribe and a typesetter from Vladimir, an artisan from Olonets, 'the serving officer Iakushka Lepekhin of Verkhotur'e (who called himself a priest and being an iconpainter depicted the church in the hands of the devil)', two blacksmiths, a gunner from Pskov, a peasant from Murom, and others.²⁰⁹

Recent studies suggest that the schismatic leaning in rural Russia was local, highly individualised, and not related to any definable movement or rebellion.²¹⁰ Some of the religious dissenters in rural Russia were so removed from the centres of authority, particularly in small monasteries that they frequently never even heard about the new service books being printed in Moscow. Their resentment against the church was based on their loss of autonomy, as they were absorbed into larger establishments. Particularly aggravating for them was the fact that their small settlements had usually been founded independently and therefore had their own religious and economic authority. From the 1670s these protestors were labelled 'schismatic' just as readily as those who had specifically rejected the official reforms of the church. In many cases village and parish clergy resented the wealth of the patriarchate and the eparchies. Overburdened trying to meet the taxes imposed by the hierarchy, protestors attacked and physically abused church officials.²¹¹

Many sympathisers were illiterate and uneducated. For example, in 1683 a man from Novgorod was burned to death for being a *raskol'nik*, despite the fact that he did

²⁰⁷ f. 159, op. 3, d. 1947, l. 6, no. 14, 1683 g. sentiabria 19. – *Rassprosnye rechi startsa Varlama v Novgorodskom prikaze, Dokumenty novgorodskogo prikaza o raskol'nikakh*, quoted in Rumiantseva, 237.

²⁰⁸ Ankudinova, 66.

²⁰⁹ Ankudinova, 61.

²¹⁰ Michels, 'Solovki Uprising,' 1–5.

²¹¹ Ankudinova, 58; Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 271–272.

not know what was in notebooks belonging to an iconpainter which had been lying around in the stall where he worked.²¹² Schismatics were also tortured and executed for their outspoken criticism of Peter the Great's laws regarding beards and Western clothing. Some protestors quoted from the *Stoglav*, the *Kormchaia kniga*, and other holy texts, saying that the tsar was destroying the Christian faith.²¹³

The issue of book reform was somewhat meaningless for dissenters dependent on others to interpret the changes in ritual for them. It seems that literate and articulate priests such as Neronov who preached against the revisions passed on a limited understanding of disputed points to less educated followers who spread these objections in their own way. Although he had only a few followers, the illiterate but self-styled preacher Sila the Tailor teamed up with two colleagues to preach their objections to the official church in the trading quarters of Rostov.²¹⁴ They believed that Patriarch Nikon's reforms were heretical and that he represented the forces of the Antichrist which would keep Russians from salvation. However, in general more relevant to Sila's supporters were problems of local finance and authority, independence, and respect for tradition. Sila, for example, complained that the miracle-working relics of Russian saints had been despoiled by the authorities of the church and were no longer effective.²¹⁵

The rural peasantry was also a constituent element of Old Belief in the seventeenth century. Many rural priests were from peasant backgrounds, as were many of the monks in the countryside, making up, for example, a large percentage of the Solovki Monastery community.

Archpriest Avvakum was the son of a village priest and was married to the daughter of a blacksmith. Archpriest Neronov was the son of a peasant as was the revered Old Believer elder, Kornilii.²¹⁶ When Archpriest Neronov was imprisoned in a monastery near Vologda, he found many peasant supporters from the neighbouring villages. In the countryside near Riazan' a recluse, Mikhail Mikulin, taught the local peasants to read and write, but at the same time preached the schismatic message against

²¹² Rumiantseva, 229.

²¹³ Esipov, 169–172, 180.

²¹⁴ Rumiantseva, 206; Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 173; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 289.

²¹⁵ Michels, 'Myths and Realities,' 170; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 291; Rumiantseva, 223–224.

²¹⁶ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 59.

Nikon.²¹⁷ Others were also associated with rebellious peasant or monastic leaders such as Sten'ka Razin in the early 1670s, as well as with the Solovki monks.²¹⁸

In the districts of Kholmogory, Pskov, and Novgorod, in the northern Karelia, in Moscow, and especially Nizhnii Novgorod runaway peasants of every description were so numerous during the third quarter of the seventeenth century that the expeditions sent by the authorities to round them up were largely unsuccessful.²¹⁹ Although there is no reason to believe that all of these refugees were schismatics from the official Russian church, it is known that many of them used the mantle of Old Belief to justify their flight. The presence of Old Believer communities in these locations provided a convenient destination for anyone on the run.²²⁰

Schismatics who joined Old Believer settlements often served as missionaries in their original homes, attracting new adherents with their stories of religious freedom.²²¹ As these settlements developed, they quickly established viable, independent communities, even in places where there was no precedent for agriculture or cottage industry. This in itself was enough to attract newcomers who not only sought a refuge for their beliefs, but who also saw a promise of prosperity.²²² The strongholds of Old Belief which had become large and well-known to Old Believers by the end of the seventeenth century, continued to play prominent roles in the history of the movement. As confirmed in Chapter 3, from the very beginning of their existence Old Believers made good use of the land and of whatever trading opportunities existed locally, providing shelter for both local people who came under their wing and for Old Believers from other *skity*.²²³

Even for the artisan townspeople, moving to the undeveloped frontier was less frightening than the thought of living wrongly in God's eyes. Although many chose the path of Old Belief for less than religious reasons, their leaders' authority was based on the lessons and traditions they had acquired from their fathers. To live under the spiritual

²¹⁷ Ankudinova, 63–64.

²¹⁸ Sten'ka Razin led a peasant revolt against the state which may have attracted Old Believer sympathizers in Cossack territory, although the influence of Old Believers in this revolt is not generally thought to be significant. Ankudinova, 64; Billington, 197–198; Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 20; Philip Longworth, *The Cossacks* (London: Constable, 1969), 141–142; Michels, 'The Solovki Uprising,' 3; Zen'kovskii, 325–326.

²¹⁹ Ankudinova, 64–65.

²²⁰ Ankudinova, 65; Druzhinin, 90.

²²¹ Druzhinin, 93.

²²² Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 38, 73; Druzhinin, 88, 99–100; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 82–83.

²²³ Druzhinin, 99; Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 64.

guidance and protection of these leaders, each individual had to abide by that paradigm. This required devotion and above all, discipline – discipline in their spiritual life and in their ability to craft the material symbols and expressions of their religious belief.

When Aleksei Mikhailovich became tsar in 1645, one of the most organised and privileged groups of artisans were the crown weavers of Moscow and Iaroslavl' province. In the following chapter I survey the work and social conditions of these weavers to illustrate both the clothmaking traditions which existed in Russia and the mood of the weavers at the time of the *raskol*. The fact that some of these skilled craftsmen joined Old Belief indicates that they took with them to new communities not only their skills but also the experience of more than a century of organised cloth production. This cloth had been made for the most rigorous Russian customer of the time – the tsar and his court. Protests by the weavers against their reduced status in society coincided with protests against church reform in Russia.

CHAPTER 2. Textiles and Trade: Crown Weavers in the Seventeenth Century

Introduction

Even at the time of the *raskol* there were connections between weaving and Old Belief. One of the artisan centres from which Old Believers were drawn was the Moscow weaving community. In Khamovniki, one of two *dvortsovye tkatskie slobody* (crown weaving suburbs) in the city, some residents were known to support the *raskol*.¹

«Великий противник святой церкви» был и житель Хамовой слободы Иван Дубовский. Он занимался пропагандой раскола.

Ivan Dubovskii, an inhabitant of the Khamovniki *sloboda*, was a 'great opponent of the Holy Church'. He was spreading propaganda for the *raskol*.²

Others had prayer rooms in their homes where they practised their religion by the old rites.

У одного Панкрата Неврева, раскольника Хамовой слободы, было совершено 8 треб.

In the home of Pankrat Nevrev, a *raskol'nik* of the Khamovniki *sloboda*, eight religious rites had been performed.³

There was also a close affiliation between the tsaritsa, her highest ranking boyaryni and the weaving settlements. When Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich ordered Boyarynia Morozova back to Moscow from the convent where she had been imprisoned for her intransigence in refusing to accept the new rites, she was brought to Khamovniki. Her ties to the community are highlighted by the fact that she was brought to the senior elder of the community and visited by her housekeeper and maid amidst much rejoicing, and then incarcerated there for a time. Perhaps the tsar hoped her contacts in Khamovniki would talk sense to her and that she would be kept from attracting the attention of potential sympathisers.⁴

¹ Unlike residents of a *posad* who were tied by heredity to give tax or services to the Russian state, until the mid-seventeenth century, residents of the *sloboda* had much greater freedom and many privileges. Pushkarev, s.v. 'posadskie liudi', 'sloboda, slobody'.

² P. S. Smirnov, *Spory i razdeleniia v russkom raskole* (St Petersburg, 1909), 69.

³ Smirnov, *Spory*, 67.

⁴ *Povest'*, ed. Mazunin, 147; A. L. Iakobson, *Tkatskie slobody i sela v XVIII veke* (Moscow-Leningrad: Ogiz, 1934), 32.

Царь же, не терпя сего зрети, еже приходити ту многим велможным на удивление страдания ея, и повел ю привести паки в Москву в Хамовники. И приведена бысть к старосте на двор, той же обрадовася радостью великою. И приходяше ту к ней наставница Мелания на посещение и Елена, служительница юзам ея. И ликоваху обще со многими слезами.

But the tsar, who could not bear to see how much of noble society marvelled at her suffering, ordered her brought again to Moscow, to Khamovniki, and she was led to the *starosta* in the community who rejoiced greatly. And Melania, her housekeeper and Elena, her lady's maid came to see her. And they all shed many tears of jubilation.⁵

One of the gathering points for Old Believers who fled from Moscow in the early years of the *raskol* was the Poshekhon'e Forest north of the Volga River in what was then the Kostroma district. Poshekhon'e was not far from the weaving village of Breitovo, separated from it today by the Rybinsk Reservoir. Near Romanov, a town in the region, two nuns from Boyarynia Morozova's own domestic cloister had burned themselves to death in 1665. During the 1670s Archpriest Avvakum's letters written from prison in praise of suicide circulated in the area and Poshekhon'e became one of the centres known for these acts of *auto-da-fe*. The extremists may also have been influenced by the precedent set by followers of Kapiton who set fire to themselves in the same district. Along with her sister, Morozova had visited the community where these suicides took place.⁶ Iaroslavl' province continued to be a hotbed of schismatic activity. In 1852, a government report established that villages in the Poshekhon'e district were made up almost entirely of Old Believers.⁷

The weavers were members of a well-organised corporation of craftsmen who produced high quality cloth for the state. They had enjoyed unusual privileges until the mid-seventeenth century, when their skills ceased to be in such demand. As these privileges were withdrawn by the state, the status of the weavers and their work diminished, as did the status of the clergy in their communities. Many weavers left their villages because of unemployment and famine.⁸

As they abandoned these settlements, some weavers joined the *raskol*, bringing with them the textile skills they had acquired through generations of work as members of an organised cloth producing community.

⁵ 'Povest', in *Pamiatniki*, ed. Dmitriev and Likhachev, 475.

⁶ Zen'kovskii, 381

⁷ Kel'siev, vyp. 2, 11.

⁸ *Krepostnaia manufaktura v Rossii*, ch. 3, 'Dvortsovaia polotnianaia manufaktura XVII v. (Leningrad: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1932) 103; Zaozerskaia, 435.

If even on a small scale, the technology and system of production known to these craftsmen at the time of the *raskol* found their way into the greater Old Believer community. An outline of this system of production provides a picture of the traditions of clothmaking in Russia at that time.

2. 1 Weaving Villages and *Slobody*

Kadashevo was the oldest of the Moscow weaving settlements. Khamovniki was transferred to the capital from Tver' province, where it had been called the *Tverskaia-Konstantinovskaia sloboda*. Apart from these two weaving suburbs in Moscow, there were two crown weaving villages in the Iaroslavl' district of Timonisk region – Breitovo and Cherkasovo.⁹

The inhabitants of these communities not only wove and bleached cloth, but also spun the yarn and thread required for particular textiles and embroidered or finished a variety of different types of cloth used by the state and by the household of the tsar. Some of these materials were needed in large quantities for everyday use, while others such as elaborate tablecloths were expensive and required greater skill to make.¹⁰ Considerable numbers of workers were needed to produce this amount of cloth and many of them had to be skilled craftsmen, as the court depended on the quality of their work to reflect its own prestige.

The close connection between the weaving communities and the court had given the weavers a special social status. The economic privileges they enjoyed had provided them with entrepreneurial opportunities, while their wide trading experience beyond the capital allowed them a position of influence within the merchant community of Moscow. In addition, as a group their textile production encompassed a wide range of skills and their experience of an organised and structured clothmaking system with hired labour placed them on the doorstep of the industrial revolution in Russia. Their immunities were a contentious issue with other privileged Moscow merchant co-operatives selected by the tsar to do business in the country, the *gosti* and members of the *gostinnaia sotnia* (Merchant Hundred) and the *sukonnaia sotnia* (Cloth Hundred).¹¹

⁹ Iakobson, 7.

¹⁰ Zabelin, 661–663; Zaozerskaia, 404.

¹¹ Samuel Baron, 'Who were the *gosti*?,' in *Muscovite Russia* (London: Varorium Reprints, 1980), 6–9.

2.11 Kadashevo and Khamovniki

The origins of the Kadashevo community are vague, but date back to the sixteenth century. It is not clear exactly when the village became a state settlement obliged to supply *kadashevskoe polotno* (linen from Kadashevo) to the court, but during the reign of Ivan IV the community was producing linen for the state. Although Kadashevo suffered a decline during the Time of Troubles, by 1613 there was in existence an official state yard associated with either clothmaking or its administration. In the 1630s the quarter consisted of 413 households and by the 1670s this number had increased to 455.¹²

At the turn of the seventeenth century, the spinners and weavers are thought to have worked only at home, but in the 1620s Kadashevo had several heated wooden buildings used specifically for clothmaking. These were replaced by stone premises in the late 1650s.¹³ In 1661, a large stone building with five stoves was constructed to house the looms where a portion of the weavers worked. The lower floor had two identical large rooms, lit by twenty mica windows. A high brick wall surrounded the buildings of the weaving yard which had both a weaving zone and an area for bleaching the woven cloth. There were other official buildings in Kadashevo such as a large house for the boyarynia in charge of the community, an administrative office, a meeting house for gatherings of the community, and a prison.¹⁴

Taking advantage of the favourable tax incentives which existed for members of the community, many of the weavers extended their work to other activities, in particular to trade. These financial advantages also attracted newcomers to the community. From the mid-seventeenth century the administration of the Moscow communities began to rely on these newcomers to do the work of weavers whose merchant interests absented them from the *sloboda*. On the other hand, some came to the community not of their own accord, but because the state transferred them from the rural weaving villages to fill houses left vacant in Moscow by the epidemic of plague in 1654.¹⁵

The *Konstantinovskaia sloboda* was transferred to Moscow from Tver' sometime before 1627, possibly to replace a sixteenth-century bleaching works near Kadashevo

¹² Iakobson, 12; Zaozerskaia, 407, 423.

¹³ Zaozerskaia, 418–19.

¹⁴ K. Bazilevich, 'Kadashevtsy, dvortsovyie tkachi poloten v 17 veke,' *Trud v Rossii*, kn. 1 (1924), 7–8.

¹⁵ Iakobson, 12, 69–73.

which had supplied yarn to the state but had fallen into disuse during the Time of Troubles. Known as the *Tverskaia-Konstantinovskaia sloboda* or Khamovniki, for the *khamovniki* (weavers) who worked there, it became the second official weaving centre in the capital. A settlement which included some buildings for weaving was established on a site belonging to the Novodevich'e Monastery.¹⁶ The precinct of Moscow still known as Khamovniki where the former Butikov factory in Ostozhenka is located, has traces of its weaving past, including the aptly named Church of St. Nicholas the Weaver and buildings used by the weavers. In 1632, there were 38 houses in Khamovniki; in 1653 there were 90.¹⁷ The weaving community in Tver' had produced the coarsest of all the cloth made for the state and it continued to be described as *tverskoe polotno* (Tver' linen) even after the weavers left Tver'.¹⁸

By the 1690s the traditional production of cloth in both Moscow communities had begun to decrease. It stopped altogether in Khamovniki in 1694 and in Kadashevo in 1698.¹⁹ To avoid imports, the state was anxious to produce sufficient amounts of domestic sailcloth and wool for the military, while its interest in traditional Russian woven products had diminished. To keep up with these needs, changes had to be made in the weaving centres which still relied on domestic spinning and weaving on narrow looms. Attempts were made to establish a central sailcloth manufactory near Moscow, which required not only larger premises but also larger looms to make wider cloth. In 1693, equipment was purchased to make sailcloth in Kadashevo and in 1696/1697 a new sailmaking enterprise was set up in Preobrazhenskoe on the Iauza River. The cloth was woven from hemp rather than flax and water power was used for the first time in textile production.

During the reign of Peter the Great, Kadashevo was turned over to the Moscow City Council and became the *sukonnyi dvor* (Cloth Yard). Weavers now worked full-time in dedicated premises and were paid daily or monthly wages. Instead of goods, the inhabitants were obliged to pay quit-rent to the state. In 1709, Peter established the first Russian linen factory in Khamovniki. This was short-lived and was replaced by a foreign-owned linen-making company a few years later.²⁰

¹⁶ Iakobson, 11–12.

¹⁷ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 6.

¹⁸ Zaozerskaia, 404–405.

¹⁹ Iakobson, 12.

²⁰ Iakobson, 13; Zaozerskaia, 424–427.

2.12 Breitovo and Cherkasovo

The Russian crown's third official cloth-producing community was Breitovo, a village on the Mologa River in Iaroslavl' district. The neighbouring village of Cherkasovo provided the fourth source of cloth for the state. When clothmaking became a specific obligation for the village communities, operated under the same auspices as Kadashevo is not precisely known. However, the provision of cloth was a well established form of rental payment before the 1620s, when it is referred to in literature as having been established 'long ago'.²¹

Along with the two Moscow communities which each supplied their own particular types of cloth, by the 1580s the rural settlements were supplying *prosorovskoe polotno* (linen from the Prosorovsk lands) to the state.²² This was the finest linen supplied to the state and was used for making shirts and other garments for the tsar and his family.²³

Although in all four settlements spinning remained an activity which took place at home, in the early 1630s there are references to purpose-built weaving premises in Breitovo. The absence of any reference to plain linen suggests that this basic weaving was also probably still done at home on narrow looms. In 1665, there were 550 women masters and by 1684 as many as 700 women weavers working in Breitovo. By that time, plain linen was being woven in the weaving buildings of the settlement. There were also storage depots for raw materials and as in the Moscow communities, there was a prison building.²⁴

By the end of the seventeenth century, many residents of the Moscow communities bore no weaving obligation themselves, but were hired to do the weaving for others. The relationship between the amount of land held in a settlement and a weaving obligation, the basis on which the communities had traditionally been organised, had ceased to be relevant. It was not even unusual for individuals with no dwelling and no land in the community to be fulfilling a weaving obligation.²⁵ Perhaps because they had not been granted the same degree of privileges and because of their more agrarian environment, this was not the case in the rural weaving centres where the

²¹ Zaozerskaia, 405–406.

²² Zaozerskaia, 405–406.

²³ Zaozerskaia, 403.

²⁴ Zaozerksaia, 421–423.

²⁵ Iakobson, 16, 76–77.

population and structure of the village communities remained more or less unchanged throughout their existence.²⁶

2.2 Administration of the Weaving Settlements.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the weaving *slobody* and villages were administered by the *Kazennyi prikaz* (Treasury Department) and then by the *Gosudarevaia masterskaia palata* (State Atelier Bureau). In 1626 they were put under the authority of the *Prikaz tsaritsynoi masterskoi palaty* (Department of the Tsaritsa's Atelier Bureau). The new department was created to look after the textile needs of the tsaritsa's household.²⁷ In addition to its administrative role, this department was also the storehouse for the Tsaritsa's Linen Treasury. This held the linens woven by the weaving communities as well as the embroidered textiles produced by the tsaritsa's own workshop, the clothing of the tsaritsa and her children, and other items of cloth or clothing which were not needed on a daily basis.²⁸

Because of its dual function, the department came under the general supervision of a boyarynia who was closely connected to the tsaritsa and to her household. She oversaw not only the quantity and type of goods produced, but was also responsible for seeing that the quality was of a high enough standard to please the tsaritsa. For example, she gave officials sample textiles as models to copy. If standards were not met, the boyarynia complained. As a result of such complaints, over the years the rural centres narrowed their range of production to goods requiring less skill and supervision.²⁹

The boyarynia was always influential in the community by virtue of her involvement in the personal affairs of the weavers. She reported cases of improper behaviour to the department as well as supervising apportionment of lands and houses in the settlement. She also settled minor disputes between members of the community and gave permission for marriages within the community. During the seventeenth century, some of these women exercised considerable power, overshadowing the elected leaders and officials of the weaving communities. For example, Boyarynia Tat'iana Shilova personally designed the new weaving premises built in Kadashevo in the 1660s for the

²⁶ Iakobson, 66.

²⁷ Iakobson, 10–11.

²⁸ Zabelin, 648–649.

²⁹ Bazilevich, 7; Zaozerskaia, 410–411.

weavers.³⁰ In general, the boyarynia was looked on as a representative of the tsaritsa's household and therefore as the person responsible for the production of suitable materials, rather than for the administration of the communities. When the Linen Treasury was thought to be in good condition, she was rewarded with pieces of cloth.³¹

Although it was an intricate system, the structure and production of the communities was closely controlled and administered both from outside and from within. Residents of the weaving settlements were obligated by the state to produce a given amount and a given type of textile product, according to the amount of land they held in the community. The work was then divided according to the specific skills of the residents. Typically, the ownership of land and the type of craftwork were hereditary, with obligations passing from father to son or mother to daughter. A special document, a *poruchnaia zapis'* (note of guarantee) had to be signed by each obligated resident of the community, in which he or she guaranteed to behave properly and fulfil the responsibilities of a member of the community. These notes could be passed from one generation to another or from relative to relative. Once signed, the note committed the holder to the community.³² Outsiders who wished to join the weavers found it difficult to gain entry. They were thoroughly investigated to make sure they did not belong elsewhere, and then obliged either to buy a house in the community or acquire the note of guarantee. Both of these demands required a certain degree of affluence.³³

Many weavers were lured away from their original obligations by the trading privileges associated with their communities. Numbers of residents of the Moscow settlements became wealthy merchants who were no longer interested in living in the *slobody*.³⁴ It was the responsibility of the officials in charge of the community to see that houses were occupied and that a sufficient number of qualified craftsmen were available to provide all the designated textiles to the state. If for some reason a household with a *khamovnoe tiaglo* (weaving tax) was left vacant, the state insisted it be sold to another weaver.³⁵ If this did not happen through the weavers' own commercial activity, the state found alternative craftsmen to occupy empty houses and take on the weaving obligation.

³⁰ Iakobson, 32.

³¹ Bazilevich, 8, 11; Zabelin, 668–669.

³² Bazilevich, 13.

³³ Iakobson, 67, 72.

³⁴ Zaozerskaia, 414.

³⁵ Iakobson, 16.

Weavers were simply transferred from one community to another, in which case they did not have to pay for the house.³⁶

Following the plague of 1654 the state began to transfer rural weavers to the city to fill the houses left vacant by the epidemic.³⁷ This was not a convenient turn of events for the rural weavers, since when a weaver was transferred from one community to another, his previous home was sold and he was compelled to stay in Moscow, despite commitments he may have had in his own village.³⁸

When there were not enough craftsmen to make such resettlement feasible, workers had to be found from outside the weaving community, which usually necessitated their training. Trainee weavers were an established group within the community and were taught by experienced or retired weavers in the settlement.³⁹

As the need to attract more weavers increased, the authorities eased the strict regulation for entry to the settlements. During the 1660s and 1670s even runaway serf weavers who found their way into the crown weaving communities were not returned to their landlords. On the other hand, specialist weavers who had abandoned their homes in Kadashevo were not allowed to work elsewhere and were ordered back to their original location.⁴⁰

Whereas almost all spinning and weaving had previously been done at home, by the second half of the seventeenth century that was no longer the case. Weaving outside the home allowed *sidelye tkachi* ('sitting' or full-time weavers) to work exclusively in weaving workshops. Many such weavers were hired by obligated residents to fulfil their weaving task.⁴¹ Initially, the full-time weavers were foreign, mainly Polish, but there were also Lithuanians who were expert weavers working in Moscow.⁴² In Kadashevo in the 1630s these few foreign weavers wove in a special *izba* (house) set aside for them, as did other select groups such as the pattern-weavers and specialist needleworkers.⁴³ From this time on, many long-standing residents began to rely on hired labour to fulfil their

³⁶ Iakobson, 22.

³⁷ Zaozerskaia, 412, 430.

³⁸ Bazilevich, 14.

³⁹ Zaozerskaia, 409–410.

⁴⁰ Iakobson, 47, 72–73; *Krepostnaia manufaktura*, 134; Zaozerskaia, 436.

⁴¹ Iakobson, 27–29.

⁴² Bazilevich, 14; Iakobson, 10; Zaozerskaia, 429.

⁴³ Iakobson, 25.

obligations, since they had lucrative businesses which required them to be away for long periods of time.⁴⁴

In Kadashevo and Khamonvniki two *starosty* (elected heads) and other officials were chosen on a yearly basis. The *starosty* were respected figures. They were supplied with food and other compensation by members of the community for the work they did on behalf of the weavers.⁴⁵ In the village communities the weavers were also under the direct authority of an official from the department and of a *starosta*. This individual had a large degree of independence but many responsibilities, including keeping track of every obligation to the *Tsaritsyna masterskaia palata*, collection of rent, tax or materials, and bookkeeping.

Three elected leaders controlled the working and personal lives of the weavers. They had to ascertain the credentials of new arrivals, oversee the condition of houses and buildings, including the large house occupied by the presiding boyarynia. They adjudicated in arguments between members of the community, granted or refused permission for girls to marry outside the community, and judged legal cases affecting weavers inside or outside the community. They had to both defend the interests of residents and satisfy the interests of the *Tsaritsyna masterskaia palata*.⁴⁶

It does not seem implausible that from the midst of the Moscow weaving communities came the unknown author of the *Domostroi*, the book of social and religious etiquette which Old Believers still revere. Recent research concludes that the author was possibly 'an unexpectedly literate merchant', a man of wealth who lived in an urban environment.⁴⁷ He had an interest in trade, understood taxes, his wife did not keep company with princesses or boyarynias, but heard about them through her own social contacts. The author understood money lending, bookkeeping, housekeeping, and all domestic matters, including the cutting, stitching, and care of cloth. He was devoutly Russian Orthodox and ran a large household.⁴⁸ In short, this description could fit that of a member of the Kadashevo community in the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.

⁴⁴ Iakobson, 67; Zaozerskaia, 429.

⁴⁵ Bazilevich, 8–11.

⁴⁶ Bazilevich, 7, 9–11; Zaozerskaia, 422.

⁴⁷ Pouncy, *Domostroi*, 44.

⁴⁸ Pouncy, *Domostroi*, 37–45.

2.3 Economic Organisation of the Weaving Communities

The same system of obligation existed in all four weaving centres and was originally fulfilled in a straightforward manner. The amount of obligation of weaving for the state was determined by the amount of land in the quarter. Individual obligation was established by ownership of a house and an amount of land in the community. In Moscow this included a garden area and in the rural villages it also included a designated amount of additional fields given to the weaver for raising flax.⁴⁹ The payment system for use of this land was based on the fulfilment of a *delo* (payment made in textile products). The ideal was for every individual yearly *delo* to represent an equivalent amount of working hours. Different types of textile products therefore defined a *delo*.

The community was responsible for a given number of *dela* which changed very little in the course of the seventeenth century. However, the ownership of houses and plots of land and the way of life of the inhabitants changed considerably, leaving the system of *delo* obligations obsolete and in disarray at the end of the seventeenth century. House vacancies caused by the plague and by the absence of weaver merchants from the community contributed to changes in the population. For example, between 1672 and 1699 there were 589 purchases of property in Kadashevo.⁵⁰ Many plots were subdivided and sold, or pawned, creating an ever greater number of people fulfilling the obligations, with all the resultant complication and confusion over division and type of work.⁵¹

The owner of a certain homestead and amount of land was assigned to a specific *delo*. An *uchastok* (plot of land) in the Moscow *slobody* was usually equivalent to 240 square *sazheni* (a *sazhen'* is 2.13 meters or 2 ¼ yards in length). In the villages it was typically 200 square *sazheni*.⁵² The owner of a full plot of land was obliged to produce one full *delo* for the state. A house with 120 square *sazheni* of land would provide half a *delo*, a house with 60 square *sazheni* one fourth of a *delo* and so on.⁵³ However, by the middle of the seventeenth century, it had become unusual for one person to be responsible for a full *delo*.

⁴⁹ Iakobson, 17; Zaozerskaia, 407.

⁵⁰ Zaozerskaia, 411–412.

⁵¹ Bazilevich, 6.

⁵² Iakobson suggests that in Moscow the size of a plot was 270 *sazheni*. Iakobson, 17.

⁵³ Bazilevich, 5.

In 1630/31 there were 413 houses in Kadashevo and the community was obliged to produce 189 ½ *dela* of linen for the state. This was practically unchanged in the 1670s and 1680s, with an increase to only 191 *dela*. However, the number of houses had increased to 455 and the majority of households were sharing a *dela* with three other households. Only 23 houses had a full *dela*, while 163 houses had ¼ of a *dela*.⁵⁴ This prompted the *gosti* and members of the *gostinnaia sotnia* and *sukonnaia sotnia* to complain that in Kadashevo three or four people were now living on a *dela*, when in the past it had just been one person. The weavers therefore had little work to do for the state, and their economic advantages had grown so large that they could compete too easily with these officially sanctioned merchant groups.⁵⁵

The obligations of the other three weaving centres were somewhat smaller than those assigned to Kadashevo. The weavers of Breitovo and Cherkasovo had to produce 159 *dela* per year, while the weavers in Tver' had only 60 in 1620, shortly before they were moved to Khamovniki. The *dela* were also comparatively undivided. By the end of the seventeenth century most weavers in the villages lived on either ½ or ¾ of a *dela*.⁵⁶

A *dela* could be a complicated measure, as it consisted not only of a number of goods, but also of types of goods which were categorised according to the work involved in making them, sometimes requiring more than one person. The obligation of work was divided by type of work and by type of product. This included not only finished cloth, but also spinning, bleaching, embroidering, and as many as twenty different specific kinds of work related to cloth.⁵⁷

The amount or type of textile associated with each *dela* was based on a scale of difficulty. For example, two patterned tablecloths could be designated as 3 ¼ *dela*. Spinning the yarn for the warp constituted ¾ of the *dela*, spinning yarn for the pattern weft counted as ½ a *dela* and 2 *dela* accounted for weaving the two patterned cloths.⁵⁸ As another example, a particular house could be responsible for ⅝ of a *dela*, where ⅜ were for spinning yarn for one type of cloth, ⅛ for spinning yarn for a different cloth, and ⅛ for spinning yarn for a third type of material.⁵⁹ Amounts and types of yarn or

⁵⁴ Zaozerskaia, 409.

⁵⁵ Iakobson, 19; Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 4; Zaozerskaia, 406–407.

⁵⁶ Iakobson, 17

⁵⁷ Zaozerskaia, 408.

⁵⁸ Iakobson, 43.

⁵⁹ Bazilevich, 5

cloth were specified for a given *delo*. A length of cloth was generally 14 *arshiny*.⁶⁰ To complete one *delo* a particular spinner had to provide enough yarn for two lengths of *dvoinoe polotno* (fine linen), for three lengths of *troinoe polotno* (medium linen) and for eight lengths of *tverskoe polotno* (heavy linen), which was normally 12 rather than 14 *arshiny* in length.⁶¹

As plots of land became subdivided, the quality of the product suffered, as the *delo* was also subdivided and fulfilled perhaps by newcomers to the community who might not yet be skilled in weaving or other of the required textile crafts. In addition, it was almost impossible, especially in the weaving villages, to monitor fully the quality of work, since much of it happened at home.⁶²

Another source of confusion in this system was the fact that when a weaver sold his house he also sold his obligation to make tablecloths or spin yarn. Someone who had threaded heddles for a loom might be assigned to weave patterned cloth, which he was not able to do. This then had to be straightened out either by the weavers themselves or by their officials. The subdivisions of land and *dela* eventually became so muddled and complex that neither the administration of the *Masterskaia palata* nor the Moscow settlements themselves could keep track of them.⁶³

In 1630/1631 the majority of textile workers in Kadashevo were women. Generally speaking, it was the wife of an obligated resident who fulfilled the weaving requirements on behalf of her husband, although in some cases a widow or other relative may have been the obligated resident in her own right.⁶⁴ Men wove only plain linen, while women were the pattern-weavers. There were 337 women and 45 men on the work roster for these years. Of the latter, two were reed-makers, two were foreign, and twelve were widowers who had to hire others to fulfil their *delo* obligation. Only ten men actually wove, whereas for various reasons, approximately thirty men hired others to do the weaving for them. These men or women formed part of the group of full-time weavers who produced cloth for the state, but without having a commensurate amount of land in the settlement. Newcomers to the communities with no weaving experience also

⁶⁰ Iakobson 54.

⁶¹ Iakobson, 53–3; Zaozerskaia, 408–409.

⁶² Zaozerskaia, 419.

⁶³ Iakobson, 20–21; Zaozerskaia, 413.

⁶⁴ Iakobson, 67.

had to hire textile workers.⁶⁵ In the weaving villages, the majority of weavers were women. They also did the spinning, pattern weaving, and embroidery.⁶⁶

An increase in hired labour also contributed to the end of the *delo* obligations. Weavers hired by others who held a *delo* obligation worked for a wage, so the concept of a weaving payment or obligation based on land usage lost its *raison d'être*. By 1693, obligation had been transformed into a cash payment of *obrok* (quit-rent). In 1694/1695 the *delo* disappeared altogether as a form of assessment. However, since each *delo* was meant to be more or less the same in terms of work hours, wages were then established on a similar basis and full-time weavers in specialised premises became the work force.⁶⁷

While such work may have attracted workers to the communities, on the other hand it altered the status of the wives and daughters who had fulfilled the cloth payments of an obligated weaver and were not allowed to leave the community without special permission. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, circumstances in the weaving communities had changed so drastically that many of the women had no work to do and requested moves to other *slobody*. Since it was now the full-time weavers, mostly men, who were doing the work, the women were allowed to leave.⁶⁸

Many weavers working in Kadashevo had neither land nor a house near the settlement, while many obligated weavers had moved to other locations to conduct their more profitable trading businesses. At the end of the seventeenth century, the full-time weavers had become hereditary professionals, bound to work for the state which went to any length to retrieve a weaver who tried to run away.⁶⁹

During the years coinciding with conflicts in the Russian church, there were many complaints from the weavers about their conditions of work and their lack of land.⁷⁰ For example, eighteen *masteritsy* (full-time female pattern-weavers) petitioned the authorities to be given vacant land near the Kadashevo settlement, since they had none. In another case weavers from Breitovo complained that if they were not given a grain allowance the workers would starve.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Zaozerskaia, 413–414, 421.

⁶⁶ Zaozerskaia, 433.

⁶⁷ Iakobson, 13, 18–20, 81–82; Zaozerskaia, 413–414, 427.

⁶⁸ Iakobson, 33.

⁶⁹ Iakobson, 76; Zaozerskaia, 430–431, 36.

⁷⁰ Iakobson, 32.

⁷¹ *Krepostnaia manufaktura*, 77–78, 132–133; Zaozerskaia, 428, 430.

In the rural settlements the relationship between land and weaving obligation survived more or less intact until the end of the century. The last known mention of them was in 1692, at which point the state was still trying to maintain its hold on the weavers, but without success. In many cases the weavers abandoned their villages because of famine.⁷²

2.4 Output of the Weaving Settlements.

The state was a demanding consumer. Its needs were for varied kinds of cloth, for bed and table linens, for the finest of shirt linen as well as heavier cloth for robes, trousers, and outer garments for the courtiers of lower rank.⁷³ The court also required fine decorative textiles, some embroidered with pearls and gems, and some woven in intricate patterns. There were at least twenty different geometric, anthropomorphic, or floral designs produced by the pattern weavers. These had names such as 'roosters', 'tree', 'elk under a tree', 'leaves', 'eagle', 'key'.⁷⁴

In Kadashevo there were approximately ten different occupations related to textile production, as well as the spinning and bleaching of white yarn and thread which are thought to have been used by the tsaritsa's personal embroiderers.⁷⁵ Some wide cloth was woven in Kadashevo after the middle of the seventeenth century and sailcloth became an additional product at the very end of the century. However, neither of these figured in the *delo* obligations. In Khamovniki, on the other hand, only two types of cloth were woven, both relatively coarse.⁷⁶

In Breitovo and Cherkasovo, essentially the same work was done as in Kadashevo, with the exception of textiles requiring the greatest skill in production – cloths woven with designs and then embroidered. Neither was cotton cloth produced here in the 1630s as it was in the city.⁷⁷ But all other types of work, including spinning and pattern weaving were practised by the men and women weavers of the rural communities. The linen fabrics made in the Iaroslavl' weaving villages were renowned in European Russia and Siberia in the seventeenth century for their fineness, despite the

⁷² *Krepostnaia manufaktura*, 77–78; *Zaozerskaia*, 434–435.

⁷³ *Zaozerskaia*, 403–404.

⁷⁴ *Iakobson*, 47, 59.

⁷⁵ *Bazilevich*, 4; *Iakobson*, 35.

⁷⁶ *Iakobson*, 36–38.

⁷⁷ *Zaozerskaia*, 422.

fact that the region was not particularly suitable for growing flax.⁷⁸ However, over time textiles from the villages and from the city became more clearly differentiated, as the urban weavers began to produce a higher quality cloth, leaving the rural villages to supply yarns and thread rather than finished material.⁷⁹

Despite the variety of products, the division of labour in the weaving *slobody* was relatively undeveloped, and men and women often had a range of skills. With the exception of some of the more difficult work, the residents could have substituted for one another, since the techniques of spinning and weaving were primitive and in domestic use. Only the pattern-weavers, reed-makers, and speciality embroiderers could be singled out as those whose work might not have been done by others. Nevertheless, the division of labour was precise enough for different professional labels to be used, some indicating more specialised work than others: a *tkach* or *tkachikha* (weaver, male or female), a *bral'nitsa* (pattern-weaver), an *osnovshchitsa* (warper), a *priakha* (spinner), a *berdnik* (reed-maker), a *belenitsa* (bleacher). In addition there were *shvei*, the women who did embroidery. Some spinners were designated to spin yarn for the warp, the fixed lengthways ends of a cloth; others spun yarn for the pattern weft, the crosswise ends.⁸⁰ Despite the fact that there were therefore several specialities within both spinning and weaving, it was often the case that the spinners in a group were also the weavers. It was also the case within the system of *delo* obligations that certain spinners were designated to spin yarn for certain pieces of cloth which were then woven by designated weavers and then decorated with embroidery by certain needleworkers. Or there could be a group of ten spinners and two weavers who worked together to produce six lengths of a particular cloth which satisfied one *delo* obligation. Generally speaking, there was one senior weaver in charge of a production group, ensuring at least some measure of control over the quality of spun yarn which would be used.⁸¹

In Kadashevo *berda* (reeds which hold the warp ends evenly spaced) for different types of cloth were made by a small number of masters who specialised in this work, while in the village weaving communities reeds seem to have been purchased rather than made locally. The threading of *niti* (heddles of looped cord which raise selected warp ends) was another specific task, but here again any domestic weaver

⁷⁸ Zaozerskaia, 436.

⁷⁹ Zaozerskaia, 411.

⁸⁰ Zaozerskaia, 433.

⁸¹ Iakobson, 42–46; Zaozerskaia, 433–434.

would have been able to do such work for his or her own loom. The women who did the fine embroidery required for decorative textiles used by the court must have been highly skilled specialists, since they could embroider with gold thread, pearls, or precious stones and were trusted to use them.⁸²

Other specialists were the cotton yarn spinner and the weaver of cotton tablecloths.⁸³ Although it was not an indigenous fibre in Russia, imported cotton was occasionally spun into yarn for tablecloths which were made in Kadashevo. Apart from this, the fabrics were made of linen. Before hemp was introduced, sailcloth made in Kadashevo was also linen.⁸⁴

Spinners received an allowance from the state for buying flax. In the weaving villages they acquired flax, already combed from local sources. The sellers were usually estate or state peasants, but prepared flax was sometimes also purchased from peddlers.⁸⁵ In Moscow spinners received combed flax from the State Treasury which purchased the raw materials in different parts of Russia, but especially in the Vladimir region.⁸⁶

As far as is known, spinning was done in all four weaving centres just as it was everywhere in Russia in the seventeenth century – with a simple wooden distaff which held the *kuzhel'* (finely combed flax) and a spindle.⁸⁷ Spinning wheels were unknown in the crown weaving communities.⁸⁸

Bleaching was done in the weaving centres after the cloth had been woven. Wood ash was purchased and used to make an alkaline solution for bleaching.⁸⁹ Until the new bleaching yard was built in Kadashevo in the mid-seventeenth century, the cloth was rinsed and spread out in a meadow.⁹⁰ Yarn for weaving and thread for embroidery were also bleached, but the spinners most likely did this work at home before they measured their yarn. There are no indications of how or where skeining or warping were done in the weaving settlements.⁹¹

Surviving examples of seventeenth-century Russian linen fabrics are scarce, but the terminology used to identify the materials made in the weaving settlements helps

⁸² Iakobson, 46, 59.

⁸³ Iakobson, 50.

⁸⁴ Iakobson, 60; Zaozerskaia, 427.

⁸⁵ *Krepostnaia manufaktura*, 39.

⁸⁶ Iakobson, 96–97.

⁸⁷ See Chapter 5.16.

⁸⁸ Iakobson, 50.

⁸⁹ See Chapter 5.22.

⁹⁰ Iakobson, 59–60.

⁹¹ See Chapter 5.22 and 5.23.

define the range of textiles. At the end of the sixteenth century, three types of plain weave linen were referred to in state records, two of which, *tverskoe polotno* and *prozorovskoe polotno* came from the Tver' and Iaroslavl' regions, while *kadashevskoe polotno* came from Moscow.⁹² Of these three, only the first can be more closely defined as a relatively coarse linen, because apart from the geographically-labelled 'tverskoe' linen, three other grades of plain linen are frequently referred to in weaving lists from Kadashevo and the rural villages. Since the *delo* requirements indicate comparative amounts to be made of one sort of cloth and its yarn, it is possible to determine the relative fineness of each type of plain weave. From the coarsest to the finest these were *tverskoe*, *troinoe* (triple), *dvoinoe* (double), and *osnovnoe* (basic). *Troinoe* and *dvoinoe* fabrics could be either plain or striped.⁹³

The kinds of cloth produced by the weavers were based either on these plain weaves or on the techniques of *bran'e* (pick-up weaving) used to create a patterned cloth.⁹⁴ Two specific types of patterned tablecloths requiring considerably more labour to complete than plain weave were referred to in the records of *delo* obligations. These were *zadeichatye* and *posol'skie skaterti* (tablecloths). The latter type was embroidered as well as patterned with 'bran'e'.⁹⁵

The second range of patterned textiles were *ubrussy* (white linen head covering with woven or embroidered patterns).⁹⁶ *Ubrussy* were sometimes decorated with gold and silver thread. There were three different categories of 'ubrusnoe' fabrics mentioned in lists from the weaving settlements. *Utiral'niki* (ceremonial towels), *gruznye ubrusy* (heavy *ubrussy*) which were sewn with pearls and gems, and *shitye ubrusy* (embroidered *ubrussy*).⁹⁷

Pattern-weavers worked in pairs as there were no flying shuttles to pass the weft across a greater width of warp which would have allowed one weaver to produce a wider

⁹² Plain or tabby weave refers to cloth woven with the weft ends passing over and under each alternate warp end.

⁹³ Iakobson, 35, 54; Zabelin, 661.

⁹⁴ Pick-up weaving involves lifting designated warp ends by means of a selecting stick which keeps the ends raised while the warp yarn is passed under them. See Chapter 5.33.

⁹⁵ Iakobson, 57; Zabelin, 662–663. In the glossary of *Krepostnaia manufaktura*, 311, a 'zadeichataia' tablecloth is defined as being 'two-sided' with a 'design on both sides'. This is an unclear description, but perhaps a clue that these were cloths made on multi-shaft looms in a damask weave, where warp and weft face emphasis alternate to create a pattern of opposite faces. Although there is a distinct pattern, it can be read from either side of the cloth, adding credence to the description 'two-sided'. John Tovey, *The Technique of Weaving* (London: Batsford, 1963), 90.

⁹⁶ Yefimova and Belogorskaya, 3.

⁹⁷ Iakobson, 35, 57, 59.

cloth. These were not introduced in Russia until the eighteenth century.⁹⁸ One weaver selected the warp ends needed to create a given pattern and the other did the weaving. *Bel'* (bleached yarn used for the weft in weft-figured weaving) was spun by a *belenitsa* (bleacher) and usually used for the first of two wefts. The second weft was typically either red or white. Pattern weavers specialised in making certain designs.⁹⁹ For example, a weaver who tried to leave Kadashevo was sent back by the authorities to the community, where 'he took up his familiar work of weaving tablecloths with an eagle design, which he had done before as a weaver in the weaving yard'.¹⁰⁰

As far as the looms were concerned, it has been suggested that they had no more than two *nishenki* (heddle shafts) because patterned cloth was only woven using pick-up techniques.¹⁰¹ The consistently narrow width of seventeenth-century Russian cloth indicates that the looms were narrow. In the seventeenth century, domestic cloth was probably no wider than 12 *vershki* or $\frac{3}{4}$ *arshiny* (53 centimetres or 21 inches) and often only 9–10 *vershki* (40–44 centimetres or 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ –17 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches). However, examples of cloth as wide as 18 *vershki* did exist in some estate weaving establishments of the time.¹⁰² Tablecloths had to be made up from two and sometimes three widths, 10 *arshiny* long, a custom which persisted in domestic use.¹⁰³

The exception to narrow cloth weaving occurred under the influence of the few Polish or Lithuanian weavers who lived and worked at Kadashevo and who are usually credited with any technical innovations in seventeenth-century weaving.¹⁰⁴ In addition to these *inozemtsy* (foreigners) weaving for the state in Kadashevo, others found their way to estate weaving enterprises. Here, thanks to their influence, cloth was made 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ *arshiny* in width, or double the typical width of the time. In the seventeenth century wider cloth was also made by Polish weavers working at the Saf'iano Mills on the Iauza River which were administered by a different state department. Although this cloth accounted for a fraction of the total produced at the time, it may have been the model on

⁹⁸ Iakobson, 50.

⁹⁹ Iakobson, 47, 58–9; Zaozerskaia, 433, 436.

¹⁰⁰ Zaozerskaia, 436.

¹⁰¹ Iakobson, 59. However, this may not be absolutely accurate. Additional shafts can eliminate the need for pick-up sticks, but there is no reason why pick-up weaving could not be practised with more than two shafts and often was. Damask weaving would also be done with more than two shafts. N. I. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie i tkachestvo vostochnykh slavian,' in *Vostochnoslavianskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, t. 31 (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1956), 530.

¹⁰² Iakobson, 55–56. A *vershok* is equal to 4.4 centimetres or 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches.

¹⁰³ Iakobson, 56. Patterned tablecloths in Old Believer villages of the Altai were still made this way in the twentieth century. (Plate 62)

¹⁰⁴ Bazilevich, 14

which Peter the Great based his *ukaz* of 1715, banning cloth woven on narrow looms and specifying that all cloth be 1 ½ *arshiny* in width.¹⁰⁵

Since domestic and most state cloth was woven on narrow looms producing almost universally the same width of linen, it is generally possible to estimate its relative fineness from the description of yarn and corresponding reed used to space and keep the warp ends in place on the loom.¹⁰⁶ The classification of reed, a comb-like device, was based on a *pasmo* number, probably reflecting the sett (number of warp ends per inch or centimetre) for a particular cloth.¹⁰⁷ This would provide an indication of the relative weight and fineness of the yarn, and of the time required preparing the warp.¹⁰⁸

For example, a reed for weaving cloth of a *pasmo* number 6 would be called a *shestukha* (a six), one for a number 9 a *deviatka* (a nine). The thicker the yarn the smaller the number of *pasmo* and reed. The higher the number, the finer the cloth. The most commonly used were reeds with names corresponding to numbers designated for finer cloth, the largest normally a *dvoinik* (a double) which warped a number 12 cloth. A *troinik* (a triple) corresponding to number 13 was also known to exist.¹⁰⁹

However, confusion in categorising types of cloth from the seventeenth century arises from the labelling in Kadashevo of reeds according to the actual cloth they produced, rather than to the numerical system already described. There were reeds described as *berdo* 'troinoe' (reed for 'triple' cloth), *berdo* 'dvoinoe' (reed for 'double' cloth), *berdo* 'tverskoe' (reed for 'tverskoe' cloth). In addition, this type of classification extended to even vaguer descriptions of reeds: *berdo* 'utiral'nichnoe zadeichatoe' (reed for 'patterned towels'), *berdo* 'ubrusnoe' (reed for 'ubrussy'), *berdo* 'u tkalei klopchatykh skatertei' (reed for 'cotton tablecloth weavers').¹¹⁰

With this system of identification, the number of *pasmo* and reed do not correspond to the typical labelling system for cloth, and in fact express just the opposite notion. For example, although they had higher numbers and, according to the usual numerical labelling of cloth more warp ends per inch or centimetre, the cloths known as 'troinoe' or 'dvoinoe' were less difficult to make than 'osnovoe' or 'tverskoe' linen, the coarsest of the four kinds of known cloth. But because there were only four types of

¹⁰⁵ Iakobson, 56–57.

¹⁰⁶ Iakobson, 52–53.

¹⁰⁷ See Chapter 5.32.

¹⁰⁸ Iakobson, 53–54.

¹⁰⁹ Iakobson, 53.

¹¹⁰ Iakobson, 54–55.

plain weave linen made in the state weaving centres, the reeds could be called simply after the names of those four grades of cloth.¹¹¹

2.5 The Weavers' Privileges.

Originally, members of the weaving communities essentially worked only part-time for the state. Since within the family it was usually one woman who did the spinning, weaving, or embroidery, as long as the household's obligation to the state was fulfilled, other family members were free to sell their cloth in the market or to engage in other crafts or commerce. For example, in Kadashevo in 1630/1631, residents had diversified into different trades, some of them connected to textiles such as shirt, boot, or cap making, but there were many other occupations listed, including metalwork, and dealing in icons.¹¹² Encouraged by the attractive financial and social privileges they had enjoyed since the sixteenth century, many of the weavers had also become merchants or moneylenders.¹¹³ Since these privileges dated back to the previous century, the status of the weavers had been firmly established by the time of the *raskol*.¹¹⁴

The Moscow weavers could sell their own linen cloth untaxed in certain stalls of the market and in other stalls paid less tax than any other merchants. They could take any goods untaxed across the Moscow River, a considerable advantage since they continually had to cross the river. They were allowed to transport goods on any river without paying various river and boat taxes to cities en route.¹¹⁵

Although they did not share any of the Moscow weavers' advantages, some of the village weavers also became at least small traders, travelling by river to Iaroslavl' to sell foodstuffs, wood, or salt.¹¹⁶

These immunities were most beneficial in the marketplace, but others affected the civil life of the weavers and set them apart from other Muscovite social groups. For example, they had special judicial exemptions. They could not be taken to court outside their community and even then they could only be tried by the tsar or his representative

¹¹¹ Iakobson, 53–44. In the Old Believer communities of the Altai, women referred to their finest plain weave linen as '*zontovoe*'. Like the '*tverskoe polotno*' from Kadashevo and Khamovniki, or the '*prosorovskoe polotno*' from Iaroslavl' district, this was a label with no numerical association.

¹¹² Iakobson, 64, 68; Zaozerskaia, 429.

¹¹³ Iakobson, 69; Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 7.

¹¹⁴ Smirnov, *Tkachi* 9.

¹¹⁵ Iakobson, 64–66; Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 11–13.

¹¹⁶ Iakobson, 65.

on three days of the year. Only murder and robbery could deprive them of this privilege. They were not held responsible for any dead body found in their settlement or for anyone who died suddenly, if it turned out that the deceased was not local.¹¹⁷ The weavers could not be seconded to work for any other state department and they were not compelled to billet foreigners or anyone else in their homes. Their boats could not be requisitioned for anyone or anything and they were not required to supply food for any military personnel.¹¹⁸ Their exceptional position not only allowed them to compete with the other merchant organisations, but in some instances gave them the same status as the clergy and the highest officials of the state.¹¹⁹ Along with the higher clergy and the tsar's servitors, the weavers occupied in some respects a more privileged position than the wealthy *gosti* and merchants of the *sukonnaia sotnia* and the *gostinnaia sotnia*.¹²⁰

The range of weavers' advantages was so exceptional that they were the target of repeated complaints to the tsar from the merchant cooperatives. During the 1640s the *gosti* petitioned the state to take sixty families from Kadashevo in to their own service ranks. This suited neither the rest of the Kadashevo community because they now had fewer residents to make up their obligations to the state nor those who left, because they now had fewer privileges.¹²¹

When disturbances took place in Moscow in 1648 over demands by artisans and traders for lower taxes and greater privileges, the crown weavers also took the opportunity to express their grievances. The full-time weavers, obligated residents, and widows from Kadashevo petitioned the tsar to verify their special status, particularly in regard to the *gosti*. The weavers asked that no more families be taken by the *gosti* into their service. The families were returned to Kadashevo, but at the same time, the weavers' privileges were virtually eliminated. The tsar re-examined the weavers' charters of 1613/1614 and 1622/1623, and then responded by writing a new charter. In 'an artfully disguised' manner, the new charter rescinded the special status of the weavers, leaving the weaving community and its members in a significantly less privileged position than the *gosti* and members of the *sotni*.¹²² This reversal of fortune was a catastrophe for the craftsmen whose status suggests in what high regard they had

¹¹⁷ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 10–11.

¹¹⁸ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 10.

¹²⁰ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 16–18.

¹²¹ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 5.

¹²² Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 17, 19.

previously been held. Even the *gosti* did not dispute their privileges, but had only complained that there were too many of the weavers doing the state's work.¹²³

When their long-standing privileges were revoked, the weavers were deprived of their tax exemptions, market rights, and freedom to travel. They lost practically all their financial advantages, except for the right to cross the river freely. Other state agencies were now able to take them into service.¹²⁴ Added to this financial blow was the fact that during the 1640s the weavers had not remained exempt from heavy new taxes imposed on Russian traders to raise money for the state's military expenses.¹²⁵

Although weavers still lived in the settlements and new residents continued to be placed by the state in free housing, the well-established social and economic patterns the weavers had known for many generations had come to an end. The weavers were reduced in status 'almost to the level of the black hundreds', the lowest group of trading artisans.¹²⁶

The weavers expressed their discontent in a variety of ways. Once they had lost their privileged status, many wealthy Kadashevo weaver-merchants joined the *gosti*. During the 1660s some of the weaving community participated in rebellions in Moscow. When they were banished from the city for their crimes against the state, their houses were put up for sale.¹²⁷

Toward the end of the seventeenth century another channel for protest against their diminished standing was support for Old Belief. The fall of the merchant weavers from wealth and influence was a gradual process which relieved them of their traditional status, but it did coincide with the upheavals taking place within the church and with the turn towards a new way of life and a new social order in Russia. The turn from this time towards the West affected the weavers, since for one thing, it changed the state's needs for traditional Russian cloth. The skills of weavers who provided these fabrics were no longer important to a state requiring substantial amounts of sailcloth and military material. Regardless of their skills, the spinners, weavers, or embroiderers could not furnish Russia with these products. Many of these clothmakers left the weaving communities in search of a livelihood. Some were schismatics who left Moscow to join Old Believer communities. When they left for new environments these highly qualified

¹²³ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 8.

¹²⁴ Iakobson, 70–71; Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 5–7, 14–16.

¹²⁵ Iakobson, 31.

¹²⁶ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 19.

¹²⁷ Bazilevich, 13; Iakobson, 70–72.

masters, of whom there were considerable numbers, brought with them not only their clothmaking skills, but also a tradition of trade and long experience of the marketplace.¹²⁸

2.6 Religious and Social Character of the Weaving Settlements.

During the Time of Troubles the weaving communities had fallen into decline, but were rejuvenated when the political situation in Russia stabilised after 1613.¹²⁹ As the Tsaritsa's Linen Treasury was restocked, the state weavers again began to enjoy the privileges they had been granted in the sixteenth century, when Anastasia Romanova, the first wife of Ivan IV and a noted embroideress, had been instrumental in building the main church in Kadashevo. The fact that she also oversaw the establishment of a linen-bleaching yard in the mid-sixteenth century suggests that the functions of the community were a priority for the tsaritsa.¹³⁰

It seems fair to assume that the entire weaving community took pride in its work and its closeness to the tsaritsa who was directly involved in ensuring that the quality of production was of a high standard. Through their work, the weavers displayed the grandeur of the Russian court and the Russian church, the skill of Russian craftsmen, and the rituals of Russian life. It was not easy work and it was not without sacrifice that they provided fine textiles for the state. A tax book from 1673–1682 reports that three out of nine weaving masters had lost their sight.¹³¹

The importance of the weavers' work set them apart from other members of Muscovite society. In addition to the trading privileges of the communities in Moscow, the weavers' Church of Kuz'ma and Dem'ian in Kadashevo enjoyed particularly unique freedoms. It was the community's main church and had been exempt from tribute and other normal regulations imposed by the patriarchate. The clergy were not required to attend the Kremlin Cathedral of the Dormition on Sundays, but were allowed to conduct their own services in their own church and they were not required to guard the royal tombs in the Archangel Cathedral.¹³² Until 1648 the weavers' church and its parishioners did not have to pay the usual tax for marriage proclamations or tribute to the patriarchal

¹²⁸ Zaozerskaia, 436.

¹²⁹ Bazilevich, 4.

¹³⁰ Bazilevich, 3–4; Zaoerskaia, 404.

¹³¹ Zaozerskaia, 431.

¹³² Iakobson, 66; Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 15–17.

treasury, leaving considerable funds in the hands of the parish.¹³³ The weavers' charter of 1622 had also stated that they were exempt from the tax which others living on church land had to pay as householders. These privileges were revoked in 1648, a move which must have angered the parish clergy and the parishioners who were accustomed to special favour. In future, they would have to pay substantial taxes to the Moscow patriarchate.¹³⁴ Like the Zealots of Piety, members of the lower clergy, the Solovki monks, *posadskie liudi*, and some members of the aristocracy, the once privileged crown weavers also had reason to resent the authority of the Moscow patriarchate.

Bearing in mind the anxious atmosphere in Moscow in the middle of the seventeenth century, as Russians looked for an explanation for unwelcome social change, plague, or natural phenomena, one of the readiest answers was the eschatological fear awakened by the belief that Russians were experiencing God's wrath. The apprehension that the Russian patriarch and the tsar could and would interfere with the codes sanctified by the Holy Spirit meant that God's enemies were present in society. The frequent references to the Antichrist in the writing of mid-seventeenth century schismatics such as the monk Avraamii suggest that this was an active and genuine fear and one they did not hesitate to promulgate among other proponents of the *raskol*.

The loss of standing for their church, the loss of special economic and trading privileges and then the devastation caused by the epidemic of plague all struck the weavers within a few years and coincided with the beginning of schism within the church. The behaviour of the tsar and the patriarch at the time of the plague played a part, not only in Archpriest Avvakum's assessment of Patriarch Nikon's responsibility, but equally in the feeling of the local population toward the reform movement in the church.¹³⁵

А в нашей Росии бысть затмение солнцу в 162 году пред мором... Солнце померче, от запада луна подтекляла; являя Бог гнев свой к людям. В то время Никон-отступник веру казил и законы церковныя, и сего ради Бог изливал фиал гнева ярости Своея на Русскую землю: Зело мор велик был; неколи еще забыть, вси помним...Верный да разумеет, что делается в земли нашей за нестроение церковное и разорение веры и закона. Говорить о том престанем, в день века познано будет всеми, потерпим до тех мест.

¹³³ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 25.

¹³⁴ Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 16–17.

¹³⁵ Zen'kovskii, 234–236.

And in our Russia in 162 (1654) there was an eclipse of the sun just before the plague. The sun disappeared and the moon cast its light from the West, showing God's anger at the people. At the time Nikon the Apostate had destroyed the faith and the laws of the church and because of this God poured forth a vial of His angry rage on the Russian land: there was a great plague; it will never be forgotten; all will remember...The faithful understand that this is happening in our land because of disorder in the church and the destruction of faith and lawfulness. We will speak no more about this. On the Day of Judgement it will be known by all, and we will endure until that time.¹³⁶

Toward the end of the seventeenth century, social unrest produced a mobile network of former inhabitants of the weaving communities who abandoned their traditional environment. Following the decimation of the Moscow population during the plague, weavers living in the countryside near Iaroslavl' were forced to have closer ties with their Moscow colleagues. When, by order of the tsar, state authorities began to transfer weavers from the rural weaving villages to the city to fill homes left empty in Kadashevo, it was not a fortuitous move for them. They were usually given the same obligation they had had to fill in the villages, but without the corresponding amount of land. Many were forced to become full-time weavers and were unable to look after the land they had left behind in the country, despite requests to return to Breitovo or Cherkasovo when their families needed help in the fields.¹³⁷

At the end of the seventeenth century, the traditional weaving centres of Kadashevo and Khamovniki in Moscow were replaced and the village weaving centres ceased to exist. As the weavers 'abandoned their spindles, seeking out colleagues in the area, collecting alms, or sometimes going their own separate ways to Moscow or other cities, they took their weaving skills with them'.¹³⁸

Much of the work force for the new enterprises established by Aleksei Mikhailovich and later by Peter the Great in Izmailovo or Preobrazhenskoe where Old Believers became influential textile entrepreneurs in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, came from the weaving communities. The Moscow weavers were also a source of labour for textile production as far away as Ukraine.¹³⁹

We know, for example, that this woman from Kadashevo was an Old Believer who moved to the Kerzhenets Forest in the 1690s with her son.¹⁴⁰ She may have left the

¹³⁶ Avvakum, 'Zhitie,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 29.

¹³⁷ Iakobson, 30.

¹³⁸ Zaozerskaia, 436.

¹³⁹ Zaozerskaia, 437-438.

¹⁴⁰ Iakobson, 67.

city because of intensified persecution of Old Believers during this period or because of the disintegration of the weaving communities.

В реестре упоминается москвич, житель Кадешевской слободы Логин Иванов сын Попов, 25 лет назад, т.е. в 1696, Логин ушел с матерью своею Ариною в Керженец.

Мать его была староверкой.

In the register a Muscovite is mentioned, an inhabitant of the Kadashevo *sloboda*, Login Ivanov, the son of Popov. Twenty-five years ago, that is in 1696, Login left with his mother, Arinoia, for Kerzhenets.

His mother was an Old Believer.¹⁴¹

In the 1650s, the anti-establishment forest elder, Kapiton exhorted his followers to turn away from the official Russian church which he said had fallen into disorder. Like the Zealots of Piety, who sought spiritual renewal and freedom from the established church, Kapiton and his followers settled *skity* in the forests south of Iaroslavl', between Shuia and Viasniki, near Ivanovo, one of Russia's most important textile-producing centres in the next century.¹⁴²

Kadashevo existed as an official weaving quarter for over a century, at least from the 1550s until the 1690s, by which time its traditional character had changed and many of its obligated inhabitants were no longer themselves involved in textile production. Along with a significant loss of economic and other advantages, natural disaster, social conflict, the tightening grip of serfdom, the beginnings of mechanised industry, and the changing needs of a militarised state had all contributed to its demise. However, it left the memory of an organised textile-producing co-operative, whose members were experienced spinners, weavers, and embroiderers, as well as successful merchants.

The evidence that Old Believers came from these weaving settlements suggests not only that some were textile craftsmen, but also that they were familiar with a well-established traditional Russian model for textile manufacturing. The fact that Boyarynia Morozova, one of the most inspirational early Old Believers, had some association with the weaving quarters may also suggest a relationship between the weavers and the *raskol*. Attachment to the ideals of the *raskol* may have come from both the higher and lower echelons of the community.

¹⁴¹ Ankudinova, 66.

¹⁴² Zen'kovskii, 148.

The weaving enterprises established by Old Believer entrepreneurs affiliated to the Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Cemeteries in Moscow and in centres such as Ivanovo and Orekhovo-Zuevo in Bogorodsk province from the late eighteenth century onwards, could well have drawn on these sixteenth and seventeenth-century traditions. There are striking parallels. A high quality of textile production, a religious identity and apartness, administration by elected community elders, independence, entrepreneurship, and discipline were characteristic elements of the crown weaving communities just as they were of Old Believer communities.

CHAPTER 3. 'A Refuge For Our Rites'

Introduction

Persecuted by the state and the official Russian church, Old Believers had to live outside the mainstream of Russian society. While most Old Believers were not crusaders for an ascetic life of isolation, they sought salvation in the symbols and traditions of a pre-Nikonian Russian lifestyle based on the instruction of the *Kormchaia kniga*, the *Stoglav*, the *Domostroi* and the religious teaching of their Holy Fathers. Their spiritual needs inspired them to create and maintain the material symbols of the ancient piety.

In their desire to guard the past, Old Believers proved to be resourceful. They found ways to coexist with the authorities of a church and state they viewed as apostate. In finding sanctuary for their religious rites they were organised, disciplined, and adaptable to new and often inhospitable environments. The economic prosperity of Old Believers was a significant weapon in their battle to protect the ancient faith, as it allowed them to establish a cultural fortress of support for their religious rituals. If they were lacking traditional texts and books, they copied them. If they could not find pre-Nikonian icons, they created their own. In their new communities they built chapels and prayer houses according to traditional Russian models. They cast crucifixes, icons and censers in metal or carved them in wood, they designed posters and religious family trees to remind them of their Christian responsibilities. They also wove and embroidered ritual textiles and clothing in order to maintain the codes of dress they had inherited from their fathers.

The industriousness and commercial interests of Old Believers helped them develop a lively network between their religious centres, drawing newcomers to their communities while reinforcing their ability to remain independent. When persecution made this impossible, Old Believers sought new refuges. By the end of the seventeenth-century, three main strongholds of Old Belief had become well established in European Russia or on its border – Kerzhenets, Vyg, Starodub'e and Vetka. Between approximately 1720 and 1765 thousands of the inhabitants of these settlements either fled or were banished to the Urals and Siberia. At the end of this period, Old Believers with close ties to these communities also founded new centres of Old Belief in Moscow.

Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Cemeteries, the mercantile and religious hub of Old Believer activity after 1771, were formed in the footprints of an existent Old Believer

culture. The character of Old Believer society in the earlier communities provides an insight to the entrepreneurial and social culture of Old Believers who settled in the Moscow region and became textile industrialists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Discipline and fastidiousness were of fundamental importance in these refuges of Old Belief, where community discipline dictated a rigid attitude toward clothing and textiles as well as to other ritual symbols.

3.1 'On Earth There is Only Persecution'

The first Old Believer communities were established in Russia as followers found their way to the remote *skit* of a charismatic leader. In the shelter of these small religious colonies, lay people who felt betrayed by the changes in church policy ratified in the 1660s and convinced of their apocalyptic significance, could form their own adjacent community. Here they had religious guidance and the freedom to seek spiritual salvation by practising Orthodoxy as their fathers had taught them. At the end of the seventeenth century one Old Believer elder asked the son of a government official from Iaroslavl' why he had come to his *skit*. The newcomer gave a forthright response: 'for salvation'.¹

Safely hidden in forests beside the Volga and Don Rivers, in northern Russia, along the Polish border in northern Ukraine, in the Urals or Siberia, Old Believers could also hope to escape the persecution meted out by authorities of the state and the official church. The words of prayers and spiritual verses which comforted Old Believers in their exile reflect a willingness to suffer and make personal sacrifices for the Old Belief.

«Здесь везде одно гоненье.»

Здесь везде одно гоненье.
И пристана чинам нет.
Пытки, ссылки и сажанья
На кострах во свете лет.

И несчастного томит
Жить недолго остается.
Знать судьба мне так велит.

Я страдаю в тяжелой доле,

'On Earth There is Only Persecution'

On earth there is only persecution
And no refuge for our rites.
Torture, exile and immolation
While still young in years of life.

It wearies this wretched soul
Which has not long to live.
I know that fate decrees it so.

I suffer my hard fate,

¹ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 229.

Жду кончины дней моих.
 А за что терплю я узы –
 Стару веру возлюбил.
 Мне сказали – я преступник,
 Но невинна жизнь моя,
 Казнить ссылкой – начертали,
 Но Бог будет им судья.
 Жалко родины оставить,
 Позабыть всех навсегда.
 Отца с матерью лишиться,
 Был как круглый сирота.
 Вы простите, все родные –
 Мне в чужбине умирать,
 Не златотканые одежды
 Будут крови небеса,
 Окружат могилу холмы,
 Да дремучие леса.
 Мне во гробе будет лучше,
 Там престану я страдать,
 Нежный голос мой умолкнет
 И не буду я стонать.
 Аминь

I await the end of my days.
 And for what do I endure my ordeal?
 For having loved the Old Belief.
 They have said I am a criminal,
 But I am innocent in life,
 They have punished me with exile,
 But God will be their judge.
 It grieves me to leave my native home
 To forget everyone forever,
 To be deprived of a father and a mother,
 And left with no one in the world.
 Forgive me, all my nearest –
 I will die in a strange land.
 No golden-threaded cloth from heaven's
 vault
 But the hills and deep forests
 Will surround my eternal resting place.
 It will be better in the grave,
 There I will cease to suffer,
 My gentle voice will be stilled
 And the torment will be over.
 Amen²

In the coming centuries Old Believers continued to fear and resent contact with the Russian state, an authority they rejected as heretical and under the influence of anti-Christian tsars. In particular, Old Believers identified Peter the Great as the Antichrist.³ Attempts to register Old Believers to pay the double tax imposed on them by the tsar in 1716, caused thousands of Old Believers to seek refuges where they could escape contact with representatives of an 'anti-Christian' ruler. As *raskol'niki* fled from the villages and *posady* of Russia to remote hiding places, they joined other schismatics from many regions of Russia who had also left their birthplaces behind them.⁴

Over two hundred years later, Old Believers who considered it a sin to have contact with 'the outside' or to work on a Soviet collective farm would also escape from the villages in Russia where they had lived for many generations. The story of one such lone family, discovered by chance from a helicopter in 1978 by a Russian exploration

² This verse was kindly provided by an Old Believer in the village of Verkh-Uimon, Republic of the Altai. It was one of many such verses hand-copied by her and kept in a special notebook.

³ Cherniavsky, 'Old Believers and New Religion,' 27–28; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:38; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 12; Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 77–79; Smirnov, *Spory*, 164–165.

⁴ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 5.

team and still living primitively in Siberia, is an example of the conditions some Old Believers were willing to tolerate in their search for salvation.⁵

3.2 Kerzhenets

The Kerzhenets River is a tributary of the Volga. It flows through the forests and hills north-east of Nizhnii Novgorod, meeting the Volga at Makar'evo, the site of a former regional market and busy centre for river traffic and trade which has been described as the 'entrance' to Old Believer territory.⁶

In 1656, monks protesting against the church establishment and Patriarch Nikon's reforms fled from their monasteries to the Kerzhenets Forest, where religious hermits had lived in the past.⁷ In 1660, the abbot Sergei Saltykov and the monk Efrem Potemkin founded *skity* which attracted numbers of sympathisers to Kerzhenets.⁸ Women's *skity* were also established in the region.⁹ While the religious leaders, monks, and nuns lived in the *skity*, lay followers built their own small settlements nearby in the forest.¹⁰ Supporters from the surrounding countryside joined the schismatics, as did Muscovites fleeing from persecution in the city.

The Kerzhenets leaders had considerable contact with other early Old Believer enclaves.¹¹ Their missionaries travelled to other centres of Old Belief and became well known throughout the Old Believer community. On holy days, for example, Kerzhenets priests and their assistants often travelled to the homes of Muscovite Old Believers to administer the sacraments.¹²

Leading schismatic activists also stayed in the Kerzhenets *skity* to discuss the complex religious and moral decisions facing Old Believers, such as the correct attitude to take regarding mass self-immolation. As Archpriest Avvakum's epistles circulated in

⁵ Peskov, 244–246. Less extreme examples of this kind were related by residents of Verkh-Uimon, an Old Believer village in the Republic of the Altai, whose families had fled there from north Siberia during the Soviet period. They were sheltered by other strict Old Believers in the village.

⁶ Lesley Chamberlain, *Volga, Volga: A Journey Down Russia's Great River* (London and Basingstoke: Picador, 1995), 229–30; P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pecherskii), *V Lesakh*, kn. 1 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1956; orig. pub. St Petersburg: M. O. Vol'f, 1881), 609;

Nikol'skii, 240–1; Smirnov, *Spory*, 41.

⁷ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:35.

⁸ Zen'kovskii, 274, 385.

⁹ Smirnov, *Spory*, 37–8.

¹⁰ Zen'kovskii, 274.

¹¹ Crummev, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 83; Smirnov, *Spory*, 32, 67–69.

¹² Smirnov, *Spory*, 67, 69.

the Old Believer community, schismatics became aware of his views. 'Lord, the blessing be with them! To them eternal memory'.¹³

Apart from disagreement about the source of their priests, divisions also occurred amongst the Popovtsy, whose stronghold was the Kerzhenets Forest, over fine points of ritual policy. New concords formed in support of a particular leader and his views. The *d'iakontsy*, for example, accepted a four rather than eight-pointed cross and opposed the views of other priestly groups in regard to the proper ritual use of the censer. They also followed their own rite for the conversion of fugitive priests into Old Belief.¹⁴

Named after Sofonii, a monk from the Solovki Monastery, the *sofontievtsy* did not accept the views of Avvakum about the propriety of self-immolation. The Sofontievtsy became the main concord of priestly Old Belief in the Kerzhenets Forest after 1720.¹⁵ Most of the priestly Old Believers who fled to the Urals and Siberia from Kerzhenets in the following years belonged to this concord. Perhaps because of the difficulty of finding acceptable priests, particularly in Siberia, members of this group gradually began to identify more closely with priestless than with priestly Old Belief. They came to be known as the *chasovenniki*, Old Believers who had chapels. In the eighteenth century their search for a Promised Land, which would have genuine Old Believer priests, contributed to their migration to the East.¹⁶

While there were priestless Old Believers in the Kerzhenets Forest, including members of the radical and independent *netovtsy* (those who have no sacraments, churches, priests, or monasteries), the community was generally associated with the Popovtsy. The Netovtsy were an offshoot of the *Spasovo soglasie*. At the end of the seventeenth century Kerzhenets became their main centre in Russia.¹⁷

In the 1680s there were 77 Old Believer *skity* with more than 2,000 monks and lay followers in the Kerzhenets Forest.¹⁸ The tsarist authorities were particularly vengeful in their campaign to destroy this haven which had close affiliations with the

¹³ Avvakum, 'Poslanie sibirskoi "bratii",' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 225; Smirnov, *Spory*, 70.

¹⁴ Smirnov, *Spory*, 33, 40; Vurgaft and Ushakov, s.v. 'diakonovskoe soglasie'.

¹⁵ Smirnov, *Spory*, 33.

¹⁶ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 14; Robson, *Old Believers*, 32-4; Vurgaft and Ushakov, s.v. 'chasovennoe soglasie'; Zen'kovskii, 476.

¹⁷ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 13; Robson, *Old Believers*, 38-9; Vurgaft and Ushakov, s.v. 'netovtsy'; Zen'kovskii, 472, 477.

¹⁸ Nikol'skii, 240; Zen'kovskii, 428.

Moscow Old Believers. In 1694 most of the *skity* were razed to the ground, forcing many leaders to abandon Kerzhenets for other havens of Old Belief.¹⁹

However, despite this devastation, the area continued to attract Old Believers. When government forces again attacked Kerzhenets in the 1720s, there were over 122,000 known Old Believers in Nizhnii Novgorod diocese, which included the Kerzhenets Forest. Following this assault, tens of thousands of Old Believers fled east to the Urals and Siberia, west to the Polish border, or to the neighbouring Kazan' district.²⁰ With the defection of such a large number of Old Believers and their priests, the focus of leadership for the Popovtsy shifted to other centres. Nonetheless, the Kerzhenets Forest remained a stronghold of priestly Old Belief until the 1850s, when the community was crushed during the campaign against Old Belief instigated by Nicholas I.²¹

3.21 Kerzhenets and Commerce

The continual harassment of the Kerzhenets *skity* deprived Old Believers there of the opportunity to achieve the same degree of independence as that which developed in other early centres of Old Belief, such as Vyg or Vetka.²² The community was less centralised and never enjoyed the stability necessary to become a cultural centre of Old Belief. But the Kerzhenets Forest was significant to schismatics in other ways. It helped Old Believers forge a path to the places where they could find spiritual salvation and where refugees could connect to the underground network and counterculture of Old Belief.²³

Old Believers associated with the Kerzhenets Forest established a chain of communities whose links were based not only on religious conviction, but also on commercial ties. Old Believers came to the fair at Makar'evo to buy produce, make contact with priests, and look for pre-Nikonian religious books.²⁴ There was also a trade in goods made especially for the Old Believer market. The amount of devotional objects sold at the annual fair in Nizhnii Novgorod is an indication of the concentrated Old Believer population in the region.

¹⁹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 40–2; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:36; Zen'kovskii, 429.

²⁰ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 13–4, 107; Smirnov, *Spory*, 32, 41. According to Russian government statistics gathered in 1762, between 1716 and 1762, 7/8 of the Old Believer population of Nizhnii Novgorod province fled to Poland or Siberia. Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:399

²¹ Zen'kovskii, 274.

²² Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 14; Zen'kovskii, 399.

²³ Zen'kovskii, 274.

²⁴ Portal, 171; Smirnov, *Spory*, 41.

Такие кадилаици употребляютя исключительно раскольниками: они делаются преимущественно в Москве и Туле. На Нижегородскую ярмарку привозится ежегодно от 5,000 до 10,000 таких кадилаициц.

These censers are used exclusively by the *raskol'niki*: they are made mainly in Moscow and Tula. Every year between 5,000 and 10,000 of these censers are brought to the Nizhnii Novgorod Fair.²⁵

Many Kerzhenets Old Believers were wealthy merchants and entrepreneurs, involved in shipbuilding, wholesale trade, and textile manufacturing. Conveniently situated near the Volga and Oka routes to the east and south, by the nineteenth century some of the Old Believer communities had become industrial centres, producing yarn and textiles for the Russian and European market.²⁶ This industrial activity acted as a magnet for Old Believers and converts to Old Belief. In 1852 the number of registered Old Believers in Nizhnii Novgorod province was 20,246. Unofficial counts put the number at 172,500.²⁷

As part of the state's effort to stamp out Old Belief, the Russian Department of Internal Affairs sent an investigator, I. P. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pecherskii), to report on the activity of Old Believers in Nizhnii Novgorod province. One section of his 1854 account is an analysis of the 'Moral and Civil Status and Daily Life of *Raskol'niki*'. The reality of the burgeoning population of Old Belief prompted the investigator's disparaging description of the Old Believers' commercial success and their *modus operandi* as industrialists.²⁸

Чтобы удовлетворить своему самолюбию, стать в ровен с хозяином и получить более денежных выгод – редкий, находясь в подобных обстоятельствах, не отпадает от церкви. Вот почему Московския и около московныя фабрики сделались училищами и разсадниками раскола. Вот почему и в Нижегородской губернии Горбатовския прядильни, приречное судостроение и пр. распространяют раскол, а сильное заражение этою язвою народа в каждом уезде, отличающемся многочисленностью раскольников объясняется тем, что предметы таможней производительности скупаются у крестьян для оптовой торговли – раскольниками.

In order to satisfy his pride, be equal with his master, and receive more financial profit, it is a rare man who, finding himself in similar circumstances, does not fall

²⁵ LMAB RO, P. I. Mel'nikov (Andrei Pecherskii), 'Otchet o sovremennom sostoianii raskola v Nizhegorodskoi Gubernii. Nравstvenno-grazhdanskoe sostoianie i byt raskol'nikov,' 1854, ch. 3, F. 127.

²⁶ Nikol'skii, 240–1.

²⁷ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), PSS, 7:400–405; Robson, *Old Believers*, 20.

²⁸ As noted in the Introduction above, literature related to Old Belief during this time was generally negative.

from the [Orthodox] church. This is why the Moscow and regional Moscow mills have become training centres and breeding grounds of the *raskol*. That is also why in Nizhnii Novgorod province the Gorbatovo spinning mills, the riverside ship builders and the like spread the *raskol*, and the contagious infection of the people by this plague in every district, notable for the abundance of *raskol'niki*, can be explained by the fact that locally-produced goods are bought up from the peasants for wholesale trade by the *raskol'niki*.²⁹

In this part of Russia Old Believers did not farm, but concentrated their energies on trade and manufacturing.³⁰ They bought up wooden crockery, felt boots and hats, nails, weighing scales, bast matting, tar, pitch, and wood. As a result, the producers of these goods were 'to a man either known or secret *raskol'niki*'. In certain districts of the province where the main occupation was oil pressing and hemp processing these goods were bought up exclusively by Old Believers. As a result, 'all the oil pressers and hemp processors have become *raskol'niki*'.³¹

The practice of cornering the market in locally produced goods was typical of Old Believer activity in many commercial centres of Russia during the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in districts where the land was poor. Old Believer textile manufacturers had opened their own shops in Russian cities during the 1840s, but rather than deal with the *skupshchiki* (large wholesalers), they preferred to sell to small traders who bought goods directly from the manufacturers at the market. They sold their merchandise, including haberdashery, books, and prints across the country and even outside the country. At the Nizhnii Novgorod fair in 1846, the sales activity of these pedlars amounted to 68% of total transactions. Many of the *ofeny*, as they were known in Vladimir province, were Old Believers. Some became manufacturers themselves. Known also as *khodebshchiki*, these travellers used their own special jargon and played a significant role in the spread of Old Belief.³²

The perpetuation of Old Belief and the cohesiveness of Old Believer society were aided by the strict controls Old Believer families kept over their financial affairs, as well as by their effectiveness in drawing everyone around them into Old Belief for financial benefit. Merchants and owners of factories or mills never divided their capital resources which were always kept 'at the disposal of an older person'. Apart from a

²⁹ LMABRO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.96-7.

³⁰ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.173.

³¹ LMAB RO., Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.97.

³² Beliajeff, 148-151; S. Maksimov, *Lesnaia glush'*, t. 1 (St Petersburg, 1871), 105-133; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:61; Portal, 171-172; Ryndziunskii, 202.

father, this could be a brother, uncle, even an aunt. Not only did this system make it possible for *raskol'niki* 'to practise a wider trade and make more significant turnover', it also kept support for Old Belief in the family. A young member could not afford to give up his religious affiliation, since he had no independent means and did not want to 'make himself a pauper'.³³

Capital was also used to keep the wider community of Old Belief together. The resources of Old Believers in Kerzhenets were pooled to offer help in times of need.

Раскольническое братство держится твердо взаимным вспоможением. В быту крестьянина страшны пожар, неурожай, падеж скота, покража и наезу суда, всего этого не боится крестьянин-раскольник, ибо братство всегда с избытком восполнит его убыток денежный и кроме того, посредством сильных связей своими раскольников, найдет ему помощь и заступничество там, куда не посмеет и вздумать добратся крестьянин Православной.

The schismatic brotherhood is strongly supported by mutual assistance. In the course of a peasant's life, a terrible fire, poor harvest, cattle disease, robbery, collision of a ship, or anything of that nature does not frighten the *raskol'nik*, since the brotherhood always handsomely makes up his financial loss. As well as that, with the aid of powerful *raskol'niki*, the brotherhood with its connections will find help and protection for him where an Orthodox peasant would not dare to hope of acquiring it.³⁴

3.22 Kerzhenets and Daily Life

In 1854, in the wooded and riverside districts of Nizhnii Novgorod province if you came upon a large house, 'unusually sturdily built', you could 'almost unmistakably guess' that an Old Believer lived there. Prosperity and fastidiousness were immediately apparent in the domestic life of an Old Believer.³⁵

The houses were divided into working and clean areas.³⁶ Animals were never fed or kept indoors in winter and dogs, considered unclean, were never allowed to enter a house. If one did get in accidentally, a cleansing ritual using holy water or incense and prayers of purification had to be performed by members of the household.³⁷

In Kerzhenets as elsewhere, Old Believers were forced to be secretive. They frequently sheltered their co-religionists, in particular those who conducted religious

³³ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.190.

³⁴ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.83-4.

³⁵ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.110.

³⁶ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.111-12.

³⁷ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.114.

rites for them or Old Believer fugitives in need of refuge. Wealthy Old Believers built prayer rooms in an attic or on a mezzanine of their house and provided monks, nuns, or Old Believer lay leaders with *kel'i*, special rooms where they could pray and 'conduct sectarian activities'.³⁸ For example, what appeared to be a bathhouse in the garden could actually be the living quarters and prayer room of an elderly female relative who harboured runaway Old Believers from the family's concord of Old Belief.³⁹

To the inexperienced eye, prayer rooms, particularly in the homes of priestless Old Believers, were not easy to detect since they were most often simply a wooden *izba*, which did not display the trappings of an Orthodox church.⁴⁰

Holy books and icons were essential furnishings in the prayer rooms of all Old Believers. The Popovtsy set out icons on shelves of the back wall, so the main icon was not in a corner, but 'predominant in the centre'.⁴¹ Other essential devotional objects were the *lestovka* and *podruchnik* (a flat cushion used to keep hands from touching the floor during low bows in prayer) usually hanging together on the wall of the prayer room when not in use. The *lestovka* has two flat triangular ends connected by a band divided into 109 small bean-like sections for counting prayers. Each section of beans has a symbolic meaning and the *lestovka* itself signifies the ascent of man from earth to heaven through his prayers. They were common in medieval Russia and traditionally crafted from leather, but can also be made from glass beads and velvet, or linen. In this case the beans consist of tightly rolled tubes of cloth which resemble the leather beans. The triangular ends of *lestovki* are sometimes decorated with embroidery or beadwork.⁴²

Every devotional object kept by a family was carefully maintained. An embroidered icon cloth, the *pelena*, had a protective as well as a ritual function in the home.

В передном углу, в деревянной божнице (киот) поставлено несколько икон, ... перед иконами висит лампада, в стороне от икон повешена кожаная лестовка. Под божницей медная ручная кадильница, один или два подручника, свечи и ладон, и иногда псалтырь. Пространство между божницей и лавкой завешивается пеленой с осминконечным крестом, пелены бывают ситцевыя, крашенинныя, у богатых шелковыя, по будням висит

³⁸ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.120-1.

³⁹ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.119-20.

⁴⁰ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.126.

⁴¹ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.127.

⁴² Vurgaft and Ushakov, s.v. 'lestovka'. In some communities Old Believers make and use sequined and beaded velvet *lestovki*.

простая пелена, а по праздникам ее сменяют другою – понаряднее. Эта пелена закрывает кадильницу и другие принадлежности находящиеся под божницей. Некоторые раскольники безпоповщинских толков закрывают и образа занавесками, чтобы ктонибудь непринадлежащий к их согласию не помолился иконам и не отнял у них благодати.

In the front corner, several icons are placed in a wooden icon case, ... an icon lamp hangs in front of the icons, and to the side of the icons hangs a leather *lestovka*. Under the icon case are a copper hand censer, one or two *podruchniki*, candles, and incense and sometimes a Psalter. The space between the icon case and the bench is hung with a *pelena* embroidered with an eight-pointed cross. These cloths can be made of coloured cotton or coarse linen and wealthy people have silk cloths. A simple *pelena* is hung up on normal days, but for holidays it is replaced by a more decorative one. This cloth hides the censer and other accoutrements which are under the icon case. Some priestless concords of *raskol'niki* also cover their icons with curtaining so that someone who does not belong to their concord will not pray in front of their icons and take away their grace.⁴³

Cloth covering was also used by the Old Believers to protect the cleanliness of their homes. In the rooms of wealthy Old Believers where food was not prepared, this was 'carried to perfection'. There was no dirt anywhere, 'not even any dust'. A newly washed floor was covered with a huge linen canvas which was fastened by nails along the edges and taken up for guests or on important holidays. On the walls of the Old Believers' *izba* there were often painted prints 'with a spiritual content'.⁴⁴

One of the favourite motifs represented in these posters were the anthropomorphic Alconost and Sirin, mythological birds of paradise connected to both ancient Slavic and Christian folklore. These bird-maidens were traditionally associated with moral lessons or religious themes and were widely used as a symbolic device in manuscript illuminations, wall posters, and embroidery produced by Old Believer craftsmen from other communities who sold their work to Old Believers all over Russia.⁴⁵ Like copper crucifixes, small icons, portable folding icons, and copper icons set into wooden boards, these prints were most probably supplied to the Kerzhenets community by the Pomortsy or by craftsmen in Guslitsa, an Old Believer centre in the textile-producing region of Orekhovo-Zuevo.⁴⁶

The attention to detail evident in Old Believers' homes was also applied to their clothing and appearance. The most important outward symbol of faith for a male Old Believer was his beard.

⁴³ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.112-3.

⁴⁴ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.115-6.

⁴⁵ E. I. Itkina, *Russkii risovannyi lubok* (Moscow: Russkaia kniga, 1992), 6-9, 17-8.

⁴⁶ M. M. Gromyko, *Mir russkoi derevni* (Moscow: Molodaia Gvardiia, 1991), 279.

Первое, что составляет неотъемлемую принадлежность всякого раскольника – борода. Брить ее считает он величайшим грехом – это по понятиям раскольников значит «портить образ Христов». Они говорят, «образ Божий в бороде, подобие в усах; без бороды и в рай не пускают». По другой раскольнической пословице целость бороды для них дороже самой жизни: «режь наши головы не тронь наши бороды.»

The first thing which is an inseparable part of a *raskol'nik* is his beard. To cut it he considers the very greatest sin – since in the understanding of *raskol'niki* this would be to 'destroy the image of Christ'. They say, 'The image of God is with a beard and whiskers; men are not let into heaven without a beard'. According to another saying of the *raskol'niki* the completeness of their beard is dearer than life itself: 'You can cut off our heads, but do not touch our beards'.⁴⁷

Even trimming a beard was considered a grievous sin. In the next world the shorn hair of a beard or cut whiskers would not be given back to 'even the most virtuous man, nor will he enter the Kingdom of Heaven until he has found every last hair of his beard'. Some priestless Old Believers would not even cut their nails, saying that in the next world they would have to climb Mount Sinai and then their nails would be needed'. However, men's hair was cut with a fringe on the forehead.

Стричь макушку или гуменую начинают они у мальчиков 7 лет и обряд этот называют «постригами». Монахи, даже и бельцы, гуменца не выстригают. They start to cut the fringe of young boys from the age of 7 and this ritual is called 'the cutting'. Monks and novices do not cut their hair in tonsure.⁴⁸

The daily wear of a schismatic peasant was in no way different to that of an Orthodox peasant. However, while the Orthodox wore his clothes 'out of habit' the *raskol'nik*, 'striving to introduce his religious views into the very details of his daily life' saw sacredness in every detail pertaining to his clothes. To change such detail, even in the smallest way, 'he considers sinful'.⁴⁹

Крестьяне-раскольники носят обыкновенные зипуны, на головах малахой, шапку или валеную шляпу, но картузов с козырьками многие избегают, считая это еретическим нововведением.

The schismatic peasants wear ordinary *zipuny* (short, narrow collarless caftans), and on their heads a *malakhai* (fur cap with large ear flaps), a cap or a felt hat, but

⁴⁷ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.131.

⁴⁸ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.130–132.

⁴⁹ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.130.

many shun wearing *kartuzy* with *kozyrki* (peaked caps), considering this to be a heretical innovation.⁵⁰

While Popovtsy loved to wear red and coloured shirts, sometimes even to prayer, some of the 'deeply entrenched' priestless Old Believers had to bow 300 times as a penance for wearing red shirts. No *raskol'nik* would wear a scarf at his neck or even tie the neck opening of his shirt with cord or braid. Therefore, they all wore a *kosovorotka* (shirt with a side, rather than centre opening) fastened at the side with a button or stud, claiming that the Apostle Peter forbade the wearing of any loop or tie on the neck. To do so was considered contrary to Scripture and a custom 'introduced to Russia by the Nikonians'. Women and girls were required to wear *sarafany* and cover their heads with shawls fastened under the chin.⁵¹

Nonetheless, as Old Believers met the commercial world 'outside' Old Belief, modern, even fashionable urban influences began to encroach on the old ways. But in regard to prayer, and in their homes, in the places where devotional rituals took place, the Kerzhenets Old Believers continued to preserve the traditions of the past.

Более зажиточные раскольники отступают от изложенных правил относительно одежды. Есть из них даже и такие, которые и бороды подстригают и во фраках ходят. Проклятая же по понятиям раскольников, перчатка прошла даже в женские поповщинские скиты, но на молитве всякий раскольник строго держится «Уставной Одежи». Щеголь из молодого поколения раскольников, утром одетый в модном фраке, завитой рукою немца - парикмахера, раздушенный французскими духами, повязанный модным галстуком, дома, особенно же на молитве, бывает совсем в другом виде; на нем тогда надет кафтан в распашку. А пояс на рубахе спущен ниже пупа, широкия штаны запущены в выростковые сапоги и на правой руке висит кожаная лестовка.

The more affluent *raskol'niki* are renouncing the rules set forth for them in regard to clothes. There are even some who shave their beards and wear frock coats. Even the glove, damned in the view of Old Believers, has entered the Popovtsy women's *skity*. But for prayer, every Old Believer strictly keeps to the 'Edict about Clothing'. A foppish fellow from the younger generation of Old Believers, dressed in a fashionable frock coat in the morning, coiffed by the hand of a foreign barber, covered in French perfume, and knotted up in a fashionable tie is a completely different sight at home, especially for prayer. Then he has on a buttoned-up caftan. And the woven belt of his shirt hangs down below his navel, wide trousers are

⁵⁰ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.133. In a footnote regarding *kartuzy* and *furazhki* (peaked caps with cap band), Mel'nikov explains that the Old Believers called them '*tafi*,' skullcaps, condemned by Maksim Grek and the *Stoglav*.

⁵¹ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.134–135.

tucked into high boots, and a leather *lestovka* hangs from his right hand.⁵²

The same dichotomous wardrobe was evident among mid-nineteenth century Old Believer women in Kerzhenets. Some of them, who 'dance at balls' dressed normally in fashionable gowns and hats, dress for prayer in '*sarafany* and shawls fastened under the chin'.⁵³

Differences of opinion regarding the preservation of ancient tradition continued to arise between concords of Old Belief over matters such as dress. Some groups remained stricter than others in their interpretation of ritual practice, basing their convictions on the writings of Holy Fathers such as Maksim Grek.

Так в Нижегородской Губернии, между раскольниками Спасова согласия, живущими в нагорных уездах, есть разномыслие за валенки: одни молятся в валенках, а другие не молятся в них, утверждая что это смертный грех. Одни носят сапоги а другие, ссылаясь на Максима Грека, говорят, что носят сапоги только еретики. И все эти разномыслящие в таких предметах спорят о них друг с другом как о главнейших догматах веры, корят друг друга названием еретиков и не имеют общение ни в молитве, ни в пище.

So in Nizhnii Novgorod Province, among the *raskol'niki* of the Spasovo concord living in the hilly districts, there is disagreement about *valenki* (felt boots): some pray in *valenki* but others do not pray in them, convinced that this is a mortal sin. Some wear boots, while others, quoting Maksim Grek, say that only heretics wear boots. And all these who differ in their views on such matters argue with each other about them as though about the most important dogmas of faith, calling each other heretics and refusing to have any contact with them, either in prayer or at table.⁵⁴

In 1854, like their counterparts in Moscow, the Kerzhenets Old Believers were in a transitional stage of evolution from affluent rural adherents of the ancient piety to wealthy, urbanised industrialists and entrepreneurs who attended balls and followed French fashion. Observations of their lifestyle make it clear that they had good reason to be successful in their endeavours, even at a time when they were contending with pressure from the government to give up their Old Belief or, at least, adopt Edinoverie.

However, in their religious rituals, they continued to uphold the traditions of the past. They still sought a refuge for their spiritual needs, untainted by what they saw as impure and corrupt influences. In defense of their views, they turned to the words of the

⁵² LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.135-7.

⁵³ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.136.

⁵⁴ LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.136-7.

Holy Fathers who guided them in their understanding of the traditions which constituted 'right praising'.

Old Believers not only dressed as their fathers had dressed for prayer, but women continued to weave the cloth and practise the needlework required for appropriate religious observances. In addition, cloth, which carried religious meaning provided a protective barrier between the Old Believers and an outside world they viewed as spiritually impure and physically unclean.

Although there was no literary or artistic tradition associated specifically with the Kerzhenets Forest, a tradition of trade and industry developed and flourished amongst these Old Believers. A parallel but somewhat different culture evolved in Pomor'e, the region of northern Russia where Old Believers from priestless concords established a centralised religious community based on Russia's monastic traditions.

3.3 The Vyg Community

Hermitages founded by Old Believer monks, many of them refugees from the Solovki and other northern Russian monasteries, first appeared in the unpopulated forests and marshes north-east of Lake Onega during the 1680s. As more schismatics joined them in the harsh landscape where the soil was poor and the winter severe, the hermits banded together in their common fight for survival. In 1694 two *skity* joined forces under the leadership of Andrei Denisov, Zakharii Drovnin, and Daniil Vikulin. This marked the beginning of the Vyg Old Believer Community in the Povenets district of Olonets province. Named for the river, on which it was situated, Vyg saw itself as the direct descendant of the Solovki Monastery whose protesting monks held out against Nikon's reforms and endured an eight-year siege by Russian troops before finally accepting defeat in 1676.⁵⁵

By 1698 there were 2,000 Old Believers affiliated to the Vyg community.⁵⁶ In 1706 a monastery for women was also founded. The convent was built on the Leksa River, adjoining the Vyg complex.⁵⁷ The Vyg-Leksa Old Believer Community survived until the 1850s, when it collapsed under the repressive regime of Nicholas I.⁵⁸ Until that time it was

⁵⁵ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 16–21; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 5.

⁵⁶ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 5.

⁵⁷ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 72.

⁵⁸ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 216–7; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 7.

the leading centre of priestless Old Belief in Russia.

While the authorities of the state showed increasing intolerance toward the Kerzhenets and Moscow Old Believers following the execution of the Pustozersk martyrs and the *strel'tsy* rebellion, it was more difficult for them to track down schismatics isolated in the distant Pomor'e. As a result, the Vyg Old Believers had greater opportunity to establish a viable community undetected by their persecutors and insulated by their monastic cohesion and the traditions of independence inherited from Solovki.⁵⁹

Peter the Great knew of their settlement by 1702 and in 1705 made an arrangement with the Old Believers which was significant for the survival of Vyg and set a precedent for the survival and development of Old Believer centres in general. Because of the contribution they could make to the northern Russian economy, including facilitating the production of Russia's military weaponry, the members of Vyg would be registered to work in the Povenets iron factories and later in copper mines in the Urals. But in return, the state would not interfere in their religious practice.⁶⁰ In contrast to the Kerzhenets leaders, by offering the Old Believers as a convenient work force, the Vyg fathers found ways to normalise relations with the Russian state while at the same time maintaining a haven for Old Belief.⁶¹

At least initially this arrangement did not threaten the integrity of Old Belief. It allowed the Pomortsy to develop a great centre for priestless Old Believers in isolated Russian territory, where a monastic tradition was second nature to the inhabitants who came to seek salvation in the northern landscape.⁶²

3.31 The Monastic Tradition of Vyg

Attracted by the religious freedom to be found under the protection of the Vyg leaders, Old Believers from Arkhangel'sk, Novgorod, Povolzh'e, Moscow and other regions came to settle in the community.⁶³ The monastic compounds were surrounded by *skity* of lay followers who came under the authority of the Vyg synod, but were allowed to live as families.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Georg Michels, 'The Solovki Uprising,' *Russian Review* 51 (January 1992), 5, 8, 11–13.

⁶⁰ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 68–9; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 5.

⁶¹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 67–70, 172; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 14.

⁶² Zen'kovskii, 453–5.

⁶³ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 68–70, 143; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 5.

⁶⁴ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 6.

This relationship between monks and lay people echoed the traditions of Russia's large monasteries which owned many villages and peasants and served as focal points for much commercial activity. As well as huge trading networks, rural industries such as fishing or apiculture developed under the supervision of northern monasteries which often had workshops where local craftsmen were hired to do weaving or tailoring as well as embroidery.⁶⁵ Religious and economic life were intertwined under monastic authority, often autonomous and independent. Unlike Kerzhenets, from the beginning of its existence in the seventeenth century, Vyg continued to maintain a monastic tradition.⁶⁶

Old Believers from Vyg could still have contact with relatives outside the community, but the Vyg rule established by Andrei and his brother Semen Denisov stipulated that this should not interfere with the proper observance of the ancient faith. If, for example, clothing received by members of the Vyg brotherhood from relatives 'outside' was not in accordance with Old Believer norms, it was confiscated by the bursar.⁶⁷

Both Vyg and Leksa consisted of a complex of wooden buildings – at the centre were the chapels and bell towers. Radiating from these were residential cells, dining halls, covered walkways, workshops such as the weaving centre, stables, barns, schools, hospitals and as in the seventeenth-century weaving settlements in Moscow, a prison. The monastery and the convent were each surrounded by continuous high wooden fencing. The entrance gates to Vyg faced the river.⁶⁸ The men and women were strictly segregated.⁶⁹ In general, since the Vyg community observed the rule of chastity and frowned on marriage, the Pomortsy leaders took care to see that communication between the men's and women's settlements was limited.⁷⁰

The original Old Believer monks in Vyg observed and preached the rule of chastity, but their religious descendants, the Pomortsy, gradually accepted certain compromises.⁷¹ As a result, like the Popovtsy, within several decades of the *raskol* the Bespopovtsy also became divided. Even disputes related to clothing led to new factions.

⁶⁵ Lawrence N. Langer, 'Plague and the Russian Countryside: Monastic Estates in the Late Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,' *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 10, 3 (Fall 1976): 360–365, 367.

⁶⁶ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 107–9.

⁶⁷ E. V. Barsov, 'Ulozhenie brat'ev Denisovykh. Materialy dlia istorii pomorskogo raskola,' in *Pamiatnaia knizhka Olenetskoi Gubernii za 1868–69 god*, (god piaty), ch. 3 (Petrozavodsk, 1869), 94.

⁶⁸ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, plates 8–9; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 8.

⁶⁹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 111–10.

⁷⁰ Barsov, 95.

⁷¹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 120–121.

When some members of the *filippovtsy* objected to the acceptance by Old Believers of new styles of clothing, hats, and footwear, they formed an even smaller priestless concord, the *filippovtsy orlovskie*.⁷²

The early Vyg fathers were forceful leaders, intellectually well equipped to defend the Old Belief. Several were erudite, talented, and dedicated scholars who contributed significant historical and theological works to Old Belief.

In 1722–1723 Andrei Denisov and two Vyg colleagues composed the *Pomorskie otvety*, a polemic based on extensive liturgical research, quotations from Scripture, the *Stoglav*, and the writings of Maksim Grek. The proof offered by Denisov and his Vyg brothers that Old Belief was the correct form of Orthodoxy confirmed the leading role of their community within Old Belief.⁷³

Semen Denisov wrote the story of the Solovki uprising and in the 1730s assembled a martyrology of Old Belief, the *Vinograd rossiiskii*. Ivan Filippov, a writer and historian who led the community from 1741–1744, wrote the history of the Vyg Wilderness and other works related to the community's history. Together, the Denisov brothers also wrote the *Ulozhenie brat'ev Denisovykh* (Monastic Rule of the Denisov Brothers) for the Vyg and Leksa monasteries.⁷⁴ The observances were based on the rule of life and service in medieval Russian monasteries such as Kirillo-Belozersk, Trinity-St. Sergius, and Solovki whose traditions were known to the first Vyg fathers.⁷⁵

The *Ulozhenie* set out a clear-cut community organisation, with division of labour precisely designated for the chosen elders and administrators.⁷⁶ For example, it was stipulated that community elders did not have the right 'to sew for or give anything to anyone, neither to their brethren nor to locals or outside residents, whomever they may be' without the instruction of the bursar.⁷⁷

The system of distributing work in the sewing and shoemaking workshops is reminiscent of that used for organising the spinning, weaving, and embroidery *dela* practised in the crown weaving centres during the seventeenth century.⁷⁸

⁷² Vurgaft and Ushakov, s.v. 'odezhda khristianina'.

⁷³ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 84–89; Iukhimenko and Serebrianka, 'Literaturnaia i knigopisnaia shkoly,' in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, ed. E. M. Iukhimenko (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei), 14.

⁷⁴ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 8–9; Iukhimenko and Serebrianka, 13–4.

⁷⁵ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 8–9.

⁷⁶ Barsov, 85–116; Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 107–8.

⁷⁷ Barsov, 93.

⁷⁸ Iakobson, 42–46; Zaozerskaia, 433–434.

Как в портной, так и в чеботной швальнях казначей должен давать свои распоряжения о всяком шитье или плаченьи старостам, поставленным над швальнями, а старосты уже распределяют работы между швалями; без их ведома казначей ничего не должен раздавать швалям.

As in the clothing workshop, so in the bootmakers, the bursar should give his instructions about every kind of stitching or garment-making to the elders in charge of the clothing makers, and the elders distribute the jobs amongst them; without their knowledge the bursar should not give out anything to the needleworkers.⁷⁹

One official who administered the agricultural activity of the religious community organised the work responsibilities for the monks and nuns and kept records of the community's grain and food stocks. Although the *skity* which surrounded Vyg had a religious connection to the community, they conducted and controlled their own economic affairs.⁸⁰

The Old Believers grew grain, vegetables, and hay for the herds of dairy cows and other livestock looked after by the women in Leksa. When the supply of arable land immediately available to Vyg and Leksa became insufficient to meet the domestic needs of the Old Believers, it was supplemented with fertile tillage land acquired a distance away from the community in the Kargopol' district. The Old Believers built a mill on the Vyg River where they ground not only their own grain, but also made money by processing grain for the local population. In addition, Old Believers from Vyg developed a profitable fishing industry. They often journeyed to the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean in search of their catch.⁸¹

Along with other crops, flax was grown and processed to make linen. In Leksa there were workshops for weaving linen which was also used in the Vyg tailoring workshops.⁸² It was the bursar's job to see that none of the tailors or seamstresses used novel designs as they cut the cloth.

Казначей обязан строго надсматривать над швалями, чтобы шили одежды по христианскому, паче же по пустынному обычаю, а иностранных и чуждых покроев отнюдь бы не дерзали действовать, под казнию запрещения.

The bursar is obliged to watch over the stitchers strictly, so that they make clothing in a Christian manner, and according to the custom of our wilderness, and that they

⁷⁹ Barsov, 93.

⁸⁰ Crummeу, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 138–41.

⁸¹ Crummeу, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 139–142; Iukhimenko 'Stolitsa,' 6.

⁸² Crummeу, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 139, 142.

not dare to use foreign or alien patterns or they will be forbidden to continue their work.⁸³

In the women's community, the nuns had to make their attire using plain dark cloth. They were not to be tempted by any outside influences or notions of colour.

Одежды постниц да будут простыя из простаго черного сукна, или крашенины; а китайчатые, киндачные, бомбарековые и иные однорядочные и яренковые и прочия подобныя одежды в пределах постниц никогда не должны показываться и держать их кому бы то ни было строго запрещается. The clothing of the nuns will be simple, of plain black wool or coarse thick linen. And nankeen [yellow] caftans, dyed calico [red] caftans, brown woollen camlet caftans, any woollen caftans with buttons and any other similar brightly coloured garments should never be seen in the vicinity of the convent. And it is strictly forbidden for anyone to keep such things.⁸⁴

The men's attire was also carefully monitored by the watchful eye of the bursar, so that it would display no anti-Christian elements.

Он должен также смотреть, чтобы у братии не было шапок угловатых, кушаков верблюжьих, кафтанов мирских с сборами и подстягами; у кого увидеть подобныя, в казну да обирает, непокаряющихся на соборе да приводить.

He should also see to it that none of the brotherhood have angular caps, camel hair belts, worldly caftans with gathers or fastenings. If he should see such things in anyone's possession, he takes them to the treasury, and if the person objects, he brings him before the general council.⁸⁵

Even in the allotment of clothing, the Vyg fathers were methodical in specifying how long garments were meant to last. New fur coats were given out to the brotherhood to last for five years, caftans for three, wool and linen work clothes for four, caps for three, and so on through the wardrobe.⁸⁶

Such strict monastic control and conformity in all areas of religious and daily life helped to unify the Vyg community in its early years and contributed to its ability to prosper in the future.

⁸³ Barsov, 93.

⁸⁴ Barsov, 109.

⁸⁵ Barsov, 95

⁸⁶ Barsov, 94.

3.32 The Vyg School

As the community stabilised and grew, the Old Believers demonstrated their resourcefulness. Vyg's economic activity became wide ranging and gave the Old Believers experience in agriculture, fishing, and mining as well as in the production and sale of handcrafts which were essential for their own religious requirements, yet at the same time provided additional revenues. The economic arrangements made by the Pomortsy with the state left the community relatively secure from tsarist attack and better able to withstand natural disasters such as the famine which afflicted the community from 1705 to 1712.⁸⁷

This legacy gave future generations of Old Believers a solid foundation on which to continue the practice of the old rites and traditions, whether in Pomor'e, the Urals, Siberia, or Moscow. In addition, the community's prosperity allowed its members time to pursue the expression of their religious commitment in many forms which added depth to their liturgical rituals. Chefs, farmers, or administrators who initially doubled as book copyists, manuscript illuminators, musicians, or icon painters were encouraged to dedicate their energy to these crafts on a professional basis. They were given studios within the Vyg and Leksa monasteries and became educators themselves. They established their own schools not only for the practice of applied arts serving the requirements of the community, but also for the study of language, grammar, and Old Believer rhetoric.⁸⁸

The artistic endeavours of the Pomortsy evolved as the needs of the community demanded. The religious convictions of Old Believers required them to have pre-Nikonian icons and liturgical texts.⁸⁹ Although they travelled widely in search of these texts and, in the monastic tradition, the early fathers established a fine library of old books and parchments and collected icons for their chapels, their needs were considerable. They began to copy the books and illuminate the texts by hand in scriptoria supervised by the Vyg leaders. Nuns from Leksa also became copyists and illuminators.⁹⁰

As the tradition of manuscript copying and illumination became established, the

⁸⁷ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 6.

⁸⁸ Iukhimenko and Serebrianka, 13–4.

⁸⁹ Avvakum, 'Poslanie "ottsu" Ione,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 209.

⁹⁰ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 98.

craftsmen created their own individual style based in part on Russia's Christian and Byzantine heritage and in part on the folk traditions of northern Russian applied art. This distinctive *pomorskoe pis'mo* (Pomor'e style) began as an evolutionary form of late seventeenth-century Russian manuscript art which had its origins in the Armoury and Printing Office studios in Moscow. Engraved copper plates from Moscow used for the title page of manuscripts circulated in the north of Russia during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. These plates gave the Vyg masters models from which they could develop their own original version of manuscript ornamentation.⁹¹ As it evolved, the Pomor'e style also relied on the primitive imagery of folk art.⁹² Typically, the illumination of opening pages of a text consisted of elaborate architectural and foliate forms entwined in intricate designs. Texts were copied in precise semi-uncial lettering similar to sixteenth-century handwriting and bound in stamped leather, often decorated with gold and always closed with metal fastenings.⁹³

In the late 1960s, Russian archeographers discovered isolated scriptoria hidden in mountainous river valleys and ravines of southern Siberia.⁹⁴ Here, Old Believers following in the Vyg tradition still copied and illustrated medieval texts which they bound in leather stamped with seventeenth-century ornamentation. The copyists and binders used archaic techniques and tools both to copy and repair the old texts. The tools included goose or eagle quill pens, home made inks, tablets for lining pages, and hand-made stamps. The bindings were fastened with copper closings and when leather was not available the scribes used cloth to cover the end boards. Although their books were newly copied and bound, they had the appearance of sixteenth or seventeenth-century manuscripts.⁹⁵

When Old Believers fled from European Russia to the Urals and Siberia they brought their most precious belongings with them. These were their pre-Nikonian religious books and sacred music notation. Many of the books produced in Vyg and Leksa were used by Old Believers in other parts of northern Russia and from there found

⁹¹ Iukhimenko and Serebrianka, 14–5.

⁹² Hubert Faensen and Vladimir Ivanov, *Early Russian Architecture*, trans. Mary Whittall (London: Elek, 1975), 37–8, 45; Stuart, 98–9; Irina Soloveva, 'The Beheading of St. John the Baptist and St. Prokopios, St. Niketas, St. Eustathios,' and Tatiana Vilinbakhova, 'St. Paraskeva and St. Anastasia,' in *Gates of Mystery: The Art of Holy Russia*, ed. Roderick Grierson (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, [1994?], 89, 175.

⁹³ Gromyko, 278; Iukhimenko and Serebrianka, 14–5.

⁹⁴ N. N. Pokrovskii, *Puteshestvie za redkimi knigami* (Moscow: Kniga, 1988), 12, 15.

⁹⁵ Pokrovskii, *Puteshestvie*, 17–18, 23, 26–27, 30.

their way to the East. Even older books, which predated Ivan the Terrible's reign, were found in the homes of the Siberian copyists in the 1960s. Their forefathers had preserved the tools necessary to reproduce these texts and their bindings, allowing future generations of Old Believers to understand the techniques necessary to maintain the ancient texts.⁹⁶

Liturgical singing notated by the system of *kriukovye noty* was studied and practised at Vyg and Leksa. The early fathers, monks and nuns studied with a knowledgeable Old Believer who came to Vyg from Moscow.⁹⁷ The *kriuki* were copied and illuminated by Vyg artists. This form of sacred music became so well understood and practised at Vyg that verses, odes, and hymns were composed by members of the community.⁹⁸

As the *Stoglav* and Archpriest Avvakum had instructed, icons were to be painted according to sanctified tradition, without stylistic innovations from Western European art.⁹⁹ The first icon painters known to have worked in Vyg were from Viazniki, Kargopol', and Arkhangel'sk. There were a considerable number of these masters, some of whom lived together in one *skit*. They educated a new generation of icon painters in the community, and the Vyg chapels were furnished with locally produced icons. Since the icon painters who came to Vyg brought different regional traditions with them, the Vyg School became a composite of various influences. In new surroundings and inspired by their commitment to Old Belief, the Vyg icon masters developed their own stylistic character, drawing on this diversity of backgrounds. As the lineage of sainted Old Believer fathers and the Vyg community's own leaders grew, the painters developed a style of iconography to accommodate the portrayal of holy figures and the northern landscape in which they had lived.¹⁰⁰

Vyg craftsmen also carved icons in wood and in particular cast icons and crucifixes in copper, many of which were gilded, silver-plated or enamelled. The first master metalworkers were townspeople from Novgorod who established the tradition of casting, another form of religious expression which reached high standards of artistry in

⁹⁶ Gromyko, 278; Pokrovskii, *Puteshestvie*, 23.

⁹⁷ Avvakum, 'Poslanie "otstu" Ione,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 213–214.

⁹⁸ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 10–11.

⁹⁹ *Stoglav*, Chapter. 43, 152; Avvakum, 'Poslanie "otstu" Ione,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 214–215.

¹⁰⁰ E. I. Itkina and E. M. Iukhimenko, 'Ikonopisnaia shkola,' in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, ed. E. M. Iukhimenko (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, 1994), 31–32; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 7–8, 11.

the hands of Vyg craftsmen. The supply of copper and iron came from wealthy merchants or mine owners such as the Demidov family. Copper icons and crucifixes made at Vyg were sold all over Russia to other concords of Old Belief as well as to members of the official church and supplemented the community's income.¹⁰¹

Among the original contributions of the Vyg community to Russian folk culture was the development of the *lubok* or painted wall poster, a form of paper art, which made its appearance in Vyg between 1750 and 1760. The usefulness of the poster as a means of transmitting messages about Old Belief, meant that icon painters, book illuminators, or copyists could also commit their skills to creating inexpensive, portable propaganda or instruction to be used throughout the Old Believer network. In the *lubok*, primitive folk art and medieval Russian religious culture combined to create a popular but didactic art form. The combination of deeply felt spiritual messages and lively decorative motifs which conveyed them has much in common with the messages transmitted through woven and embroidered patterns, which also served the spiritual and aesthetic needs of Old Believers.¹⁰²

In addition to spinning and linen-weaving, the women of Leksa practised decorative needlework. They also made objects for devotional use such as the *lestovki* which hung in every Old Believer home, altar cloths, and *peleny*. The Leksa weavers made fine gold ribbon which was purchased by individuals outside the community.¹⁰³

Like the manuscript and icon traditions of Vyg, embroidery designs also displayed a mixture of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Russian ornamentation influenced both by Byzantine ecclesiastical tradition and northern Russian folk tradition. For example, the mythological bird-maidens, Sirin and Alkonost, used as the centrepiece of religious messages in *lubok* prints or in illustrated Old Believer genealogical trees, were also repeated in embroidery, along with other archaic symbols borrowed from Slavic folk art.¹⁰⁴

Although they could not themselves wear or display any form of festive ornamentation, the Leksa sisters embroidered these and other designs in coloured silk or

¹⁰¹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 98–9, 142; E. P. Vinokurova, O. V. Molchanova, L. A. Petrova, 'Mednaia plastika,' in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, ed. E. M. Iukhimenko (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, 1994), 37–8.

¹⁰² E. I. Itkina, 'Nastennye listy,' in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, ed. E. M. Iukhimenko (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, 1994), 59–60; idem, *Russkii lubok*, 6–9.

¹⁰³ L. V. Efimova and E. M. Iukhimenko, 'Vyshivka,' in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, ed. E. M. Iukhimenko (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, 1994), 92.

¹⁰⁴ Efimova and Iukhimenko, 92

silver and gold. They used traditional stitches such as *nabor* or *bran'* (double-sided counted running stitches which follow the weave of cloth and so imitate patterned weaving) as well as *bit'* (metallic thread embroidery). The nuns were able to supplement the income of the community by selling their work to the outside world in the local market. They also made gloves, hats, scarves, shawls, and head-dresses as well as garters, braids, tobacco pouches and wallets.¹⁰⁵

In texts circulated in their communities, Old Believers were reminded of the importance of proper attire. This tract is thought to have been written at Vyg.¹⁰⁶

Посмотрим же, сих обычаев ношениев одеяний (начало), откуда влечется, от древности или от новости. Но если в древность вникнем, – в древности, кроме противников, сего не обретаем. Откуда прилетеша к нам разлетай – ...аще не от чуждых стран?...аще не от западных стран? Откуда возвеяло всякое немецкое платье на бедныя россияны и яко геенскою облече мглою, аще не от люторов и калвинов – адских жителей?...Сице и диавол, супостать и ратник наших душ, является в угодном ему литовском, а не древле-российском, и всеспасительном и богоугодном одеянии.

Let us look, then, at the beginning of these customs of wearing clothes –whether they are drawn from antiquity or from novelty. If we look into the past, in ancient times we will find only opponents [of anti-Christian dress]. From where have these novel arrivals flown to us...if not from Western and foreign countries? ...From where has every kind of foreign attire, covered with the fiendish smoke of hell, wafted its way to the poor Russians, if not from the Lutherans and Calvinists, the inhabitants of hell?... Thus the devil, the Satan who battles for our souls, appears in Lithuanian clothes which are pleasing to him but are not ancient Russian, all-protecting and God-pleasing.¹⁰⁷

Vyg has been described as a 'unique phenomenon in Russian history'.¹⁰⁸ Its artistic *oeuvre* was based on ancient Russian literary as well as visual traditions, but had a unique thematic unity in all its art forms, defined by reverence for the past, high artistic standards, and a specific creative energy which came from the Vyg craftsmen's own experience.¹⁰⁹

During its years of existence, Vyg offered Old Believers not only a refuge for their rites, but also prosperity and the spiritual sustenance of a sophisticated religious culture expressed in an outpouring of creative activity. Books, manuscripts, sacred

¹⁰⁵ Efimova and Iukhimenko, 91–2.

¹⁰⁶ M. I. Uspenskii, *Starobriadcheskoe sochinenie XVIII stoletia ob odezhde* (St Petersburg, 1905), 1–2.

¹⁰⁷ Uspenskii, *Starobriadcheskoe sochinenie*, 1–2.

¹⁰⁸ Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 7.

¹⁰⁹ Itkina, 'Nastennye listy,' 60; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 11.

music, posters, icons, crucifixes, religious cloths, finely woven and embroidered clothing and linens were all material evidence of this culture. In addition to maintaining the religious identity of the Old Believers, such craftsmanship also contributed to the income of the community, thereby adding to its independence.

During its 150-year history the Vyg community survived oppression and the persecution of its leaders and members by forces of the state. In 1854, the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs ordered all the sacred buildings constructed between 1722 and 1809 in the Vyg and Leksa communities to be destroyed. In 1855 Old Believers living in the Vyg community but registered outside it, were banished to their place of registration.¹¹⁰

The Fedoseevtsy continued to perpetuate the heritage of Vyg's priestless Old Believer culture in their centre in Moscow, the Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery, founded by Ivan Kovylyn in 1771.¹¹¹ Until the opening of this centre, the Vyg community remained the focal point of priestless Old Belief in Russia. In the mid-eighteenth century the Pomortsy further liberalised their views on marriage, even devising an approximation of the Orthodox marriage ceremony for their followers.¹¹² Although this was never acceptable to members of the stricter priestless concords of Old Belief such as the Fedoseevtsy, during the 1850s it did convince numbers of the Preobrazhenskoe merchants to join the Moscow community of Pomortsy.¹¹³

3.4 Starodub'e and Vetka

In some cases the Old Believers' search for a safe place to practise their religion according to the old rites forced them to find sanctuary beyond the Russian border.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 214–218; Vurgaft and Ushakov, s.v. 'vygovskoe obshchezhitel'stvo.'

¹¹¹ Kel'siev, vyp. 1, 3–10.

¹¹² Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 121–122; Robson, *Old Believers*, 35.

¹¹³ Ryndziunskii, 216–218.

¹¹⁴ As recently as the late 1950s and 1960s, for example, Old Believers who found their way to China during the early years of the Soviet regime, fled from the Communist repression of the counter-revolution to the west coast of the United States, as did other Old Believer groups previously settled in Turkey and Brazil. Some of these families then moved to Alaska, where the Old Believer population had reached 3,000 by 1971. A. Michael Colfer, *Morality, Kindred and Ethnic Boundary: A Study of the Oregon Old Believers* (New York: AMS Press, 1985), 5–9. On the importance of tradition in hair style and dress in Old Believer communities outside Europe see also Richard A. Morris, *Old Russian Ways: Cultural Variations Among Three Russian Groups in Oregon* (New York: AMS Press, 1991), 69. See also Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:33.

At the end of the seventeenth century, such a refuge was established just outside Russia, in Poland. Like the Vyg wilderness, it would become one of the illustrious religious and cultural centres of Old Belief. Its first settlement was located on Vetka, an island in the Sozhi River, a tributary of the Dneiper, near Gomel'.¹¹⁵ Vetka later gave its name to the whole community of Old Believer settlements built nearby. By the end of the seventeenth century, Vetka had replaced the Kerzhenets Forest as the religious centre of priestly Old Belief.

Following the *raskol*, schismatics fled to regions south-west of Moscow as well as to Kerzhenets. Some *raskol'niki* went as far as Kaluga, Belev, or the Briansk forests to escape oppression, while others found their way to the territory of Starodub'e, an area of northern Ukraine situated along the Polish border and acquired by Russia in 1654.¹¹⁶ Densely wooded and sparsely populated, the region had provided a haven for fugitives even before the *raskol*.¹¹⁷

In 1678 a small band of parishioners left Moscow with Archpriest Avvakum's supporter, Kuz'ma, a priest from the Church of All Saints in Kulishki.¹¹⁸ His followers, 12 families in all, were mainly prosperous craftsmen and traders from the *posady* of Moscow.¹¹⁹ The *raskol'niki* were shown tolerance by the local authorities, with whom they may have already been acquainted through previous encounters in Moscow.¹²⁰ They settled first in the small town of Ponurovka, where schismatics had appeared as early as 1667. They soon formed four of their own *slobody* nearby and were joined by Stefan, a priest from Belev who had close ties to Boyarynia Morozova's supporters in that town. His followers included schismatics from the Tula and Kaluga regions.¹²¹ Since they had

¹¹⁵ Iv. Abramov, *Staroobriadtsy na Vetke* (St Petersburg, 1907), 1–2.

¹¹⁶ In the nineteenth century this became the Chernigov region of Russia, and in the twentieth century the Briansk region. Zen'kovskii, 398.

¹¹⁷ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 66; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 452; Zen'kovskii, 398.

¹¹⁸ The years 1668–1669 were suggested by authors such as Mel'nikov (Pecherskii) and Demdovetskii as the date of Kuz'ma's arrival in Starodub'e, but other historians generally accept this to be a mistake, since Kuz'ma was known to be still in Moscow in 1676–1677. A. S. Demdovetskii, *Opyt opisaniia Mogilevskoi gubernii v istoricheskom, fiziko-geograficheskom, etnograficheskom, promyshlennom, sel'sko-khoziaistvennom, lesnom, uchebnom, meditsinskom i statisticheskom otnosheniiakh, s dvumia kartami gubernii i 17 reznyimi na dereve graviurami vidov i tipov, v trekh knigakh sostavlenn po programme i pod redaktsieiu predsedateliia Mogilevskogo gubernskogo statisticheskogo komiteta A. S. Demdovetskogo*, kn. 1 (Mogilev na Dnepre: Tipografiia Gubernskogo Pravleniia, 1882), 654; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 66; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:33–34; Zen'kovskii, 379.

¹¹⁹ Nikol'skii, 138, 237.

¹²⁰ Anderson, 191–193; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 8; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:34.

¹²¹ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 66–67; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:33–34; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 452; Zen'kovskii, 379, 399, 430–1.

no church, they congregated in an *izba* where their priests conducted all religious rites except the Liturgy (Eucharist).¹²²

The Ukrainian authorities liked the Old Believers because they were settling new lands for them.¹²³ However, with the introduction of the Russian government's repressive laws regarding Old Belief in 1685, the Ukrainians were compelled to punish Old Believers or force them back to their homeland to rejoin the Orthodox church.¹²⁴ No longer safe on Russian territory, in 1685 many Old Believers in Starodub'e moved the short distance across the Russian border into Poland and settled their first colony on Vetka, an uninhabited island.¹²⁵ Since the *obrok* paid by the Old Believers for this land provided a new source of income, the local landowners offered the refugees support and protection from the Russian government.¹²⁶

When a Polish government investigation determined that there was nothing schismatic in Old Belief, *raskol'niki* were granted the legal right to live in Poland by order of the king, Jan Sobieski. In addition, the Polish church took the view that Old Belief was a curious new religion, rather than a threat to Catholicism.¹²⁷ As a result, the *vetkovtsy* were allowed to practise their religious observances without interference from either Polish or tsarist authorities. As well as this, the landowners were so anxious to maintain the economic benefit gained from Old Believer immigrants that they generally disguised the fact that there were *raskol'niki* living in their territory.¹²⁸

3.41 Vetka and Commerce

Impressed by the high rents paid by the Old Believers to their Polish landlords, Ukrainian landowners also encouraged Old Believers to resettle in Starodub'e. Although these Old Believers were subject to the same legal constraints as Old Believers in Moscow or elsewhere in Russia, to a certain extent the local Ukrainian authorities also sheltered the Old Believers. Officially they were not referred to as *raskol'niki*, but rather as *krest'iane* (peasants) or *posadskie liudi*. They were allowed to buy land and had the

¹²² Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 333; *Opyt*, 654; Pascal, *Avvakum*, 452; Zen'kovskii, 399.

¹²³ Nikol'skii, 237.

¹²⁴ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 66–67; *Opyt*, 654; Zen'kovskii, 429.

¹²⁵ Abramov, 1–2; Nikol'skii, 152–156.

¹²⁶ *Opyt*, 654; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:34.

¹²⁷ T. P. Korotkaia, E. S. Prokoshina, A. A. Chudnikova, *Starobriadchestvo v Belarusi* (Minsk, 1992), 33; Smirnov, *Spory*, 44–6; Zen'kovskii, 430.

¹²⁸ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 116–119.

right to borrow serf labour.¹²⁹ Old Believers soon established a network of communities in the forests along the border close to Vetka.¹³⁰

The Old Believer population grew quickly, since their centre became a sanctuary for all kinds of refugees, including soldiers, peasants, Cossacks, and Moscow *strel'tsy*.¹³¹ As a result of this migration, Russian officials carried out strict checks on anyone travelling along the Kaluga and Tula roads leading to Poland from Moscow.¹³² However, earlier settlers or sympathetic Russian soldiers stationed along the route helped smuggle newcomers across the border.¹³³ Many of the runaways were attracted by the prosperity of the Vetka *slobody*. When they came to these communities, they joined Old Belief.¹³⁴

Protected by their Polish landowners, the Old Believers in Vetka were safe from persecution, free of economic constraints and accessible to their co-religionists across the border in Starodub'e, Moscow, and other Russian towns.¹³⁵ In return, the Old Believers contributed significantly to the economic development of the region.¹³⁶ They not only became prosperous farmers, but were also instrumental in the development of trade and industry.¹³⁷

Kaluga became the contact point which connected Old Believers from Moscow with Starodub'e and Vetka.¹³⁸ When the Kerzhenets Forest leader, Feodosii, was forced to leave his *skit* because of governmental surveillance of his activities and attacks on the Kerzhenets community, he fled first to Kaluga and from there to Vetka in 1695. He brought with him the *dary* (Holy Gifts) he had consecrated on Holy Thursday and the *iconostasis* he had acquired in a disused pre-Nikonian church in Kaluga.¹³⁹

In addition, Malan'ia, a nun associated with Boyarynia Morozova and who corresponded with Archpriest Avvakum, brought a pre-Nikonian *antimins* (consecrated communion cloth) to Vetka. The acquisition of these devotional appurtenances allowed the first and only Old Believer church built for the Popovtsy at that time to be

¹²⁹ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 116.

¹³⁰ *Opyt*, 656–657.

¹³¹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 194; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 67.

¹³² Hughes, *Peter the Great*, 449; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 66–67; Zen'kovskii, 399, 430,

¹³³ Zen'kovskii, 430.

¹³⁴ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 214–215, 268.

¹³⁵ Zen'kovskii, 429–430.

¹³⁶ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 117–118; *Opyt*, 668–671.

¹³⁷ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 82; Nikol'skii, 238–239.

¹³⁸ Zen'kovskii, 426.

¹³⁹ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:36; Nikol'skii, 250; A.V. Vorontsova, 'O polemike "Vetkovtsev" s d'iakonovtsami: maloizuchennye rannie polemicheskie sochineniia predstavitelei "vetkovskogo" soglasiia,' in *Mir Staroobriadchestva*, vyp. 1, *Lichnost', kniga, traditsiia* (Moscow and St Petersburg, 1992), 117–118.

consecrated at Vetka in 1695, making Vetka an important religious focal point for Old Believers.¹⁴⁰ Under Feodosii's leadership, Vetka replaced Kerzhenets as the most active and important centre for the Popovtsy.¹⁴¹

Until its destruction, first attempted by the Russian government in 1735 and again in 1764, Vetka served as a model of flourishing Old Believer culture, just outside the reach of tsarist Russia, but still in close contact with it and with other Old Believer centres scattered around Russia. At the height of its influence, between 1700–1764, Vetka had a lay population of up to 40,000 Popovtsy governed by their own elected leaders. There were also 1,200 monks and several hundred nuns living in two monasteries. There were as many as 14 *slobody* founded by Old Believers around Vetka, most of which had their own chapels.¹⁴²

The religious influence, mercantile success, and cultural importance of the Vetka Old Believer community can be attributed to several factors. In the first place, the influence of its religious leaders was widespread and attracted many Old Believers and their priests to Vetka, while the churches and chapels in Vetka represented an important religious oasis for priestly Old Believers.

The Old Believers who settled in Starodub'e and Vetka during the 1680s and 1690s came primarily from the manufacturing regions of central Russia. Apart from Kostroma and Moscow, this included numbers of families from the Poshekhon'e, Rostov, and Iaroslavl' districts of what was then Iaroslavl' province where the seventeenth-century crown weaving villages were located.¹⁴³

Although fewer in number, there were also refugees in Vetka from Smolensk, Nizhnii Novgorod, Novgorod, Pskov, Tver', Vladimir, and other smaller towns.¹⁴⁴ The Old Believers who fled into Poland from Starodub'e were primarily Muscovite *posadskie liudi*. As merchants and craftsmen, their commercial experience as well as their crafting skills helped them develop a viable economy as they established new settlements near Vetka.¹⁴⁵ Apart from agriculture, their commercial activities included

¹⁴⁰ Korotkaia, Prokoshina, and Chudnikova, 16; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 168–169, 187–189; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:36, 43; Smirnov, *Spory*, 47–48; Vorontsova, 117; Zen'kovskii, 431.

¹⁴¹ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 187–189; Zen'kovskii, 429–431.

¹⁴² Korotkaia, 16; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:37; Nikol'skii, 238; Zen'kovskii, 431.

¹⁴³ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 80; Ryndziunskii, 242; Zen'kovskii, 381–382.

¹⁴⁴ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 80–81; Nikol'skii, 237; Shvetsova, 14–15.

¹⁴⁵ G. G. Nechaeva and L. S. Ivanovna, *Vetkovskii muzei narodnogo tvorchestva* (Minsk, 1991), second and third pages of text (n.p.n.); Nikol'skii, 237–238.

trading enterprises and small-scale manufacturing.¹⁴⁶ Thanks to the Old Believers in northern Ukraine, the region became a manufacturing centre.¹⁴⁷ Over a century later, cloth-makers from Starodub'e became members of Preobrazhenskoe Cemetery in Moscow.¹⁴⁸ Records show that weavers from Starodub'e were among those registering their looms in Moscow between 1771–1775.¹⁴⁹

Records from the 1710s and 1720s show that Old Believers in Vetka were involved in a variety of businesses. They purchased quantities of hemp and dealt extensively in hemp oil, salt, and fish. They kept bees for honey and wax, and sold candles and tallow. They also sold plain linen and coarse woollen cloth, icons, ironwork, and other handcrafted goods. There were hat, boot, glove and saddle-makers, tailors, dyers, and furriers among the Vetka Old Believers. Craftsmen began to set up factories in premises away from their homes. In 1729 a leather factory produced goods in one of the Old Believer *slobody*. Klintsy, a *sloboda* settled by peasants from Kostroma, became a wool-producing centre. In another settlement there were stalls where plain linen and dyed cottons were sold. Old Believer merchants from Kaluga sold goods such as wool, coarse linen, roots for egg-dyeing, gold paint, and olive oil.¹⁵⁰

Many of the Old Believers had large herds of cattle and numbers of horses, which were of good quality and well fed. In comparison to the local Belorussians, the Old Believer immigrants tilled the land more carefully and had higher crop yields. They fertilised their fields and sowed a variety of grains. They rented land for sowing flax. In a few of the *slobody*, flax was sown commercially. The Old Believers operated a system of mutual aid, particularly during the flax-processing period. They helped each other in turn to gather, ret, and prepare the flax for market. Some of the Vetkovtsy had nurseries where they raised fruit trees for sale. Others rented large fields for growing fruit and vegetables and sold the produce in Moscow or St Petersburg.¹⁵¹ Apart from their own trading stock, they bought grain, salt, and timber in particular regions of Russia and sold it in others. The Old Believers also traded in cattle and larger items such as carts and

¹⁴⁶ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 80–82.

¹⁴⁷ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 85.

¹⁴⁸ Ryndziunskii, 242.

¹⁴⁹ Gromyko, 281; Ryndziunskii, 211.

¹⁵⁰ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 58, 83–84; Nikol'skii, 238–240.

¹⁵¹ *Opyt*, 670–671.

sleds.¹⁵² They were themselves involved in the carriage business, providing transport for goods to and from the markets and towns.¹⁵³

As a result of their commercial activity, the Old Believers from Vetka were not isolated from Orthodox Russians, with whom they traded and worked in the *slobody* or in distant markets.¹⁵⁴ The Vetkovtsy developed or maintained strong trading connections all over Russia. For example, one Old Believer who had come to Vetka from Kazan' district sold red calico in a market town in Siberia. Old Believer merchants travelled beyond Poland to Germany, and in Russia to the Crimea and Don region as well as to Moscow, Kaluga, and the Volga. They often registered themselves in the Old Believer community where they paid a tax, and then were free to live where they pleased.¹⁵⁵

Just as the commercial success of the crown weavers in Moscow had antagonised the *gosti* in the seventeenth century, so the Old Believers in Vetka and Starodub'e made a significant, but not altogether welcome impact on the commercial life of the region.¹⁵⁶ As Old Believers squeezed out local traders, complaints were made to the authorities not only about the local *raskol'niki*, but about those who came from other parts of Russia to buy up local goods.¹⁵⁷

In 1716 an order was issued forbidding *raskol'niki* in the *slobody* to trade in northern Ukraine. Although they had been banished from the area, some had returned to live in Starodub'e. Others, who were allowed to remain had been 'renting stalls from Starodub'e artisan traders and selling all kinds of goods'. They were 'taking profits away from the local traders'. In the past the artisans had not been allowed to rent space to these 'immigrants from Moscow'. Now they were to be punished for doing so. The local authorities were ordered to collect 'a large fine from those who had rented stalls to the *raskol'niki*'.¹⁵⁸

It seems that the local authorities were turning a blind eye to much of the Old Believers' enterprise. In the coming years, more measures were devised to curtail their trade. In 1719 for example, the local authorities were told to 'to forbid once and for all...

¹⁵² *Opyt*, 668–669.

¹⁵³ *Opyt*, 670.

¹⁵⁴ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 62,85.

¹⁵⁵ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 114; N. A. Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane – "Poliaki" na Altae v XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX v.,' *Politicheskie ssyl'nye v Sibiri (XVIII – nachalo XX v.)*, ed. L. M. Goriushkin (Novosibirsk: Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1983), 206; Nikol'skii, 238.

¹⁵⁶ Iakobson, 19; Smirnov, *Tkachi*, 4; Zaozerskaia, 406–407.

¹⁵⁷ Nikol'skii, 239.

¹⁵⁸ M. I. Lileev, *Novye materialy dlia istorii raskola na Vetke i v Starodub'e XVII–XVIII vv.* (Kiev, 1893), 110.

raskol'niki and Great Russian people to send their greedy merchants to trade in Starodub'e'. They were to ensure that they only traded during a fair when they could 'sell from their homes and stalls'. The authorities were also to forbid local residents 'to sell tallow, hemp, wax, or honey to the merchants who come to them, except to the local buyers'.¹⁵⁹

As a sign of their Old Belief, from 1722 schismatics were obliged to dress in the old style, 'so that their faith would be known'. The 'old style' included a *zipun* (collarless jacket) with a *kozyr'* (high standing collar) attached, a *feriaz'* (long collarless woollen caftan with narrow sleeves to which a *kozyr'* could be attached) and an *odnoriadka* (collarless single-breasted long coat) with a flat collar onto which the red cloth was added.¹⁶⁰

3.42 The Vetka School

Apart from their commercial activity, the Old Believers in Vetka and Starodub'e were also known for their disciplined and cultured lifestyle, where monastic and lay people lived in close contact with one another and Old Believer devotional rites were strictly observed.¹⁶¹ Despite the impediments placed in the way of their economic progress and the ever-present threat of repression in their religious life, the Old Believers nurtured the skills necessary to continue the traditions of medieval Russian culture.

Like the Pomortsy, the Vetkovtsy continued to copy, print, and illuminate liturgical books, music, and other texts. Like the Vyg craftsmen, the Vetkovtsy created an original graphic art form, using semi-uncial lettering and a distinctive curvilinear style of illumination, combining the simple forms of Russian folk art with designs taken from early Christian miniatures. Workshops for book printing and binding reproduced ornamented religious texts such as Psalters, *Chasoslovy* (Books of Hours), *Kanonniki* and *Sluzhebnyki* (Prayer and Service Books) as well as the works of Old Believer writers.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Lileev, *Novye materialy*, 112–113.

¹⁶⁰ Esipov, 179; Lileev, *Novye materialy*, 127–129; P. M. Kirsanova, *Kostium v russkoi khodozhestvennoi kul'ture* (Moscow: Bol'shaia rossiiskaia entsiklopediia, 1995), s.v. 'zipun', 'kozyr'', 'feriaz'', 'odnoriadka'.

¹⁶¹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 129; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 272; *Opyt*, 671–674.

¹⁶² Gromyko, 278–281; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 272, 389.

These books were purchased and used in many parts of Russia, by Old Believers and Orthodox Russians alike. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, valuable collections of medieval books were carried by Old Believers to the Urals and Siberia, where they formed the basis of Old Believer education, as they did in European Russia. Children were taught to read and pronounce religious words correctly using these volumes. In the eighteenth century, privately owned Old Believer printing houses were also set up in nearby *slobody* such as Klinttsy and Pochaev. Their books were sent to Moscow and then distributed throughout the Old Believer network.¹⁶³ The monastic libraries of Vetka were important centres for the preservation and safekeeping of collections of old and rare pre-Nikonian Russian books and manuscripts bought and collected by Old Believers.¹⁶⁴

A school of icon painting also developed in Vetka. Orthodox Russians from the state church came to study with the Vetka icon masters.¹⁶⁵ Their work provided an important source of income for the community. Like the priestless Old Believers in Vyg, the Vetkovtsy supplied Old Believers all over Russia with their icons.¹⁶⁶

Weaving and needlework were practised in Vetka and Starodub'e by women who decorated their homes with hand-woven and traditionally patterned textiles such as embroidered cloths and ritual towels. Beadwork was widely practised by Old Believer craftswomen, not only for clothing but also to create icons or their protective *oklady*.¹⁶⁷ The Old Believers dressed in traditional Russian clothing and women's holiday head-dresses were embroidered in gold and silver thread. An early twentieth-century visitor to Vetka was able to see such clothing and head-dresses, still carefully preserved by the owners' descendants.¹⁶⁸

In the eighteenth century, the prosperity, independence, and religious influence of the Old Believers in Vetka were sources of irritation to the Russian government, which wanted them to live within the Russian border, where their economic and religious activity could be monitored and controlled. In addition, during the early 1730s as the Vetka Beglopovovtsy began actively searching for a bishop who could establish a

¹⁶³ Gromyko, 279; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 217–218; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:352–253.

¹⁶⁴ Korotkaia, 25; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola* 217, 390; Nechaeva and Ivanovna, fourth to eight pages of text (n.p.n.); Nikol'skii, 250–251; Vorontsova, 118.

¹⁶⁵ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 215.

¹⁶⁶ Nechaeva and Ivanovna, tenth and eleventh pages of text (n.p.n.); Nikol'skii, 251.

¹⁶⁷ Nechaeva and Ivanovna, eighth to tenth pages of text (n.p.n.).

¹⁶⁸ Abramov, 8–9.

hierarchy acceptable to Old Believers, the government became more apprehensive about the spreading religious influence of Old Belief in Russia.¹⁶⁹

In 1733 Empress Anna offered Old Believers the opportunity to return to Russia, free of tax or any penalty for their crimes, free to practise their religion and dress as they wished. Since the invitation appealed to only a small number of Old Believers in Vetka, the offer was repeated the following year. When this produced no response, in 1735 Russian forces made their first attempt to destroy Vetka. Monasteries, chapels, houses, and *skity* were burned to the ground; the Old Believers' books and icons were confiscated. Monks and nuns were sent to Russian monasteries and lay people were driven back across the border. Despite the fact that over 13,000 Old Believers were sent back to Russia, many managed to return to Vetka and Starodub'e, where they were able to re-establish their communities and even attract newcomers.¹⁷⁰

Renewed appeals for these Old Believers to return to Russia were issued between 1762 and 1765. The government again promised to pardon any Old Believers for their crimes if they returned, either to their own birthplace or to areas of Russia such as southwestern Siberia designated for settlement in the decrees issued by both Peter III and Catherine the Great. They would live as state peasants and be free of tax and work obligations for six years, after which time they would have to pay the double capitation tax for schismatics.¹⁷¹

A few Old Believers from Vetka and Starodub'e came back to Russia and founded monastic settlements on the lower Volga River at Irgiz and a certain number did move to the appointed regions of Siberia.¹⁷² However, a measure of the quality of life enjoyed by the Vetkovtsy is reflected in the fact that despite the enticements, there were again an insignificant number of volunteers.

Even outside their native Russia, Old Believers were unable to live in freedom from the oppression of Russian authorities. After the repeated attempts to convince them to leave Vetka voluntarily had failed, Catherine the Great used military force to banish

¹⁶⁹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 168–169; Zen'kovskii, 437.

¹⁷⁰ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 168–169, 194; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 288–302; Nikol'skii, 240; *Opyt*, 659; Zen'kovskii, 432.

¹⁷¹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 195–1966; Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 199; Shvetsova, 3–7.

¹⁷² Alekseenko, 27–8; Shvetsova, 7–8. Records show that there were some Old Believers from Vetka in Irkutsk by 1756. In 1757 they were sent to settle along the Chika and Iro Rivers, tributaries of the Selenga in Zabaikal'e. These were therefore either volunteers or some of the Old Believers banished from Vetka during the first attempt to destroy it in 1735, who took a long time to get to Siberia. F. F. Bolonev, *Semeiskie, istoriko-etnograficheskie ocherki* (Ulan-Ude: Buriatskoe knizhnoe izd-vo, 1985), 29–30.

the Old Believers to a distant corner of her empire where their industriousness and well-developed economic experience could be put to work for the state.¹⁷³

In 1764 she ordered Major General Maslov to cross the Polish border and destroy the settlements, churches, and monasteries in Vetka. As the community was broken up, its inhabitants either fled or were resettled according to the will of the state. Twenty thousand Old Believers were rounded up for deportation to Siberia. Part of this group was sent to Zabaikal'e in eastern Siberia. They were held for a time in Kaluga where temporary barracks were built for them on the banks of the Oka River and where many of them perished. The survivors, numbering 11,000, were then sent off in various parties by ship to Kazan' and Verkhotyry'e and from there to Tobol'sk. Before they reached Zabaikal'e, between 1765 and 1767, records suggest that two thirds of this number had died or escaped.¹⁷⁴

A second party of Old Believers from Vetka were sent to the foothills of the Altai Mountains in south-western Siberia where a group thought to number approximately 1,500 people arrived in June 1766.¹⁷⁵ The Russian government expected these Old Believers to establish an agricultural community in this sparsely populated but naturally bountiful outpost of the Russian empire. Their task was to provide a supply of food and other goods for Russian military personnel living in the fortress towns along the Irtysh River and its tributaries.¹⁷⁶ The local population called the Old Believers in the Altai and Zabaikal'e the '*poliaki*' since they had come from Poland.

At the same time, the empress gave Old Believers the right to build their own churches in Russia. Some Old Believers, particularly the monks, managed to remain in the Starodub'e region. Some of those not banished to Siberia or who did not flee abroad joined other Old Believers in establishing a new centre of priestly Old Belief at Irgiz. After 1771, members of the Irgiz community maintained close affiliations with the Rogozhskoe Cemetery in Moscow, where the Vetkovtsy were able to continue their religious traditions. By the mid-twentieth century there were approximately 3,000 Old Believers left in Vetka itself, mostly Bespopovtsy. By the 1960s the number had dwindled to 1,000.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Bolonev, *Semeiskie*, 29.

¹⁷⁴ Bolonev, *Semeiskie*, 30–31.

¹⁷⁵ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 315.

¹⁷⁶ Bolonev, *Semeiskie*, 29; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:132; Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 199; Nikol'skii, 240; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 313; Shvetsova, 8–10, 13.

¹⁷⁷ Kel'siev, vyp. 1, XVII; Korotkaia, 33–34,37; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:132; Vurgaft and

Conclusion

Old Believer communities were sanctuaries for the practice of outlawed religious rituals, but they were also meeting points of industry and Russian culture. While Old Believers in Kerzhenets, Vyg, Starodub'e and Vetka continued the traditions of trade and manufacturing natural to them from their origins in the *posady*, the cultural development of Old Believer society was driven by a desire to preserve pre-Nikonian traditions in exacting detail. As guardians of the cultural traditions of Old Russia, Old Believers maintained the crafts and applied arts which supported the rituals of their religious convictions.

While Old Believers in Vyg maintained a monastic tradition, Kerzhenets and Vetka evolved as lay communities linked to one another by a common religious bond. In each case economic prosperity was facilitated by these networks and provided a degree of protection and independence to the Old Believers. From the social and economic patterns which developed in these seventeenth-century colonies, it is possible to see the basis on which Old Believers structured new communities in Moscow at the end of the following century.

The liberalised laws regarding Old Belief instigated by Catherine the Great provided new freedoms, including relaxation of obligatory dress codes for Old Believers. As members of the Moscow Old Believer Cemeteries became wealthy merchants, in their urban environment they began to forsake some of the external symbols of Old Belief. By the twentieth century, families such as the Butikovs still maintained their attachment to Old Belief, but in a way which isolated them less than before from the rest of Russian society.

As these entrepreneurs were beginning their manufacturing dynasties in European Russia, many of their co-religionists were settling the isolated territory of south-western Siberia. Here they lived more or less undisturbed for the next century and a half. The lifestyle and value system of these Old Believers provides an insight to the society of Old Belief before urbanisation and contact with Western traditions had left their mark.

A survey of the lifestyle and attitudes of Old Believers in the Altai Mountains in the following three chapters confirms both the religious discipline which governed their lives and the role clothmaking and textiles played in expressing that discipline. Apart from being commercially, culturally, and psychologically equipped for their entrepreneurial role in Russia, the Old Believers were expert weavers who maintained these skills to pass on traditional forms of ritual dress.

CHAPTER 4. 'In a Strange Land'

Introduction

Significant Old Believer centres in Russia and Poland developed at the end of the seventeenth century as Old Believers created refuges for the pre-Nikonian lifestyle and ritual observances they believed would lead them to spiritual salvation. These European communities provided the foundation and inspiration for Old Believer culture and were models on which future communities such as those in Moscow or elsewhere could be established.

Even by the end of the seventeenth century Old Believer communities exhibited characteristics which accounted for the entrepreneurial achievements of their members. The structure of Old Believer society demonstrates that industriousness, resourcefulness, mutual aid, discipline, secrecy, discretion, financial prudence, and a network of supportive contacts had all contributed to the commercial success of Old Believers well before they began to settle and manufacture cloth in Moscow after 1771.

In addition, attention to order and visual detail were evident in the domestic, monastic, commercial, and ritual life of Old Believers. This fastidiousness stemmed from a religious conviction that everything had to be done in the 'correct' way, the way of Old Belief. The anti-Western dress codes observed in these communities were symbolic of the ritual representation of the ancient piety. Like other traditional handicrafts maintained to support their ritual life, Old Believers needed spinning, weaving, and needlework skills to make clothing and furnish their homes and churches in the way they believed was appropriate.

In the eighteenth century thousands of Old Believers emigrated to the Urals and Siberia from the colonies of Old Belief described in the previous chapter. From the middle to the end of the century, dozens of Old Believer villages were settled in the Altai Mountains of south-western Siberia and present-day East Kazakhstan. Old Believers transferred the ethos and culture developed in their European centres to the new communities of Old Belief which emerged in the Siberian frontier.

At the same time, Old Believer communities were also forming in the urban environment of Moscow, where individual Old Believers began to establish profitable textile enterprises. As described in the Introduction, Preobrazhenskoe and Rogozhskoe

Cemeteries were focal points of Old Believer religious culture as well as commercial centres for wealthy Old Believer entrepreneurs such as the Butikovs. Many of these Old Believers had shared the same common European background as their co-religionists who also displayed entrepreneurial resourcefulness as they forged new communities in the undeveloped region of the Altai Mountains. However, unlike their Muscovite counterparts, these Old Believers remained particularly isolated from urban innovation. (Plates 13–32 inclusive).

Even in the late 1990s, descendants of these settlers continue to express a view of the world reflecting the mixture of religious ritual and folk tradition which dominated their existence as a persecuted minority of Russian society. A survey of the daily life and customs of the two main groups of Old Believers who populated the Altai provides a window to the past and a glimpse of the fabric of their society in the eighteenth century. Their lives were governed by religious discipline. Their affluence and the order of their society allowed Old Believers the opportunity to focus on every symbolic detail of life.

Chapter 4 traces the Old Believers' search for salvation in the East and examines their way of life in the Altai, based on observations of their attitudes to religion, work, family and social life. In its own way the search itself is indicative of the inner strengths demanded of Old Believers.

4.1 Belovod'e

From the time of the *raskol*, escape from oppression became a pattern of Old Believer life. This reality has continued well into the twentieth century.¹ Apart from overt persecution, even attempts by the Russian government to subject Old Believers to close surveillance by agents of the state or church could provoke extreme responses. Although flight to safer territory was the most common reaction, in many cases fanatical Old Believers also turned to self-destruction in mass suicides of flame as a means of escape. For some who feared contact with people and institutions they considered anti-Christian, the purification of a fiery death was the lesser of two evils.²

¹ Sv. B. Gerasimov, 'V doline Bukhtarmy,' in *Zapiski semipalatinskago Pod'otdela zapadno-sibirskago otдела imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva*, vyp. 5 (Semipalatinsk, 1911), 9.

² K. V. Chistov, *Russkie narodnye sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy XVII–XIX vv.* (Moscow, 1967), 242; Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 4; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 43.

In addition to these fears, another factor which compelled Old Believers to flee their homeland was the search for Belovod'e, the Land of Freedom many believed they would find somewhere in the East beyond the Urals. Apart from Old Believers, the search for this legendary and mythical utopia, the Shambala or Land of the Gods, has attracted explorers, mystics, and artists to the Altai Mountains of south-western Siberia and East Kazakhstan, where it was popularly rumoured that such a spiritual and material paradise could be found.

The Altai is situated in territory between the Irtysh and Ob' Rivers. The mountains, which are linked to the Urals in the west, form an uninterrupted chain from the Irtysh River to the Chinese and Mongolian borders.³ At the time of the *raskol*, Russia had begun to chart this bountiful but uncolonised region of its empire.⁴ Many Old Believers were convinced that if they found their way to this land they would be free to uphold the ancient piety and thus find salvation.⁵

Apart from the Ob' and Irtysh, the Bukhtarma, Biia, and Katun' are the great rivers which flow through the Altai plains and steppe. Their fast-flowing tributaries such as the Uba, Ul'ba, Alei, Bobrovka, Arguta, Koksa, and Mul'ta gather the melting snow from the mountains in spring. The mountains, which were traditionally the territory of Turkic-speaking nomadic clans, were said to be rich in natural resources including mineral deposits of copper, silver, iron, lead, and gold.⁶ In the language of local Kalmyk tribes, 'Altai' means 'Golden Mountains'.⁷

Here fertile river valleys were sheltered by the mountains. Meadows in the foothills provided grazing for cattle, sheep, and horses, while pasture lands and the

³ N. N. Pokrovskii, ed., *Sibir' XVIII veka v putevykh opisaniakh G. F. Millera*, vyp. 6, comp. A. Kh. Elert, (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 1996), 17.

⁴ V. A. Lipinskaia, *Starozhily i pereselentsy: Russkie na Altae XVIII – nachalo XX veka* (Moscow, 1996), 14.

⁵ Chistov, *Legendy*, 239–40; S. M. Krasnikova, 'Legenda o Belovod'e u bukhtarminskikh staroobriadtsev,' in *Staroobriadchestvo. Istorii, kul'tura, sovremennost'*, (Moscow, 1998), 157–8; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 29–31; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:22–26. Mel'nikov associates this search with the urgent need felt by priestly Old Believers to find a bishop. See also: Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 336; A. Printts, 'Kamen'shchiki, iasachnye krest'iane Bukhtarminskoi volosti Tomskoi gubernii i poezdka v ikh seleniia i v Bukhtarminskii krai v 1863 g.,' in *Zapiski imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva po obshchei geografii*, t. 1 (St Petersburg, 1867), 546–7, 578; E. Shmurlo, 'Russkiiia poseleniia za Iuzhnym Altaiskim khrebtom,' in *Zapiski zapadno-sibirskago otdela imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva*, kn. 25 (Omsk, 1898), 13–22; Smirnov, *Spory*, 164–167.

⁶ N. V. Alekseenko and V. P. Pizikov, eds., *Ocherki istorii rudnogo Altaia* (Ust'-Kamenogorsk, 1970), 20; David N. Collins, 'Colonialism and Siberian Development: A Case-Study of the Orthodox Mission to the Altai, 1830–1913,' in *The Development of Siberia, People and Resources*, ed. Alan Wood and R. A. French (London: Macmillan, 1989), 51–53; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 13.

⁷ Pokrovskii, *Sibir'*, 17.

expanse of steppe offered a wide choice of arable lands for sowing grain and other crops. Plants such as dogrose, honeysuckle, acacia, and bird cherry, all attractive to bees, grew wild in the Altai. The riverbanks and woods were abundant with edible berries and medicinal plants.⁸ Fish and fur-bearing animals provided sources of food, winter clothing, or barter for any who found their way to the foothills or into the mountains. In addition, deep in the mountains were inaccessible cliffs and rocky ravines which offered natural hiding places for any adventuresome enough to seek refuge there.

Conversations with Old Believers living in the Altai in the 1990s indicate that many local people believe a powerful, even dangerous energy radiates from Belukha, the highest peak (4,506 metres or 14,780 feet) of the mountains, situated in the southern Altai on the border with East Kazakhstan. Russian settlers also believed that Belukha was the source of both the Bukhtarma and Katun' Rivers and that its crevices were bottomless.⁹ The stories of its mysterious force have attracted many adventurers to investigate the source of such power.

And from the Studenyi summit one can see vast Beluha itself – of whom even the deserts whisper.¹⁰

From the end of the seventeenth century, Old Believers sought Belovod'e as the haven where they would find a world untouched by forces of the Antichrist. In the East they believed they would find not only freedom from their tribulations but also the purest of ancient Orthodox piety and the rightful bishop they had lost as a result of the *raskol*.¹¹

The Russian artist, Nicholas Roerich, who visited and painted in the Altai in the 1920s reported that Old Believers received news of this Promised Land from Buddhist messengers.¹² In Siberia in the mid-eighteenth century, printed routes were found in books and manuscripts taken from runaway peasants showing the route to Belovod'e. There were detailed explanations of the route from Moscow through the Urals and

⁸ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 17; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 325; Printts, 573–574, 548; Shvetsova, 20, 68.

⁹ Gerasimov, 79.

¹⁰ Nicholas Roerich, *Altai-Himalaya* (New York: Dutton, 1929), 340.

¹¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 9; Printts, 546. Although the literal translation of the Russian word 'Belovod'e' would be 'land of white water,' scholars suggest that adjectives such as 'pure' or 'free,' also associated with 'belo,' are more appropriate in the context of Old Belief. Chistov, *Legendy*, 279; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 29.

¹² Roerich, 338.

Siberia to the Bukhtarma and Katun' River valleys and even through Siberia and the Gobi Desert to a Japanese kingdom where Russians would find their true church and hierarchy. Many journeys were undertaken by expeditions of Old Believers in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Some of the travellers reached China and Japan in their search for Belovod'e.¹³

4.2 The First Old Believers in the Urals and Siberia

Toward the end of the sixteenth century, Russia began to conquer Siberia. The towns of Tiumen' and Tobol'sk were founded in 1586 and 1597 respectively. In 1613 the Russian government, eager to develop an economic presence in south-western Siberia, offered incentives to explorers and settlers who would colonise the territory, protect trade routes to Central Asia, and assure a supply of salt which could be transported back to Russia from Siberian lakes. Clergy were also needed in Siberia to establish monasteries and conduct missionary work for the Russian church. In addition, famine in 1646 and 1679 had also driven many Russians to Siberia.¹⁴

Siberia was also convenient for the Russian government as a place of exile and imprisonment for criminals or other undesirables who threatened the public order. During the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich, Archpriest Avvakum and other protestors against church authority were periodically exiled to Siberia by the tsar and Patriarch Nikon. Between 1653 and 1664, for example, Avvakum and his family were under arrest in Tobol'sk, Eniseisk, and in Zabaikal'e.¹⁵

In Siberia, schismatic preachers such as Avvakum exerted a considerable influence on local Russians, many of whom came from the Novgorod region originally and continued to maintain economic ties to northern Russia. Inclined toward the traditions of independence associated with that city, they were generally resentful of

¹³ In his novel, *V lesakh*, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii) describes the travels and adventures of Iakim Prokhorych, an Old Believer who spends four years in the bountiful Belovod'e of the Altai Mountains. Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *V lesakh*, 154–156; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 36–40; Chistov, *Legendy*, 258, 260; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 29; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:23; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 331, 336; Printts, 676–678; Robson, 33; Roerich, 337.

¹⁴ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 6–7; I. L. Man'kova, 'Neopublikovannye materialy po istorii Dalmatovskogo uspenskogo monastyria,' in *Kul'tura i byt dorevoliutsionnogo Urala* (Sverdlovsk 1989), 32; Printts, 546–547; Zen'kovskii, 396–397; Alan Wood, 'Avvakum's Siberian Exile,' in *The Development of Siberia*, ed. Alan Wood and R. A. French (London: Macmillan, 1989), 12–13, 16.

¹⁵ Avvakum, 'Zhitie,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 37–39, 43, 47; V. L. Petrov, 'Predaniia ob Avvakume v Zabaikal'e,' in *Staroobriadchestvo. Istoriia, kul'tura, sovremennost'* (Moscow, 1998), 63; Wood, 15–19, 23–25.

attempts by the Russian state to control them.¹⁶ Although they were far from the protests against church reform taking place in Moscow, these supporters of the Old Belief had established numerous *skity* in Siberia before the end of the seventeenth century, particularly in the Tobol'sk district.¹⁷

By the end of the seventeenth century a large majority of the Russian population in western and southern Siberia consisted of Old Believers whose presence attracted additional sympathisers throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁸ The undeveloped and sparsely populated territory of Tomsk, Barnaul, or Kuznetsk districts offered fugitives a degree of independence. They could trap and trade furs without paying tax, escape from serfdom or other obligations in Russia, and live in freedom from the laws of the state.¹⁹

While poor harvests and famine also played a role in the migration of Old Believers to the East, their flight to Siberia and their search for Belovod'e were precipitated on the whole by the periodic waves of intensified repression of Old Belief instigated by succeeding governments. In the decades following the *raskol*, Old Believers were continually forced to find new refuges.²⁰ In 1722, for example, 180 Old Believers were found living in a *skit* on the Ishim River in Tobol'sk district. Their leader was the son of a *strelets* from Ustiug Velikii and a large supply of pre-Nikonian religious books were found in the *skit*.²¹

As happened in parts of European Russia in the last decades of the seventeenth century, there were instances of mass self-immolation by Old Believers in Siberia. Twice in 1679 hundreds of schismatics burned themselves to death near Tiumen'.²² During the eighteenth century, in their campaign to find and register Old Believers, local officials repeatedly triggered attempts by Old Believers to end their lives in flame. For some this was still an option preferable to registration in a state they considered heretical.²³

¹⁶ V. A. Lipinskaia, *Russkoe naselenie Altaiskogo kraia. Narodnye traditsii v material'noi kul'ture (XVIII–XX vv.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), 6; Zen'kovskii, 395.

¹⁷ Smirnov, *Spory*, 43.

¹⁸ D. N. Belikov, *Pervye russkie krest'iane-nasel'niki Tomskago kraia* (Tomsk, 1898), 23.

¹⁹ Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 24; Printts, 546.

²⁰ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 6–7; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 6. Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7: 160; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 14; Smirnov, *Spory*, 43–45.

²¹ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 40–43; Smirnov, *Spory*, 44.

²² Alekseenko, 15; E. M. Iukhimenko, 'Kargopol'skie "gari" 1683–84 gg. (K probleme samosozhzhennii v russkom staroobriadchestve),' in *Staroobriadchestvo v Rossii. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, ed. E. M. Iukhimenko, vyp. 2 (Moscow: Arkheograficheskii tsentr, 1994), 64; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 45–6; Zen'kovskii, 395–396.

²³ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 27, 37, 60–61, 82–83.

However, despite such instances of fanaticism, by the second half of the eighteenth century the missionary influence of less radical Old Believers with strongholds in the Ural Mountains had spread into Siberia where Old Believer communities harboured thousands of runaways and converts to Old Belief.²⁴ As in the Kerzhenets Forest and along the Polish border in Vetka, a system of Old Believer settlements, often with 600 or more inhabitants, stretched from the Urals to the Tomsk and Kuznetsk regions of southern Siberia.²⁵

Genealogical records published by a descendant of a Russian family who fled to Siberia in the 1720s reveal the combination of circumstances which led to Old Believer emigration to the East.²⁶ This family had lived 'somewhere in one of the north-eastern provinces'. During the time of Peter the Great they moved to settle 'in "Belovod'e", in the free land, as they called southern Siberia'. The three reasons for this move were famine, the reforms of Peter the Great, 'and preservation of the Old Belief'.²⁷

The migration of Old Believers to the East was also intrinsically connected to the development of Russia's metallurgical industry and to the Russian empire's expansion across the Urals and Siberia.

4.3 Old Believers and the Mines – the Kerzhaki

Mines opened by the Demidov, Osokin, and other families in the Ural Mountains at the end of the seventeenth century contributed significantly to the formation of Old Believer communities in Siberia.²⁸

During the reign of Peter the Great, close associations were established between Old Believers, particularly the Pomortsy, and these industrialists. Amongst the Vygovtsy were mining experts whose knowledge and help were sought by both the tsar and the Demidovs in running iron mines in the Olonets region and later in the Ural Mountains. In exchange for their expertise, these Old Believers and their Vyg brethren were not

²⁴ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:161; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 39–40.

²⁵ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 40.

²⁶ Iu. L. Troitskii, 'Genealogicheskaia zapiska S. I. Guliaeva kak istoricheskii istochnik,' in *Novye materialy po istorii Sibiri dosovetskogo perioda*, ed. N. N. Pokrovskii (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1986), 108.

²⁷ Troitskii, 105.

²⁸ V. V. Kafengauz, *Istoriia khoziaistva Demidovykh v XVIII–XIX vv.*, t. 1 (Moscow and Leningrad, 1949), 360–361; V. M. Svistunov, 'G. F. Zotov – ural'skii promyshlennik, staroobriadets,' in *Staroobriadchestvo. Istoriia, kul'tura, sovremennost'* (Moscow, 1998), 71.

persecuted for their schismatic activities.²⁹ The Demidovs sheltered thousands of Old Believers in the Urals and Siberia, sometimes paying substantial bribes to the authorities to turn a blind eye to the presence of runaway Old Believers living beside the mines. However, many of these Old Believer refugees used the protection they found in the Urals as a stepping stone to a more independent life in less developed regions of Siberia.³⁰

Through their close connections to the industrialists Old Believers were often given important administrative jobs at the mines and in some cases were able to travel on business, in the process trading, buying books, and maintaining contact with other Old Believer centres.³¹ In 1721, the Demidovs were granted permission by the Russian government to purchase thousands of state peasants to work in the mines near Ekaterinburg. This pattern continued throughout the century, as the Demidovs bought whole villages of Old Believers from Guslitsa, for example, and exiled them from Europe to work in their Siberian mines.³²

The mine owners protected and sometimes secretly supported the religious views of their workers.³³ As they fled from Moscow, Kerzhenets, or Vyg, Old Believers had somewhere safe to go. Missionaries and priests were free to recruit Old Believers in settlements near the mines and the Vygovtsy received donations such as cast bells and raw materials for casting their icons from the Demidovs and their colleagues.³⁴

When the Kerzhenets Forest community was devastated by government attacks in 1722, thousands of Old Believers together with their religious leaders fled to the Ural region and settled on the Tagila River near the Demidov and Stroganov mines.³⁵ Wealthy Old Believers associated with the mines gave support to the Kerzhenets

²⁹ Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 160; Hughes, *Peter the Great*, 355; Iukhimenko, 'Stolitsa,' 6; E. M. Iukhimenko, "'Ot koreni vygoretskago monastyria...': Vygo-leksinskoe obshchezhitel'stvo – nachalo i dukhovnyi tsentr pomorskogo staroobriadchestva,' *Revue des Études Slaves* 69, *Vieux-croyants et sectes russes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*, fascicule 1–2 (1997): 39; I. N. Iurkin, 'Tul'skoe staroobriadcheskoe okruzhenie Demidovykh (k postanovke voprosa), *Staroobriadchestvo: Istorii, kul'tura, sovremennost'* vyp. 5, no. 5 (1996): 31; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:160; idem, *V lesakh*, 612; Nikol'skii, 241; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 107, 190–192.

³⁰ Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 22–23.

³¹ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 73.

³² Vladimir Lizunov, *Staroobriadcheskaia Palestina (Iz istorii Orekhovo-Zuevskogo kraia)* (Orekhovo-Zuevo, 1992), 8; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:160; idem, *V Lesakh*, 612.

³³ Iurkin, 31; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 86.

³⁴ Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 22; E. P. Vinokurova, O. V. Molchanova and L. A. Petrova, 'Mednaia plastika,' in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia*, ed. E. M. Iukhimenko (Moscow: Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei, 1994), 37–38; Iurkin, 31; Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:160; Nikol'skii, 241; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 191–2; Svistunov, 71.

³⁵ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 40; Smirnov, *Spory*, 45.

communities which sent them priests and teachers in return.³⁶ By the end of the eighteenth century, some Old Believer leaders had as many as 150,000 men in their communities at the Ekaterinburg mines.³⁷ One estimate suggests that between 1727 and 1736, 400,000 people fled from Russia to places unknown. The fact that at least 3,000 fugitive Old Believers were found living at the Demidov mines in Siberia in 1733 suggests that many of these unaccounted for fugitives were Old Believers.³⁸

In the Urals and Siberia Old Believers were known as *kerzhaki* (the Kerzhenets People), a label coined for those who came from Kerzhenets to work in the Demidov mines near Perm'.³⁹ In the eighteenth century the name was used to refer to any Old Believers who came to Siberia from the Kerzhenets or Pomor'e communities. Many of these belonged to the Chasovennik concord. In Siberia, the Chasovenniki, who had originally been Beglopovovtsy, gradually adopted priestless Old Belief as they accepted the futility of their search for what they believed was their lost priesthood, a search which often inspired their expeditions to find Belovod'e.⁴⁰

A cat and mouse game between the state and Old Believers began in the Urals and Siberia in 1719, as the Russian government and the Orthodox church attempted to register fugitive Old Believers for census reports and collection of the double tax imposed on them in 1716.⁴¹ When hidden *skity* were discovered, Old Believers were subjected to punitive measures. Their leaders were arrested, tortured, and executed. The *skity* were burned to the ground and religious books and documents confiscated. In a *skit* uncovered in 1723 these books included two *Chasovniki*, a *Psaltyr* written in Moscow in 1636 and another in 1623–1624; a *Chet'ia-Minei* (Lives and Holidays of the Saints) written in semi-uncial script contained various schismatic compositions, promoting rumours of a link between Peter the Great and the Antichrist; part of a 1648 *Oktoikh*, a choir book of sacred music written for eight voices, was also found in the *skit*.⁴²

The authorities were instructed to return runaway peasants to their owners, while Old Believer monks and nuns were to be dispatched in small groups to Siberian monasteries and forced to join the official church. All other crown, state, and monastic

³⁶ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:160–161; Nikol'skii, 241.

³⁷ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:161.

³⁸ Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 27.

³⁹ Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *PSS*, 7:43.

⁴⁰ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 2; Robson, 32–33; *Staroobriadchestvo*, s.v. 'kerzhaki.'

⁴¹ Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 15.

⁴² R. G. Pikhoia, ed. and comp., *Knigi starogo Urala* (Sverdlovsk: Sredne-ural'skoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1989), 132–133.

peasants, and *posadskie liudi* were to be taken from their forest settlements, forced to live and work beside the mines, and to join the dominant church. During the course of the eighteenth century, nine further census and tax assessment reports were conducted. In each case Old Believers reacted vehemently against this intrusion on their privacy and attempts to monitor them. In order to preserve its work force, the Demidov family did its best to protect the Old Believers. They frequently resorted to bribery, and as a result, the success of the government campaign was limited.⁴³

Nonetheless, such intense interference from the state threatened the Old Believers' sense of security and drove many to abandon their communities in the Urals and Siberia, renewing their search for the Land of Freedom and independence. Scholars have attempted since the mid-nineteenth century to pinpoint the arrival of Old Believers and other Russians in the Altai. It is not known precisely when the first settlements were established, but from the 1740s onward, if not earlier, Old Believers began to seek sanctuary in the mountains where they would be free of the mines, the tax net, and a Russian state they saw as corrupt. The momentum of their migration is indicative of their determination to find refuge for the old rites, protecting as they went the symbols of their faith such as sacred pre-Nikonian books.

4.4 Old Believers in the Mountains – the Kamenshchiki

The Irtysh River, the main tributary of the Ob' and an important Siberian waterway, begins its long northward course to its confluence with the Ob' from Lake Zaisan in the Altai Mountains. At the end of the sixteenth century, Russians built and fortified towns such as Tara and Tobol'sk far down the Irtysh in western Siberia, a region sparsely inhabited by tribes of nomadic Kalmyks. In 1618, the most southerly fortified Russian position was Kuznetsk, built on the Tom' River, also a tributary of the Ob'. In 1709 Russian colonists built a small fortification upstream at the meeting of the Biia and Katun' Rivers. It was soon destroyed by marauding tribes, but as the Russian presence expanded, explorers moved south beyond the Altai foothills into the mountains where the presence of mineral riches had been reported by prospectors working for Peter the Great.⁴⁴

⁴³ Jukhimenko, "'Ot koreni",' 39; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 35, 83–84, 107–110, 191.

⁴⁴ Alekseenko, 15–17; Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 32; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 7; N. M. Iadrintsev, 'Poezdka po Zapadnoi Sibiri i v Gornyi Altaiskii okrug,' in *Zapiski zapadno-sibirskago otdela*

Between 1716 and 1720 the Kalmyk leaders allowed the Russian government to build several strategic fortified settlements in their territory further south on the right bank of the Irtysh. These included Omsk (1716), Semipalatinsk (1718), and Ust'-Kamenogorsk (1720), where the Ul'ba River joins the upper Irtysh.⁴⁵ At the same time garrisons of Cossack infantry and horse dragoons were sent to Siberia to serve in the new fortified towns.⁴⁶ New fortifications also paved the way for the Demidovs to expand their metallurgical interests beyond the Urals into the Altai Mountains. In 1727 they opened the Kolyvano-Voskresensk factory, their first smelting furnace in the Altai.⁴⁷

The Russian government granted the Demidovs permission to purchase a work force by ascribing all Russian peasants living in the Tomsk and Kuznetsk regions to work in the smelters and ore mines.⁴⁸ In addition, the Demidovs sent large numbers of their workers from the Urals to their newly opened mines in the Altai.⁴⁹

The natural wealth and favourable agricultural conditions in south-western Siberia had also attracted Russians, among them many Old Believers living in more northerly regions of western Siberia such as Tobol'sk, to Tomsk and Kuznetsk provinces.⁵⁰ As they heard about the unpopulated and fertile land being settled in the Altai foothills south of them, many petitioned the government for permission to move there.⁵¹ By 1734 there were enough Old Believers living near these mines for the Orthodox church to assign missionaries the task of converting them to the state church.⁵²

In accordance with the law stipulating that precious metals were the property of the Russian sovereign, in 1747 Peter the Great's daughter, Empress Elizabeth, took the Demidov mines which had begun to process silver and gold, into the State Treasury. New lines of fortification were built from Ust'-Kamenogorsk to the Uba River in the Altai foothills and northward toward the towns of Biisk and Kuznetsk. The government not only needed more personnel for the mines, but also needed to furnish the miners and military personnel with food and supplies. In 1749 a State Decree was issued assigning

imperatorskago russkago geograficheskago obshchestva, kn. 2 (Omsk, 1880), 104; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 12-13; Printts, 544-545.

⁴⁵ Alekseenko, 17-19; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 7; Printts, 544.

⁴⁶ Alekseenko, 21; Shvetsova, 1-3.

⁴⁷ Alekseenko, 20; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 16; Printts, 544-545.

⁴⁸ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 7; Printts, 545-546.

⁴⁹ D. N. Belikov, *Tomskii raskol (istoricheskii ocherk ot 1834 po 1880-ye gody)* (Tomsk, 1901), 2-3; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 17.

⁵⁰ Alekseenko, 27; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 7-8; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 16.

⁵¹ Alekseenko, 24-5; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 22.

⁵² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 8. During the same period missionaries had also been sent to the Demidov mines in the Urals for the same purpose. Crummey, *Old Believers and Antichrist*, 160.

the entire Russian population of the south-western Altai either to work for the government in the mines or to provide goods and services to the mining industry. In some cases this entailed the onerous and dangerous work of transporting food or timber far up the Irtysh River. The local Russians assigned to this task could no longer take care of their own land and animals.⁵³

Many of these workers were Old Believers. No longer under the protection of sympathetic industrialists such as the Demidovs, the Old Believers who had in the past fled from contact with Russian authorities they perceived as anti-Christian, were now forced to interact with a state they saw as evil and corrupt.⁵⁴

As apprehension increased within the Old Believer population, some extremist groups again turned to mass self-immolation as the only available avenue of salvation.⁵⁵ Others who did not resort to suicide chose their own act of defiance. They simply disappeared. They fled from the mines in groups of two or three to the mountains beyond the Irtysh. Most of the fugitives carried some kind of map or chart. In some cases this showed a route to Belovod'e which started in Moscow or Kazan' and led from Ekaterinburg in the Urals through Tiumen', to Biisk, along the Katun' River to Gorno-Altaiisk and into the Altai river valleys.⁵⁶

Alternatively, it seems likely that from the late 1720s as the Demidov mines and Russian fortifications built to defend them expanded southward, Old Believers escaping from their obligations at the mines had also followed the Irtysh River to its upper reaches. From here they could journey across the mountains to the Arguta and other uninhabited tributaries of the Katun'. This route brought them 'along the Irtysh through Ust'-Kamenogorsk to the mouth of the Bukhtarma and then by the Bukhtarma valley, through one of the mountain passes of the Katun' Range to Uimon'.⁵⁷

There is evidence to suggest that the Katun' Old Believers originally came from the Bukhtarma River communities.⁵⁸ Here and above the Bukhtarma valley they camped

⁵³ Alekseenko, 20–22; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 7–8; Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 17–18; Printts, 545; Shvetsova, 1–2.

⁵⁴ Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 103; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 324.

⁵⁵ Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 34, 103; Belikov, *Tomskii raskol*, 70–71; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 8.

⁵⁶ Chistov, *Legendy*, 258.

⁵⁷ Chistov, *Legendy*, 258, 260; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 335.

⁵⁸ Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 25–27.

in a landscape of inaccessible cliffs and ravines which hid them well from the authorities.⁵⁹

By 1750 there were significant numbers of Old Believers hiding in the mountains. They lived in riverside camps previously used as bases for hunting or fur trapping.⁶⁰ In order to survive the difficult conditions of such an existence the small bands began to join together. Their hidden refuges attracted relatives and acquaintances and quickly increased in size as more Old Believers fled from the mines. If discovered, they moved deeper into the mountains (*v kamen'*) where no government officials and no passing traders would find them. These Old Believers came to be known as *kamenshchiki* (Mountain People).⁶¹ They were often joined in their hideaways by peasants, mineworkers, or soldiers seeking freedom from their obligations to the state.⁶² The fugitives could join an Old Believer *skit*, knowing that they would be accepted and harboured if they abided by the unwritten laws and religious codes of this hidden society. Even in such primitive refuges, the Kamenshchiki kept pre-Nikonian religious books and texts.⁶³ It was not until 1791 that the Kamenshchiki were pardoned for their flight by Catherine the Great and were then able to live in the open without fear of repression. There were probably not more than 400 Old Believers spread out in 30 camps in 1792, but they were given a unique position of independence by the empress which helped the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers prosper as a community in the coming century.⁶⁴

4.5 The Old Believers from Poland - the Poliaki

Unlike the Kamenshchiki, the other significant community of Old Believers living in the Altai at that time, for the most part had not come voluntarily. These were the Poliaki, Old Believers deported from Vetka after its destruction by Russian troops in 1764. By the 1820s one half of this group, the Old Believers sent to Zabaikal'e, had

⁵⁹ Belikov, *Pervye russkie*, 40–41; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 7–8; Iadrintsev, 108–111; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 326–7; Printts, 547.

⁶⁰ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 327.

⁶¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 2, 9; Printts, 546–547; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 313, 324.

⁶² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 9; Printts, 551–552.

⁶³ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 327.

⁶⁴ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 12–14; Printts, 556–558; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 332–334.

become known as the Semeiskie (Family People) because they were sent to Siberia in family groups rather than as individuals, such as for example, the Decembrist exiles.⁶⁵

Their relatives, neighbours, and co-religionists from Vetka, who continued to be called 'Poliaki', were designated by the government to provide food for the miners and soldiers in the Altai. Their first settlements were in the foothills not far from Ust'-Kamenogorsk, along the Ul'ba, Uba, and Glubokaia Rivers, tributaries flowing into the right bank of the Irtysh.⁶⁶ There is evidence that some of these exiles were in fact from Starodub'e as well, in which case these Old Believers technically could have been called 'Ukrainian' as well as 'Polish'.⁶⁷

Although they had much in common with the Kamenshchiki already hiding above the nearby Bukhtarma and Katun' Rivers, in the course of the next century, the Poliaki remained almost entirely separate from them.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, there were small numbers of Poliaki who escaped from work in the Altai mines to join the more isolated and independent Kamenshchiki and, since these communities were traditionally short of women, wives were sometimes sought in the Poliaki villages.⁶⁹ As a result of their shared religious commitment, both the Kamenshchiki and the Poliaki, as well as the geographically distant Semeiskie in Zabaikal'e, continued to maintain the material customs and traditions of a pre-Nikonian Russia.⁷⁰

Despite their remoteness, both groups of Old Believers in the Altai kept close ties to their European co-religionists through their association with Old Believer centres in Vyg, Starodub'e, Irgiz, and Moscow. However, their isolation dictated that the patterns of life inherited and transferred to the Altai from these centres barely changed until the political circumstances of the 1920s and 1930s in Russia forced change upon them. Although they lived apart, both the Kamenshchiki and the Poliaki demonstrate through the structure of their lifestyle shared attitudes to the religious, economic, and social dimensions of that life.

As Old Believers contemplated the reality of finding Belovod'e they understood what they were looking for. While they sought an environment they could control and in

⁶⁵ Bolonev, *Semeiskie*, 30–31, 36; Shvetsova, 8.

⁶⁶ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 313; Shvetsova, 9.

⁶⁷ Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 200.

⁶⁸ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 3; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 314.

⁶⁹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 11–12; Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 203; Printts, 552; Shvetsova, 19.

⁷⁰ The research of Russian ethnographers such as Bolonev, Blomkvist and Grinkova, Fursova, Rusakova, Selishchev, Shegelina, Shvetsova, Zharnikova and others demonstrates the close similarity of the Semeiskie

which Old Belief would be the sanctified focus for their lives, the striving for such a paradise represents the search for salvation which began with the *raskol*. Interviews with members of the older generation in Kamenshchiki and Poliaki villages of the Altai in the late 1990s reveal that this focus has not disappeared. (Plates 13, 14, 15, and 16). Its presence defines the ethos by which Old Believers lived and how this contributed to the entrepreneurial success of their fellow Old Believers in European Russian.

4.6 The Uimon and Bukhtarma Old Believers

Надо жить своим трудом.

You must live by your own efforts.

Agrafina Dmitrievna (1912)

At the end of the eighteenth century, the political situation of the Kamenshchiki was unique, giving them freedom and independence from most obligations to the Russian state. In 1792 Catherine the Great granted them the legal status of settled foreigners. As such they were exempt from tax, from military or other service to the state, and were only required to contribute an annual *iasak* (payment in kind) of fur pelts to the Russian coffers. This payment was looked on as a particular freedom. The Kamenshchiki were also known as '*iasachnye krest'iane*' (peasants who pay *iasak*). In addition, in the same year Catherine officially forgave the Old Believers for running away from the mines and established two regional groupings – the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believer communities.⁷¹

Once they were pardoned, Old Believers began to move from the inhospitable mountains where they had been hiding to the lower pastures and valleys, where communities formed not as before with two or three mountain dwellings, but in whole villages along the Bukhtarma and Katun' Rivers. A winding path which took three days to travel crossed the Kholzun Range of the Altai Mountains and connected Fiakalka, the most northerly Old Believer village of the Bukhtarma Valley, to the village of Verkh-Uimon. This was the first village settled by the Bukhtarma Old Believers along a tributary of the Katun'. The village lies in the relatively flat oasis of the mountain steppe and is sheltered by the mountains which surround it.⁷²

to the Poliaki and Bukhtarma Old Believers in speech, dress and lifestyle.

⁷¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 12–14; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 332–334; Printts, 556–557.

⁷² Ust'-Kamenogorsk is 250 kilometres from the mouth of the Bukhtarma and until 1901 there were no steamboats running regularly on the upper Irtysh. Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 14–16, 27–28;

Although this is not an authoritative date, historians suggest the village was founded in 1798. In the late 1990s Verkh-Uimon has a population of about 4,000 people. Many Old Believers in the village share the same family name as earlier settlers who were known to have come originally from one of the Bukhtarma villages.⁷³ The village of Nizhnii-Uimon was settled later on the left bank of the Katun'. Residents of the villages say the names were derived from two brothers called 'Uimon'. Strangely enough there is no river of this name. A smaller river, the Shchela, runs right through Verkh-Uimon, more or less parallel to the Katun' tributary. (Plate 18).

In 1863, A. Printts offered this description of Verkh-Uimon;

The village of Verkh-Uimon is situated, at 3,144 feet above sea level in fertile terrain on the right bank of the Katun', seven *verst*y (7.4 kilometres) from its confluence with the Koksa River. It is surrounded on three sides by mountains, and has the appearance of an affluent Russian settlement.⁷⁴

In 1999, although the village has electricity and a post office, there is no running water. There is just one telephone. Public transportation to the village began in 1998 in the form of a bus which operates three days a week between the village and Ust'-Koksa, the nearest town. Horses and carts or the occasional private vehicle provide the common mode of transportation to or from Verkh-Uimon. The roads of the village are muddy and deeply rutted from frequent summer rains and heavy winter frost. Footpaths and small bridges made of planking are laid everywhere across the roads, tracks, and puddles or at the entrance to houses. In this regard little has changed since the 1920s when researchers visiting the remote Old Believer refuges of the Bukhtarma valley reported the same conditions.⁷⁵

While the inaccessible Altai Mountains provided a refuge for the Old Believers' religious rites, the industriousness and self-sufficiency of the people themselves accounted not only for the survival of Old Belief, but also for the preservation of a traditional material culture which other Russians in Europe were replacing. The Old Believers' attitude to their faith, their work, their family, and social life expresses the

Printts, 558.

⁷³ Lipinskaia, *Starozhily*, 26.

⁷⁴ Printts, 559.

⁷⁵ E. E. Blomkvist, 'Postroiki bukhtarminskikh staroobriadsev,' chap. in *Bukhtarminskie staroobriadtsy* (Leningrad, 1930), 195.

religious ethos which ran like a thread through all facets of their lives, giving them an unwavering sense of purpose, expressed in the details and fabric of their life.

4.61 The Ancient Faith

Although descendants of the Kamenshchiki who settled Verkh-Uimon identify with the concord of Old Belief professed by their ancestors and readily acknowledge that they are Old Believers and understand that they have purely Russian backgrounds, few now know anything of their European origins. This is not surprising since they represent a ninth or tenth generation of Old Believers in the Altai. One resident was able to tell us something of her background.

А моя, вот например, мать, родня у матери там были у них со стороны поморцы.

And for example, my mother, my own mother's people were from the Pomortsy.

Varvara Pavlovna (ca. 1935)

Rather than refer to themselves as '*starovery*' or '*starobriadtsy*' the present inhabitants of Verkh-Uimon usually use geographical labels to distinguish themselves from any other ethnic group, sometimes saying that they are 'Siberians', sometimes 'Russians'. Some simply refer to themselves as 'Christians'. The label 'Kerzhaki' is still widespread in Siberia and the Altai and refers in general to Old Believers, but in particular to members of the priestless concords. Villagers often describe their customs and way of life as '*po-kerzhatski*' (in the Kerzhak way). A word with no specific Old Believer connotations, 'Kamenshchiki', is not in common usage.

There is a mixture of Old Believer concords in the village.⁷⁶

А: Церковь здесь была?

Б: Здесь есть. Венчались у нас, у попов венчали.

А: Вы поповские были?

Б: Нет. Не поповские.

А: Вы беспоповские?

Б: Христиане были, христиане. Как знать: – сибиряки или России ли? Не Россия – сибиряки.

⁷⁶ According to A. Printts, the Bukhtarma Old Believers were Bespopovtsy, but in the twentieth century there were also Edinovertsy and priestly Old Believers in Verkh-Uimon. Printts, 580.

- A: А вы не старообрядцы?
 B: Ну, ну, ну.
 A: А вы двумя перстами молились? Вот так?
 B: Ну, вот так. Идите поглядите какие у нас иконы.
 A: Was there a church here?
 B: There was one here. People had their weddings and the priest married them.
 A: You were Popovtsy?
 B: No, not Popovtsy.
 A: You were Bespopovtsy?
 B: We were Christians. Christians. Who knows – Siberians or Russians? Not Russian – Siberians.
 A: But aren't you Old Believers?
 B: Oh yes, of course we are.
 A: And you prayed [crossed yourself] with two fingers, like this?
 B: Yes, like so. Come and have a look at our icons.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

In the Bukhtarma and Uimon villages by the mid-nineteenth century, Old Believers who accepted priests belonged to the Beglopopovtsy, Belokrinittsy, or Edinovertsy. Edinoverie was introduced to the Ural Old Believer communities in 1788. In the Altai, adherents of Edinoverie began to call themselves *tserkovniki* (Church People), since following their compromise with the official Orthodox church in 1800, they were allowed to practise the old rites in state-supported churches.⁷⁷ Although several merchants and their families accepted the new faith and although one of the first churches for the Edinovertsy was built in Ekaterinburg in 1805, Edinoverie was not generally accepted by the Old Believer population until later.⁷⁸

The present-day residents of Verkh-Uimon and neighbouring Old Believer villages differentiate very precisely and in some cases disparagingly between priestly and priestless Old Belief and look on them as completely separate faiths.

У нас же здесь большинство то кержацкой веры. Мы то так церковники. А они то, у них молебный дом. Им то не нужна церковь, а нам сатанинская церковь не нужна. Мы верование свое имели.

You know around here the majority of people are of the Kerzhakh [priestless] belief. We are Tserkovniki, but they have a prayer house. They don't need a church, and we don't need a satanic church. We had our own belief.

Maria Pavlovna (1929)

⁷⁷ Robson, 29–30; Shvetsova, 46.

⁷⁸ B. I. Baidan, 'Novye istochniki po organizatsii i ideologii uralo-sibirskogo staroobriadchestva v kontse XVIII – pervoi polovine XIX v.,' in *Sibirskoe istochnikovedenie i arkheografiia*, ed. N. N. Pokrovskii and E. K. Romodanovskaia (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1980), 96–97.

During the early nineteenth century, prayer houses constructed by Old Believers in the Altai were usually part of the domestic compound of a private individual. However, during the period of repression under Nicholas I many of these structures were partially, if not completely, dismantled. Books and icons from Old Believer chapels were also confiscated and destroyed.⁷⁹

The architecture of these Old Believer prayer houses and chapels varied from village to village and from concord to concord and were called by a variety of names, including *molenna*, *molebna*, and *chasovnia*.⁸⁰ In general, the spaces for worship created by the Old Believers had their origins in northern Russian folk architecture. However, ethnographers have noted the absence in northern Russia of some of the architectural forms used by Old Believers in the Altai, suggesting that these are based on prototypes which preceded the spread of Muscovite influence to northern Russia.⁸¹

Priestless Old Believers usually had a main prayer house in one of the villages, which they too referred to as a church. Its parish leader, the *nastavnik* or *nastavnitsa* if a woman, would visit other villages periodically to conduct services or baptise children. In the 1920s the main prayer house of Bespopovtsy living in the Bukhtarma valley was very similar to an Edinoverie church, even having an altar.⁸² In Verkh-Uimon, Popovtsy or Edinovertsy also sometimes refer to themselves as 'Orthodox', a means of distinguishing themselves from the priestless 'Kerzhaki'.

B: Нет, не было церкви, не было. Ну вот, такая кержацкая была тутюка.

A: Молитвенная?

B: Ну, была. Ну, эта наша православная.

B: No, there was no church [for them]. But there was something for the Kerzhaki over that way.

A: A prayer house?

B: Yes, there was. But ours [our church] was Orthodox.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

In the 1840s, when priestly Old Believers created their own Belokrintsa hierarchy, many Beglopovtsy accepted that the search for Belovod'e had finally ended, not in the

⁷⁹ Belikov, *Tomskii raskol*, 69–72, 136–141.

⁸⁰ Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 307.

⁸¹ Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 305–307, 310–311.

⁸² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 30–31.

East as expected, but in the West. However, there were others who did not accept the Austrian Old Believer hierarchy and continued to believe that they would find the Promised Land somewhere beyond the Bukhtarma valley.⁸³ Perhaps because of this, it was not until the early twentieth century that many Chasovenniki converted to the Belokrinitsa concord. The increase in their numbers brought the Altai villages into close contact with the Rogozhskoe Cemetery and its priests. For example, when churches were built for the Belokrinittsy, they were furnished with icons from Moscow.⁸⁴

As the protocol of the *Domostroi* instructed, prayer occupied many hours in the lives of strict Old Believers. For example, a *svod* (wedding service) can last for seven hours. Prayer is a lengthy ritual not only on holidays and other religious occasions, but also in the routine of daily life. We observed a woman who had finished her breakfast porridge stand at the window with her back to us for a long time, praying and bowing in thanks for her food, completely oblivious to her visitors. In Zamul'ta, a nearby village where many relatives of the Uimon residents live, an elderly Old Believer who lives in a small room in the yard beside the house spends her day in prayer. She joins other members of the community when they gather to pray and sing spiritual music which, in keeping with Old Believer tradition, has been collected and written out by one woman in a special notebook.⁸⁵ The *nastavnik* in this village is highly thought of not only for his religious guidance but also for his knowledge of sacred verse and music, practised according to pre-Nikonian tradition.

Many people in Verkh-Uimon still carefully observe the religious fasts.

Есть люди здесь, которые возьмут заповедь, чтобы мясо не есть вообще. Нельзя. Возьмут заповедь. То это тот возьмет, который на покос не ездит, тяжелую работу не робит, только молится, да только чего дома поделает. Молодые то не берут такой заповеди, надо работать. Надо получше есть. Как я сейчас, примерно, все соблюдаю. Держу пост. Все до одного дня.

There are people here who take a vow never to eat meat. It is forbidden. They take a vow. But that is for people who don't go to the fields, who don't do the heavy work, but only pray, and do things at home. Young people would not take such a vow. They have to work. They have to eat a bit better. I pretty much observe everything. I keep a fast, right up to the very last day.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

⁸³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 38–39.

⁸⁴ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 34–35.

⁸⁵ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 390.

Self-discipline was also expected of children, who had to behave appropriately during the fasting period.

Великий пост абсолютно все, сула всякие делали, брюкву парили, и печенки и все похлебку варили. Шибко Пост признавали. А мама моя, бабушка Настасья у нее была. Ну ее отцова мать. В бадьях у них мясо было навялено. Я говорит: «Наемся, наемся, досыта в великий пост.» А бабонька-то Настасья потом узнала да ее напоролла ремнем. И все.

For the Great Fast of Lent absolutely everyone made all kinds of fruit juices. They boiled turnips and made stews and everyone made broth. They took the fast very seriously. And my mother had a grandmother Nastas'ia, her father's mother. They kept their salted meat in tubs. And she would say, 'I will eat and eat and eat until I'm stuffed during Lent'. But then Granny Nastas'ia found out about it and she beat her to pieces with the strap. And that was that.

Natal'ia Pavlovna (1922)

Many of the older generation of priestless Old Believers attend prayer services in the home of the *nastavmitsa*. Residents of the village are reluctant to talk about her, except to say that she is a very upstanding woman. Many are so guarded about their religious practice that they will not even acknowledge to an 'outsider' that there is such a person in the village.

The *nastavmitsa* baptises children, conducts prayer services, and as much as possible fulfils the role of a priest. She is respected for the strength of her faith and her integrity.⁸⁶ It is clear that any who pray with her acknowledge her moral authority. Any moral decisions which the faithful make, seem to be based on what this woman would think. We also frequently heard women say they feared what their own mother would think if, for example, they gave away a *shashmura* (cloth cap which covers the hair of a married woman) or allowed an icon to be photographed or in some cases even viewed by a stranger. They understand that they may only enter the house of the *nastavmitsa* for prayer if they have themselves been strictly observant of their faith.

Although we could visit this spiritual leader and talk to her in the other rooms of her house, we were not allowed even to look into the prayer room, nor were we permitted to photograph her. Only an accidental opening of the door allowed a glimpse of the icons and holy books inside. She spoke freely about the difficulties of keeping religious practice alive during the Soviet regime, her work, cutting the hay, taking care of her horse, and

⁸⁶ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 33.

helping her children and grandchildren, but would not speak about her religious role. It was another woman in the village, who described the prayers.

Песни пели. Так молится она и поет. Так молится и поет в какой-нибудь праздник. Вот сегодня Спас. Сиреневый Спас. Так вот они уже молились. Еще десять дней. Шибко молиться.

People would sing [religious] songs. When [the *nastavnitsa*] prays, she sings. She prays and sings on any kind of holiday. Today is the day of our Saviour. The Lilac Saviour. So people have already been praying. That will last for ten more days. One should pray a lot.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

Like many other Old Believers of the older generation in Verkh-Uimon, the *nastavnitsa* is not literate in the conventional sense, but is able to read the Church Slavonic texts enough to chant the prayers required for various liturgical rites. A young brother and sister in the village from the Spasovo concord are now learning to read the prayers. They have started to conduct prayer services with the older woman. These can last for many hours, with the participants standing for the duration, completing the numerous bows required as part of the devotional ritual. They use their *podruchnik* to protect their hands from the floor and their *lestovka* to keep track of prayers. When not in use during the service, participants keep the *podruchnik* at the waist, tucked into the woven belt of their traditional Russian dress. Thick wax candles are lit in front of each icon in turn, providing the only light in the room.

Although many other older people in the village did not learn to write, like the *nastavnitsa* they can read the holy books. While they would not be able to read the contemporary Russian on this page, they can read the Church Slavonic script from the holy texts at speed. They refer to this as reading '*po-slavianski*' (in Slavonic) as opposed to '*po-russki*' (in Russian) or '*po-staro-slavianski*' (in Old Slavonic).

A: И писать умеете?

B: Нет, писать не могу, а читать читала.

A: А читать можете?

B: Ну, письма вот читала, а писать не могу. Вот книгу читала, русскую-то нашу. У нас книга есть и у меня сейчас дочка; дак вон Канун Спасу читает, самому Господу

A: And do you know how to write?

B: No, I can't write, but I read.

A: So you can read?

B: Well, I used to read letters, but I can't write. I have read our Russian book. We have a book and my daughter reads the Saviour's prayer to our Lord.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

Every family kept pre-Nikonian versions of the holy books. Some villagers said they had had 'stacks' of them. We were shown books such as an illuminated Psalter probably printed in the 1780s at an Old Believer printing house in Pochaev, near Vetka.⁸⁷ One woman said her family has a holy book written in the 1660s, as well as a copy of the *Domostroi*. Many people told us they had old texts, but were reluctant to show them to us. In the past they could be put in prison if they were caught using them.

A: А у вас есть старинные книги?

B: Больших-то нет. А маленькие есть. Я ведь так-то неграмотная была. Мало так. Маленькая была не училась, некогда было учиться. И тогда их преследовали, не разрешали. Строго было. Да и сажались, кто занимался этим. Мало ли нарушили народу этого.

A: And do you have very old books?

B: I don't have the large ones. But I do have small ones. You know I was not literate. Only a little bit. When I was small, I didn't study. There was no time. And then they were disapproved of – the books were not allowed. It was very strict. And anyone who studied them was put in prison. They did away with a lot of literate people.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

In the view of members of the older generation of Old Believers, Soviet education was not real education.

B: А грамотных-то вообще нет, вот которые уж советскую грамоту выучили, дак эту не скоро поняли, эту читают. Которые желают, дак советская грамота у многих, сейчас желали бы, дак все бы могли читать уж эти книги наши.

A: Вы житие Протопопа Аввакума, это все читаете?

B: Нет. Я же мало-мало к празднику гляжу только. Я не читаю, не умею читать. Меня никакой грамоте не научили, ни той, ни другой.

B: And on the whole there are no literate people here. There are those who studied Soviet books, and they didn't catch on to that very fast. Whoever wants, can have Soviet education. Many of them would be able to read our books.

A: Do you read the life of Protopop Avvakum?

⁸⁷ I am grateful to Dr. Zoja Jaroszewicz-Piereslawcew for help in identifying the approximate date and place of publication.

B: No, I just look at the books for a holy day. I don't read. I don't know how to read. I didn't have any kind of education, not that kind nor the other.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

The words of this woman reveal that a distinction was made between state and religious education, between 'worldly' and religious literacy. Old Believers, in particular the Bespopovtsy, did not attend state-run schools. Since someone had to read the liturgical texts, if there was any form of education in the villages it was administered by a local elder and consisted of learning religious texts and prayers in Church Slavonic.⁸⁸

B: Но самое такое время было, что всех сажали подряд. Не в то время родились все мы. Надо было раньше или позднее. Сейчас разрешили молиться. Кто не ленится, тот молится. По вере.

A: Так уже отошли многие от веры просто. Ведь 70 лет – это не шуточка – это три поколения. Разорвали всю цепь.

B: Да, обесценилось, разорвали. Никого здесь. Наш брат только еще маленько держится.

A: Книги все отобрали, иконы отобрали. Все сожгли. Все уничтожили.

B: Я говорю, вот еще наш брат уйдет – все умрет. Никого не останется, некому молиться будет. Я примерно осталась, дак я не грамотная.

B: It was the time when everyone was being put in prison one after the other. We were just born at the wrong time. It should have been either earlier or later. Now we are allowed to pray. Whoever isn't lazy, prays. According to his faith.

A: So many people just gave up their faith. You know 70 years is no joke. It is three generations. The whole chain has been destroyed.

B: Yes, it lost its significance. They destroyed it. There is no one here. It is only people like us who hold on to it a bit.

A: All the books were taken away and the icons. It was all burned. Everything was destroyed.

B: When people like us go it will all die. There will be no one left. There will be no one to pray with. I am here, for example, but I am illiterate.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

It would be difficult to say that these Old Believers were uneducated. Even in the eighteenth century, Old Believers assigned to the Kolyvano-Voskresensk mines had elected leaders from their community who were at least semi-literate and therefore dealt with any official business between workers and the administration. Like the villagers in Verkh-Uimon, such individuals could usually read, but not write. These Old Believers were instructed by religious leaders who travelled around the mining villages. Religious texts formed the basis of their education. On the other hand, mining schools set up at the

⁸⁸ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 29–30.

end of the eighteenth century gave young people assigned to the mines a technical education, while architects, builders, and local painters also developed the skills of their craft.⁸⁹ Numerous women we met said they wished their parents had allowed them to attend school.

Despite the concern of the older generation that religious knowledge is vanishing from the community, there are younger people in Verkh-Uimon and neighbouring Old Believer villages who still observe the fasts, who still gather to pray and sing in the traditional manner, who are learning to read the ancient texts. Strictly religious young people either marry within Old Belief or marry someone who will convert to their faith. They follow the customs of Old Believer family life. One couple in the village has 11 children. Some villagers still dress in traditional Russian clothes for prayer and cover their hair at home as well as in public. Although many of the material symbols of their faith were destroyed, many women explained that even without their churches, books, and traditional culture, their belief has remained.

Я воспитывалась в такое время, что...но все равно веровали. В душе поддерживали. Но сейчас то, конечно, вон проще.

I was raised during a time when [religious practice was forbidden], but people kept their belief anyway. They kept it in their soul. Now of course it is not so difficult.

Maria Pavlovna (1929)

It must also be said that an element of fanaticism has not disappeared from sections of the community. Although the *raskol* took place over 300 years ago, some of the Old Believer villagers still express their hatred of Patriarch Nikon and of Western, Catholic culture in general.

4.62 Work and the Economy

Правда, если не лениться, дак все есть.

The truth is that if you are not lazy, you can have everything.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

⁸⁹ Iu. S. Bulygin, 'Nekotorye voprosy kul'tury pripisnoi derevni Kolyvano-voskresenskikh gornykh zavodov XVIII v.,' in *Krest'ianstvo Sibiri XVIII-nachale XX v.: Klassovaia bor'ba, obshchestvennoe soznanie i kul'tura* ed. L. M. Goriushkin (Novosibirsk, 1975), 66–70.

Some regions of the Altai had better conditions for growing crops than Verkh-Uimon. However, despite the climatic challenges presented by long winters with heavy snow, the cold of high altitude, and the damp conditions brought by frequent rains in summer, Old Believer villagers were successful tillage farmers who became wealthy from this and other enterprises.⁹⁰ They farmed large ranches of livestock. They trapped fur-bearing animals such as sable, fox, and beaver. When this activity became overdeveloped they began to raise goats and keep *maraly* (Siberian deer, *Cervus Canadensis*) for their antlers which were highly prized and bought by the Chinese.⁹¹ The villagers had artels for preparing pelts, for tanning, leatherwork, boot making, and fishing. They kept dogs to chase off fox and wolves and to kill the sables they trapped. Old Believers in the Altai were also expert beekeepers.⁹²

From the time of their settlement along the Katun' River in the 1790s until the Russian Civil War in 1920, the Old Believers maintained a carefully disciplined society, organised around a system of mutual help and division of labour.⁹³ They had large families who lived in *sviazi* (connected houses) where a son and daughter-in-law had their own section of the house. The women shared domestic responsibilities on a rotating basis.

В этом доме 24 человека семья была. Хорошо жили. И никто не ругался, никто не перерабатывал. Вот, примерно, женщин понедельно поставят. Неделю ты стряпаешь, корми людей, неделю вторая идет стряпать, а другая доит коров, на улице управляется. Третья – на поле едет, на такую работу. А четвертая гульная. Отдыхает. Так по очереди все работали.

A family of twenty-four lived in this house. And lived well. No one argued, and no one was overworked. For example, the women were organised on a weekly basis. You would cook for a week, you would feed everyone, then the second woman would cook for a week; another milked the cows and did everything outdoors. The third would go to the fields for that sort of work. And the fourth would have free time. She relaxed. So everyone worked in her turn.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

⁹⁰ E. E. Blomkvist and N. P. Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt bukhtarminskikh staroobriadtsev,' chap. in *Bukhtarminskie staroobriadtsy* (Leningrad, 1930), 82; Printts, 570.

⁹¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 117.

⁹² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 124; Printts, 559, 573–576.

⁹³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 91.

Like other Old Believers in the Altai, the residents of Verkh-Uimon were independent and self-sufficient. They had everything they needed to provide their own food and clothing.

Кони были. И все было: и косилки, и плуга, и молотяги, и самовязки – все машины были, какие надо. Уж жили раньше-то жили. Все было. Хлеб сами сеяли. Коров доили... помню восемнадцать было.

We had horses. And we had everything: mowers and ploughs and threshers and balers – we had all those machines, whichever were needed. We really lived so well. We had everything. We sowed our own grain. We milked the cows...I remember we had eighteen milking cows.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

Printts reported that in the 1860s some of the Verkh-Uimon villagers kept more than 500 horses and frequently had 50 to 70 head of cattle and 200 sheep.⁹⁴ Before the Russian Revolution some villages in the region had 2,000 horses per hundred houses. A villager with fewer than 10 horses was considered poor.⁹⁵

Although significantly fewer in number, in summer the cows in the village are still led to the mountain pastures in early morning. For a month each summer the villagers are occupied with haymaking. They travel by horse and wagon to the meadows where they cut the hay with scythes.

На той стороне, в каждом селе было сколько отар, сколько дойных коров. Сколько давали молока, мяса и сыру и сколько мяса на комбинат гнали. In that direction, in every village there were so many large flocks of sheep and so many milking cows, producing so much milk, meat, and cheese that a huge amount of meat was sent to the factory.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

Apart from cattle and sheep farming, the Old Believers took advantage of the natural resources of the forests and rivers.

A: А охота была тут какая-нибудь?

B: Ой, была. Вот старики-то помнили. Тут и рыболовная артель была, и охотничья артель была. Потом, вот и кожи выдывали всякие. Тоже артель.

A: And was there any kind of hunting done here?

⁹⁴ Printts, 560.

⁹⁵ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 104.

B: Oh, there certainly was. The older people here remember. There was a fish as well as a fur-processing artel. In those days people also processed all kinds of skins. There was also an artel for that.

Maria Pavlovna (1929)

Although it was less common than flax or hemp, wool, considered a more expensive and valuable yarn, was used for making the finest traditional woven belts and was felted for other garments such as hats. It was also woven with linen to make sturdy winter trousers and coats.

Вот в Теревте жили, вот за рекой в Теревте. Потом переехали сюда, шерсть терebить вот сюда в Уймон.

We used to live in Terevta, beyond the river. Then we moved here, to process wool, here in Uimon.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

Parents helped young couples establish their own flock of sheep.

Свекры нам отдали пять овечек, да мать пять или шесть овечек отдала, сразу у нас был табун овечек. А двойниками носили овечки. Уж вот редко принесет у нас. Нынче вот десять овечек.

My parents-in-law gave us five sheep, and my mother gave us five or six, so right away we had a flock of sheep. They usually produced twins. That rarely happens now. Today we only have ten sheep.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

In general in the past, the Old Believers did not attend doctors. Some suggest the serpent of the medical symbol is a sign of the devil. In any case, they take advantage of the medicinal qualities of wild plants which are used to treat all sorts of illnesses. In summer, villagers travel by horse and cart to the mountains to gather roots and leaves which they dry and chop to make herbal teas, salves, and tonics. Some plants are used to treat women, while others are specifically for men. Many of the plants found in the Altai are native to other countries as well, but *maralii koren'* (*Leuzea carthomoides*), *mar'in koren'* (*Paeonia anomalata*), *badan'* (*Bergenia crassifolia*), *zolotoi koren'* (*Rhodiola rosea*), *krasnii koren'* (*Hedysarom neglectum*), and *medvezhnaia puchka* (*Angelica decurrens*) are indigenous medicinal plants gathered by the villagers.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ I am grateful to Roza Bail'man for help in identifying the Latin names for these plants. On the preparation of such folk remedies see S. V. Korepanov, *Rasteniia v profilaktike i lechenii raka* (Barnaul:

Winters are severe in the Altai. In village houses a traditional Russian stove provides rapid and effective heat as well as a baking oven. It was also a place to bleach and dry spun linen yarn, in former times the most important weaving material prepared by women in the villages.

A: А когда снег, как вы топите? Дрова заранее запасаете?

B: Конечно летом под крышей дрова. У меня еще столько дров, сколько у мужика нету. Я никогда не ленюсь, если могу делать, так я пряду, вяжу. Сейчас стала уставать, болеть шибко стала. Скоро уже восемьдесят лет.

A: And when there is snow, how do you heat your house? Do you get a supply of wood in ahead of time?

B: I always get the firewood in under the eaves in summer. I have more firewood than any man would have. I am never idle. I spin and knit, for example. If there is something I can do, then I do it. But I tire easily now, and my health has really started to deteriorate. I will be eighty before long.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

On Saturday afternoon smoke rises from bathhouses in the village as they are heated for the weekly bath. Many of the villagers have 'black baths'. A fire is lit for five or six hours under a large pile of rocks which sit on an iron container inside the bathhouse. In a 'black' bathhouse there is no chimney, so the rocks and bathhouse become blackened with smoke. Strict Old Believers must finish bathing before sundown, as they consider Saturday to be over at that point. (Plate 19).

The first crude mountain dwellings built by the Kamenshchiki were usually constructed with one corner over a spring, so that the inhabitants would not have to leave the building to get water.⁹⁷ After 1792 when villages began to form, the first and best homesteads were always built in the most convenient location along a riverbank. Rivers provided the main source of water for domestic and agricultural use. As a result, potable water was often in short supply. Hygiene and washing were problematic in the villages. In general, the Old Believers are careful about their environment, especially about their water supply. To interfere with someone's well is considered a particularly grievous sin. In the 1990s there are individual wells outside all the houses in Verkh-Uimon. A bucket suspended on rope is lowered by hand into the well from a long wooden pole weighted to the ground with a heavy iron wheel. In the late 1920s even this system did not exist.⁹⁸

ОАО Altaiskii poligraficheskii kombinat, 1999), 109–115.

⁹⁷ Printts, 548.

⁹⁸ E. E. Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 195–196.

The villagers are self-sufficient in regard to food. They grow their own vegetables and potatoes, keep at least one milking cow, farmyard fowl, pigs, and sheep. The kitchen gardens in Verkh-Uimon and other villages are kept absolutely weed-free. Late frosts, drought, and locusts are all a threat for even the smallest grower who depends on the kitchen garden for winter supplies and preserves. In the past, although the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers grew many vegetables in their gardens, produce which they had not grown themselves was considered unclean, as it had been raised by 'outside' hands. In some Old Believer villages where there were no fruit trees, for example, people never ate or even saw apples or pears.⁹⁹ Until the mid-nineteenth century Old Believers in the Altai did not grow potatoes, considered an anti-Christian innovation.¹⁰⁰

Ну, чего готовили? Вот, примерно, постами: они корчаги поставят, сусла наварят всякого из ягод и такого, квас кислый, жидкий, всякий. Ну, каши там какие, капуста соленая, огурцы - все огородное. Все было. Все оно росло. Это сейчас: то мерзнет, то сохнет. Но помидоры не знали, не садили здесь. So people prepared food for the fasts: they put up earthenware pots on the stove, and boiled drinks from all kinds of berries, and watery, bitter kvass and other kinds of drinks. And there were porridges, pickled cabbage and cucumbers, everything from the vegetable garden. There was everything and everything grew. These days it is either too hot or too cold. But we didn't know about tomatoes. People didn't plant them here.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

Many Old Believers consider it a sin to eat sugar. One of the most widespread and important activities of Old Believers in the Altai was beekeeping, usually the work of the older generation.¹⁰¹ The warm summer weather and the abundance of wild flowering plants and bushes make the Bukhtarma valley in particular an ideal location for bees. Apiaries were established in large number all through the Katun' Valley as well, although the risk of losing bees in severe weather was greater in the higher altitude of villages such as Verkh-Uimon.

It was in fact not the Kamenshchiki but the Poliaki who introduced beekeeping to the rest of the Old Believer population after their arrival in 1765/1766. (Plate 20). Having been beekeepers in Vetka, they set up apiaries in the Ul'ba and Uba River

⁹⁹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 34.

¹⁰⁰ V. Otpetyi, 'Altaiskii Gornyi Okrug,' in *Altai, budushchaia Kaliforniia Rossii* (Leiptsig, Tipografiia Bera i Germanna, 1882), 39.

¹⁰¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 133.

Valleys, an activity which the Bukhtarma and Uimon villagers soon imitated.¹⁰² Siberian traders came annually to designated villages to buy the honey and wax which would be loaded in large tubs onto rafts and transported along the Bukhtarma and Irtysh Rivers. Produce from the Altai went to the Nizhnii Novgorod and Irbit'sk markets. Until 1860 when an epidemic killed many of the bees, it was not uncommon for an apiary to consist of 1,000 or even 2,000 hives, built in specially prepared rotted, dried, and hollowed-out branches. Discouraged by the losses suffered, some villagers turned to more profitable businesses such as raising deer. Although many people continued to keep bees, by the 1920s it was unusual for an apiary to have more than 200 hives.¹⁰³

A place would be chosen for the hives in a sheltered position alongside a stream, preferably not within a kilometre of another apiary. Good locations for beekeeping near a village were the property of older people who could sell them if they wished.¹⁰⁴ Traditionally, the apiarist provided a place for hives in evenly dried trunks or branches of aspen, poplar, birch, willow, or fir cut into lengths of approximately a metre. They were usually laid under bushes or trees with one end slightly higher than the other. A *duplianka* was made from an open-ended section of hollowed tree trunk whose ends were sealed with rounds of wood. These were lightweight and warm for the bees. In more recent years frame hives were introduced, but they required more attention and care than the traditional hive used in the Altai. The large apiaries were usually far from town, so it was difficult and time-consuming for beekeepers to transport and change frames as often as was required.¹⁰⁵ A *medogon'ka* was the device used to pump out and purify the honey.

Б: А пасека, вот у нас пасека была и больше (чем наша) ни у кого не было.

А: А пасека где у вас была?

Б: А вот маленькая речушка, а там всякие черемуховые кусты, кислица и вот называлась Забока. А меда было, Господи! Никаких ни клещей, никого. Бабушка одна ухаживала за ними. Кто ей когда поможет.

А: А просто в ульях, да?

Б: Немного было рамчатых, немножко так - в ульях. Ну в дублянках в таких. Ну, вырезали с сотами.

А: И качали его, нет?

Б: Качали вот. Эти рамчатые были. Качали. Я умею за пчелами ухаживать.

¹⁰² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 124–125.

¹⁰³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 126, 130, 136; Printts, 572–573; Shvetsova, 68, 70–71.

¹⁰⁴ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 128.

¹⁰⁵ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 128, 130, 135.

B: And we had an apiary, bigger than anyone's.

A: Where was it?

B: There was a little river, and there were all kinds of *cheremukha* (bird cherry) bushes and *kislitsa* (wild sorrell) there, and it was called Zaboka. And my God, there was so much honey! There were no ticks, not a one. It was just my grandmother who took care of them. No one ever helped her.

A: And were they just in hives?

B: There were some frames and some in hives - in those *duplianki*. So it would be cut out with the honeycomb.

A: And did you pump out the honey?

B: Yes. There were frame hives. We used a centrifugal pump. I know how to take care of bees.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

In Verkh-Uimon some women still keep bees and travel by horse and cart to the apiary. This woman used to go on horseback, but recently injured her leg in a riding accident.

B: Теперь этих – пчел развожу.

A: А кто же с пчелами водится? Вы?

B: А сама хожу. Я кропотливо работаю. Тут недалеко пасека. Ни у одной меня, с соседями вместе.

A: Но вы там не живете?

B: Нет, не живем, только ездим.

A: Не разоряет никто?

B: Да пока ничего, не знаю дальше как. Лазила ребятня, наверно. А пчелок не трогали. Избушку там у нас: пришли, крышку свалили, так никого такого не пакостили. Так в медогонке мед маленько повыскребали, ложки наши нагнули.

A: У вас ульи рамщистые?

B: Ну. Потом уж как медок всегда надо. Да где его сейчас купить-то? Значит плохо с медом в этом году, мало. Лето видишь – то мороз, то жар. В жар цветы-то все позасохли.

A: А цветочный у вас мед в основном?

B: Да, цветочный. Мед хороший.

A: Но алтайский он вообще считается самый хороший?

B: Да, самый хороший, цветочный, алтайский. В пригороде сахаром их кормят, они перерабатывают. А это уже он не мед, у него ни запаха, ни пользу никакой. Для лекарства он вообще не идет.

B: I keep bees now.

A: Are you the one who looks after them?

B: I go myself. I work meticulously. The apiary is a long way away. I don't take care of them alone. I do it with my neighbours.

A: Do you stay there?

B: No, we don't stay; we just go back and forth [by horse and cart].

A: Won't somebody destroy the hives?

B: So far it has been all right. I don't know what will happen in the future. It was probably some young fellow who did get into them, but the bees were not

touched. We have a little house there. They came and pulled off the roof but they didn't interfere with the bees. They scraped honey out of the container and bent our spoon.

A: Do you have frames?

B: Yes, that is how we always kept bees. You have to have your own honey. Where could you buy it? This year hasn't been a good summer for honey. There isn't very much. There can be frost or too much heat in summer. The heat dries up all the blossom.

A: So your honey is basically from flowers?

B: Yes. It's good honey.

A: Isn't Altai honey considered to be the very best?

B: Altai honey from flowers is the best. Beekeepers closer to town feed sugar to the bees and they turn it into honey. But that isn't really honey. It has no fragrance and it is completely useless. It has no medicinal qualities.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

The small income this woman receives from her honey helps support her children and grandchildren.

There was much folklore connected to beekeeping in the Old Believer villages. Some people believed that a harmful dew could kill the bees. There was little knowledge of bee disease and its prevention or treatment and bees often died of hunger in the winter, when insufficient honey was left for them. In spring, prayers were said for the bees to their protectors, Saints Zosima and Savvatii, and to the Mother of God. There were potions and rituals involved in warding off the evil spirits which might destroy the bees. Siberians who bought hives from the Old Believers thought that they used witchcraft or spells to make bees they had sold come back to them or die with their new owner.¹⁰⁶

A system of *pomoch'* (mutual aid) existed in the Old Believer villages.¹⁰⁷ For example, groups of women would help each other to break flax when it was ready in the autumn, to spin yarn, or to put up cabbage for the winter.¹⁰⁸ Now older women help one another dig and plant potatoes in the kitchen garden. On a larger scale, when the wheat was ripe, villagers invited members of other households to help with the harvest. During

¹⁰⁶ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 133–4. In Old Believer icons dedicated to the Archangel Michael, swarms of bees are often used as a symbolic motif. Old Believers likened the Archangel's battle against the serpent to Christ's struggle against evil. In addition, in Russian folklore the bee was thought to have eased Christ's suffering on the cross. The bee is associated with the immortality of Christ as well as with the death of a hostile world. Such mythological legends endowed the bee with protective attributes which symbolically supported Old Believers in their battle against anti-Christian powers. See E. P. Ershov, 'Pchelinyi roi na staroobiradcheskoi ikone "Arkhangel Mikhail – voevoda",' *Staroobriadchestvo: Istorii, kul'tura, sovremennost'* (Moscow, 1998), 250–251.

¹⁰⁷ *Pomoch'* is an obsolete form of *pomoshch'*, the noun meaning 'help.'

¹⁰⁸ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 90; Troitskii, 109.

the haymaking season villagers still observe religious holidays and will not work on those days. Although it was unacceptable to work on a holiday, it was not considered sinful to work on a help day.

Both rich and poor came to help when they could and, without being asked, everyone came to help the religious leader of a village. It was also considered everyone's responsibility to help those who could not manage on their own, such as a widow or an elderly man. The host provided water in the field and supervised the workers, while the women in his family brought food at lunchtime. Later in the evening, the helpers each brought a member of their family who had not been at the 'help' to a party given by the host family. Traditionally, the Old Believers preferred to ask their neighbours for help rather than invite outsiders such as the local Kazakhs or other Russians who were not Old Believers and from whom they remained socially apart. If such helpers were present at the celebration they were given particular cups to drink from, since Old Believers maintained a ritual prohibition on sharing drinking vessels or any kind of tableware with '*mirskie*' ('outsiders'). In Old Believer homes a separate set of tableware was kept for such visitors. If an outsider should happen to use the Old Believers' cups or plates, these had to be purified with prayer and a ritual washing in the current of the river to cleanse them from the touch of Anti-christian hands.¹⁰⁹

However, by the end of the nineteenth century it was commonplace for villagers to hire Kazakh-Kirgiz workers, from whom they got horses and livestock, to work in the fields. They were also hired as shepherds and assistants in the apiaries. In addition, the Kazakhs prepared wool and sometimes made work clothes for the Old Believers and silver decorations for the horses' tack. Apart from these working relations, because of the shortage of women in the Bukhtarma and Uimon villages, Old Believers sometimes did marry Kazakh women who converted to Old Belief. The inexpensive labour of Kazakh workers provided Old Believers the opportunity to expand the size of their farms. As a result of such enterprise, many wealthy Old Believers became gentlemen farmers who no longer needed to work in the fields, a situation which clearly set them apart from other Russian peasants.¹¹⁰

The Old Believers in Verkh-Uimon lived near the border between Russia and China and near the only road leading from the Irtysh to China. Along with cattle

¹⁰⁹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 33, 90–92.

¹¹⁰ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 43–45, 48, 89; Printts, 581.

ranching, tillage farming, beekeeping, fishing, and hunting, barter with both the Chinese and Kirgiz as well as with Russian merchants was one of the main occupations of the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers. In exchange for grain, flour, and furs, the Old Believers got all sorts of cloth, including cottons, fancy silks and brocade, robes, silver, and porcelain from the Chinese.¹¹¹

The Old Believers paid a considerable price for the wealth and high standard of living they had achieved through more than a century and a half of hard work in the Altai Mountains. From the time of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War in 1920, the economy and traditional lifestyle of residents of these villages began to collapse.¹¹² Nicholas Roerich was a visitor to the Katun' valley shortly after the Civil War.

Everything bears the traces of the civil war. Here on the highway, a Red regiment was destroyed by ambush. Here in the Katun they drowned the Whites. On the mountain ridge are lying the red Commissars. And under Katanda, the Kerjak psalmist, an old believer, was hacked with sabres. Many graves on the roads; and near them grows thick new grass.¹¹³

The Old Believers were targets for persecution not only because of their wealth, but also because of the religious orientation of their communities.

Многих, многих расстреляли. И которых Катунью к Коксу и унесло. Которых нашли, которых не нашли.

Many, many people were shot. Some were carried away by the Katun' to Koksa. Some were never found.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

During the 1920s and 1930s the Soviet government sent many Old Believers to labour camps and shot many more. Women were sent to work on collective farms set up in the area. The state took all the villagers' livestock and horses, confiscated their icons and books, and burned their churches, in the process destroying families and traditions which had survived many previous Russian regimes.

¹¹¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 40–42; Printts, 580–581.

¹¹² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 126.

¹¹³ Roerich, 340.

Много преследовали и расстреливали. Много уничтожили. У нас, примерно, самого главного не довезли до Мульты, расстреляли по дороге. Так угоняли в Горно-Алтайск. Угонят, да и там порасстреляют. Да половину, большую половину, уничтожили. Осталась частичка какая-то. Всех поугробили. Кого посадят, так потом убьют.

Many people were persecuted and shot. An awful lot was destroyed. For example, they didn't take the head of our community even as far as Mul'ta. They shot him on the road. They sent people to Gorno-Altaiisk. They sent them there and then shot them. They destroyed half, more than half the population here. Only a fraction was left. They destroyed everyone. Some they put in prison, and then they killed them.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

As their traditional households and farms were broken up, the Old Believers found the quality of their life diminished.¹¹⁴

Раньше, до революции, шибко хорошо жили. Большими семьями. Здесь рядом, все, – и снохи, и зятья, и свекры и свекровки - все жили вместе. Единая семья жила. И вот потом революция все нарушила. Не стали уже потом. Все по отдельности.

In the past before the Revolution, people lived really well, in large families. Everyone was next door here – daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, fathers and mothers-in-law all lived together. It was one big family. And then the Revolution destroyed it all. It wasn't like that anymore. Everyone began to live apart.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

Now that they have the freedom to live as they wish, some Old Believer families are recreating lost traditions. One young woman who converted to Old Belief in order to marry her husband, described how important it was for her to live with her mother-in-law for a year after marriage to learn the patterns of Old Believer life. Now she has three children and her own home, but it is just next door to her husband's parents.

During the second quarter of the twentieth century, as in other parts of Russia, the Old Believers in Altai suffered from overwork and starvation. The villagers supplied meat, butter and grain to the front during the Second World War and travelled long distances to deliver it.

А: И ничего не платили?

Б: И ничего не платили, даром робили. Трудодней-то много нароблю, а на трудодни ничего не получаю. Ни денег, ни хлеба. В первые-то годы,

¹¹⁴ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 87.

когда войны не было, хоть хлебом давали, хлеб получишь для себя-то, все не покупать ни у кого. Да и продашь, все какая-то копейка. А в войну все на государство, весь хлеб шел.

A: And were people not paid?

B: They weren't paid anything; people worked for nothing. I worked many 'trudodni' (work days on the collective farm), but I never got a thing for them. No money and no grain. In the first years, when there was no war, at least people were given grain. You got grain for yourself. You didn't have to buy it from anyone. And if you sold it, you got a little money. But during the war everything, all the grain went to the state.¹¹⁵

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

Despite the spiritual, physical, and economic hardships they encountered, many Old Believer villagers remain steadfast in their religious and moral conviction and express the view that salvation can be found, but only by overcoming temptation in this life. For example, a villager explained that she will not accept a pension even though she has worked all her life. She looks on the pension as a temptation from the state which must be resisted. Like other Old Believers she believes the life of a soul in eternity will only be good if the person lives properly in this world, by his own labour. Another woman in the village was more succinct.

Б: А я не получаю пенсию.

А: Почему?

Б: Ну, за грех считаю.

B: I don't receive a pension.

A: Why not?

B: I consider it a sin.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

4.63 Family, Home, and Social Life

Apart from the discipline apparent in the Old Believer's religious and working life, discipline and co-operation were also evident in their attitude to family and in the way they structured their social life. The network of closely connected villages helped the Old Believers maintain a closed society, where they were free to structure that society by their own rules. They were helped in this by their favourable economic status which gave them freedom from tax and mining obligations. Military service was not

¹¹⁵ The Soviet government required people to work a certain number of *trudodni* on the collective farms. Theoretically, the workers were paid for their labour in grain or produce, rather than money.

demanded of them until 1878.¹¹⁶ In addition, their self-sufficiency allowed them to remain separate and relatively isolated from the state, the Orthodox church, and 'worldly' society. The value placed on visual and material details in their homes and dress is still displayed in their aesthetic awareness and appreciation of beauty.

Old Believer families were large in number.

Я уж как родилась, я шестнадцатая у матери.

I was my mother's sixteenth child.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

Apart from the help with domestic and occupational work provided by the young people in these villages, large families also signified a superior status. For Old Believers it was not only a disappointment, but also a failing to have a small number of children.

Ну, уж давным-давно я овдовела. Еще сорок годов мне было. Мужа можно сказать – убили. Здесь, в Коксе. А хоронили-то, мы его сюда привезли. Ребятишечек у меня было только семь.

Oh, I was widowed long ago. I was just forty. My husband – let's just say he was killed near here, in Koksa. But then we brought him back here and buried him. I only had seven children.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

Old Believers in their eighties or nineties spoke of the long lives of their own grandmothers and grandfathers. One woman's grandfather, her mother's father, lived to 130.

У меня отцу 101 год уже пошел. Он умер во время войны. А бабонька прожила сто четыре года.

My father lived to be 101. He died during the war, but my grandmother lived to 104.

Maria Pavlovna (1929)

Traditionally, Old Believer families in the Altai were not only large and well organised in their working routines, but also observed the seniority of generations.

¹¹⁶ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 15.

A: А кто хозяйство вел?

B: Какая вот привычка была: все подчинялись старикам: дедам, бабам. У нас вот мамина мать, я помню, как дедушка умер, а она потом умерла. И всегда у них были снохи... ее страшно слушали. Она за пчелами ухаживала. Тоже все хорошо. Ребятишки, внучата соберутся, зашалят, забегают. Она только одно слово скажет: «Полно». Все. Тишина. Тут попробуй, бабушку не послушай. Тут беда будет. Строго было. Ребятишки боялись, ребятишек много было, но дисциплина строгая была. Не разбалованы.

A: And who ran the household?

B: We had this custom: everyone was under the command of the older people, of the older men and women. With us, I remember my grandfather died, and my mother's mother died after him. But the daughters-in-law always lived with them...and they obeyed my grandmother completely. She looked after the bees. She did that well, too. When the grandchildren would get together and start to misbehave and run around, she would just say one word: 'Enough!' That was it – there was silence. And if you tried to disobey your grandmother, it was disastrous. It was very strict. There were a lot of children, but they were afraid. The discipline was very strict; they weren't spoiled.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

Old Believer communities were not perfectly just. Deviation from uncompromising discipline was sometimes dealt with cruelly. It was not unusual for wives and children to be severely beaten by their husbands or fathers. A woman who was unfaithful to her husband could suffer dreadful punishment. Old Believer society did not condemn the head of a household for his actions and a wife could not expect the support, even of relatives, against her husband.¹¹⁷ An element of fear ran through the lives of Old Believers.

Отец матери страшно строгий был у нее. Она взяла, да частушку спела:

«Я пойду по лебеду, поймаю лебеденочка,
У какой-нибудь растрепы отобью миленочка.»

А отец услышал. Она за коровами пошла, а он услышал. Она пришла домой, он взял узду и всю ее, абсолютно всю, издрал. Даже до потери сознания. И под залавок забросил ее. А потом понятые пришли какие-то. Хотели его посадить, отца. Он задарил, шибко богатый был. Работающий, сусеки, муки имел, зерна, работников держал.

My mother's father was horribly strict with her. She took to singing this *chastushka* (rhyme), [but not in front of him]:

'I'll go off to fetch some duck weed and I will catch a little swan.

I'll steal a boyfriend from some silly absent-minded one'.

But her father overheard. She had gone off for the cows, but he heard her. When

¹¹⁷ N. A. Minenko, 'K izucheniiu semeinoi etiki sibirskogo krest'ianstva vtoroi poloviny XVIII v.,' in *Krest'ianstvo Sibiri XVIII – nachalo XX v.: Klassovaia bor'ba, obshchestvennoe soznanie i kul'tura*, ed. L. M. Goriushkin (Novosibirsk, 1975), 80.

she got home, he took a bridle and he completely tore her to pieces until she was unconscious. And he threw her under a bench. So then these monitors came. They wanted to put him in prison, her father. But he was extremely rich and he bribed them. He was a very hard worker, he had a flourmill, and grain, and he employed people.

Natal'ia Andreevna (1922)

The Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers built their houses in a variety of traditional northern Russian styles which by the twentieth century had disappeared from European Russia. Their houses were both one and two-storied. The latter often had galleries with balconies around the second storey and porches with high-pitched roofs.

As a villager explained, her wealthy relatives had two-storied houses in the past.

Дак это, чего там раскулачивали все там.

But then they were dispossessed of everything because they were 'kulaks'.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

Some houses, particularly the *sviazi*, were large, with numerous rooms.¹¹⁸ Wooden fencing and high gates surrounded the houses and outbuildings. In the oldest Old Believer houses, windows did not usually face the street, a feature providing greater privacy and less distraction for those indoors.¹¹⁹

The log houses, wooden fences and gates surrounding every property, and the kitchen gardens beside each house create a visual uniformity in the village. Split logs for winter fuel are piled high beside or in front of the houses. In addition to vegetables, most houses have colourful flowers growing outside the door or in barrels beside the house.

Б: А вот у старшого брата моего отца – ой, дом сильно был красивый, хороший.

А: Какой?

Б: Деревянный, у всех здесь...высокий. С подвалом. Под домом – дом. Окна большие, наличины красивые. И вот как вот заходишь – сенки, большие, бревенчатые. Тут дверь плотно закрывалась. Теперь вот так вот, ну как кухня – изба. Из кухни сюда – горница – четыре окна большущих. Из горницы, где эти сенки тут прирублены, там еще вот такая горница маленькая. Два хода было в дом... Дома были хорошие выстроены. Дедушкин дом, он дальше фермы стоял, его сломали, на ферму увезли.

В: My father's older brother had a really fine, beautiful house.

¹¹⁸ For detailed descriptions with photographs of this and other types of housing built in the Bukhtarma and Uimon regions of the Altai see Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 199–246.

¹¹⁹ Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 197–199.

A: What was it like?

B: It was wooden, as they all were here, and tall. It had a basement. A house under the house. The windows were large and on the outside had pretty carved frames. And when you went in, there was a large vestibule made with logs. The door [into the main house] would close well [so no heat could escape]. Then there was the kitchen – the *izba* (the room with the stove). From the kitchen you went into the *gornitsa* (sitting room) which had four huge windows. From the *gornitsa* where there was the log vestibule, there was still another small *gornitsa*. There were two entrances to the house. The houses were well built. My grandfather's house was beyond the State Farm cattle barn. They tore it down and took it away for the barn building.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

The older log houses were built without the convenience of modern tools.

B: Машины родители в этой избе жили.

A: А потом вы вошли сюда, да?

B: Так по наследству дошло до меня.

A: И сколько она уже стоит?

B: Да кто ее знает. Мама не знала когда. Она была рублена топорами, не было пил еще.

B: Mama's parents lived in this house.

A: And then you came here?

B: I inherited it.

A: And how long has it been here?

B: Oh, I don't know. Mama didn't even know then. It was cut with axes – there still weren't any saws.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

The interiors of these houses are furnished with colourful hand-woven floor mats and rugs. Traditionally, tables were covered with intricately patterned hand-woven cloths, often placed one over another. Beds were piled high with pillows and bed linens were finished with lace or crochet work. Cupboards and other storage areas of the houses were concealed behind decorative curtaining. A family's icons and mirrors were draped with long linen towels, woven and embroidered with archaic traditional Russian patterns.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the interior walls of houses were often painted in oil colour by visiting craftsmen who passed their techniques on to local painters. After the Revolution, when it became impossible to buy the powders required to make the paint, the villagers made their own, using ochre and other pigments found in

the mountains. In the Uimon region, villagers had made their own oil colours even before the Revolution.¹²⁰

Apart from this background colouring, in many houses, particularly of the more affluent villagers, the doors, shutters, ceilings, walls, stoves, and furniture were decorated with painted designs typically consisting of geometric or symmetrical stylised floral or bird motifs.¹²¹ (Plates 21, 22, 23, and 24). One visitor to the Bukhtarma villages suggested that in its most elaborate form, densely patterned on a red background, the painted rooms in these houses were probably reminiscent of those in palaces of sixteenth or seventeenth-century Muscovite boyars.¹²²

Examples of this festive decoration can still be seen on wooden door panels in some buildings in Verkh-Uimon. The walls and ceiling in a room of one of the oldest houses in the village is covered in a red sunburst pattern on a grey ground. (Plates 24 and 25). Storage chests for clothing which sit on the floor are also decorative. (Plate 27).

Apart from work, leisure time was also important in the Old Believer villages. Holidays were always observed and people travelled from one village to the next for their celebrations.

Все, все было распределено: в какой праздник в какую деревню приезжать. Уже все знали. Работают, работают, а потом загуляют, дак тоже неделю-две кутят.

It was all designated who was supposed to go to which village for which holiday. Everybody knew. People worked and worked and then they really celebrated, for a week or two they would really have a good time.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

The celebration of *Maslenitsa* marking the beginning of Lent was especially festive.

А: В старинные времена праздновали как следует?

Б: В Масленку, в проводы зимы.

А: Что было?

Б: Господи! Так праздновали хорошо, сейчас я не стала ходить. Не знаю, чего они там делают. Дак там в Масленку быка запрягали. Ему одевали валенки, снарядили его, в Кокс, в район ездили, дак первое место заняли. Песни поют все. Вот на Тихоньке сильно хорошо выступают с песнями.

¹²⁰ Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 258–259.

¹²¹ Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 259–265, 269.

¹²² Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 270.

A: Какие песни поют?

B: Старинные.

A: In the old days did you celebrate properly?

B: At *Maslenka*, at the end of winter.

A: What was it like?

B: Oh my God, how we celebrated! I have stopped going now. I don't know what they do these days. But in my time a bull would be harnessed up for *Maslenka*. They dressed him in felt boots, decorated him and rode around the Koksa region and they used to win the competition. Everybody sang songs. In Tikhon'ka [the nearest village] they have a really good choir.

A: What kind of songs do they sing?

B: Very old ones.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

Villagers remember the celebrations of former times.

Но вот, как вот праздники все гуляли. Зимой ездили через Катунь, когда лед станет. Наши с Уймона ездили туда гулять. А если летом, бухтарминцы опять сюда едут гулять. Гуляют там компаниями. Там, батюшки, там чего только! Пиво вагонами варили.

And so all the holidays were celebrated. In winter people would travel across the Katun' when there was ice. Our people from Uimon would go there [to the Bukhtarma River villages] to celebrate. But if it was summer, the Bukhtarmintsy would come here to celebrate. People went around together with their friends. Oh my, there was just everything! They made gallons of beer.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

Apart from home-made beer, villagers make wine for celebrations such as a wedding. Sap from birch trees is gathered in the spring and a light, fresh-tasting wine is ready by summer. (Plate 28).

Holidays were a time for showing off the finest new clothes. Making these required all the sewing skills a woman had acquired from her mother and grandmother. For ritual occasions such as holidays, clothing had to be traditional. The prosperity for which the Old Believers were known was displayed in the beads and silver jewellery worn by women as part of this traditional dress. It was not uncommon for a wealthy Old Believer to wear eight or more strands of large amber beads in graduated lengths which fit one inside the other and completely covered the front of her costume. A family's wealth was also evident from the amount of expensive clothing a woman had.

У бабы Кати, у матери-то у моей, у ней шибко много было платков кашемировых и атласных. И сарафанов и шалей много шибко. Муж богатый был.

My granny Katia, my mother's mother, had lots of cashmere and satin headscarves. And she had lots of *sarafany* and shawls. Her husband was wealthy.
Natal'ia Andreevna (1922)

Villagers sold and traded valuable furs such as bear, squirrel, marten, sable, fox, and polar fox. They made garments for themselves from deer and goat skin as well as from sheep, which provided them with fleece as well as wool for weaving.¹²³

A: А зимой чего одевали?

B: Хорошие были кто, богатые, дак шубой были крытые. Из молодых овечек, чтобы шерсть такая маленькая была, черным сукном покрыта была, красиво пошита. Полушубки шили, как военные. У меня мать шила. Мама у меня сильная мастерица была. Тулупы, полушубки – все шила.

A: And what did people wear in the winter?

B: The wealthy people would be covered in fur. There were these coats made from lamb's fleece, so the wool would be fine. It was faced with black woollen cloth, beautifully sewn. People made sheepskin coats, like military jackets. My mother sewed. She was a fantastic seamstress. She sewed everything - she made both *tulupy* and *polushubki* (short and long sheepskin coats).

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

A woman's most time-consuming and demanding work was preparing and spinning flax, from which she wove the cloth for everyday, holiday, and ritual clothing and for much of her family's domestic needs. Women learned many weaving techniques. Words of prayer or religious verse were woven into the pattern of belts worn by Old Believers, reminding them of their religious commitment.

B: Ну половики ткали, холсты всякие ткали, опояски ткали хорошие, пояски ткали; со словами я пояски ткала.

A: С какими словами?

B: Важными.

B: So people wove floor mats, they wove all kinds of linens, they wove fine wide belts, and narrow belts. I wove belts with words in them.

A: What kinds of words?

B: Important ones.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

¹²³ *Otpetyi*, 41

The religious ethos of Old Believer society in the Altai did not conflict with the affluence enjoyed by the villagers. Wealth was acceptable, but only when honestly attained. For example, a villager described a narrow escape her father and brother had when riding along the Katun' on horseback. They encountered a huge mass of poisonous 'fire snakes' jumping high in the air. Somehow they got past them. They attributed their escape to the fact that they had just thrown gold nuggets they had found on the trail into the river rather than bring them home. By resisting such temptation, members of the community strengthened their commitment to hard work and self-discipline.

Traditionally, young people met and became acquainted at the winter spinning evenings organised by girls in the village. In fine weather there were outdoor meeting places.

A: А где парней с девушками знакомили?

B: Но, вот примерно, весной назывался лужок, поляна. Где выберут красивое место, и всякие хороводные песни играли. В пары там играли, что жених невесту выберет.

A: And where did boys and girls get to know each other?

B: Well in the spring for example, there was what was called a meadow or a glade. They chose a pretty place and they sang all kinds of songs – choruses. They danced in pairs so that a young man would choose his bride.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

A young girl's beauty was associated with her single long plait, which was divided at the time of marriage.

Замуж шла, да видной красавицей была. Вот до пояса была у меня коса.

When I got married I was really very pretty. I had a plait which went to my waist.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

When she was married in 1922, according to Old Believer ritual this woman was given an icon by her mother and her husband's parents as a sign of their blessing of the marriage. Traditionally, a girl was given an icon and a boy a metal crucifix.

A: А вас мамонька иконой благословляла?

B: Мамонька, а с той стороны свекор со свекровкой.

A: And did your mother bless you with an icon?

B: Mama did, and from the other side my father and mother-in-law.

Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

She explained that weddings were celebrated in the Old Believer or Kerzhakh tradition.

А раз сибиряки мы были, дак по-кержацки гуляли...
But because we were Siberians, we celebrated [our weddings] in the Kerzhak way.
Dar'ia Stepanovna (1904)

Intermarriage between concords was a frequent occurrence in the mixed communities of Old Belief in the Altai. If they married outside their concord of Old Belief, young people ran the risk that parents might never forgive them. To marry *ubegom* (by running away) was a serious matter, but to marry *dobrom* or *s dobra* (with blessing) and with parental consent meant that the young couple would receive the blessing of parents and the Old Believer community in general. On the other hand, if a family were too poor to pay for a wedding and all it entailed, a couple might secretly marry and then return home to receive their parental blessings.

During the Soviet period, when religious expression of any sort was discouraged, Old Believers were afraid to have traditional weddings. However, under the circumstances parents frequently forgave their children and accepted the marriage.

- A: А замуж вышли с добра или убегом?
B: Не шибко с добра, убегом. Не спрашивали. Все боялись. Подходить-то ни к кому нельзя было.
A: А потом-то простили?
B: Потом втихомолку уже прощались. Не так, чтобы все знали. Так родители только были и все.
A: And did you get married *s dobra* or *ubegom*?
B: Not really *s dobra*, *ubegom*. We didn't ask. Everyone was afraid. There was no one you could go to ask.
A: And then were you forgiven?
B: Then we were secretly forgiven. Not so that everyone knew. Just our parents and that was it.
Agrafena Dmitrievna (1912)

There are Old Believers who feel that intermarriage could never really be forgiven, because it can never work. This woman, who referred to her family as Orthodox or church-going explained that her own daughter had married into a priestless Old Believer family and the marriage had ended in divorce as a result.

A: А к отцу, к матери не шли на прощину?

B: Ну, отец с матерью конечно прощают. Куда им деться. Вот у меня дочь-то выходила замуж за ихнего сына, но веры разные.

A: Ну, а они разве не старообрядцы?

B: Вот они старообрядцы.

A: А вы?

B: А мы православные. Мы церковные, а они нет. Так что – веры разные – житья не будет.

A: And people didn't go to their father and mother for forgiveness?

B: Your mother and father forgave you of course. What else could they do? My own daughter got married to the son [of strict Bespopovtsy] so they were from different faiths.

A: But weren't they Old Believers?

B: That's just it, they were Old Believers.

A: And you?

B: We are Orthodox. We are *tserkovnye* (church people) but they aren't. So the beliefs are different – that means it can never work out.

Maria Pavlovna (1929)

There were often economic reasons for marriage *ubegom*. Apart from the work a daughter could do for her parents, she sometimes had to contend with attempts by her family to arrange a financially beneficial marriage.¹²⁴

Но, и вот отец никак не отдает мать за отца замуж. Ему надо, чтобы она коров доила, огород завершила. Все. А уже отцу 23-ий год, а матери 22-ой. Они взяли – и в церкву. Денег мало привезли, поп никак не венчал. А что им, зато они убегом убежали. Там так ведь их сколько копили. Дак отец не меньше 20 раз попу кланялся, чтобы ее с сиротой обвенчали ради Христа. Потом обвенчали.

But her father refused to give my mother in marriage to my father. He wanted her to milk the cows and look after the vegetable garden. That was it. But my father was already 23 and my mother 22. They decided to go off to the church. They didn't bring much money with them and no way would the priest marry them. So what else could they do but marry *ubegom*. So they saved and saved, but still didn't have enough money and my father begged the priest at least twenty times so that my mother could marry the poor fellow, for heaven's sake. Then they were married.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

However, before the marriage took place, an old man was summoned from another village to put a spell on the girl.

¹²⁴ Minenko, 'K izucheniiu semeinoi etiki,' 78.

И вот мать приезжали с Абая сватали, а она полюбила и не пошла замуж за того парня. Они старика привозили, а коса у матери здоровая была. Девушки раньше, чтоб обязательно одну косу носить: грех был, если раздвоилась. И этот старичонка пришел и маму дернул за волосы. И сказал: «Сама, – говорит, – прибежишь.»

Meanwhile people had come from Abai to arrange a marriage for my mother, but she had already fallen in love and she wouldn't get married to the young man. So they brought an old guy. My mother still had her beautiful plait. In the past young girls absolutely had to wear one plait, it was a sin to divide it. So this really old man came and he pulled my mother by the hair and said, 'You will come to us of your own free will!'

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

She hid in a barn and refused to see anyone for a time. The sorcery came to nothing and when the young woman got married to the speaker's father, 'the spell that old guy put on her was gone'.

Apart from intermarriage between concords, intermarriage between Old Believer communities did also take place.¹²⁵ The shortage of women in the Bukhtarma villages meant that men sometimes found brides in Old Believer villages of the Poliaki. Ethnographic research seems to indicate that there must have been a certain number of such marriages. The similarities in everyday life, as well as the presence of flamboyant and colourful southern Russian and Ukrainian designs, typical of the handcrafts of the Poliaki, in the more reserved northern Russian costume, embroidery and weaving designs of the Bukhtarma and Uimon communities shows the influence of Poliaki women.¹²⁶

Поляки – эти вон в степи были. Но здесь не было их. Они были где-то там в Алтайском районе. Сюда к нам в горы не дошли. У нас была одна женщина в деревне. Например, «узdechki», так она «у печки» говорила. Из староверов же она была. Вот она была взятая оттуда-то, сюда уже привезена к нам.

There were Poliaki there on the steppe. But there were none here. They were somewhere around the Altai region but they didn't get as far as us here in the mountains. We did have one woman in the village. For example, she would say 'uzdechki' instead of 'u pechki' (by the stove). She was an Old Believer. She was taken from there and brought here.

Varvara Pavlovna (ca. 1935)

¹²⁵ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 314.

¹²⁶ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 11.

4.7 The Poliaki

Unlike the Kamenshchiki whose first communities were formed haphazardly by Old Believers with no one common European point of departure, at the time of their exile to Siberia the Poliaki were members of a well-established group of co-religionists, which had existed for a century in Vetka and neighbouring Starodub'e. Uprooted by Catherine the Great from a thriving economic and cultural centre of Old Belief on the Russian border with Poland, these Old Believers were successful farmers and prosperous merchants.¹²⁷ Apart from this, members of the community were experienced in the handcrafts which had flourished in Vetka including weaving, beadwork, and embroidery.

On the other hand, they had not enjoyed the gradual process of acclimatisation to their new environment which the Kamenshchiki had experienced from their less abrupt migration to the Altai. When the main group of Poliaki arrived from Vetka and Starodub'e in 1765/1766, although they were allowed to dress as they wished and practise their religion without persecution, they lost much of the independence they had enjoyed outside the Russian state in Vetka. In the Altai they were registered as state peasants and although they were not at first required to work at the mines, as *raskol'niki* they were obliged to pay a double soul tax like all other schismatics in Russia. They were exempted from this tax for four years, while any Old Believers who had volunteered to transfer to Siberia were granted the tax-free period of six years offered to them by Catherine the Great.¹²⁸

Within a few decades of each other but under different political circumstances, both the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers and the Poliaki had established similar networks of villages settled by new generations of Old Believers.¹²⁹

At the end of the eighteenth century the Poliaki were assigned to new mines which had opened closer to their villages. Apart from the difficult and hazardous work and the loss of relative freedom they had had as state peasants, the Old Believers were forced to have contact with 'worldly' people and with the Russian state. Fearing in particular that their children would be corrupted by this influence when they were sent to the mines, many Poliaki bribed their way out of this obligation. Faced with the same

¹²⁷ Lileev, *Iz istorii raskola*, 82–85.

¹²⁸ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 313; Shvetsova, 11.

¹²⁹ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 313.

alternatives as the Kamenshchiki who had seen no other means of protecting their faith under similar circumstances in 1747, a few Poliaki also fled to the mountains along the Bukhtarma River to join the more isolated and independent Kamenshchiki.¹³⁰ The influence of these Old Believers, along with that of the Poliaki women who were taken as wives by the Kamenshchiki, may explain in part the extremely similar lifestyle and culture of the two separate groups of Old Believers in the Altai. From 1798 to 1861 the Poliaki remained assigned to the Altai metallurgical industry.¹³¹

Professor P. S. Pallas was the first explorer to document the living conditions of Poliaki in the Altai. Writing in 1770, he marvelled at the advanced development, order, and quality of their earliest villages, settled between 1763 and 1769. He referred to the Old Believers as 'hardworking Polish farmers' and noted that there were already 150 houses in one of their villages, despite the difficulties of settling where there had not been sufficient timber or arable land.¹³² In 1776, the botanist Dr. G. Berens, who also referred to the Poliaki as honest and hardworking farmers, counted from 200 to 300 homes belonging to Poliaki in Bobrovka, a village settled by Old Believers between 1768 and 1770, shortly after their arrival in the Altai. Nearly 80 years later, when M. Shvetsova visited the same area, there were 21 villages of Poliaki in the region surrounding Bobrovka. Situated on the Bobrovka, a tributary of the Ul'ba River, the village is on the site of an earlier fortified settlement, part of the original Russian defence line north of Ust'-Kamenogorsk in south-western Siberia. There were still some Cossack families living near the settlement, and although for the most part the Poliaki rarely mixed with local outsiders, some of the Cossack settlers converted to Old Belief and came to live with them. In addition, the Poliaki were joined by the families of retired soldiers from Poland who converted to Old Belief.¹³³

Interviews conducted in 1996 with Old Believers in Bobrovka, East Kazakhstan, indicate that the way of life in this village is comparable to that in Verkh-Uimon. Despite the fact that the two communities of Old Believers in the Altai did not live side by side, their lifestyle and their attitude to questions of faith, work, and society were virtually identical.

¹³⁰ Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 208–209; Shvetsova, 15–19, 21.

¹³¹ Shvetsova, 18.

¹³² P. S. Pallas, *Puteshetsvie po raznym mestam Rossiiskogo gosudarstva*, ch. 2, kn. 2 (St Petersburg, 1786), 222, 227; Shvetsova, 9–10.

¹³³ G. Berens, 'O sostoianii novykh poselenii v Iuzhnoi Sibiri, i o tamoshnem pchelovodstve,' (Iz Nordishches Archiv, juni 1803. Sochinenie G. Berensa), *Sibirskii vestnik*, ch. 10, (St Petersburg, 1820),

4.71 The Ancient Faith

In 1898, most of the Poliaki questioned by Shvetsova did not know where their ancestors had lived before they came to Vetka.¹³⁴ Although they had come from the centre of priestly Old Belief in Europe, as they had in Vetka and Starodub'e the Poliaki in Altai belonged to a range of Popovtsy and Bespopovtsy – Beglopopovtsy, Belokrinitsy, Pomortsy, Filippovtsy, Fedoseevtsy, Chasovenniki and other smaller groupings. By the end of the nineteenth century, over half the Poliaki had embraced Edinoverie, while there were also numbers who had joined the *samodurovtsy*, a sect which did not mix with other Old Believers.¹³⁵ Although it has been suggested that in their distant outpost the Poliaki may have become more tolerant of 'Nikonian' Orthodoxy and while in some villages members of the priestly concords even prayed together, priestless Old Believers always remained apart. The Poliaki did not marry outside Old Belief.¹³⁶ At the end of the nineteenth century, although in general the Poliaki had a limited understanding of the differences between concords or even of the difference between Old Believers and Orthodox Russians, they still clung carefully to the traditions they had learned from their fathers.¹³⁷

In the mid-twentieth century every villager in Bobrovka understood which concord of Old Belief his ancestors belonged to, even though at that time there were no churches left in the village and religious observances had to be practised in secret, if at all.¹³⁸ In Bobrovka in the late 1990s, as in Verkh-Uimon, villagers are not precise in defining their concord of Old Belief, but use similar terminology (*Tserkovniki*) to refer to adherents of Edinoverie.

In the early 1800s the difficulty of finding priests had lessened for Old Believers in the Urals and Siberia, as they were allowed to acquire Edinoverie priests from the Irgiz priestly community to minister in the Old Believer villages. Wealthy metallurgical merchants even bought priests for their own parishes and if they were unhappy with

294, 296; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 313, 315; Shvetsova, 11–12, 21, 24–25.

¹³⁴ Shvetsova, 14–15.

¹³⁵ Shvetsova, 36, 48–50. The *dyrniki* who prayed to the East through a hole in the wall of their home, also had a wide following in Siberia and like the *Samodurovtsy* did not pray before icons. *Staroobriadchestvo*, s.v. 'dyrniki'. Baidan, 93–94. Chasovenniki were known by other names as well, including *starikovtsy* and *nikolaevskie bespopovtsy*. *Staroobriadchestvo*, s.v. 'chasovennoe soglasie'.

¹³⁶ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 314.

¹³⁷ Iadrntsev, 99; Shvetsova, 43–45.

¹³⁸ This is the view of Professor Maerova, based on her research in Bobrovka between 1953–1964.

them, sent them back.¹³⁹ Influential in this regard was an Edinoverie priest from Irgiz who was popular amongst the Poliaki and presumably responsible for the conversion of many Poliaki to this faith. Priests also came to the Poliaki villages from Starodub'e.¹⁴⁰

Poliaki from other concords of Old Belief coped with the absence of dedicated liturgical spaces in different ways. After 1846, in the case of the Belokrinitsy, for example, a priest living in one of the villages would travel to other villages, where a linen tent would be put up to form a temporary sacred enclosure where a religious service could be conducted. When it was over, the cloth was stored away.¹⁴¹

As in the Uimon region, prayer rooms were usually established for other Old Believers in the home of their spiritual leader, the *nastavnik* or *d'iak* who performed many of the duties of a priest. Priestly Old Believer leaders also maintained contact with Old Believer centres in European Russia as well as with the Semeiskie in Zabaikal'e. This ensured that priests from Starodub'e and the Irgiz monasteries would come periodically to the Altai to administer religious rites such as baptism and marriage in the villages.¹⁴²

Unable to find and establish their own hierarchy and priesthood, from the end of the eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, Chasovenniki began to rely on their own *nastavniki* or *stariki* (elders) to perform the functions of a priest. The homes of these leaders served as *chasovni* (chapels), often richly furnished and decorated. The only visible difference between these domestic prayer rooms and an opulent church was the absence of an altar.¹⁴³

In 1830 local authorities in the Altai sent word to the highest levels of Russian government that the building of new prayer houses, new chapels, and the reconstruction of existing ones had taken place in Bobrovka and other villages. The government's reaction was severe. Although the chapels could remain in place, the prayer houses were to be destroyed. The Old Believer leaders were punished for allowing these illegal structures in the village and books and icons were confiscated from prayer rooms and

¹³⁹ Baidin, 96.

¹⁴⁰ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 320, 323.

¹⁴¹ Shvetsova, 46.

¹⁴² Minenko, 'Politicheskie ssyl'nye,' 199, 208, 210; Shvetsova, 46.

¹⁴³ Baidin, 93–95, 102; Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Kto takie,' 35–36; Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 321–322; Robson, 32–34.

private homes.¹⁴⁴ According to residents of Bobrovka, at the time of the 1917 Revolution, Old Believers had two churches in their village.

The same initial reluctance on the part of older people in the village to discuss this or other religious questions was as evident in Bobrovka as in Verkh-Uimon. However, after a second or third meeting, people became less reserved.

A: А чего никто не рассказывает нам про веру? Ведь это все старообрядцы здесь живут.

B: Не, православные у нас.

A: Ну, православные и есть старообрядцы. Это старого обряда люди.

B: Вот – это единоверческие.

A: Единоверческие, поповские, беспоповские – все вместе – это старообрядцы. А никто не рассказывает, видно, боялись раньше говорить и так привыкли бояться, да?

B: Никто никого не боялся. Веру знали, кто какой веры. Вот если, а это было, вот любит, значит, эту девушку, она – православная, а он – беспоповский, вот до самой до свадьбы все ругаются – «не ходи к ней и все, не ходи к ней и все, на черта она тебе сдалась?» А православные тоже говорят: «Че за беспоповского пойдешь?! На черта он сдался. Иди к черту», как их называли. У них своя вера, свой обычай, они тяжело жили, они не мирские. Приходит человек напиться, ему отдельную посудину дают напиться, свою не дадут.

A: But why doesn't anyone talk to us about his faith? Everyone who lives here is an Old Believer.

B: No, we are Orthodox

A: Yes, Orthodox are Old Believers. People who go by the old ritual.

B: So that is Edinovertsy.

A: Edinovertsy, Popovtsy, Bespopovtsy – all those together are Old Believers. But no one talks to us about it – it seems they used to be afraid to talk and so they got used to being afraid, is that it?

B: Nobody was afraid of anyone. People knew the faiths and who was which faith. So it would happen that if a boy who was a Bespopovets fancied an Orthodox girl, then right up until the wedding they would nag him: 'Don't get married to her, don't get married to her, why the hell would you marry her?' But the Orthodox would say: 'Why are you getting married to a Bespopovets? What the hell do you need him for? The hell with him,' as they used to chide them. They had their faith, their customs. They lived very strictly – they were different to the rest. If someone came for a drink, he would be given a separate cup to drink from. They didn't give their own.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

¹⁴⁴ Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 209.

Since everyone in the Old Believer villages identified strongly with one concord or another, it was clearly preferable to marry within the same concord and to receive parental blessings.

A: К какому Вы принадлежали: поповские, беспоповские?

B: Нет, не поповские. Беспоповские. И муж тоже из беспоповских.

A: Вы добром шли?

B: Добром.

A: Which did you belong to: Popovtsy, Bespopovtsy?

B: No, not Popovtsy. Bespopovtsy. And my husband was also from the Bespopovtsy.

A: Did you get married *dobrom*?

B: Yes we did.

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912)

Although no Old Believers approved of mixed marriages, priestless Old Believers were generally stricter in their attempt not to mix with members of another concord. In the villages separate cemeteries were usually maintained for each concord.¹⁴⁵

Because of their involvement in mining, many of the Old Believers had acquired technical skills and knowledge of metallurgy. In addition, these Old Believers had not led completely insular lives. Despite their isolation in the Altai as they had travelled great distances to reach Siberia, many were exposed to other ethnic groups and to the geography of Russia. Others continued to travel to maintain contacts which provided access to priests and other centres of Old Belief in Russia. However, in matters of formal education, the Poliaki retained the same religious focus as in the Bukhtarma and Uimon communities. At the end of the nineteenth century in the Bobrovka region, numbers of Old Believers could read the holy books, but very few were able to write or read contemporary Russian.¹⁴⁶ Their teachers were Old Believer *nastavniki* who educated boys in the holy texts. In some villages there were parish schools affiliated to Edinoverie churches, where subjects other than religious texts or history were studied. However, parents were still reluctant to send their children to school.¹⁴⁷ Girls remained generally illiterate, although some of the oldest women in Bobrovka said they were able to read letters.

After the introduction of Communist rule in Russia, as elsewhere in the Altai Old Believers in Bobrovka were persecuted for their wealth and because of the religious basis

¹⁴⁵ Shvetsova, 46.

¹⁴⁶ Shvetsova, 65–66.

¹⁴⁷ Shvetsova, 66.

of their communities. Villagers explained that both their churches were destroyed in 1922. As in the past their icons and books were confiscated. (Plates 29, 30, 31 and 32).

A: А иконы запретили?

B: Запретили. Ходили по дворам. Комсомольцы.

A: And were icons forbidden?

B: Yes. They went around all the houses, the Komsomoltsy [to take them away].

Vassa Proter'evna (1900)

4.72 Work and Economy

The Poliaki settled primarily in the more mountainous region of the Altai situated between the Uba and Ul'ba Rivers north of Ust'-Kamenogorsk. In this area cattle farming and beekeeping were more suitable occupations than sowing grain which took place on a larger scale in the more northerly steppe region also settled by Poliaki.¹⁴⁸ Apart from agriculture, in the twentieth century residents of Bobrovka continued to work in the mines north of their village, as far away as Barnaul.

На севере, от Барнаула было, на шахты, а как их там называли «рудники» открывались. И мужчины уходили туда работать а дома оставались одни женщины.

To the north of Barnaul mines or pits, as they called them there, were opened. And the men would go to work there and only the women would be left at home.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

As they had done in Vetka and Starodub'e, the Poliaki lived well in the Altai and became affluent farmers. Their agricultural skills, hard work, and four tax-free years helped them adapt quickly to the new conditions in the Altai. Within a few years of their arrival they were considered prosperous.¹⁴⁹ Like the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers, the Poliaki had large farms with considerable numbers of horses and pigs. Families often had thirty dairy cows. Everyone kept sheep and, according to one informant, 'countless' farmyard fowl.

B: И доеные и нетеля, и телятки, и свиньи в засадке и по воле, и в кустах даже ходили, и лошади на каких пахали, сеяли.

A: Ну, по сколько лошадей было?

¹⁴⁸ Shvetsova, 25.

¹⁴⁹ Pokrovskii, *Protest*, 315–316.

B: Штук по десять. Потому что рабочие лошади были, и выходные лошади были. Вот, например, у моего отца сын был один. Вот ему два выходных коня держали. Он уедет, катает девчонок на одном, на другом выйдет – сам поедет либо-куда кататься.

B: And we had dairy cows and breeding cows and calves and pigs in the yard and they even roamed way off in the distance. And there were horses for ploughing and sowing.

A: How many horses did you have?

B: We had about ten. There were working horses and horses for riding. For example, my father had just one son. They kept two riding horses for him. He had one of them for girls to ride on and the other he kept for himself when he went off riding somewhere.

Matrena Gerasimovna (1923)

As it had done in Vetka, beekeeping became an important part of the rural economy of the Poliaki. In 1770, Pallas noted that apiculture was already an established activity.¹⁵⁰ Because of the cold winters, the Old Believers at first encountered difficulty keeping the bees alive. With the help of Russian beekeepers the Poliaki were able to order new hives from the Kiev region. By the mid-1780s beekeepers from Bobrovka had journeyed to European Russia to buy hives which they brought back to the Altai and sold in the Old Believer villages. In order to set up an apiary, residents had to inform the village community that they were taking land for that purpose, since a new apiary could only be established at a designated distance from an existing one. By 1826, in one of the districts inhabited by the Poliaki, there were nearly 19,000 hives producing approximately 3,500 poods (57,330 kilograms or 126,000 pounds) of honey *per annum*. Like the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers, the Poliaki had a rich folklore connected to the health and safety of their bees. Rather than take other preventive measures, the villagers used spells and incantations to ward off disease they believed was visited on their bees by evil spirits.¹⁵¹

Artels of various sizes were organised for different types of work in the Poliaki villages. Groups of relatives or villagers worked together in forestry, fur trapping, fishing, farming, or beekeeping. Women also had artels for bleaching linen. As it was in the extended families where individuals worked in rotation, in the artels the same system prevailed. For example, a group of 200 loggers would divide into parties of from 3 to 11 men to fell timber in the forest near a mountain river such as the Uba. Every man in the

¹⁵⁰ Pallas, 217.

¹⁵¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 125; Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 204–205; Shvetsova, 70–71.

artel had a horse and cart for hauling logs to the riverbank. One member of each small group was designated to get the horses home, while two others were assigned in turn to raft the logs or prepare food for the other members of the artel. In two or three weeks, when everyone's timber was ready, all the small groups joined forces in one large artel to float the logs downriver. In addition to safety, this system provided an economical use of each man's time and energy.¹⁵²

A system of *pomoch'* was also practised in the villages. A *pomoch'* took place only on weekdays, since it was considered sinful to work on a Sunday. The Poliaki did not entertain their helpers the evening of a *pomoch'*. They waited for the next holiday to have a 'thank you' party for their helpers. Beer was made and food provided for the occasion. Sometimes there was also entertainment such as horse riding. Days of help were usually arranged for the grain harvest, but sometimes also for cutting and making hay. In other cases, there might be a *pomoch'* organised to build a new house. Any of these were considered invitations which could not be refused.¹⁵³

A: А у вас дом, вот ваша изба еще давно поставлена?

B: Давно, тут много пережило. И я в тем.

A: Но она хорошо, по правилам поставлена. Помощь устраивали?

B: Помощью. Тут четыре брата жили.

A: And your house, here, your *izba*, was it built long ago?

B: Yes, a lot of people have lived in it, including me.

A: But it is a fine house, properly built. Did you organise a *pomoshch'* to build it?

B: Yes. I had four brothers.

Lidia Anan'evna (1916)

Women worked alongside men in the fields, where they sowed *belaiia pshenitsa* (white wheat) and *iachmen'* (barley). The Poliaki ploughed up their land with a Russian *plug* (plough) normally associated with southern and southeastern Russia. It was heavy and usually harnessed to oxen for ploughing wheat fields.¹⁵⁴ Until approximately 1900 the Bukhtarma Old Believers also used such a heavy wooden *plug*, harnessed to five to eight horses, depending on the soil. By 1905 most of their ploughs were purchased and made of

¹⁵² Shvetsova, 72–74.

¹⁵³ Shvetsova, 72–73.

¹⁵⁴ Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivogo velikorusskogo iazyka* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo inostrannykh i natsional'nykh slovarei, 1956, orig. pub. Moscow and St Petersburg: Vol'f, 1881), s.v. 'plug.'; Minenko 'Politicheskie ssyl'nye,' 204.

iron.¹⁵⁵ The wooden *sokha* used by other farmers in Siberia was a simpler, more primitive ploughing tool.¹⁵⁶

Visiting Bobrovka and other Old Believer villages in 1776, Dr. Berens reiterated the observations of Pallas in regard to the exemplary condition of the Poliaki farms and to the work ethic evident amongst these Old Believers. When he reached the village itself he found numbers of neatly dressed women of different ages singing and joking as they went about their work.¹⁵⁷

Apart from work in the fields, making linen was the most demanding aspect of every woman's domestic responsibilities. Many villagers repeated the same words:

Работы много было со льном.
There was a lot of work involved with linen.
Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912)

In addition to fine shirt linen, women wove traditional patterned cloth, such as the striped material used for men's trousers. As well as weaving and embroidering for their families, at the end of the nineteenth century, some women in the Poliaki villages also worked to order, embroidering linen towels and formal head-dresses which were part of the Old Believers' ritual costume.¹⁵⁸

Вот и начнешь холст ткать. Не было брюк-то. Мужикам накрасим всякие, полосочку наснуем. Это брюки шили, штаны их называли. А скатерти – так, всяким цветкам. Всем было наткано.

So you would get started weaving some linen. There were no [readymade] trousers. We would dye all kinds of things for the men and we would warp a stripe. People made trousers – they were called *shtany* – and tablecloths, with all kinds of patterned designs. Everybody had woven things.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900)

The treatment of flax, which had to be processed in the autumn so yarn could be spun during the winter months, required many hours of labour. As soon as they were seven or eight years of age, girls in the village began to spin flax. Then they learned to help their mothers warp the loom.

¹⁵⁵ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 85–86.

¹⁵⁶ Dal', s.v. 'sokha.'; Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 204.

¹⁵⁷ Berens, 298.

¹⁵⁸ Shvetsova, 75.

During Soviet collectivisation almost everything the villagers owned for their domestic and agricultural work – animals or equipment – was confiscated by the state.

A: А у вас раньше кони были?

B: Были. Сколько? Я помню, как я у дедоньки жила, коней много было, штук по двадцать запрягали. А в колхозе, уж все забрали, коней забрали, коров забрали. Это сейчас и коней держат, и коровы, и бараны. А мы уже сносились.

A: And did you have horses in the past?

B: We did. How many? I remember when I lived with my grandfather, there were horses, twenty horses in harness. But they took everything for the collective farm. They took the horses and the cows. Now there are people here who keep horses, cows and sheep. But we are old and worn out.

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912)

Their working time was also confiscated. People who had created an orderly and organised economy based on a careful structure of responsibilities were sent to work in collective state enterprises. This allowed them no time to continue their own domestic routines, except at night.

B: А лето придет, пахать мужики поедут, сеют, а хлеб взойдет – полоть его, полоть уже в августе полют. Все на пашню, дома кто-нибудь один с детьми останется, а все на пашне. Прополют хлеб. Покос. Косишь вручную, не то что машинами сейчас. Покос кончится, жать начинается. Жали серпами. Все до одной женщины на пашне... а когда отмолоотишься с хлебом, опять лен подходит, опять за лен берешься. Это уж в октябре тянется... А колхоз начался, работы еще больше было. День работаешь, еще на ночь оставляют тебя. Много.

A: А веселое что в жизни было?

B: Веселого ничего. Хвалиться нечем, нечем. Наша жизнь прошла ни в чем, в работе, в нужде, в недостатке. Тридцать лет одна живу. Сперва держала коровешку, тут не стала держать. Пешком ходить косить далеко. Помочь некому.

B: When summer came, they sowed and when the grain was up they weeded it, they weeded in August. Everyone was in the field. Someone would stay home with the children, but everyone else was in the field. The grain field was weeded. Then there was the haymaking. You cut by hand. There were no machines the way there are now. Haymaking finished and then the harvest started. Every last woman was in the field. And when you had threshed the grain, then the flax was waiting. You had to get to work on the flax again. This went on into October. But when the collective farm started, there was even more work. You worked all day, and still they made you work at night. There was so much work.

A: And were there enjoyable times in your life?

B: There was nothing enjoyable. No way, absolutely no way. Our life passed in nothing, in work, in want, in shortages. I have lived alone for 30 years. At first

I kept a milking cow, but then I stopped keeping one. It was too far to go on foot to cut the hay. There was no one to help.

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912)

In some cases entire families from Bobrovka were sent to prison camps in East Kazakhstan, simply because they had been wealthy.

A: А до первой войны было хорошо?

B: Да, коров держали. По 18. Лошадей, луга свои имели, пашки свои имели. Называли тогда «зажиточные крестьяне», а то были кулаки.

A: Но это уже потом. Самых трудолюбивых ведь называли, так ведь?

B: Да, да, да.

A: Согнали ведь всех потом?

B: Согнали.

A: But you lived well before the First War?

B: Yes. We kept cows, about 18. We had horses, our own meadows, our own fields. They called us 'wealthy peasants', but then we were called 'kulaks'.

A: But that was later. Isn't that what they called the most hard-working?

B: That's right.

A: And then they rounded up everyone?

B: Yes, they rounded them up

Vassa Proter'evna (1900)

Families no longer had the resources to support a lifestyle of generations. Apart from the loss of tools and animals, men sent to labour camps or war rarely came back, adding to the domestic responsibilities of the women left behind. Women had no time to grow and process flax. They no longer had enough time to weave, except late at night or sometimes during the winter. Centuries of experience and traditional skills brought by the Old Believers to the Altai from their former homes in Europe began to disappear.

Раньше ведь этого не было – производственные работы, своя работа ведь была, жили единолично, колхозов не было, в тридцатом году колхоз-то образовался.

In the past you know there was none of that – no production work for the state. We had our own personal work; we lived individually. There were no *kolkhozy* (collective farms). In 1930 the *kolkhoz* was set up.

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912)

Women drove tractors, worked in the fields and tried to buy what cloth they could or they tore up and reused materials woven by their mothers in the past such as tablecloths or domestic linens.

Брезентовые тряпки брали, их дергали. Потом ткали их, сновали да ткали. Дранки драли. Старое, сносишь что, раздерешь.

We took rag cloths, and pulled them apart. Then we wove them; we did the warp and we wove. We pulled the cloth apart. If you wore something out, you took it apart.

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912)

In the 1950s and 1960s some women still found time to make basic household furnishings such as floor mats, often using the torn up pieces of cloth as yarn.

A: А вы эти половики сами ткали?

B: Ну, а кто же мне ткал? Все сама ткала.

A: Did you weave these floor mats yourself?

B: Well, who else would have woven them? I did it all myself.

Matrena Gerasimovna (1923)

While women of this generation still practised weaving on a small scale or had at least a rudimentary knowledge of the craft, for the most part they did not have time to acquire the sophisticated skills of pattern weaving their mothers could have passed on to them. On the other hand, they remember every detail of growing and processing flax and many of these women still spin yarn for knitting or crochet, not from flax as they had traditionally done, but from wool fleece and goat hair. They embroider, crochet and knit, but weaving, which in the Old Believer villages of the Altai was not only a handcraft but also an art form, is now only a memory. Some women still keep their disassembled loom in the attic. Others said they had burned their loom. Some said it without concern, as purchased cloth may have liberated them from painstaking work.

4.73 Family, Home, and Social Life

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Russian geographer N. M. Iadrntsev described the Poliaki as ‘a strong and pure bred population which has remained faithful to the past and to its traditions’.¹⁵⁹ Old Believers maintained a society based on the sanctity of Russian tradition, often citing the traditions of their fathers as the basis of their views. In the isolation of the Altai Mountains, innovation from urban contact did

¹⁵⁹ Iadrntsev, 99.

not create conflict within the community for many generations. This is not to say that injustice or other forms of social discord did not arise or that all concords shared the same views in regard to the practice of Old Belief. But in general, until traces of urbanisation appeared in their villages in the early twentieth century, Old Believers in the Altai lived in a spiritual and cultural accord described by members of the older generation.

In Bobrovka, houses were built in traditional Russian architectural style which differentiated them from anything else in Siberia. Often built with two stories and an upper gallery, they had high pitched porch roofs decorated with turned wooden railings sometimes painted in different colours. Intricate woodcarving was added around the windows and roofs of the houses. Carved wooden roosters frequently embellished the windows or gates.¹⁶⁰ Here too, windows did not usually face the street.¹⁶¹ (Plate 17). The ceilings, walls and furniture of the Poliaki houses were decorated with colourful paintwork. Some researchers suggest that this type of decoration may have started in these Old Believer villages and spread north through the Altai to the Bukhtarma and Katun' valleys.¹⁶² In practically every house we visited in Bobrovka in 1996, painted murals decorated the walls of one or more rooms. Although the murals are painted in a style vaguely reminiscent of traditional Russian folk art, this is the relatively recent work of a local artist. (Plate 23).

Houses were divided into a 'dark' and a 'light' section, each containing two or three rooms. The *izba*, or 'black' section, contained the kitchen, domestic storage area and living quarters of the owners. The built-in stove was whitewashed, with painted wooden panels underneath. Log walls were usually left exposed but evenly planed. Occasionally they were whitewashed or covered with wallpaper. The houses were tidy and clean. The *svetlitsa* or 'clean' section was reserved for guests and for a married son. Mirrors in both sections were draped with woven and embroidered towels. Garlands of dried flowers were frequently hung around the ceiling. Several icons painted in pre-Nikonian style were placed in the front corner of the first room from the entrance door. Typically, a metal icon representing the crucifixion on the eight-pointed cross would be

¹⁶⁰ Shvetsova, 26.

¹⁶¹ Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 199.

¹⁶² Blomkvist, 'Postroiki,' 273; Shvetsova, 26–27.

included in this group.¹⁶³ Just as in Verkh-Uimon, the Old Believers in Bobrovka maintained a large family unit and lived in *sviazi* they added to when a son got married.

Discipline was strict in these Old Believer families, where children were expected to do nothing without parental permission.¹⁶⁴ Two daughters in their 70s explained that they still obey their 96-year old mother without question.

Мы все ее слушаем. Ее слово – закон для нас.

We all obey her. Her word is law for us.

Varvara Mikhailovna (1923)

Life was difficult for young women whose fathers who would not allow them to marry.¹⁶⁵

A: Отец строгий был?

B: Ага. И как-то ему – нас было много – восемь человек, а он нас ни одну никуда не отдал. Четыре брата, четыре сестры было.

A: Was your father strict?

B: Yeah. Well, he had to be, there were a lot of us – eight children – and he would not let one of the girls out of his sight. There were four brothers and four sisters.

Lidia Anan'evna (1916)

Sometimes there were straightforward economic reasons for this.

Вот отец уедет, а девки уже в возрасте. А замуж их отец не выдает, дома работать некому. Она сходится с каким-то, кого-то полюбит и от того принесет ребенка. Этого ребенка не крестят, потому что в брак не вступили, не венчались, и все равно не запишут. Вот какие законы были, очень тяжелые.

So a father would leave [to work in the mines] and his daughters would be grown up. But the father wouldn't let them get married – there would be no one to work at home. So a girl would take up with someone, fall in love with someone and then have a baby. The child would not be baptised, because the couple had not been married, there had not been a wedding, so they could not register it. Those were the laws and they were very tough.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

¹⁶³ Shvetsova, 26–27.

¹⁶⁴ Minenko, 'K izucheniiu semeinoi etiki,' 82; Shvetsova, 64.

¹⁶⁵ Minenko 'K izucheniiu semeinoi etiki,' 78.

This strictness could be taken to extremes, with tragic results. Girls who gave birth outside marriage were treated unsympathetically by the community and bore the responsibility for their circumstances.

И, значит, она должна заплатить штраф или корову отдать за то, чтоб ребенка крестили. Это, значит, дева, у одной нечем не было, корову ей мать не дала, чтобы штраф заплатить, ребенка не стали крестить, за это ей определили 20 палок. Она: «Я уж буду палки принимать, бейте, а мне платить нечем, а крестить все равно надо, некрещеного ребенка иметь нельзя.» Вот она получила 20 палок и скончалась. Потом ребенок мертвый родился, у нее кровотечение пошло, она и скончалась. Вот священник законы такие держал в себе!

So she had to pay a fine or give a cow so that her child would be baptised. And this particular girl had nothing. Her mother wouldn't give her a cow to pay the fine, and they would not baptise the child unless she took 20 blows from the stick. She said: 'Hit me with the stick – I will take the beating. I have nothing to pay the fine with, but I still have to have the child baptised. You cannot have an unbaptised child'. So she got twenty strokes of the stick and she died. Then her child was born dead. She had a haemorrhage and she died. Those were the sorts of laws the priests had!

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

Whereas the priests may not have been morally upstanding, their word was law. This woman's contemptuous description of the Old Believer priests in Bobrovka is reminiscent of arguments debated by the Beglopopovtsy in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in Kerzhenets and Vetka regarding the moral qualifications of fugitive priests who were willing to be reordained in Old Belief.¹⁶⁶

А священники, они и раньше жрали (в великий пост). Они, говорят, самые большие преступники, самые грешники. Грешнее попа нету. У него душа никогда не наполняется, ему всегда надо больше.

But in the past the priests stuffed themselves (during Lent). People said that they were the very biggest offenders, the worst sinners. There was no one more sinful than a priest. He was never satisfied. He always had to have more.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

Even when they no longer had churches and priests in their village, in Bobrovka the attitude of Old Believers to intermarriage between concords or outside Old Belief was just as unequivocal as in Verkh-Uimon.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ *Opyt*, 675.

¹⁶⁷ Minenko, 'Ssyl'nye krest'iane,' 203.

- A: А Вы из старообрядческой семьи?
 B: Да.
 A: Поповская или беспоповская?
 B: В поповстве.
 A: И выходили замуж за поповского?
 B: Нет, убегом. Убегом. Так меня отец и не простил. Умер и не простил. Мамка простила, а он говорит: «Живите себе, а я с вами не буду жить».
 A: And you are from an Old Believer family?
 B: Yes.
 A: Are you priestly or priestless?
 B: Priestly.
 A: And did you get married to a priestly Old Believer?
 B: No. *Ubegom*. So my father never forgave me. He died and he hadn't forgiven me. Mama forgave me, but he said: 'Live your own life, but I am not going to live with you'.

Lidia Anan'evna (1916)

The Revolution did bring some improvements to women's rights.

Десять десятин сеяли, когда жили единолично. Их надо посеять и убрать. Мать – старушка, отец – все еще на руднике работает. Вот девки нарождаются, тому и горе, на них еще и землю не давали до революции. Землю только на мальчиков давали. Только в 20-ых годах стали одинаково давать, что на мальчишек, то и на девочек. Жить-то нечем, а без земли так жить нельзя.

People used to sow ten *desiatny* (27 acres) when they lived on their own holding. They had to sow and do the harvest. The mother would be old, and the father still working in the mine. So when daughters were born, it was difficult: before the Revolution they still wouldn't give them land. They only gave land to the boys. They only started to give it equally in the 1920s – what they gave to the boys, they also gave to the girls. There was no way to live. It was impossible to live without land.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

Traditionally, young people of this generation met at the evening spinning parties organised by the girls in the village. In addition to the serious work of spinning something to bring home to show their mothers, the girls arranged for boys to come along to talk, play music, sing and dance.¹⁶⁸ In addition, young people and newly married couples from the Poliaki villages would meet after holiday celebrations in a grassy meadow. Groups of young girls could gather on the street together on such an

¹⁶⁸ Shvetsova, 55.

occasion, but not meet with the boys until they reached their destination.¹⁶⁹ Older people gathered nearby. Everyone came dressed in their best holiday clothing, sang songs, and danced. A young man would choose his bride. Gifts would be exchanged – a woven belt for a man, earrings for a girl. Unless there were economic reasons to prevent it, in general it was accepted that young people married for love.¹⁷⁰

На Покров все гуляли компаниями, девки гуляли, только без ребят. Ребята не гуляли раньше. Это было вроде бы стыдно, что ли.

So for Pokrov (Feast of the Intercession) everyone went out together with their friends. The girls went out but without the boys. In the past boys did not go out with them. It would have been sort of shameful.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

For the Edinovertsy, church services also provided a meeting place for young people.

А в воскресенье все девки ходили в церкву. Куда больше? Выходу не было. На полянку ходили вечером, а утром в воскресенье в церкву. Нарядные, самые лучшие наряды надевали. Косу заплетали, в косу ленту вплетали и стоят и влюбились в церкви.

But on Sunday all the young girls went to church. What else could they do? There was no other way to meet. In the evening they went to their *polianka* (meadow) but on Sunday morning they went to church. They put on their very best clothes. They braided their plait and wove a ribbon into the plait and they stood and fell in love in the church.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

For the Poliaki, as for all Old Believers, holiday clothing was an important expression of their ritual life. Their specific costume not only supported the religious rituals of Old Belief, but also served as a means of identification between communities with a shared experience of persecution and a shared belief in the anti-Christian corruptness of Western innovation. Men as well as women had to have something new for a holiday, but cut and made in a traditional style. Women dyed yarn and wove cloth for special patterned holiday trousers for the men.

¹⁶⁹ Shvetsova, 55.

¹⁷⁰ Shvetsova, 52–54, 57.

Для праздников брюки шили. Вот полосатым красишь.
We would sew trousers for the holidays. You would dye [yarn] for the stripes.
Vassa Proter'evna (1900)

Iadrintsev noted the fine carriage and figures of Poliaki women working alongside men in the fields.¹⁷¹ Perhaps the many years of such work accounts for the physical energy and upright bearing of the women we met in their 70s, 80s, and even 90s. Despite their lack of formal education, they possess the third attribute of literacy – the ability to figure. The next chapter surveys the weaving traditions practised by these women. In executing all the stages of their craft, they demonstrate not only the technical precision required of good weavers, but also the eye for beauty and aesthetic judgement required of fine craftsmen.

Conclusion

Their religious observances, economic prosperity, family and social life as well as their network of closely related villages in the Altai can be seen as a continuum of the life Old Believers had led previously in Vetka, Starodub'e, and other parts of Russia. The details of this life remembered and described by descendants of the Kamenshchiki and Poliaki provide an insight to the community structures their co-religionists brought with them as they settled in and around Moscow at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

From observations of the fabric of Old Believer life in the Altai, it seems evident that Old Believers who had shared the same background in European Russia would have been well prepared to organise weaving enterprises. They were well suited to the roles of entrepreneur and manufacturer. They believed that in work was salvation. As a result, they were hardworking, self-disciplined, and worked by a sensible division of labour, within a clear hierarchy of seniority. The Old Believers were used to organising large numbers of workers. Their system of mutual help not only at home, but also in the artels allowed them to conduct enterprise on a large scale. They were resilient and adaptable to new circumstances, setting up new enterprises when they saw opportunity. They were at ease with their wealth, hiring outsiders to work for them when necessary, while still

¹⁷¹ Iadrintsev, 101.

maintaining a social distance from them. They were an insular group, cautious in their relations with an outside world whose influence they feared and they kept close control over their family and social life. However, they also kept close ties to other Old Believer communities around Russia. This afforded them trading as well as religious connections and bonded them together in a world they perceived as hostile and heretical.

They had a high standard of living. In the affluent Old Believer villages women had leisure time to devote to handcrafts. This was reflected in the quality of their dress and in their homes. The Old Believers had a highly developed tradition of weaving and a thorough understanding of the clothmaking process. The preservation of these skills was also a by-product of the value system of Old Believer society, representing the striving for a harmony of life and conscience noted by visitors to the Altai.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Shvetsova, 57.

CHAPTER 5. The Weaving Tradition

Introduction

In addition to nettles, both hemp and flax grew wild in certain regions of Russia and were the fibrous plants from which yarn was spun and cloth woven to make household linens and all kinds of clothing.

Nettles grew everywhere and were used not only for making fishing nets but also for spinning thread for children's games. Shirts made of nettle cloth are referred to in some Russian folk tales. Because of their burning sting people believed that nettles symbolised or represented the energy of fire and sun. In some Old Believer communities they were therefore thought to possess powers of purification and were used in rituals designed to ward off witchcraft against livestock.¹

As long ago as 10,000 B. C. hemp was cultivated for its fibre in China. Although it is not certain precisely when its use began in Russia, from ancient times hemp was used to make fishing nets. Fishermen from the Il'men' and Pskov Lakes say it has a scent which attracts the fish. It grew wild in Ukraine, along the Volga River, in Western Siberia, and Middle Asia where it was used for oil and clothmaking. Hemp shirts were made and worn by Russians in the Tula and Briansk regions where flax was not cultivated for cloth.² Fabric made from hemp was still widely used in the nineteenth century in Belarus', Ukraine, in southern Russia, and in the twentieth century in Old Believer villages in Siberia and the Altai. After their exile to Siberia from Vetka and Starodub' e in the 1760s, the Semeiskie Old Believers depended on growing hemp for clothing and other domestic fabrics, since in the harsh climate of Zabaikal'e flax was vulnerable to frost and drought. However, even hemp could not thrive in some of their villages.³

The construction of the hemp fibre stalk makes cloth woven from it cool to wear in summer, but warm in winter. It is more durable than linen, very strong, resistant to

¹ F. F. Bolonev, *Mesiatseslov semeiskikh Zabaikal'ia* (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1991), 59; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 467. In Scandinavia, ancient shirts once thought to be made of linen proved to be woven from nettle fibre. Barber, *Work*, 234.

² Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 466. Because of the trace amount of a psychoactive substance found in hemp, it has been illegal to grow the plant in the United States since 1937. Nancy Nehring, 'Hemp, the Forgotten Fabric,' *Threads*, 71 (June/July 1997), 49-50.

³ Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 141-43.

mildew, rot, and deterioration in sunlight.⁴ However, unlike flax, hemp fibres lose their strength when bleached and are therefore not generally suitable for materials which need to be either dyed or bleached very white.⁵

Although flax also grew wild on the steppes of southern Russia, very early traditions of linen-making amongst the Eastern Slavs are indicated by the presence of cultivated flax seeds and part of an ancient distaff dating from the second millennium B. C., found in the Vologodsk region. While there is evidence that the cultivation of hemp was widespread, that it was woven for clothing and sails, and processed for oil, there are no records of the cultivation of flax in the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century by Russian settlers in Siberia.⁶

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century the Poliaki and Semeiskie Old Believers brought flaxseed and their linen-making skills to the Altai Mountains. In addition to grain, the local authorities initially supplied the Old Believers with a specified amount of hemp and flaxseed.⁷ As the Kamenshchiki were pardoned for their crimes they too began to establish agricultural communities in the Bukhtarma and Katun' river valleys where flax could be sown, processed, spun, and woven for cloth. While the Semeiskie eventually abandoned sowing flax on a large scale, in the Altai growing conditions were more favourable. Old Believer women in these communities prepared the yarn for and wove an exceedingly fine linen for shirts and ritual towels.

Все же холщевое было. Ситцу после германской войны долго не было.
Everything was made of linen. There was no cloth [to buy] for a long time after the German war.

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912).

The cloth was made using primitive homemade equipment.

Такой холст ткали, выбелишь его – он белый, белый – тонкий, просто не различишь, то ли фабричный, то ли свой.

This linen was woven and you would bleach it – it was white as white – and so

⁴ Mabel Ross, *Encyclopedia of Handspinning* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1988), s.v. 'hemp'. Herodotus wrote that in the fifth century the Thracians were able to weave cloth of hemp so like linen that no one could tell the difference. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 465–467.

⁵ Janet Phillips, *The Weaver's Book of Fabric Design* (London: Batsford, 1983), 22.

⁶ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 465–466.

⁷ Bolonev, *Semeiskie*, 76–77; idem, 'Priadenie,' 141.

fine you just couldn't tell whether it was factory-made or whether it was your own.
Maria Pavlovna (1929).

For the Old Believers, especially the women who devoted a substantial amount of their time and physical energy to making such cloth, this work was central to their lives. Many ritual events accompanying the stages of clothmaking included men, but the work itself was left entirely in the hands of women. The fineness and beauty of their handwork reflected their commitment to the preservation of deeply held religious convictions.

Social life for the young and courtship often took place within the clothmaking circle where young people got to know each other. Spinning usually began in October when the combed plant fibres were ready and lasted until the beginning of Lent. Young girls organised the *vecherki* (evening gatherings) where they congregated to spin yarn. In addition to the serious work of spinning something to show their mothers, the girls arranged for boys to come along to talk, play music, sing and dance.⁸

B: Ну, придут парни на вечерку с гармонью, вот тогда мы и пляшем и песни всякие поем.

A: А на вечерку парни приходят, вы ложитесь под койку?

B: Нет, мы уже не ложились, а вот мои старшие сестры – ложились.

B: So the boys would come to the *vecherka* with an accordion, and then we would dance and sing all kinds of songs.

A: And when the boys came to the *vecherka*, did you lie down with them under the bed?

B: No, we didn't do that any more, but my older sisters used to lie down.

Matrena Gerasimovna (1923).

The girls also arranged a kind of 'dating game' at these gatherings where boys and girls who liked each other were left alone in pairs to get to know one another better. Each pair would leave the *izba* (the main room of the house in which the stove was lit) where people were sitting. They went into another room where a fur rug and a pillow were placed under a wooden bench or bed. The boys went in order and the girls contrived to end up with the boys they liked best. When it was their turn, each pair would lie down together on the fur rug, kissing and cuddling. This ritual was meant to

⁸ Shvetsova, 55.

help a girl decide whether or not there was a particular 'chemistry' with the boy she fancied.⁹

A: Ляжете, поцелуетесь, да, под лавкой?

B: Ага. Прядешь, вот жених садится к подруге, пошлет, постель постелит, нагнется: «Ну, кого тебе?» – «Вот эту». Подходит, посылает, идешь, где... там отправляешься и все в углу. И лежишь. Весело было.

A: You would lie down and kiss under a bench?

B: Uh-huh. You would be spinning and a young man would come and sit beside your girlfriend. She would lean over and say, 'Who do you fancy?' He would say: 'That one, there'. He would send the girlfriend to organise the bed. Then he would come over to you and you would go off – it was always in the corner. You would lie there. It was fun.

Lidia Anan'evna (1916)

Although from an outsider's point of view, this custom may seem out of keeping with the strict codes of behaviour in Old Believer communities, the spinning evenings provided a supervised and ritualised, yet relatively open environment in which young people could become more closely acquainted. It was here that young men usually met their future bride.

In the process of socialising young people became accustomed to the demands of preparing fibrous plants for cloth, but once a girl was married she could no longer attend these work parties.

B: Прядешь еще, хоть такой клубочек, а нарядешь. А как же, а то мамка не пустит более. Замуж вышла в 44-ом году, мне двадцать первый год шел. Гляжу, везде песни поют, а я реву.

A: Дома сидеть надо замужем-то?

B: Вот. А потом-то привыкла и ничего.

B: You would spin a bit, even if you spun just a little ball. Otherwise Mama wouldn't let you go back again. I got married in 1944, when I was twenty-one. I saw that everyone was singing songs, but I was bawling.

A: You had to sit at home when you were married?

B: That's right. But then I got used to it and didn't mind.

Matrena Gerasimovna (1923).

During the weeks of spring sowing, rituals of purification and prayers for blessing the land took place. Crumbled Easter eggshells and *tvorog* (a type of cottage

⁹ A description of this custom was provided by Professor K. V. Maerova, based on her observations in the 1950s and 1960s. One informant in Bobrovka explained that with the advent of a village club where young

cheese) had symbolic meanings connected to these hopes for good growth and were mixed with the flaxseed to make the linen white. Special prayers were said before the icon of the Virgin on the day of sowing and new linen shirts were worn. Bathing before sowing was also an essential act of cleansing. In Old Believer villages, as elsewhere in Russia, verses, and prayers were said in the flax fields to keep evil spirits away.¹⁰

Wool was another source of cloth. Apart from sheep fleece, goat, horse, rabbit, camel, or dog hair were also used for weaving. In some regions of Russia dog hair was considered to have therapeutic benefits when worn, although Old Believers living in some parts of Russia and Siberia refused to keep or have contact with dogs, considering them either unclean or frightening to wandering pilgrims.¹¹

The Bukhtarma Old Believers hired local Kazakh women to do the first stages of preparing unwashed *zhishka* (coarse wool) for spinning. The Old Believers then used the wool to weave patterned belts, for the embroidery on clothing, and for making hats, socks and mittens. Wool dyed in a variety of colours was also used as the weft in woven floor mats.¹² Although the Old Believers did felt woollen cloth using a special trough with a ribbed bottom, in recent times Russian settlers in the area had also been hired to do this work for them. They beat the wool with a *luchok* (a tool with a bowstring) and felted the wool for men's hats and boots.¹³ Woollen yarn was dyed in colours for making belts, but for other clothing the wool from black sheep was used.¹⁴ In addition to hemp, used to weave cloth for work clothes, a cloth woven from wool and linen was used for outer garments or *shabury*, also *chembary*, heavy trousers.¹⁵

А вот верхнюю одежду – пряли шерсть тоже потом с такой льняной ниткой
ткали на шабуры. Она не промокает, эта ткань.

And for outer clothing – wool was also spun and then woven with linen yarn for
shabury. That cloth was waterproof.

Maria Pavlovna (1929).

people could dance, this custom began to disappear.

¹⁰ Bolonev, *Mesiatseslov*, 48–50; T. A. Bernshtam, *Molodezh' v obriadovoi zhizni russkoi obshchiny XIX – nachalo XX v.* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1988), 159–160.

¹¹ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 464; LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), *Otchet*, F. 114; Pokrovskii, *Puteshestvie*, 35.

¹² Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 287.

¹³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 172.

¹⁴ N. P. Grinkova, 'Odezhda bukhtarminskikh staroobriadtsev,' chap. in *Bukhtarminskii staroobriadtsy* (Leningrad, 1930), 316–317.

¹⁵ Grinkova, 376.

In the late 1990s villagers in Verkh-Uimon buy prepared wool. Some spin the wool, dye it in bright colours, and crochet heavy floor mats in a double stitch.

5.1 Preparation of Plant Fibres

Bast plants have long fibres lying within the plant stem which can be used for making yarn. These fibres are released by rotting the stems. Then they must be cleaned, combed, and softened. The fibre flax cultivated today for making linen grows to a height of approximately 120 centimetres (48 inches) and is derived from flax which grew in the Baltic region in ancient times.¹⁶ Flax fibres are very strong but difficult to use for weaving, because they are not elastic and are susceptible to changes in humidity.

Hemp was sown and grown in Russia with little fanfare, but sowing and tending flax demanded care. The earlier it can be sown in the spring the better, so that early growth will be slow and the plants strong. One hundred days are required from sowing to uprooting.¹⁷

In Russia, the seeds were usually sown before the end of May, when the fluff flew from the aspen trees or when the guelder rose blossomed. The land would be ploughed once or even twice and harrowed up to three times in the north of Russia and thoroughly fertilised with manure, as flax requires rich soil. In some areas it was thought that flax grew best on ground where there had been potatoes. In the Altai, a new field was thought best.¹⁸

Сажали лен всего чаще на целине, в свежем месте.

Flax was planted most often in virgin soil, in a fresh place.¹⁹

Flaxseed needs to be sown thickly and the plants kept weed-free because thin stems contain the finest quality fibres. Fields were weeded in wet weather and weeding marked the point at which the care of flax was turned over to the women, who would be responsible for all the following steps required to create cloth from the plant.²⁰

¹⁶ Eileen Chadwick, *The craft of hand spinning* (London: Batsford, 1980), 102.

¹⁷ Chadwick, 102; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 473; Ross, s.v. 'flax'.

¹⁸ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 473.

¹⁹ K. V. Maerova and C. Dowling, 'L'novodstvo, priadenie, tkachestvo v sele Bobrovka Vostochno-Kazakhstanskoi oblasti,' (1953–1964, 1996), 1.

²⁰ Chadwick, 102; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 473.

Flax was gathered by *dergan'e* (pulling), uprooting the plant. Bast plants need to be harvested in this way to obtain the full length of the fibres.²¹ Depending on local conditions, harvesting takes place from July to September when the heads have turned brown and the seeds are ripening. However, plants cannot be fully matured or the fibres will be too stiff. Opinions vary as to the optimum amount of maturing required before harvesting. Some sources say that one third of the stem should be yellow at the time of pulling; others say two thirds, but all agree that for the finest quality, the plant should be pulled before the seeds are fully ripe. One informant in Verkh-Uimon explained that the correct time was when the blue flowers had faded. Later there would be a greater number of fibres, but they would be coarser.²²

Hemp, on the other hand, was harvested in two stages. When the blossom had finished, the *poskon'* or *zamashki* (male stalks) would be gathered in July. *Konoplia* (female stalks) would be left to ripen and gathered at the end of August or in September, when the seeds were mature and the plants had withered. Yarn spun from *poskon'* was finer than that from the female stalks, which was used for coarser materials including bags, ropes, saddle-girths, hessian, bedding, and heavy cloth.²³

Коноплю два раза берут, сперва посконь берут, потом коноплю берут, когда отохнет. Посконь, замашки в июле берут. Одна конопля спеет до сентября. Hemp was gathered twice. First the *poskon'* was taken up, then the *konoplia* was gathered when it had withered. The *poskon'*, the *zamashki*, was taken for retting in July, the *konoplia* was only ready by September.²⁴

The amount of flax which could be pulled out in one handful was a *gorst'* (handful).²⁵ Several handfuls of uprooted plants made up a *snop* (sheaf), a variably-sized unit of flax or hemp.²⁶ The sheaves of flax were left in a dry place.

Лен дергаем горстью. В снопы вяжем. Снопы вешают на жердь головкой вниз. По одному снопку разворачиваешь и надвое вешаешь на жердь.

²¹ Chadwick, 102.

²² Chadwick, 102; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 473; Ross, s.v. 'flax'.

²³ 'L'novodstvo,' 1. '*Poskan*,' similar to the word used in Bobrovka, is also used to describe male hemp stalks in the Riazan' region of Russia, while '*konoplia*' is considered a Belorussian term. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 473. The word '*zamashki*' was also used by the Semeiskie. Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 144-145.

²⁴ 'L'novodstvo,' 1.

²⁵ The use of this word was associated with the Tula region and Briansk Marshes of Russia. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 473.

²⁶ The number of handfuls making up a sheaf varied in different areas of Russia from two to eight. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 473.

We would pull the flax out by the handful. We tied it in sheaves. The sheaves hung head down from a long pole. A sheaf was separated so that one half hung down on either side of the pole.²⁷

One fifth of the weight of a sheaf was useable plant fibre. The rest was straw.²⁸ The ultimate product available for clothmaking was sorted and spun into four different grades of fibrous material. One was for making floor matting, bags or sacks, one for sturdy garments such as trousers. The third was used to make the lower unseen section of women's shirts and the fourth was for fine linens such as shirts, ritual towels, and tablecloths.

Subsequent stages in the preparation of fibrous plants for spinning all required instruments and tools.

5.11 Threshing and Rippling

Obmolot (threshing) separates the seeds from the stalks of the plant by means of a beating tool or de-seeding device, in which case the process is technically known as rippling. This can be done with different hand-held tools made of wood or root, with bare hands or even with feet. The seed heads can be struck with instruments, pulled through a coarse comb, or alternatively cut off, the seeds saved for sowing or making oil, with some loss of the stalk containing the fibrous matter. The seeds can also be filtered out between the fingers or the seedheads trampled by foot. Villagers wasted no seed, whatever its size.

Теперь высохнет на крючках, обмолотишь; семена—то нужны все равно.
When [the plants] had dried out on the hooks, you would thresh them; there was no difference – all the seeds were needed.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

Different threshing tools were used for hemp and flax.²⁹ The *valek* (a short-handled small paddle) usually made of birch and used to thresh flax, was also put to other uses such as washing linen or in helping to beat the ash used for bleaching out of

²⁷ 'L'novodstvo,' 1.

²⁸ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 479.

²⁹ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 474–475.

yarn and cloth.³⁰ In some parts of Russia the *valek* was decorated with carving or oil-painted designs.³¹ A *lapa* (a paw or fluke) was made of a branch of root dug up with a sapling whose form resembled a human foot and shin. It also served as a tool for threshing grain. A *tsep* (flail) which consisted of a hollowed wooden baton to which a piece of root was attached by a leather strap was also used, in some places to thresh grain as well. Typically a *tsep* was used to thresh hemp, and the *valek* and *lapa* were used for flax, but this varied from region to region.³²

A *brosal'nitsa* (ripler) used exclusively for de-seeding flax consisted of a blade with thick teeth. The stalks were pulled through the teeth so the seedheads came off. When the plant heads were simply cut off, various blade tools could be used: a *kosa* (scythe), *resalka* (blade with a handle) or a *drachok*, a metal blade-like tool into which several small sharp teeth were attached for cutting.³³

In Bobrovka, the tools used for threshing were a *palka* (stick) and a *tsep*.

Тут же на льнице молотят; палкой или цепом молотят. Стучаешь, без ума сделаешься.

The flax was threshed right there where it was stored, with a *palka* or with a *tsep*. You would beat it like crazy.³⁴

In general, threshing tools are considered particularly ancient as they imitate methods for separating parts of the plant which were practised with hands and feet before the invention of appropriate tools.³⁵

5.12 Retting

Once the seedheads have been removed the next stage in preparing flax and hemp for spinning depends on retting, the natural fermentation process which breaks down the adhesive substance holding the long fibres, the outer stem, and the woody

³⁰ N. I. Lebedeva, *Ocherednie voprosy izucheniia priadeniia i tkachestva* (Moscow, 1929), 7.

³¹ *Khosiaistvo i byt russkikh krest'ian*, eds. A. S. Bezhkovich, S. K. Zhegalova, A. A. Lebedeva, S. K. Prosvirkin, (Moscow, 1956), 70.

³² *Khosiaistvo*, 71; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 474.

³³ These threshing or rippling instruments were identified with different geographical regions of Russia. In southern and central Russia as well as in parts of Belarus' and Ukraine, the *tsep* and *valek* were commonly used. In the Novgorod area and the north-east of Russia influenced by Novgorod, the *lapa* was most common, while in other parts of the Novgorod region and eastern Baltic areas cutting tools such as the *drachok* were typical. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 475.

³⁴ 'L'novodstvo,' 1.

³⁵ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 535.

inner core of the stalk together. The choice of retting methods is dependent on local climatic conditions. Whatever method is used, moisture is required to separate the fibres from the boon or straw. In many parts of Russia and Ukraine, the threshed stalks were spread out in thin, even bands in a meadow in September or October for a minimum of fifteen to twenty days.³⁶ In the Altai and Siberia, retting would begin in July or August.

После этого его стелили на покосы, на луга, поближе к болотам; там где росы выпадают, и где есть сырые места.

After that it was spread out in cut fields, in meadows closer to the marshes where the dew fell and where there were damp places.³⁷

When this system of *stlanie* (spreading or dew retting) was used, it was helpful to have heavy dew and warm temperatures. The action of bacteria in the soil, of dew and rain on the stalks would produce a very good quality of linen, but the bacterial process could take up to six or eight weeks.

Расстелишь где-нибудь в закутке, в поле, он (лен) лежит полтора месяца.

You would spread it out in a sheltered place somewhere in a field; [the flax] would lie there for a month and a half.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

Alternatively, the stalks could be submerged in a dammed-up pond or swamp for *mochenie* (soaking or pond retting) or in a specially dug hole which filled with water and served the same purpose. Pond retting, which produces results more quickly, was more widely used in the Pskov, Iaroslavl', and Vologda regions than elsewhere in Russia.³⁸ In general, this is a less predictable and less satisfactory method as the stagnant water can affect the colour and quality of linen.³⁹

А в засуху – его вообще на болота стелили; стелили, и больше уже не мочили, потому что моченый лен – не хороший выходил...

And in hot dry weather it was spread out in the marshes. It was spread out but not soaked any more, because flax which was soaked didn't turn out well.⁴⁰

³⁶ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 475.

³⁷ 'L'novodstvo,' 1.

³⁸ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 475.

³⁹ As well as that, the water pollution caused by this method of retting is considerable.

⁴⁰ 'L'novodstvo,' 1.

Konoplia was always pond-retted, but at the end of the nineteenth century only 15% of flax in Russia was treated in this way.⁴¹ With the plants soaking in stagnant water, there was always a danger of over retting. After a short period of soaking in a pond, if the flax was then spread out on grass, heat and rain finished the process of removing the adhesive substances in the stalks.⁴²

An additional method of soaking was water retting, where slow-running water was used instead of a stagnant pond. In the Altai, a retting pond was often formed under a millwheel, in a little creek, or partitioned off in a section of river so the flax could not be carried away by the current. The wooden partitioning used had gaps between the boards so the water would stay clean. Sometimes villagers also soaked the threshed stalks in spring, using deep hollows along the riverbank where water remained after a flood. Flax stalks were also often put into the river on submerged wooden rafts tied up to the riverbank.

А некоторые мочат в мельничном ставу, в мочильном ставу. Весь мир сеял. Наставят много плотов, все мочат. Озярина – вода из него никуда не уйдет. But there were some people who would soak it in a millpond, in a retting pond. The whole village sowed [flax]. Lots of rafts would be put out, everybody would be soaking. There was a pool. The water couldn't get out of it.⁴³

Still others had a different system for retting flax on flattened grass in a meadow.

А бывает его стелят на прикатаное место (на полосы). Возьмут жердь, охомуають лошадь, и прикатывают траву, и на эту траву стелят лен. Там он лежит месяца полтора–два.

And some would spread the flax out (in bands) in a place which had been rolled and flattened. You took a long pole, a horse would be harnessed to it and it would flatten down the grass. The flax would be spread out on the grass. It would lie there for a month and a half or two.⁴⁴

Since retting required an unpredictable number of days, plants were carefully checked to see if they were ready. If under retted, the fibres would not come away from the boon; if retted for too long, the fibres themselves would start to break up. Every woman who described this process mentioned a different amount of time for retting. The

⁴¹ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 475.

⁴² Chadwick, 103.

⁴³ 'L'novodstvo,' 1.

⁴⁴ 'L'novodstvo,' 1.

colour of the fibres was an important guide. During the bacterial process the colour of flax stems changes from yellow to dark reddish brown, then to grey, and finally to a bluish grey or cream in the case of water retted flax.⁴⁵ If they were ready and the *kostra* (woody exterior) and *bylka*, *byloshti* (inner core) came away easily, the plants could be gathered up for the next stage of processing.

После того как лен уляжется, его поднимают. Для пробы возьмешь прядку; если лен улежал – так его надо поднимать, а не улежал, пусть еще полежит. Если не улежал – прядка красная, улежал – так белая; хорошо от былошти, от костры, отскакивает, блестит на солнышке.

Спиток возьмешь – если влажный, костра не держится, если влажный, то он становится мягким.

Сняли, в снопы большие связали и увезли мять. На коне подъезжают и увозят домой.

After it had been lying there for awhile the flax would be taken up to see how it had retted. You would take up a strand to test it. If it was ready you had to gather it up; if it hadn't matured you let it lie some more. If it wasn't retted enough, the strands were red. If it was ready they were white and came away easily from the core and the outer straw and it would shine in the sun.

You took a sheaf. If it was well retted the outer part didn't stick to the fibres. When it's damp enough, it becomes soft.

You would gather it up, tie it in large sheaves, and take it away for breaking. It was loaded onto a horse and brought home.⁴⁶

The tied sheaves were left to dry out in the bathhouse for a day. In many parts of Russia retted flax was retied in sheaves and left in the sun to dry, but the bathhouse provided a more controlled and reliable heat at the end of the summer.

5.13 Breaking

When retting had separated and softened the plant fibres, *miat'e* (breaking) helped remove the *kostrika* (straw from flax or hemp) by breaking up the boon, the inner core and the tough outer layer surrounding the fibres.⁴⁷ This unwanted material could then be beaten out of the plants.

In former times, breaking flax was accomplished in a variety of ways. The plant stalks could be pounded open on a stone or a horse could be harnessed to a stone wheel

⁴⁵ Chadwick, 103; This was the method of retting traditionally practised in Belgium, for example, where a very fine quality of linen was made. Because of the resulting pollution water-retting is no longer allowed in Belgium. Ross, s.v. 'retting'.

⁴⁶ 'L'novodstvo,' 1–2.

⁴⁷ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 476.

which was dragged over the plants. A wooden mallet or beetle was also used. Known in Russia as a *kolotushka*, this tool was a bat with large cuts at one end.⁴⁸ However, a wooden instrument with a levered beater providing a mechanical advantage was used by Old Believers in the Altai, as it was in many parts of Russia. This breaker could either be made in one unit from a tree and its roots or assembled from separate pieces of wood.

A primitive inclined levered *mialka* (breaker) was made from an uprooted young tree, usually spruce or birch, arranged so that the trunk sloped to the ground and sections of root formed the legs. A channel was cut along the upper length of the trunk. A faceted lever, usually made of hardwood, was attached at one end. This was the *bilo* (beater) or *iazyk* (tongue).⁴⁹ It was the working part of the breaker, cut as a three-edged striking blade with the sharp corner facing downward. The remaining side edges of the trunk were the *shcheki* (sides).⁵⁰

In a later development of this tool, sections of root or other heavy pieces of wood formed supports at each end of the breaker, creating a horizontal apparatus whose legs were made tall enough to be of a convenient height for the woman who did the breaking. A finished wooden blade, often made of hardwood, was fastened to the far end of the breaker with a wooden or iron peg. A skilled workman often made this beater. The *bylka* (woody material) would be broken up into straw by the breaker which required considerable energy to use.

Такая мялка сделана из дерева, в котором есть дырка, ноги, щеки, какие мнут, била, которой бьешь; ручка деревянная из этого же лесу. Мялка будет более метра. Кто зря не сладит. Мять начнут, былка вся сомнется в костру. Остается одна прядешка.

The breaker was made from wood. It had a hole [groove] in it, and legs; there were the *shcheki* which did the breaking, and the *bilo* which you beat; a wooden handle was made from the same piece of wood. A breaker would be over a metre in length. Not everyone knew how to make one. As you started to break the flax, all the woody matter would be crushed into straw. Only the fibre would be left.⁵¹

Drying the sheaves of flax removed an amount of moisture from the plants, making it easier to bruise and break up the woody material.

⁴⁸ *Khoziaistvo*, 72.

⁴⁹ This word, used by Old Believers in Verkh-Uimon, was also used in Nizhnii Novgorod. *Khoziaistvo*, 73.

⁵⁰ In parts of Russia, when there was a large quantity of flax to be processed, a double blade was sometimes made of two sharp parallel edges. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 476-77; idem, *Voprosy*, 7; *Khoziaistvo*, 73.

⁵¹ 'L'novodstvo,' 2.

В баню насадим лен, полную насадим, вязанок пять. Подтапливаем, чтобы хорошо в мялке мять, а то – погрызика на ней.

We would fill the bathhouse full with flax, with five bundles. We would warm the bathhouse slightly and keep it at a constant temperature so the flax would be dry enough to break well – otherwise it was too difficult.⁵²

Retted stalks were put between the beater and the wooden trough and crushed as the blade moved up and down.

Мялка будет вот такой величины, это у нее ножки, ну, тут – щеки, а это – язык.

The breaker was about so long. It had legs and then the *shcheki*, and the *iazyk*.
Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

A certain amount of flax could be broken at one time.

Изомнут десяток. Шестнадцать горстей получается. Сколько там десятков получится?

You would break a *desiatok*. Sixteen handfuls make up a *desiatok*.
Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

Three or four women would often help each other by doing this work together as quickly as possible, so that the dried plants would not get cold and damp.⁵³

Мнем около бани. Скажешь: «Бабы, сегодня лен мять ко мне идите».

We did the breaking near the bathhouse. You would say, 'Girls, come over to my house today to break the flax'.⁵⁴

5.14 Scutching

Trepanie (scutching) was the next stage in processing the fibres for spinning. When the retted fibres had been broken down, the unwanted woody matter was removed from the stalks with a *trepalo*, *trepalochka*, or *trepalka* (scutching blade). This was a wooden knife, paddle, or sword-shaped tool held by a handle, known to have existed in

⁵² 'L'novodstvo,' 2

⁵³ *Khoziaistvo*, 75. As with many activities connected to the clothmaking process, groups of women frequently helped each other in turn through all the different stages. Bernshtam, 160; Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 146.

⁵⁴ 'L'novodstvo,' 2

the seventh century. In the Altai, Old Believers used a knife-shaped wooden scutching blade common in southern Russia and Ukraine.⁵⁵ (Plate 33).

Трепали, бывало до-полуночи. Трепалкой этой опять его потчнешь. Отрепы все отреплются, обобьется все плохое.

Scutching used to go on half the night. Then you would give [the flax] the treatment again with the scutching blade. All the woody bits were shaken away, you beat out all the bad part.⁵⁶

The fibre bundles themselves also began to separate during scutching. Any broken fibres were saved to spin rough yarn. They were gathered up in an apron.

Надевают хороший крепкий фартук; кладут эту горсть на колени и треплют; с одного конца треплют, треплют. С другого растрясут маленечко, и опять туго в руке держат.

You would wear a good, strong apron; you put the handful [of flax] on your knee and you would scutch; you scutched at one end and at the other you would shake it around a bit, and then hold it tightly again in your hand.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

Nothing was wasted. *Kudel'* (tow, coarse fibres) could be used for household purposes.⁵⁷

Теперь эту кудель не бросаем, что натрепали то. Мешки рядные надо, тряпки, все надо спрясть, обдирки ткать.

Now we didn't throw out the *kudel'* which was scutched. You had to spin everything – for ordinary bags, for cloths – and weave the bits which came off.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

In the scutching process these coarse and broken fibres, the *otrep'e* (scutched tow of uneven length) constituting approximately 17% of the total plant fibres, were shaken off the stalks.⁵⁸

Опять треплют, вот все протреплют – и это все называется «первое отрепье». Из него прядут на толстые мешки, или на что попало там такое.

⁵⁵ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 167; Lebedeva, *Voprosy*, 7.

⁵⁶ 'L'novodstvo,' 2

⁵⁷ Generally speaking, '*kudel'*' referred to shorter, coarser bast fibres for spinning, while '*kuzhel'*' was the finest combed flax. However, there were also differences in pronunciation. For example, '*kuzhel'*' was usually associated with the Pskov region of Russia. Dal', s.v. '*kudel'*'.

⁵⁸ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 478.

You would scutch some more and everything beaten away was called 'the first scutching'. From this you would spin for thick sacks or whatever.

Malan'a Vasil'evna (1922).

The long strands constituting 83% of the fibres were kept for further refining to be used ultimately for spinning into fine yarn.⁵⁹

5.15 Hackling and Combing

Breaking flax and hemp stalks separated the plants into boon and fibre, while scutching produced three types of material – *kostrika*, *otrep'e* (tow, the short, broken fibres) and *mychka* (long fibres for combing or hackling). For flax to be ready for spinning, *chesanie* or *mykanie* (combing, brushing, or hackling) with various combs or brushes was required to refine the longest fibres into *kuzhel'* (line flax).

Кужель чесана то – как волос тоненький.

The combed *kuzhel'* was so fine it was like hair.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900)

To reach this stage of fineness the scutched flax was combed in three stages. Each combing produced an end product for spinning. The *otrep'e* could be spun without further combing but the remainder, the *mychka*, was first hackled using either a wooden or metal-toothed *greben'* (comb) or *shchetka* (brush) and then brushed. (Plates 34 and 35).

Теперь чесать будем в теплой бане. Баню топим, чтобы начинать чесать.

Now for combing – we would do it in a warmed bathhouse. We would heat it up so you could start to comb.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

As the fibres were hackled, drawn through the teeth or nails of a comb or brush as it was sometimes called, the long strands were separated, straightened, and lined up in one direction.⁶⁰ The comber was able to strip away any remaining bits of boon, while the

⁵⁹ Lebedeva, *Voprosy*, 7; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 478.

⁶⁰ The description of different techniques for hackling, combing and brushing is somewhat confusing in translation, since the verb *chesat'* (to comb) is used regardless of the tool, while in some cases two different words describe the same tool. For example, the nail-studded hackling comb described here and

shorter or weaker fibres would be left behind on the hackling device. The long fibres became softer and more lustrous.⁶¹

Потом надо обдирать его на гребень. После гребня идут обдирти. Сядешь на него и начнешь чесать. Обдирти валятся, лен все мягче и мягче делается. Then you had to hackle [the flax] on a comb. After combing, the *obdirti* were hackled away. You would sit on [the hackle comb] and start to comb; the *obdirti* came off, and you would make the flax softer and softer.⁶²

The *shchetka* used in Verkh-Uimon for this purpose was a metal hackling tool with a checker-board arrangement of nails. As with other hand tools, it was made in such a way that the worker could sit on the end. (Plate 35).

Вот найдут дерево, чтобы оно горбатое было; и садишься на этот хвост, как у прялки, и вот тут такая узенькая часть, чтобы ни туда, ни сюда не двигалась. Для ножки берут вот такую узенькую круглую досточку и набивают на определенное расстояние гвозди. Теперь второй ряд начнут; в промежуток бьют гвозди. Затем переворачивают досточку, чтобы гвозди были кверху и затем крепко прибивают ее гвоздями к этой ножке.

A tree would be found which had grown with a bend, so you could sit on the tail [end] the same way as on a distaff. There was this narrow part [to sit on] so that it wouldn't move around. For the leg [the upright] you took a thin round piece of wood and pounded nails into it at a certain distance apart. Then you would start the second row and pound nails in between the gaps. Then you would turn the little board over so the nails were on top and you would fix it securely to the leg with nails.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

After the first combing, coarse, broken fibres were left on the hackle.⁶³

А теперь горсти кладут на эту щетку и начинают чесать. Получается изгребье. А лен уже чистым остается. Из него прядут нитки для основы, чтоб она крепкая была.

And then you would put the bunches onto this brush and you would start to comb. From this you got the *izgreb'e*. And now the best flax was left; from it you would spin yarn for the warp, so it would be strong.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1923).

the bristle brush are both referred to by the Old Believer women as a *shchetka* (brush), although in literature pertaining to textiles, the latter is sometimes more precisely described as a *zheleznaia shchet'* (iron brush). *Khoziaistvo*, 79; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 479.

⁶¹ Chadwick, 105; Ross, s.v. 'hackling'.

⁶² 'L'novodstvo,' 2.

⁶³ Fibres from the first combing were known generally in Russia as *ocheski* or *verkhovina*. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 479.

The next combing of the longer fibres produced a softer material, the *pachesi* (the second combing).⁶⁴ The long, fine *kuzhel'* was the product of the third combing and would be spun into the best yarn. Roughly speaking, these fibres represented about 2% of the weight of the original sheaf of flax.⁶⁵

As the fibres became more refined and the weaker bits were combed out, the long fibres were brushed with a different tool. This brush was made of bristle and had a wooden handle. As an indication of its sturdiness, one woman said she now uses the brush to scrub men's trousers clean. Various substances such as melted fir resin or pitch were normally used in European Russia to make the bristles spread out at one end and to stick together at the other. In the Altai, the bristles were coated with beeswax or with resin collected from larch trees. One end of the bundle of bristles was gathered into the wooden handle and wrapped with coarse cloth. The unbound bristles were evened and spread out. Sand or millet was sprinkled into them. Next they were dusted with crushed resin or wax, covered with flax tow, and put into the stove where the resin or wax melted. Finally, the brush was left outdoors where the wax hardened.⁶⁶ (Plate 36).

Вставляют в ручку свиную щетину. Воском заливают, чтобы щетка пошире была.

The bristles were put into a handle. Wax was poured over them, so the brush would be wider.⁶⁷

Varvara Mikailovna (1923).

A woman would hold the end of a hackled bunch of flax across her knee in the left hand and brush with her right hand.

После гребня, лен чешешь и чешешь щеткой, пока он не будет хороший.

After hackling, you would brush and brush the flax with the *shchetka* (bristle brush) until it became fine.⁶⁸

Varvara Mikhailovna (1923).

⁶⁴ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 479, 538.

⁶⁵ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 479.

⁶⁶ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 173; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 479; *Khoziaistvo*, 79.

⁶⁷ 'L'novodstvo,' 2.

⁶⁸ 'L'novodstvo,' 2.

Before spinning began, the prepared bundles of combed flax were organised into measured *delianki* (stricks) and stored.

Когда лен обрабатывают, его делят на делянки. Пятнадцать делянок – это пол кужля, тридцать делянок – одна кужель. Кужли кладут в мужские штаны, чтобы лен «родился» – ворожба такая есть.

When the flax had been prepared, it was divided into *delianki*. Fifteen *delianki* was half a *kuzhel'*. Thirty *delianki* made one *kuzhel'*. The *kuzhli* were put into men's trousers, so that the flax would 'be born' – that was the belief.⁶⁹

Scutched tow, different grades of hackled tow, and line flax were all ready for spinning.

5.16 Spinning

Как со всем управимся, так начинаем прясть из отрепья или изгребья; кужлем прядем.

When we had finished with everything we would start to spin from the *otrep'e* or from the *izgreb'e*. We would spin with the *kuzhel'*.⁷⁰

Hand spinning represents the lowest, but most demanding step in the creation of textiles. In the division of spinning, weaving, and sewing into separate parts of one overall process, spinning signifies the darker side of this transformation. It takes place in the dark months of the year and in the dark of winter evenings when work in the fields has finished. It requires countless hours of repetitious work. However, the protective patron figures associated with spinning in Russia, such as *Piatnitsa* (Saint Paraskeva) and particularly the Virgin, contradict this sense of lowliness by their inspirational qualities. In Christian iconography, paintings of the Annunciation often depict the Virgin with spindle in hand.⁷¹

In the Altai, from the beginning of October girls would find an *izba* suitable for entertaining the young men who were invited to join them while they spun. Three girls might get together and buy a skirt or a shawl for an older woman living on her own whose *izba* would be lent to them for the occasion. In addition to a basket of combed

⁶⁹ 'L'novodstvo,' 2.

⁷⁰ 'L'novodstvo,' 2.

⁷¹ For example, an icon of the Annunciation from the Vetka school, painted in 1880, shows the Virgin seated with the spindle in her left hand. Leont'eva and Nechaeva, n.p.n.

white *kuzhel*', a spindle, and distaff, they brought logs for the stove so they could bake bread.

There are three steps within the spinning process. *Priadenie* (spinning) consists of pulling the fibre or fleece into long *priadi* (strands). *Suchenie* is the twisting of strands to form yarn. In the third phase, *namatyvanie* (winding), twisted strands are wound or reeled into lengths.⁷²

Depending on its consistency and texture, every material requires a different drafting technique when spun. For example, because flax fibres are so long, they are particularly difficult to work with. Other materials present other problems. One spinner in Bobrovka explained that she spins woollen fleece on its own, but when she uses goathair, she adds another thread after spinning. She either buys a thread to add to it or pulls threads out of old cloth, because on its own the goathair would shrink to nothing when washed.

Spinning with a *vereteno* (spindle), a simple stick-like wooden device or turned shaft was practised in the same way by Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians. The spinner draws out the fibrous material or fleece from the strick or bundle with the left hand which never lets go of the forming yarn, while the movement of the spindle which is spun clockwise by the right hand twists the fibre or fleece into yarn. More fibres are drawn from the bundle with the left hand to form a continuous length of yarn, held together by means of the twist. The spun length is then wound several times over the back of the left hand, while the right hand drafts the fibres into the desired thickness and twists the spindle again. The newly-spun length of yarn is then rewound onto the spindle which is sometimes held with the knees. Each length is then looped over the top of the spindle so that the next length of yarn can be spun.⁷³ When spinning, the spinner has to keep covering the fingers of her left hand with spittle or water to strengthen the yarn. In Russia it was usual for a woman to keep a berry in her mouth so it would not become too dry. After a long time spent spinning, a woman could be very hoarse.⁷⁴

Some spindles were wider at one end and finished with a little knob or *boroda* (beard). A small disc-like fitting which slid onto the spindle, a *priaslitsa* (whorl), could be made of wood, stone, slate, pottery, or even in some cases potato, and served as a

⁷²Sometimes hackling or combing is included as the earliest phase of spinning. However, this is a process which can take place well before spinning, and therefore is less logically included as one of the stages of spinning. Bolonev, *Mesiatseslov*, 160; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 480.

⁷³Barber, *Work*, 34–39; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 481; Ross, s.v. 'spinning with a handspindle'.

⁷⁴Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 482.

weight which aided the spinning process by adding momentum to the turning spindle.⁷⁵ Frequently the spindle itself was decorated with paint or with designs burned into the wood or sometimes even had bells attached.⁷⁶ The Bukhtarma Old Believers used spindles decorated with balusters and horizontal bands.⁷⁷ Their *prialki* (distaffs) were usually decorated with painted designs.

Б: А мы и на вечерки с прялками ходили, пряли. Идешь, бывало, а какая-нибудь свечка чуть-чуть горит – не видать.

А: Сколько за вечер нарядали?

Б: Веретешка два нарядали, не больше.

В: And we would also go to the *vecherki* with our distaffs and spin. You would go and some sort of a candle would be barely burning – you couldn't see.

А: How much did you spin in an evening?

В: We spun two spindles, not more than that.

Lidia Anan'evna (1916).

A distaff, made in many varying forms, was usually, but not always used to hold the material for spinning. In a simple form, the handle of a small stick-like distaff could be tucked into a spinner's belt, so she could still spin while driving cattle or moving around. A second type of distaff was designed for sitting work and could be fixed to a bench or inserted into a plank of wood, in which case it consisted of two sections. The *pero* (feather), the holder, fit into the *dontse* (seat) of the distaff and could easily be removed. This separate piece of wood could be shovel, stick, or comb-shaped. A fork-shaped distaff was usually used to hold wool.⁷⁸ (Plates 37 and 38).

A distaff for seated work could also be fashioned from a single piece of wood, using a small tree. The root served as the *khvost* (tail) which was placed on a bench and on which the spinner sat. At the top end of the upright section of tree trunk was a widened *lopast'* (blade). Common in central and northern Russia, this design of distaff was also used by Old Believers in the Altai and Zabaikal'e, along with distaffs assembled from separate sections of wood.⁷⁹ In the Bukhtarma region, root distaffs were usually made from cedar or fir, since these trees had the most suitable shape, with the trunk growing perpendicular to the root.⁸⁰ The stricks of fibre or fleece were dressed to

⁷⁵ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 482–83.

⁷⁶ Lebedeva, *Voprosy*, 8.

⁷⁷ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 167–168.

⁷⁸ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 487.

⁷⁹ Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 153; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 486–487; idem, *Voprosy*, 8–9.

⁸⁰ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 167.

the blade of the distaff with cord threaded through two or more small holes in the blade. Sometimes the stricks were also tightly wrapped in cloth.

The shape of a blade varied from region to region. It could resemble a shovel, a fork, a stick, or a comb and in some areas was highly decorated, either with woodcarving or painted designs.⁸¹ In Russia, it was customary for a young man to make a distaff for his bride. Miniature distaffs were also made for little girls to use when they were old enough to spin. Decorated distaffs were often works of art and imagination and were considered ornamental additions to the home.⁸² In the Altai, Old Believers usually made wide rectangular or shovel-shaped blades typically decorated with paint, rather than woodcarving.⁸³

At *Maslenitsa*, when spinning was finished for the winter, young people brought the unusable residue from spinning to the hills to be burned and the distaff was used for sledding. This ritual is also thought to have a symbolic function as a fertility rite connected to the growing of flax. In popular belief, the longer the sledding run the longer the flax would grow in the summer.⁸⁴

Spinning could also be done without a spindle or distaff, by rolling or twisting the fibres left over from an earlier spinning or from the *pachesi* by hand.⁸⁵ These leftovers collected in a woman's apron, in a basket, or were still connected to the distaff. Such rough-textured yarn was then wound around a basket or onto the hand. Called *verch'* or *suchanina* (twist) it could be used as the warp in weaving matting or bedding.⁸⁶

⁸¹ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 487,490.

⁸² Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 489.

⁸³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 167.

⁸⁴ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 490; Bolonev, *Mesiatseslov*, 35.

⁸⁵ A *samoprialka* (spinning wheel) provided the third means of spinning in Russia. However, it was not in common use amongst the Old Believers in the Altai, although a foot-operated spinning wheel existed in Russia for industrial purposes by the end of the seventeenth century. The most common and probably indigenous Russian spinning wheel was a *samoprialka-lezhak* (horizontal spinning wheel), a foot-pedaled mechanism where the wheel and the spindle were both set in a horizontal plane. The other type of foot-operated spinning wheel, a *samoprialka-stoiak* (standing spinning wheel), which replaced the first type in many parts of Russia, had the wheel and spindle in the same vertical plane. This type of wheel was known by varying names in Russia, all suggesting foreign origins, such as *gollandka* (Dutch spinning wheel), *nemka* (German spinning wheel) or *chukhonka* (Finnish spinning wheel), whereas the *samoprialka-lezhak* was referred to as *russkaia* (Russian spinning wheel), and was considered an older invention. A hand-operated mechanism for twisting wool or fibre into yarn was also known in earlier times and it is likely that the horizontal Russian spinning wheel evolved from this. This device, a *sukal'no*, is very similar in design to the *skal'nitsa*, consisting of a wheel and spindle, used by Old Believers in the Altai to wind bobbins. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 483–485. In the Old Believer villages of Bobrovka and Verkh-Uimon, only one or two women interviewed mentioned a spinning wheel. They had all spun or still spin with a traditional distaff and spindle. However, at least by the end of the nineteenth century, the Semeiskie used both the vertical and horizontal spinning wheel as a matter of course. Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 149.

⁸⁶ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 481.

Each grade of fibre was designated for spinning into yarns for specific clothing or furnishings. The *otrep'e* were spun and used for *poloviki* (floor matting), the *obdirki* and *izgreby* for trousers and for the lower part of shirts. The *pachesi* was better still, but the very finest yarn was spun from the *kuzhel'*.

A spinner kept track of the amount she spun to make bleaching, warping, and weaving as efficient and accurate as possible. In the Altai, Old Believers referred to an amount of yarn as a *polumotok* or a *polnitochka* (skein), terms related to their count system.⁸⁷ Although the terminology may have varied, the quantity of spun yarn was continuously being measured and counted by the spinner. (Plates 39, 40, 41, and 42).

Садись за прялочку, или как говорят, на ниточку, садись на полниточки.
Матери наши так говорят. Не ленитесь прясть.
You should sit down at the distaff, or as they said, sit down to a *nitochka*, to a *polnitochka*. That is how our mothers talked. You shouldn't be lazy at spinning.
Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

5.2 Preparation of Yarn for Weaving

5.21 Skeining and Measuring

Once a certain amount of yarn had been spun, it was wound off the full spindle into skeins. This could be done in concentric circles around a table or bench, spinning the ends of yarn from the spindle together to create the desired length, or they could be wound onto a *motovilo* (niddy-noddy). The skeins were a relative amount of coiled yarn manageable for the next stages of preparation, including bleaching or dyeing, measuring and counting the lengths of yarn needed to warp the loom for weaving.

Вот зиму прядешь. А потом полумотки мотаешь на мотовило.
So you spin in the winter and then you wind the *polumotki* onto the niddy-noddy.
Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

The *motovilo* was literally a 'fork for winding', a device for skeining and measuring which in its simplest and most archaic form as used by Old Believers in the

⁸⁷ A *polumotok*, literally 'half a skein' refers to the oblong shape of a length of yarn as it was wound off after spinning. The more commonly used word, *motok* (skein), would refer to a round ball of yarn, but they may each refer to the same amount of spun and measured yarn.

Altai, consisted of the branch of a tree with one forked end and one end which formed a natural T-bar. Alternatively, a stick was attached perpendicular to the end to create a T. The shoulders were planed down a little lower to make a place for the yarn.

И вот на него мотают: на этот конец и на этот, и полумоток получается, больше четырех метров, когда его снимут.

You would wind on it: on this end and on that and when you took [the yarn] off, you would get a *polumotok*. A *polumotok* would be more than four metres long.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

The length of a round of yarn naturally varied according to the length of the niddy-noddy. In European Russia it was generally between 0.5 and 1.0 metres (19 ½ and 39 inches), the equivalent of the Russian measure of 1 or 2 *loktia* (a *lokot'* or elbow is equivalent to the obsolete measure of a cubit). Old Believers in the Altai used a niddy-noddy which was comparatively long – approximately 1.1 metres (42 inches).

Каждый полумоток на мотовило мотаем, мотовило длиной в шесть четвертей.

We wound every *polumotok* on the niddy-noddy; a niddy-noddy is six *chetverti* [a *chetvert'* was ¼ of an *arshin*: 18 centimetres or 7 inches] in length.⁸⁸

The spinner counted as she worked.

Мотаешь и считаешь: чисменка – три ниточки на мотовило, тридцать чисменок – полупасок, семь полупасков – полумоток. На холстину надо пять полумотков.

You wind and you count: a *chismenka* is three *nitochki* on the niddy-noddy. Thirty *chismenki* is a *polupasok*, seven *polupaski* is a *polumotok*. For a *kholstina* you need five *polumotki*.⁸⁹

In Russia there were many regional variations of the count system, but the vocabulary remained generally consistent, with a few exceptions. For example, in the Altai Old Believers did not use the word *krug* (circle) for counting a turn of the niddy-noddy as was common in other parts of Russia.⁹⁰ They counted rounds of the niddy-noddy as *nitki*, *nitochki* (threads).⁹¹ For them, a *chismenka* consisted of three *nitki* on the

⁸⁸ 'L'novodstvo,' 3.

⁸⁹ 'L'novodstvo,' 3.

⁹⁰ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 491.

⁹¹ A *nit'* was the measure commonly used in Ukraine, but it was wrapped four times, not once around the

niddy-noddy. The method of winding off (that is, from the forked end around each of the two shoulders of the niddy-noddy) would therefore produce a *nitka* of approximately four metres.

1 *nitka* = a round of the niddy-noddy
3 *nitki* = 1 *chismenka*
30 *chismenki* = 1 *polupasok*
7 *polupaski* = 1 *polumotok*
5 *polumotki* = 1 *kholstina*

Villagers in Verkh-Uimon also used an additional unit of measurement, a *pasmo*. Although used as a measure everywhere in Russia, a *pasmo* is defined differently in different areas.⁹² In Verkh-Uimon it was equivalent to a *polupasok*.

90 *nitki* = 10 *chismenki* = 1 *pasmo*

Yarn counts are established by one of two systems – indirect or direct. In the latter case the yarn count is based on the weight unit of a standard length of yarn. Therefore, the higher the count of yarn, the heavier the yarn, because a length of heavy yarn weighs more than a length of fine yarn. Using the indirect system, the length of yarn required to make up a pound of weight expresses the yarn count. Therefore, the higher the count, the finer the yarn, because it takes more lengths to make a pound of weight.⁹³ For example, the unit of linen yarn measure called a ‘lea’ in English is 275 metres (300 yards) of yarn. The call number of the yarn is figured by the number of three-hundred yard leas required to make a pound of yarn.⁹⁴

An indirect count system will always have local variations, because it is based on the size of the reel used for skeining and on the number of rounds of yarn which can be wound on at one time without becoming too thick. Although the count system in European Russia had no consistent pre-determined amount of yarn which fit the

reel. Lebedeva, ‘Priadenie,’ 491.

⁹² *Pasmo* is usually translated into English as ‘lea,’ a measure of yarn. However, as described in Chapter 2.4, the same word is also used in a weaving context to identify the type of reed used for a particular cloth. For a variety of explanations in this regard see Iakobson, 52–54, also Lebedeva, ‘Priadenie,’ 497, 516, 528.

⁹³ Tovey, 76–77.

⁹⁴ In English the standards of measurement in the Indirect Yarn Count System are expressed with different terminology for linen (lea), cotton (hank), silk (hank) or wool (skein, snap, hank, etc.) to denote the lengths per unit weight. Using the Direct Yarn Count System in which the yarn size is expressed by the number of units of weight per unit length of yarn, for linen or hemp the yarn number would be the weight

terminology used here, generally a *pasmo* was divided into ten *chismenki*. A *motok* (skein) could be an unspecified relative amount of coiled yarn, while a *pasmo* was the consistent unit for measuring and dividing the length of a *motok*. The actual amounts of yarn rather than the terminology differed according to local tradition, but not by any confusion over counting on the part of a spinner or weaver who knew her own system, her yarn, and her loom. Because of the variable length of a niddy-noddy, the length of a *pasmo* could vary from place to place by as much as 100% and the number of *pasma* which made up a *motok* varied from seven to seventeen.⁹⁵

Since the length of the niddy-noddy made by the Old Believers was approximately 1.1 metre (42 inches), using the count system described here as a very rough guide, a *pasmo* would therefore be equivalent to 360 metres (390 yards) of linen yarn. A *polumotok* would measure 2,520 metres (2,730 yards) and a *kholstina* approximately 12,600 metres (14,000 yards) of yarn.⁹⁶

Women interviewed in the Altai use '*polumotok*' to describe the skeins wound off on the niddy-noddy. However, it was also the word used in Bobrovka to measure a much greater specific amount of yarn, suggesting that it was both a general and precise amount of spun yarn, depending on the context. The use of the same word for different units of measurement is also found with the word '*kholstina*'. This is a unit for measuring both a length of yarn of 5 *polumotki* and a length of cloth equivalent to 20 *arshiny* (approximately 14 metres or 15 yards). In addition, it describes linen cloth of different sorts.

As they were wound off the spindle, it was usual in Russia for *chismenki* to be counted out and tied up separately, then put together and retied to form a *pasmo*. The weaver had to know the right amount of yarn to prepare in order to warp the loom for a particular length of cloth. She would calculate the length of cloth according to the

in pounds of 14,400 yards of yarn. Ross, s.v. 'lea,' 'yarn count,' 'yarn count units'.

⁹⁵ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 491. Dal', s.v. 'pasmo'.

⁹⁶ A system of measurement similar to this is explained in Marguerite Porter Davison, *A Handweaver's Pattern Book* (Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, 1944), VIII.

One circumference of the reel – 1 ½ yards = one thread;

80 threads = one skein = 120 yards

7 skeins = one hank = 840 yards

18 hanks = one spyndle = 15,120 yards

number of *steny* (walls) needed for the warp. Since every house had its own length of wall, a variable *stena* measured the length of cloth to be woven.⁹⁷

Теперь вот нарядут там, чтобы сколько этих полумотков, на основу надо сколько этих стен, чтобы прозолить в золе.

Then you would spin so many of these *polumotki*; you had to bleach so many *steny* in ash for the warp.

Malan'ia Mikhailovna (1922).

5.22 Bleaching and Winding

Once measured, the skeins were ready for bleaching and rewinding onto reels, drums, and spools, from which they could be unwound for warping or weaving.

Потом эти полумотки золой обваливаешь. В русскую печку скидаешь, печку заслонишь, замажешь глиной, чтобы там пар был.

Then you would roll these *polumotki* in ash. You would put them into the Russian stove and close up the stove and cover the crack with clay so there would be steam [so it would be really hot].

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912).

The lye in wood ash acted as a bleaching and softening agent. Sun and frost completed the whitening.

Полумотки в печи сталкиваем мокрые, они там преют день. Потом опять кипятком заливаем, чтобы отошла из них эта сырость. Потом начинаем полумотки мыть, в золу их назолим, чтобы они намякшие стали, потом в катки; помокнут день и на речку везем. Полумотки там полоскаем, колотим. С речки привезем и на улицу выкидываем мерзнуть. Потом они будут белые и мягкие. Потом подсушиваем их.

We would put the *polumotki* in the stove wet; they dried out all day there. Then we would cover them with boiling water again, to get rid of the damp smell. Then we would start washing the *polumotki*. We would put them in the ash so they would soften. Then we soaked them in a tub all day and took them to the river. There we would rinse them and beat them. We would take them from the river and leave them outside to freeze. They would be white and soft. Then we dried them out.⁹⁸

With spring approaching, there was a sense of urgency to have the work done before Lent.

⁹⁷ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 491.

⁹⁸ 'L'novodstvo,' 3.

«Ведь подумать только – Великий пост подойдет, а мы все еще белим его, все таскаемся с ним».

‘Now just imagine – Lent was approaching and we still had to bleach [the flax], we were still struggling with it’.⁹⁹

Spun and wound yarn could also be dyed at this point. Dyes were traditionally made from plants or the bark or root of trees, but later these were replaced by purchased powdered dyes. Black dye could be made from alder bark and sandalwood, the latter purchased in Siberian markets, as was the indigo used for dark blue. A brownish colour was made from the root of madder plants. The Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers used a combination of birch bark and *krovianka* (from Russian *krov*’, blood), a plant also known as *chistotel* (*Chelidonium majus*) to make a dye for linen. After hanging in the sun, the material turned red.¹⁰⁰ *Pizhma* (*Tanacetum vulgare*), wild rowan-berry, grows in the meadows and was used by the Poliaki to make a yellow dye for linen.

Normally two devices were used for reeling: one to untangle and straighten out the bleached or dyed yarn from the skeins and a winding device to organise the yarn for warping and weaving. First of all, the skeins were unrolled.

Все высохнет, затем развеять воробой, ну вот положишь этот полумоток на вьюшку, разовьешь.

All [the yarn] would dry out and then it was reeled with the *voroba*. And then you would put the *polumotok* onto a *v’iushka* and you would wind.

Vassa Proter’evna (1900).

The *voroba* or *voroby* (reel) was made of wood and had two pairs of crossed arms. The four arms were narrow planks, usually 100–110 centimetres (or approximately one yard) long nailed at their crossing onto a vertical post or leg. At the outer edge of the four big arms were holes in two places for little pegs or spindles, around which the yarn was wound. A whole *polumotok* was stretched out around the ends on the crossed arms and taken off from the end so it would ‘unwind nicely’. As the reel turned, the skeins of yarn were wound off onto *v’iushki* (spools).

⁹⁹ ‘L’novodstvo,’ 3.

¹⁰⁰ Grinkova, 316; O. N. Shelegina, ‘Izgotovlennye odezhdny krest’ianami zapadnoi Sibiri (XVIII – pervaiia polovina XIX v.), in *Kul’turno-bytovye protsessy u russkikh Sibiri XVIII – nachalo XX v.*, ed. L. V. Ostrovskaia (Novosibirsk, 1985), 152–153.

Воробы сами шибко бегают. С воробы все смотаем на вьюшку.
The *voroby* itself turns very fast. We wound everything off the *voroby* onto a
v'iushka.¹⁰¹

A spool was a wooden drum with open sides. The ends were connected by several upright wooden bars. In the centre of each end was a round opening for fitting the spool onto the *v'iukha*. A *v'iukha* was cut out of a block of wood and held the horizontal axis on which the spool turned. From these large spools yarn would be taken for the warp or rewound onto small *tsevki* (bobbins), often made of lime bark, which held the weft yarn and were slotted into the shuttle.¹⁰² A *skalka* or *skal'nitsa* (bobbin winder) consisted of a horizontal rod, usually made of iron, with an iron or wooden wheel at one end, which turned in two arms of wood or iron fixed to a log. This was used to unwind lengths of yarn from the *voroby* onto the bobbins which were inserted into the shuttle and used for the weft.¹⁰³ (Plate 43).

Old Believers from the Bukhtarma and Uimon communities called the spool a *tiurik*. (Plate 44). However, they referred to the stand on which the spool turned as a *v'iukha*.¹⁰⁴ Some people used no spools at all, but rolled their yarn into balls by hand from the reel.

У кого-то были тюрики, а кто-то крутил с воробы на клубки.
Some people had *tiuriki*, but some people rolled [yarn] into balls from the reel.
Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

The type of design to be woven determined the number of *v'iushki* or *tiuriki* which were prepared before weaving. If plain tabby weaving was planned, with only two shafts in use, there were only two *v'iushki*. But for a patterned tablecloth design, for example, typically eight different spools of yarn might be designated for that length of cloth.

Everything had to be meticulously worked out to save time and energy.

¹⁰¹ 'L'novodstvo,' 3.

¹⁰² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 169; Lebedeva, *Voprosy*, 9; idem 'Priadenie,' 493.

¹⁰³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 168. Yarn could also be twisted mechanically on this device to be wound and joined together when required. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 495.

¹⁰⁴ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 168.

На мотовило мотаешь, сидишь – считаешь по указке. Вот две рогульки, вот так мотаешь, чтобы сикось-накось не попало, а все путем-путем.

You wind onto the niddy-noddy and you sit and count according to your system. You wind on the two ends this way, so it doesn't get into a tangled mess and you keep track of everything.

Varvara Mikhailovna (1923).

5.23 Warping

With the yarn measured, coloured, and wound, a weaver could begin to organise the warp ends or threads which would create the length of her cloth. By one definition 'a warp is a skein of yarn of any length, with a cross at each end'.¹⁰⁵ For this skein to become an arrangement of separate parallel ends fixed at tension on a loom requires careful planning. The warp has to be measured out and arranged in advance in such a way that it can be transferred efficiently and in order to the loom. For the weaver this is a particularly important step as it determines the ease with which the loom will be prepared for weaving as well as the design of the cloth. Not everyone had a *snovalka* (warping frame or mill) for preparing the warp. In the absence of such a device, warping was done on the wall at home, in which case the warp yarn was usually wound beforehand in balls, rather than onto spools, and put into a bucket to keep it from moving around.

У меня не было сновалки. Я на стене сновала.

I didn't have a *snovalka*. I warped on the wall.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

Warping yarn on the wall was an exacting task. It was done by arranging two vertical rows of pegs or nails parallel to each other at either end of a wall. The distance between the two rows therefore depended on the length of the room. The vertical distance between each peg was 15 to 20 centimetres (5 to 6 ²/₃ inches).¹⁰⁶

The distance from one peg to the next at the other side of the wall was measured as a *stena* (wall). An additional peg was added to the wall halfway between the left and right hand pegs of the bottom row. This was used to form the figure-of-eight cross which

¹⁰⁵ Ann Sutton, Peter Collingwood, Geraldine St Aubyn Hubbard, *The Craft of the Weaver*, ed. Anna Jackson, (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982), 60.

¹⁰⁶ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 495.

separated the yarn into two sections, thereby preventing the warp ends from getting mixed up and crossing over each other either when they were removed from the pegs or when they got to the loom.

Yarn which would make up the entire length of the warp was wound back and forth around the pegs, with one yarn going over and the other under the additional crossing peg or nail in the bottom row to create the cross. The yarn was kept at an even tension. When it reached the last peg, the yarn was brought back again to the beginning where one went once under and one once over the additional peg. (Plates 45, 46 and 47). In Russia this work had to be finished in a day, because there was a belief that if left overnight the warp would get tangled up.¹⁰⁷ When the warping was finished, the yarn was taken off the wall and arranged in loops to be brought to the loom. (Plates 48 and 49).

The following example is an indication of the exhausting nature of this work. To warp a piece of cloth with a width of 300 warp ends and 12 *steny* in length (assuming a wall length of 3.2 metres or 3 ½ yards), the warper had to go back and forth 3,600 times.¹⁰⁸

A *snovalka* consisted of a horizontal wooden frame, usually 1.3 metres (1 ⅙ yards) wide and no longer than 3.2 metres (3 yards). Using this frame, warping was done in the same way as on the wall but did not damage the wall and did not require the warp to be finished in a day.¹⁰⁹

Снуем в избе, а есть люди, что на улице снуют. Снуем тоненько.

We would do the warping in the *izba*, but some people did it outside. We would warp very carefully.¹¹⁰

For those with a rotating warping mill, also known as a *snovalka*, the task was considerably easier. A different principle governed this standing vertical warping device which in the Altai was always used outdoors.¹¹¹ The mechanism rotated, while the person warping remained still. The other advantage of the warping mill was that the yarn

¹⁰⁷ Anne Field, *The Ashford Book of Weaving* (London: Batsford, 1991), 51–54; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 496–97.

¹⁰⁸ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 496–97; Collingwood and others, 61.

¹⁰⁹ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 497.

¹¹⁰ 'L'novodstvo,' 3.

¹¹¹ Since warping was not done outdoors in European Russia, the Old Believers in Altai were unusual in this regard. Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 168.

was wound around upright bars, rather than around pegs, more likely to move under pressure.

The Bukhtarma Old Believers used a rotating *snovalka* which differed in shape to the usual Russian device. Each vane formed a square rather than a rectangle as it commonly did in other parts of Russia. In either case a warping mill had two interconnected wooden frames. At their crossing and joining was a vertical pole, approximately 2 metres (1 ¾ yards) high, forming an axis which turned in a stone positioned at the bottom. At the top it turned in a horizontal pole fixed to a building at one end and into a special holder at the other. At the bottom edge of one of the vanes two pegs or a wooden fork were added. Like the extra peg on the wall described above, these allowed a cross to be made in the yarn as it was warped. It has been suggested that the warping mill is so different in concept to that of warping on a wall or board that it must have come to domestic weavers from the experience of industrial weaving. This is a curious point in view of the fact that isolated Old Believers in such a distant part of Russia were familiar with the warping mill.¹¹²

The mental and physical discipline required to reach this point in the preparation of flax or hemp fibres for weaving allowed time for little else.

Полумотки в золу. Вот такая зола-то. Горячей воды надо. Вот было я (пойду) на речку, повесила, она промерзнет, снег тает как. Ну и вот эти полумотки развеваешь: тонкие к тонким снуешь, а толстые к толстым. Некогда было гулять; не гуляли, кроме свадьбы.

The *polumotki* went into the ash. You had to have hot water for the ash. Then I would go to the river and hang up the yarn. It would freeze and then the snow would melt. And then you would unwind the skeins and warp fine yarn for fine and thick yarn for coarse [cloth]. There was no time to enjoy ourselves. We didn't go out, except for a wedding.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900)

Other women expressed similar feelings about the time-consuming routine involved in preparing linen yarn.

¹¹² Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 168; Field, 68–70; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 497–498. I would like to express my gratitude to Ann O'Kelly who graciously provided demonstrations of warping on both a warping board and mill.

Напрядешь за зиму полумотков. Сидим, прядем, всю жизнь он сгубил, этот лен.

During the winter we would spin *polumotki*. We sat, we spun; it ruined our whole life, that linen.¹¹³

5.3 Traditional Weaving Methods

The essential elements of weaving have not changed over the 8000 years during which the presence of looms can be documented by fragments of cloth found in different parts of the world.¹¹⁴ Weaving consists of 'passing the weft between taut, alternately raised warps, as in the basic plain weave, or between other combinations of selected warps, and pressing it into place'.¹¹⁵ It is the loom which provides this tautness for the lengthways warp ends, by suspending them at tension between two fixed points.

Although the process of interlacing perpendicular rows of yarn to form cloth remains the same, there are many varieties of looms which can be used to achieve this. There are vertical and horizontal looms, warp-weight looms, bar or beam looms, back-strap looms, inkle looms, table looms, pit looms, floor looms, pedal looms and many more. A good number of these were known to the Russians and to the Old Believers living in the Altai. Some looms allow more flexibility of design and of movement for the weaver, some are simple, some complex, but in every case the warp ends are held in place and spaced in parallel rows by the loom. Selected groups of these warp ends are raised or lowered, allowing the weft to be interwoven through the shed or opening this creates. The formation and sequence of this opening determines the design of the weave.

In its simplest and slowest form weaving is done as the weaver takes the weft yarn back and forth over and under the warp by hand. But various devices, including rods and sticks, comb-like reeds, or loops of string have been invented to make the raising of alternate groups of warp ends more efficient for the weaver.

For example, a stick can be used to create a shed in the warp. By passing under and over alternate ends of the warp, a shed-rod divides the warp into odd and even

¹¹³ 'L'novodstvo,' 2.

¹¹⁴ Anni Albers, *On Weaving* (London: Studio Vista, 1966), 22, 29–30; Barber, *Work*, 78–79; Eric Broudy, *The Book of Looms: a history of the handloom from ancient times to the present* (London: Studio Vista, 1979), 38.

¹¹⁵ Albers, 19.

sections by raising one half of the ends. This leaves an opening the thickness of the rod through which the weft yarn can be passed.

However, for the labour-saving shed-rod to be left in place during weaving, a system is needed to form a second shed by raising the ends which lie under the stick. A heddle, a loop of string, was the solution found to form this countershed. A row of strings attached to and hanging from a rod were looped under the warp ends which had not been raised by the shed-rod. By raising this heddle-rod the alternate ends of the warp could all be lifted at once, forming a countershed. When more complex designs requiring the raising of more than alternate threads were planned, additional heddle-rods could be added to the loom. The modern horizontal floor loom represents a development of this system of raising warp ends by means of such loops of string.

The heddle-rods, or shafts, were suspended from the frame of a loom or from the ceiling by a length of cord fixed at each end of the rod. As the floor loom evolved, they were also attached by cord to foot pedals. This arrangement allowed the weaver to raise and lower the heddles without using hands.

Pushing the weft yarn into place after it has been passed through the shed on simple looms can be done by hand with a batten not unlike a scutching blade or with a reed fixed to a beater on more complex looms. The reed is a wooden or metal comb-like device which holds the warp ends parallel and evenly spaced on the loom. Each warp end is threaded through the dents or spaces of the reed. Reeds can be hand-held or kept in place by a moveable beater suspended from the frame of a floor loom. After each throw or pick of the weft, the beater pushes the weft yarn into place against the cloth.

A vertical loom is thought to be the first used by the ancient Slavs. Warp-weighted vertical looms are suitable for making heavy products such as bedspreads or rugs. A disadvantage of the vertical loom is that its frame can limit the length of the warp. Garments made on these looms were therefore short and made one at a time. Ukrainians and Russians in the Kursk and Orlov regions used a vertical loom for rug-making.¹¹⁶ Rug-making was also practised by Old Believers in the Altai and Siberia, using designs similar to those found on woven belts. However, rugs, like belts and floor matting, may have been made on a horizontal rather than a vertical loom.

¹¹⁶ Barber, *Work*, 81, 221–222; Lebedeva, *Voprosy*, 11; idem 'Priadenie,' 513.

Так мама все ткала – и скатерти, и ковры. И пояски ткала со словами всякими разными.

Mama wove everything – both tablecloths and rugs. And she wove belts with all kinds of different words.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1917).

The terminology for a horizontal loom is common to all Eastern Slavs, leading ethnographers to believe that they also used this loom in the ancient past.¹¹⁷

The Bukhtarma Old Believers constructed a horizontal loom outdoors to weave sieves, netting, and bee-keepers' masks, all of different density, from the hair of horse tails. The horsehair warp was stretched tightly between two cross bars fixed to struts supported by legs at the back and in the front by the logs of a house in front of which the weaver sat. A *tsen* (shed-rod) was inserted across the warp to separate the odd and even hairs. In front of the shed-rod was a shaft consisting of a dowel with string loops tied to it, through which alternate hairs of the warp were threaded. Each end of the shaft was tied with looped cord, allowing it to be lowered by hand to form a countershed. When released, the shaft let the warp ends move back into place to form the natural shed.¹¹⁸

A horizontal floor loom with heddles, shafts, reed, and pedals is thought to be a medieval invention which came to Western Europe from the Near East sometime around the year 1000.¹¹⁹ Fragments of cloth from the tenth to eleventh centuries found in Russia indicate that a horizontal loom used for clothmaking existed in Kievan Russia. Although this was the prototype of the horizontal floor loom used by Old Believers in the Altai, in its earlier form it was a fixed loom. It had neither a frame nor a beam at the back of the loom to hold the warp ends in place. (Fig. 5.1) The warp, which was called the *kosa* (plait), was looped and tied to a post or to the wall, while the shafts holding the heddles were attached to the loom by cords suspended from the ceiling. The shafts were raised and lowered by means of two or four pedals made originally of loops of heavy cord and later of wood, to which they were attached by cord.¹²⁰

Sometime after the thirteenth century, changes such as a frame and a warp beam were added to the loom. This was essentially the structure still used by Old Believers in

¹¹⁷ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 514–515.

¹¹⁸ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 173–174.

¹¹⁹ Broudy, 138.

¹²⁰ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 517.

the Altai in the twentieth century and by handweavers generally in many parts of the world. The weaver can use both hands and feet to operate the loom.

5.31 The Loom

The horizontal floor loom constructed by Old Believers in the Altai had a timber frame kept disassembled in an attic or other dry place when not in use. In the past no home had been without such a loom. It was known as the *krosna*, a northern Russian, Ukrainian, or Belorussian term, which in some places referred to a loom which had been warped. In eastern Ukraine it referred to a vertical loom used for rug-making or more accurately to the two upright posts of the loom. However in the Smolensk region, for example, as in the Altai and amongst the Semeiskie in Zabaikal'e, it referred to an unwarped loom.¹²¹

Каждая женщина пряла и ткала, каждая на своих кроснах ткала.
Every woman spun and wove; every woman wove on her *krosna*.¹²²

Typically, this loom had two or four *nishenki* (shafts) which held the *niti* (heddles) and usually two or four *pronoshki* or *podnozhni* (pedals) which allowed for the mechanical operation of the *zev* (shed). The *utok* (weft) was passed through the shed by means of a *chelnok* (wooden shuttle) which carried the wound *tsevka* (bobbin) of yarn back and forth. The *berdo* (reed) of the loom fit into a removable wooden frame or *nabelka* (beater) which could move the reed up and down the *osnova* (warp) in front of the shafts, allowing the weaver to push and beat the weft pick into place after each throw of the shuttle. In the Bukhtarma region parts of the loom were sometimes decorated with woodcarving.¹²³

The loom was supported by *nogi* or *stanoviny* (legs) which could have *skalotiny* (cross bars) for support. It had two roller beams, the *navoi* or *koloda* (warp beam) at the back of the loom and the *prishva* (cloth beam) in front of the weaver. The tension of the warp was controlled by the rotation of the two beams. To keep the beams from moving backwards, wooden *prituzhal'niki* (sticks) were inserted at one end to hold them in place

¹²¹ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 170; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 510, 514–515.

¹²² 'L'novodstvo,' 4.

¹²³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 170; Examples of treadle looms used in Norway in the 1660s are very similar in design to those used by Old Believers in the Altai. Broudy, 142, 144.

and to act as brakes. There was some variation between the loom used by the Bukhtarma Old Believers and the Poliaki on the other side of the Altai Mountains in that the latter sometimes had a slightly more comfortable and modern design. The cloth beam would be in a lower position in front of the weaver, with an additional *nagrudnik* (breast beam) across which the cloth was first wound.¹²⁴ If the loom had a plank of wood attached at the front for the weaver to sit on, this was called the *sidelka* (seat).

5.32 Dressing the Loom

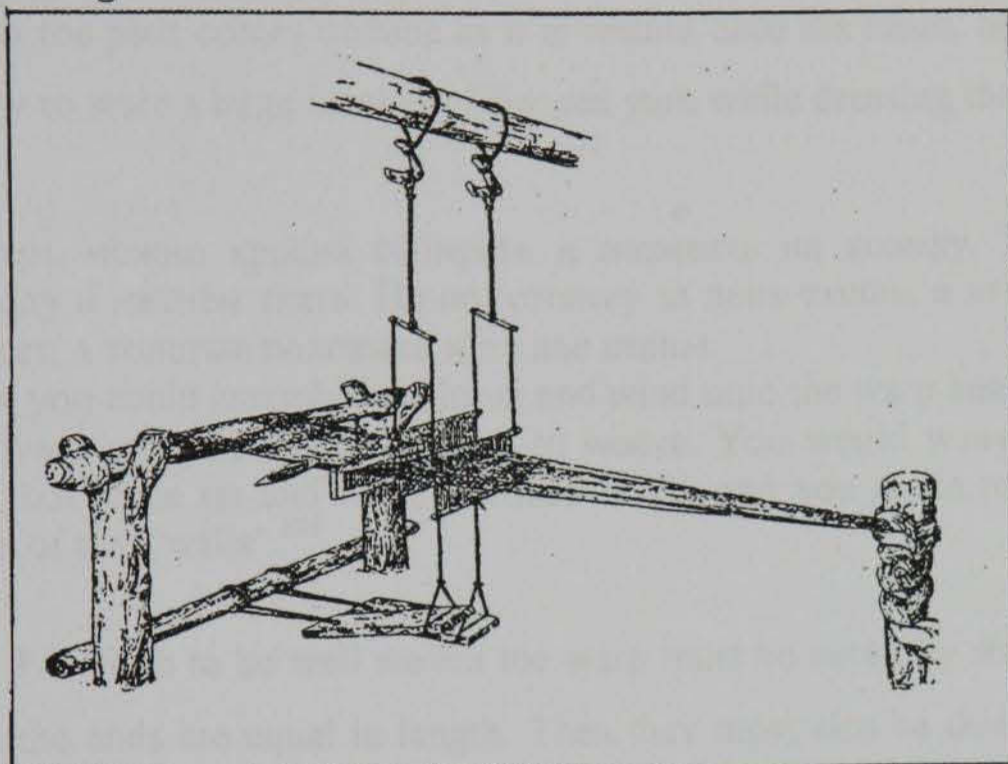


FIG. 5.1 Floor loom without warp beam (M. N. Levinson-Nechaeva, 'Tkachestvo,' in *Ocherki po istorii russkoi derevni X-XIII vv.*, ed. B. A. Rybakov (Moscow, 1959)).

The process of dressing the warp ends onto the warp beam of the loom began by removing them from the pegs or warping mill, neatly arranged and chained in loops. Because earlier horizontal looms in Russia had not had a warp beam, the warp was looped like a plait around for example, a stake stuck in the floor behind the loom. The system of looping or chaining allowed the warp to be unwound as weaving progressed. After the introduction of a warp beam, as they were removed from the warping pegs or mill, the ends continued to be transferred to the loom as a *pleten'* (braid or warp chain).¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 169–170.

¹²⁵ Similarly, 'chain' is used in English to designate the warp. Field, 54, 79; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 517; Ken Ponting, *Beginner's Guide to Weaving* (London: Newnes Technical, 1982), 28; Rybakov, 19.

Сначала (одну) петлю берут и в следующую петлю. Она называется плетень, потому что плетется как коса.

First you make a loop and bring it into the next loop. It's called the braid because it is braided like a plait.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

The use of the noun '*pleten*' rather than '*osnova*' (the usual word for the warp in Russian), referring here to the warp ready to be wound onto the warp beam, is related by the speaker to the more archaic idea and term of a plait. The chain is looped in such a way that the plait comes undone as it is wound onto the beam, but is a manageable and safe way to store a large amount of warped yarn while dressing the loom.

Теперь можно кросна собирать и навивать на колоду. Навьем основу на колоду и начнем ткать. По полустенку за день ткешь, а кто сидит и по стене соткет, а толстые половики и по две стены.

Now you could assemble the loom and wind onto the warp beam. You would wind the warp onto the beam and start to weave. You would weave half a 'wall' in a day, but some sat and wove a whole 'wall', and you could make two thick floor mats of two 'walls'.¹²⁶

For cloth to be well woven the warp must be carefully stored on the warp beam so that the ends are equal in length. Then they must also be threaded carefully through the heddles and reed of the loom. It was customary in some parts of Russia, but not everywhere, for the warp ends to be drawn first from their cut end through the dents of the reed in pairs all the way to the uncut end. This was to check that the warping was correct before the ends were attached to the warp beam. Once this was done the other end of the warp could also be cut. The ends were then threaded from the back of the loom through the eyes of the heddles, through the reed, now in its weaving position, and tied to the cloth beam in front of the weaver.¹²⁷ Typically, a weaver works from the back to the front of the loom, but when space does not allow, the opposite is also possible. (Plates 50 and 51).

Теперь снимут со сновалки, концы разрежут у одного бока, вот а навьют на навойку в бердо так вденут по-порядку.

Now [the yarn] would be taken off the warping mill and the ends cut on one side.

¹²⁶ 'L'novodstvo,' 3.

¹²⁷ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 519.

Then they would be threaded into the reed in order and wound onto the warp beam.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

When the warp was threaded through the reed for checking, it was separated into pairs of alternate ends by *tsenki* (cross-sticks) which preserved the cross made while warping the yarn on the pegs or mill. This kept the ends straight and untangled so they could not cross over each other and could be easily threaded through the heddles. The warp ends were tied to a back-stick fitted into holes along the warp beam. Before the other end of the warp could be threaded through the heddles and tied to the beam at the front of the loom, the entire chain would be wound onto the warp beam and the reed used for checking removed.

Ну, и вот, разделявают это бердо, сразу ценки, вденут 2 этих палочки у навойки, чтоб нишенки там работали, (и ценки там по паре ниточки вдернуты). И ценки подвигают к навойке, бердо подвигают и на плетень становится ткачиха ногой вот так, вот: правой ногой дальше, левой – ближе и она туго держит этот плетень. А на навойке дырочки, палка такая – она их втыкает. Навойка крутится, весь плетень этот совьют на навойку.

So the reed is organised [threaded with the cut ends] and right away these two cross-sticks are inserted near the warp beam so the heddles will work. (The cross-sticks are put in by pairs of ends). The cross sticks and the reed are moved up to the warp beam and the weaver stands so – on the warp chain – with her right leg forward and her left leg back, and her foot holds the warp chain tightly. There are holes on the warp beam and there is this stick. The [back] stick fits into the holes, the beam turns and the whole warp chain is wound onto the beam.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

Apart from keeping the warp threads evenly spaced and parallel on the loom, the number of dents of the reed determines the structure of cloth to be woven. Therefore, reeds come in different sizes and are removable.

Берда были таки частенькие.

Reeds were like a fine-toothed comb.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

The parallel vertical dents of the wooden reed were fixed to a light rectangular frame which slotted into the beater. The beater was suspended from the overhead struts at the weaver's end of the loom. The beater with the reed in place was moved forward

and back to push each pick of the weft against the fell or edge of new cloth formed during weaving. When this type of loom was used for weaving wide belts, both the reed and beater were removed.¹²⁸

Before they can begin to do the warp for any given cloth, weavers have to calculate the weave construction according to the number of warp ends per centimetre (or per inch). This sett number or epi (ends per inch or e/cm, per centimetre) is an important calculation as the quality, texture, and drape of a cloth are determined by the appropriateness of its sett.¹²⁹

Reeds are made with varying numbers of dents in order to correspond to different setts and to accommodate different weights of yarn. (Plates 52 and 53). In domestic weaving this number was typically 9, 10, 12, and even 20. A lower number indicated a coarser, heavier yarn and cloth and a higher number a finer yarn and cloth. In the Altai villages, weavers labelled reeds according to a *pasmo*.¹³⁰ Reeds could also be adapted for a variety of setts by sleying varying numbers of ends per dent.¹³¹

After the warp ends had been checked through the reed, they were threaded through the *nishenki* or *nitchenki* (heddle-shafts).

Пасма сосчитывают и вот, по этим пасмам, будет вдето в бердо, и потом бердо снимают, ценки остаются, разделявают концы и вдевают в нишенки. The *pasma* are calculated and then according to them the reed would be threaded. Then the reed is removed, the cross-sticks are left, and the [other] ends are arranged and threaded into the heddle shafts. (Plates 54, 55, and 56).

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

The heddles were lengths of unbleached yarn looped under the designated warp ends to raise or lower them to form alternate sheds. They were suspended between two parallel horizontal wooden dowels. The heddle shafts were attached to the frame of the loom by pieces of cord. After being threaded through the heddles, the warp ends were sleyed through the dents of the reed.

¹²⁸ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 171.

¹²⁹ In ancient Egypt, silk-like linen was woven with a sett of up to 200 epi. Barber, *Work*, 194.

¹³⁰ As described above, a *pasmo* refers to a measured length of linen yarn, similar to a 'lea' in English. In referring to a reed number, however, a *pasmo* relates to yarn thickness rather than yarn length. Ross, s.v. 'yarn thickness'; Tovey, 76. See also Iakobson, 52–54; Lebedeva. 'Priadenie,' 497, 516, 528.

¹³¹ Janet Phillips, *The Weaver's Book of Fabric Design* (London: Batsford, 1983), 14.

Сколько будет нишенок зависит (что вы собираетесь) ткать. Я половички за 4 нишенки ткала, как я у мамы научилась. Наконец бердо (направляют) к прише. Потом аккуратно привязывают концы за нее.

The number of heddle shafts would depend on what you were planning to weave. I wove floor mats with four shafts, as my mother taught me. Finally, the reed is arranged at the cloth beam and the ends are carefully tied onto the cloth beam.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

Some weavers worked in pairs to dress the loom, one person threading the ends through the reed and the other fastening them to the cloth beam. A heading weft would be loosely woven to start a length of cloth, so it could be wound onto the cloth beam. The warp would be tightened, and weaving could begin.

The weft yarn was passed back and forth across the shed with the *chelnok*, a wooden shuttle. The boat-shape helped it pass more easily across the warp.¹³²

Челнок, вот такой вот, маленький, в нем выдолблено и эти вот концы; как у уточки носики «попреслок» называется.

В челнок (в его концы) одевается цевка с пряжей, вставляется в этот челнок.

The shuttle was small like this, with a hollowed out part and there were ends like a duck's bill called the '*popreslok*'. A bobbin wound with yarn fit inside the ends of the shuttle.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

The shafts were tied up to the pedals of the loom in a particular arrangement, depending on what was to be woven. These footboards were rectangular or oval in shape. In some cases they had a hole in the tip from which they were attached by cord to the shafts holding the warp ends. (Plates 57 and 58).

Many women in the villages described the rhythm of weaving on a floor loom. As each weaver related her experience, the importance of this rhythm was evident in the way she used her hands and feet to remember and describe the process of weaving, even when the words for parts of the loom had been forgotten.¹³³ (Plate 59).

¹³² As the name suggests, *cheln* is a type of boat.

¹³³ A saying associated with weaving in the Semeiskie communities emphasises this rhythm: '...*нупом тру, ногами мну, как раздвинется, так приткну...*'. Roughly speaking, this can be translated as '...I work with my body, I beat with my feet, as the warp parts anew I throw the weft through...'. Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 157.

5.33 The Cloth

Weaving began in March when spinning was finished. The amount a woman wove was measured by the *kholstina* (length).

Зиму-то пропрядешь до марта месяца, а в марте уже начинаешь ткать. А ткали помногу. Холстин по двадцать, а холстина – это сколько? Метров десять, наверно, холстина будет.

You would spin through the winter until March and in March you start to weave. And we wove a lot – about twenty *kholstiny* each. And how much is a *kholstina*? Probably about ten metres.¹³⁴

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912).

Cloth was woven for domestic needs as well as for clothing.

Ткали все, ткали помногу; узором ткали и просто ткали. Из этого рубахи ткали, станки, половики, скатерти делали. Товару ведь не было.

We wove everything; we wove a lot, we wove designs and we wove plain cloth. We wove shirts, trousers, floor mats, and tablecloths – you see there were no goods to buy.¹³⁵

The Poliaki and the Bukhtarma Old Believers were skilled in weaving cloth in one colour or in multi-coloured plaids and stripes. Sometimes women had their own secret designs. They used a wide range of techniques, many of them advanced but labour-intensive methods of handweaving.

Plain or tabby weave linen woven with two shafts was used for the fine white shirts which were part of ritual attire in the Old Believer community and for the ceremonial towels used in ritual observances. Plain weave hemp cloth was made for everyday work clothes or 'jeans'. Stripes or plaids were also woven with two shafts.¹³⁶

By manipulating the weft or warp yarn, open, lace-like weaves as well as cloth with relief patterns could be woven with two shafts, either for tablecloths or in some cases for the ends of towels. This was achieved by weaving '*peredberdniki*' (in front of the reed). Groups of warp ends were gathered up with a stick, the weft was passed through the shed, and the selected ends were fastened together to create a gauze-like

¹³⁴ A *kholstina* is usually a piece of linen approximately fourteen metres or 20 *arshiny* long. However, in the seventeenth-century crown weaving communities, it was normally between 12 and 14 *arshiny*, closer to the 10 metres described here.

¹³⁵ 'L'novodstvo,' 4.

¹³⁶ Shvetsova, 30–31; Selishchev, 8.

cloth. Additional interest was added to this type of cloth by embroidering over the gathered warp ends with coloured or white thread to form *iagodki* (little berries). Fancy shawls were even sometimes woven and embroidered using this technique with a different brightly-coloured warp and weft.¹³⁷

The use of four shafts provided almost limitless scope for twills, double cloth, herringbone, weft-figuring, and pattern weaving of different sorts. Patterned belts, an essential element of dress for both men and women in the Old Believer villages, were also woven on the loom with four shafts.

With four shafts, overshot weaving could be done. A ground cloth is woven, usually in plain weave, while designs are interwoven on top. Patterns are created on the ground weave by extra weft picks woven through the warp.¹³⁸ This technique encompasses a large group of traditional handweaving designs. The pattern weft often 'floats' across more than one warp end of the ground weave. Typically, this yarn is thicker than the plain or binder weft which is usually the same yarn as the warp. Traditional overshot designs have names such as 'Monks Belt,' 'Summer and Winter,' or 'Snail Trail'.¹³⁹ Self-patterned tablecloth linens were woven in designs resembling these or textured patterns such as 'Finnish Lace Block'.¹⁴⁰

Apart from relying on multiple shafts to make a patterned cloth, hand weavers can also use a more archaic but versatile device on a loom with multiple shafts and foot pedals. By picking up selected ends of the warp with a stick and tying them up in a certain order, the existing shed can be altered for a particular weft pick. When the necessary warp ends have been picked up, a larger stick is inserted in the warp and turned up on its side to make the shed large enough for the shuttle to pass through. *Bran'e* (pick-up or weaving with a selecting sword) is a traditional method of weaving for all Eastern Slavs and can be done using one or two wefts. For more complex patterns more than one group of ends is selected, requiring additional sticks. Using multiple sticks, all the raised ends are tied up row by row with loops, and the sticks are inserted under each row in turn. Traditionally, geometric patterns in variations of diamond,

¹³⁷ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 411–412.

¹³⁸ Field, 65–66, 94–96; Phillips, 28.

¹³⁹ Although its exact origins are not known, 'Monk's Belt' is thought to be a very old form of pattern weaving, particularly associated with Sweden, but also practised in many parts of Europe and Scandinavia. Davison, 101.

¹⁴⁰ Davison, 93–97. Patterns identical to some of these tablecloth linens were woven by Old Believers in Vetka. These include variations of designs such as 'Monk's Belt' and 'Summer and Winter Plaid'. Leon'teva and Nechaeva, n.p.n.; Davison, 194.

swastika, and hook designs were made for the woven decorative borders of linen towels. A heavier red pattern weft almost invariably created the relief pattern of the border. It is often difficult to distinguish this type of weaving from embroidery, especially when the second weft is a much heavier yarn than the ground.¹⁴¹

In Russia, weaving was also often practised with four or more shafts while using pick-up sticks. Ends of the warp were rearranged by the sticks in a particular order to form new sheds in addition to those created by the heddles. Any number of sticks can be used to create a design, and they can be replaced in order at the back of the loom for a repeat pattern. When woven, the back of the pattern then shows in reverse floats on the opposite side of the cloth.¹⁴² The possibilities of creating designs with this method of weaving are endless, but very slow and tedious for the weaver.

Old Believers in the Altai called the pick-up sticks '*nabiralenki*' or '*igolochki*' (pick-up sticks, literally needles).¹⁴³ Weavers in Bobrovka referred to the designs made using pick-ups as '*prianiki*'.¹⁴⁴ One woman described how she made a long roll of floor matting in a '*elochka*' ('herringbone') twill using pick-up sticks.

Monochromatic patterns were woven for tablecloths, while other geometric tablecloth designs were woven in a variety of colours. It was not unusual for the Old Believers to weave with six, eight, twelve, eighteen, or even twenty-four different *tsepy* (picks), particularly for tablecloth linens.¹⁴⁵ In Verkh-Uimon a woman recalled how her mother had woven such cloth.

Ткали за 12 или 16 цепов, цепи назывались, даже до 18-и всякие были натканы, всякого узора.

They wove with 12 or 16 *tsepy* (they were called *tsepy*), even with up to 18 all kinds of things were woven, with every sort of pattern.

Agrafena Dmitrievna (1917).

¹⁴¹ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 527–530. L. V. Efimova and O. G. Gordeeva of the Department of Textiles and Costume in the State Historical Museum in Moscow explained that it is very easy to mistake one for the other.

¹⁴² Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 529–530; Lillemor Johansson, *Damask and Opphamta* (Helsingborg, Sweden, 1984), 34–41.

¹⁴³ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 170; Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 411.

¹⁴⁴ The name is taken from wooden boards with cut-out designs used for baking.

¹⁴⁵ Blomkvist and Grinkova, 'Khoziaistvennyi byt,' 170; Grinkova, 285. Some analysts attribute the use of multiple-shaft weaving to the influence of manufactured textiles in Russia. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 526–527.

The Poliaki, Semeiskie, Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers also wove *opiaski*, (wide belts) on the floor loom using a pick-up stick but no reed. These belts were longer and wider than the narrow *poias* (belt) measuring up to 3.5 metres (3 $\frac{3}{4}$ yards) by 30–35 centimetres (11 $\frac{3}{4}$ – 13 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches).¹⁴⁶ A '*tavolga*' (twig from a meadow-sweet) was used in the Bukhtarma villages to select the warp ends for a design. On the floor loom these belts were woven using two different types of weft, a '*prostoi*' ('ordinary') weft or a '*potainoi*' ('secret' or 'flush') weft. In the first case, pairs of linen and pairs of woollen ends were warped alternately, while one colour of linen yarn was used for the weft. Only the woollen ends of the warp were picked up, creating a two-sided design, where a positive relief pattern in wool appears on one side on a linen ground and on the other side the negative and flat pattern or reverse of this is formed by the woollen warp ends.

When a 'secret' weft was woven, the entire warp was done in wool. The weft yarn was usually linen but wool was sometimes used for this as well. There would be no relief pattern in this type of belt, since the entire warp was of the same thickness, and the weft was covered by the heavier warp, making it more or less invisible. The various colours of selected warp ends created the design. Belts with a 'secret' weft were more valued not only because of the greater amount of wool, but also for the smoothness of the weave. Several additional linen warp ends of a different colour to the linen of the warp and weft were usually added to the outer edges of these belts to form a finished border. The patterns created with this technique were typically diamonds and swastikas with varying numbers of hooks. *Imenniki*, belts woven with words or names were also made on the loom using pick-up sticks.¹⁴⁷ To make the fringe of belts wide and dangly, weavers sometimes added a few extra bunches of yarn across the ends.¹⁴⁸

The range of cloth made by Old Believers in the Altai is illustrated by the work of one woman in Bobrovka. Red, white, and blue plaid linens, each designed with a different pattern and a different scale of stripes and checks, were part of a selection of this woman's work, woven in the 1920s. Plaids are among the most difficult patterns for a handweaver to weave successfully as it is easy for them to look dull if the colours are poorly chosen or the proportion of intersecting stripes is not well thought out. In

¹⁴⁶ Grinkova, 385; G. I. Okhrimenko, 'Zhenskii kostium semeiiskikh XIX–XX vv. i ego ukrashenie,' in *Etnografiia russkogo naseleniia Sibiri i Srednei Azii*, ed. G. S. Maslova and L. M. Saburova (Moscow, 1969), 202–203.

¹⁴⁷ Grinkova, 380–382.

¹⁴⁸ Okhrimenko, 'Zhenskii kostium,' 206–207. G. A. Shcherbik, 'Kollektsiia krest'ianskoi odezhdy v fondakh Vostochno-kazakhstanskogo istoriko-kraevedcheskogo muzeia,' in *Kul'turno-bytovye protsessy u*

addition, they are technically hard to weave. If the weft is not precisely beaten into place, the pattern will not work well.¹⁴⁹ (Plates 60, 61, 62, and 63).

Some of the plaids were woven in twill and some in plain weave. The weaver had also woven quantities of different grades of plain weave white linen and hemp and a self-patterned white linen used for a tablecloth. Similar cloths were woven in Verkh-Uimon. (Plate 64, 65, and 66). Also in this collection of linens was a length of plaid woven in a geometric pattern of large and small checks and stripes in blue, black, and yellow. (Plate 60). Probably woven with four shafts, this plaid is an example of advanced handweaving, using a form of 'Summer and Winter,' a weft-faced weave in which the front and back of the material have exactly opposite designs. For example, where there is a blue block on one side, it is black or yellow on the other. In this type of weaving, large blocks of cloth can be covered with one colour because the floats of weft are anchored by the warp at every fourth end. As a result, the warp and weft peek through on either side, creating a tweed-like effect.¹⁵⁰

In Bobrovka, not only *skaterti* (tablecloths) but also floor mats were designed in varying scales of stripes and plaid. Floor coverings were woven in large quantities, rolled up, and put away for future use. (Plates 67, 68, and 69). They are approximately 56 centimetres (22 inches) in width. A length can be cut off when needed. We saw no house in the Old Believer villages without these mats. The linen warp used for matting is very strong and makes an attractive fringe but is hard to work with because it has no elasticity.¹⁵¹

In addition to striped weft-faced floor matting, large plaids were woven using strong colours in herringbone twill.¹⁵² A colourful rag weft was also often used, made from torn up old clothes. These were connected in lengths and stored in balls like yarn. The weaver tried to keep the thickness and colour of the rag consistent, so the rugs

russskikh Sibiri XVII – nachalo XX v., ed. L. V. Ostrovskaia (Novosibirsk, 1985), 228.

¹⁴⁹ Phillips, 92–95. For an analysis of the antiquity of twill plaids (woven for at least 3,000 years by the Celts) see Elizabeth Wayland Barber, *The Mummies of Ürümchi* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 132–145.

¹⁵⁰ Davison, 55–61. 'Summer and Winter' weave is thought to have ancient origins, possibly in Finland. In other parts of Europe and America traditionally such weaving was done with a fine wool for the pattern and linen for the warp and was considered very suitable for interior furnishings. Davison, 187–188; Phillips, 120–121.

¹⁵¹ Collingwood and others, 105.

¹⁵² In weft-faced weaves the weft is closely packed and therefore more obvious than the more widely-spaced warp. Like 2/2 twill where the weft crosses over and under two warp ends at a time, this type of weave may have been used originally to accommodate the stretchy nature of wool. Barber, *Mummies*, 63–64, 139–140; Field, 25.

would be as flat and even as possible.¹⁵³ In Verkh-Uimon weavers seem to have preferred multi-coloured stripes to plaid. In one house in the village, the entire floor of a sitting room is covered in hand-woven heavy red and black striped woollen weft-faced matting, which gives the impression of carpeting. Unlike the tablecloths, the floor mats have usually been woven by the present woman of the house and not by her mother, indicating that these domestic furnishings are the last remnants of the weaving skills passed down through generations of Old Believer women in the Altai.

5.34 Finishing the Cloth

When lengths of linen had been woven, women finished preparing the cloth outdoors. Fine linen for shirts, towels, and burial garments had to be as white as snow. There were different names for different grades of woven cloth. For example, *zontovoe polotno* (plain linen) was considered the finest quality of white linen.

Выткут холсты, а потом снег тает, их в золе проварят, и надо их мочить часто и стелить, а потом белые-белые будут хорошие. Полотенца или там что другое.

The lengths of cloth would be woven and then when the snow was melting they were thoroughly boiled in ash. You had to soak them often and lay them out. Then they would be white as white and nice – for towels and other things.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922).

The linen was washed and bleached to soften it, hung out in the frost where the action of sun and moisture helped whiten it. Some Old Believer communities had special collective stoves for bleaching linen built on the riverbank for groups of women to use in turn. The fires had to be very hot, so for safety's sake they were set up near the water.¹⁵⁴ Leaching or extracting the lye from wood ash made an alkaline solution for bleaching and washing.

А холст мочу и вешаю, пусть вымерзает. Каждый день мочу в щелоку и вешаю. С Поста все мочу. Весна придет, тогда я иду на берег, раскладываю огонь, чугунок большой ставлю, туда золы, камни каленые и холст туда, он кипит.

So I would soak the linen and hang it up, I would let it freeze. Every day I would soak it in lye [from the wood ash] and hang it. From Lent I would soak it all the

¹⁵³ From the observations of K. V. Maerova, Bobrovka, 1953–1964.

¹⁵⁴ Shvetsova, 73.

time. Spring would come and then I would go to the riverbank and make a fire. I would put on a big iron pot, put in some ash and white hot stones and the linen, which would boil.¹⁵⁵

Sometimes the *valek* used for threshing flax or hemp was put to use during this process.

Вот на речках – вальком полощешь. Камней лучше надо. Камни кипят, потом золы. Все плохое со льну-то (исчезает).

Then at the river – you would rinse [and beat the linen] with a *valek*. It was better to have some stones. The stones boiled and then the ash [went into the pot]. Everything bad would be washed out of the linen.

Vassa Proter'evna (1900).

It was not unusual for women to stay at the river overnight for a few days to keep the fire going. The bleached cloth would be dried and sized before being crushed or beetled with a wooden roller. This gave a lustrous finish and a good drape. Finally there was the satisfying moment of storing it all away.

Бывало ночуешь там. На утро (идешь) полоскать. Потом сушу – на огороде, настелю под одно, потом на брус тяну, потом – каталкой катаю, потом в ящик складывают. Ну теперь все – управила холст.

You would spend the night there and go to rinse [the linen] in the morning. Then I would dry it in the garden. I would lay it all out one under the other and then stretch it out on a beam. Then I would roll it with a roller. Then I put it away in a chest. So then it was all done – I had made my cloth.¹⁵⁶

5.35 Weaving Without a Loom

The existence of both warp threads to create the length of cloth and perpendicular weft threads to fill in the width is the first requirement for weaving. Secondly, the presence of some form of mechanical system, however primitive, to raise and lower sections of the warp to provide alternate sheds through which the weft threads can be passed is essential to the weaving process. The absence of either or both of these elements then relates to either plaiting or semi-weaving.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ 'L'novodstvo,' 3.

¹⁵⁶ 'L'novodstvo,' 4.

¹⁵⁷ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 499.

Woven belts were the first thing a young girl learned to make. From an early age she was introduced to a variety of plaiting and semi-weaving techniques requiring a minimum of equipment. Since these belts were not wide, simple designs could be quickly made. Later she could weave wider belts on a loom without a reed, but first she learned to plait, use tablets, and a back-strap loom. The methods of plaiting and semi-weaving often required two people working together.

In plaiting there is no real difference between the warp and weft yarn. *Pletenie* (plaiting) known as *dergan'e* (pulling) was practised in Russia by two people, one of whom looped the warp ends around several fingers on each hand and then moved the loops back and forth to other fingers. The second person held the other end of the warp in one hand and pushed the 'weft' created by the moving ends into place with the other hand. In this system warp and weft are virtually the same. This technique was used to make narrow cord or belts and was widely practised in Eastern Europe in the past.¹⁵⁸ (Fig. 5.2).

Semi-weaving is described as a technique having no mechanical system for creating alternate sheds in the warp. An example of this was *pletenie na vilochke* (plaiting on a forked stick). (Fig. 5.3). The straight end of the stick was held in place at the weaver's waist and the warp ends were attached to the forked end. Each outermost thread from the left and right would be used to form a weft. The warp was separated into two groups of threads to create right and left sections. The left outer end became the weft for the right side, and vice versa. Each side was also divided into upper and lower ends to create a shed which gave this method the name *polutkan'e* (semi-weaving). With a selection of coloured yarns, a diamond pattern was easy to weave with this method, used to make belts or braid. Other techniques of semi-weaving used for belt-making were not unlike crochet in that they involved looping yarn over nails or pins on a spool loom.¹⁵⁹

It seems likely that the closest ancestor to weaving on a floor loom in Russia was the technique of primitive weaving known as *tkan'e na nitu* (weaving with a heddle). Yarn was warped to a nail on the wall and then to the weaver's waist by means of an H-shaped holder. This system creates a backstrap loom, where the weaver's body controls

¹⁵⁸ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 499–501.

¹⁵⁹ Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 151; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 501–504; Kathe Todd-Hooker, 'The Russian Old Believers in Woodburn, Oregon,' *Shuttle, Spindle and Dyepot*, 28, 1, 109 (Winter 1996/1997): 60–61. In more recent times both crochet and knitting were used by the Bukhtarma Old Believers to make belts with geometric designs in imitation of weaving. Grinkova, 384.

the tension of the warp. The odd and even threads of the warp were wrapped alternately over and under a small wooden peg situated between the wall and the weaver, thus creating upper and lower groups of warp ends and the first shed. Then unbleached threads were looped under each of the lower warp ends, allowing this section of warp to be raised and lowered by means of the looped threads held on another small peg above the warp. Thus, a second shed was formed as the peg holding the unbleached threads was lifted and released. Weft threads were passed through the alternating shed by hand or with the help of a small blade. When this lease was lowered, the alternate shed was formed. This weaving method was used widely in Russia, in parts of Belarus' and in Lithuania to make belts with a wide range of geometric patterns.¹⁶⁰ Pick-up sticks could also be used with the backstrap loom.¹⁶¹ (Fig. 5.4).

Tkan'e na berdechke (rigid heddle weaving) was used particularly for making matting and netting in Russia and was a method used to make belts with designs similar to those made with tablets. Two people are required. The *berdechka* is a square wooden reed with a handle at the bottom to hold it upright. Along the length of the reed, a horizontal row of small holes is made in the reed between the dents. One group of threads is warped from a hook on the wall through the dents to the weaver's waist; the other group is threaded through the holes. One of the weavers raises and lowers the reed, creating the shed through which the other weaver passes the weft.¹⁶² (Fig. 5.5).

Tkan'e na doshchechkakh (tablet or card weaving), known to weavers in the Bronze Age, was also used by the Old Believers to make belts into which words and other patterns were woven.¹⁶³ It was also used to make braid, woven designs for the hems of garments, ends of towels, and even occasionally to make shawls. The number of tablets determined the width of cloth and ranged from two to 150. The tablets were made of wood or bone and had four holes, one in each corner. Again the warp was attached to the wall or other immovable point, threaded through the holes of the tablets and fastened to the weaver's waist. Each time the weft passed through the shed created by the arrangement of upper and lower warp ends, the tablets were then rotated once so that

¹⁶⁰ Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 508–509.

¹⁶¹ Todd-Hooker, 61.

¹⁶² Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 155; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 506–507.

¹⁶³ Both tablet weaving and weaving on a backstrap loom, as well as plaiting, are still practised for belt-making by Old Believers living in Oregon. Todd-Hooker, 60–61.

25% of the ends changed each time. In order to make more intricate designs any combination of rotations could be used.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

Recently, a resident of Verkh-Uimon has begun to study the weaving techniques used by villagers in the past. With the help of elderly women who remember these techniques and donated their equipment for use, he has embarked on a weaving project with children from the village. He is teaching them to weave traditional belts on backstrap or floor looms as well as with tablets. He prepares the warp for the floor loom on the wall. In some cases he has substituted metal for traditional wooden or bone devices. The difficulty he has experienced in mastering these techniques is an indication of the range of complex weaving skills possessed by women in the past.

In Russia, women devoted time to spinning and weaving not only for their families but also for the welfare and benefit of the whole community. Thread, yarn, and cloth were used in communal rituals emphasising women's protective and creative roles. In many parts of Russia, lengths of yarn or unbleached cloth spun or woven in one day were used in acts of ritual safeguarding. Just as churches or homes might be built in a day by men as an act of devotion or as a means of warding off natural disasters, drought, hail, or disease, groups of women wove and embroidered pieces of cloth. They could be draped over a cattle fence or left in the church. Fields, rivers, homes, and farmyards could all be subject to the collective energy of a group of women who used their powers of creativity for the benefit of the community. There was a belief that the creation of these material goods symbolised the productive forces of women in general, as they re-enacted the creation of life with their own hands.¹⁶⁵ In order for this to be possible, every woman had to process flax, hemp, or wool, spin yarn, warp a loom, and weave a wide range of cloth.

¹⁶⁴ Broudy, 33; Sutton, Collingwood, and St Aubyn Hubbard, 126–130; Lebedeva, 'Priadenie,' 505–506. I am indebted to Viktor Efimovich Kuchuganov for demonstrating this and other techniques of weaving, plaiting, and semi-weaving.

¹⁶⁵ Bernshtam, 160–164; Dm. Zelenin, "'Obydennyya" polotensa i obydennye khramy,' *Zhivaia starina*, 20, vyp. 1 (1911): 2–6.

A: А каждая женщина пряла и ткала?

B: Каждая женщина. Каждая, каждая.

A: So every woman spun and wove?

B: Every woman. Every single one.

Elizaveta Mikhailovna (1912)

For Old Believers this creative process had added religious significance. In order to maintain the symbols of their faith, in order to dress in the way of their forefathers, the spinners and weavers had to create a particular sort of cloth and a particular sort of dress. Although hemp was woven and used for work clothes and other domestic needs, it was the painstaking task of making fine linen used for ritual purposes which most occupied the time of women in the Old Believer villages of the Altai.

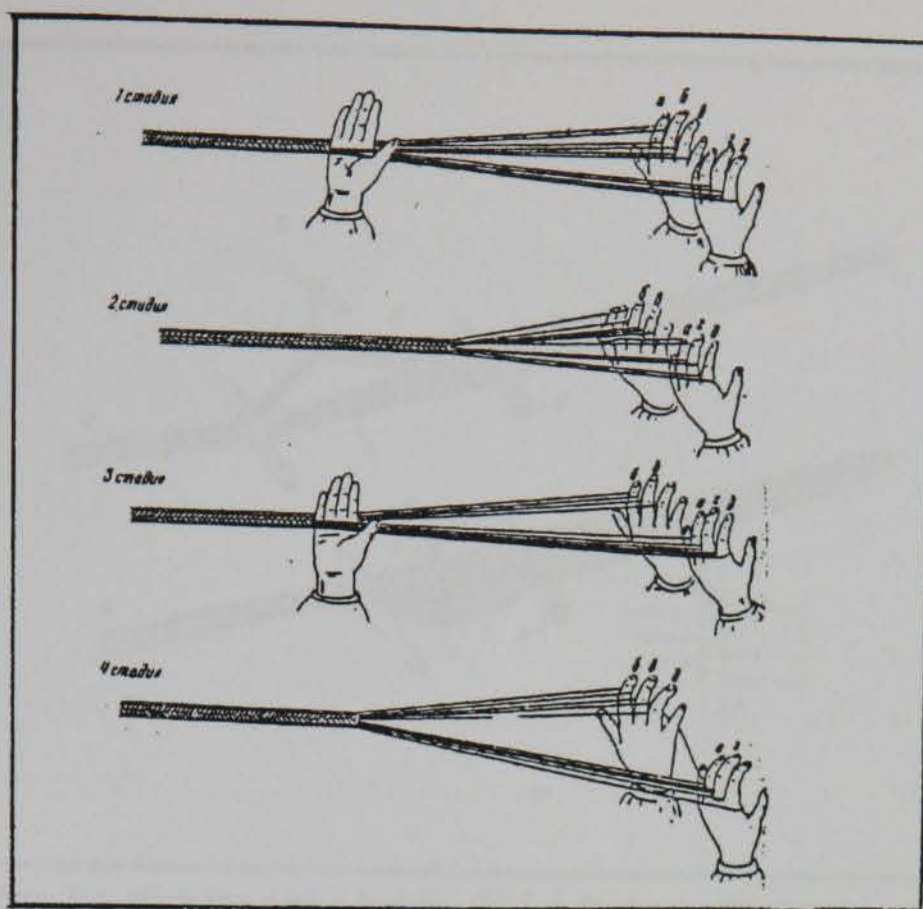


FIG. 5.2 Plaiting by hand. (N. I. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie i tkachestvo vostochnykh slavian,' in *Vostochnoslavianskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, t. 31 (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1956), 500).

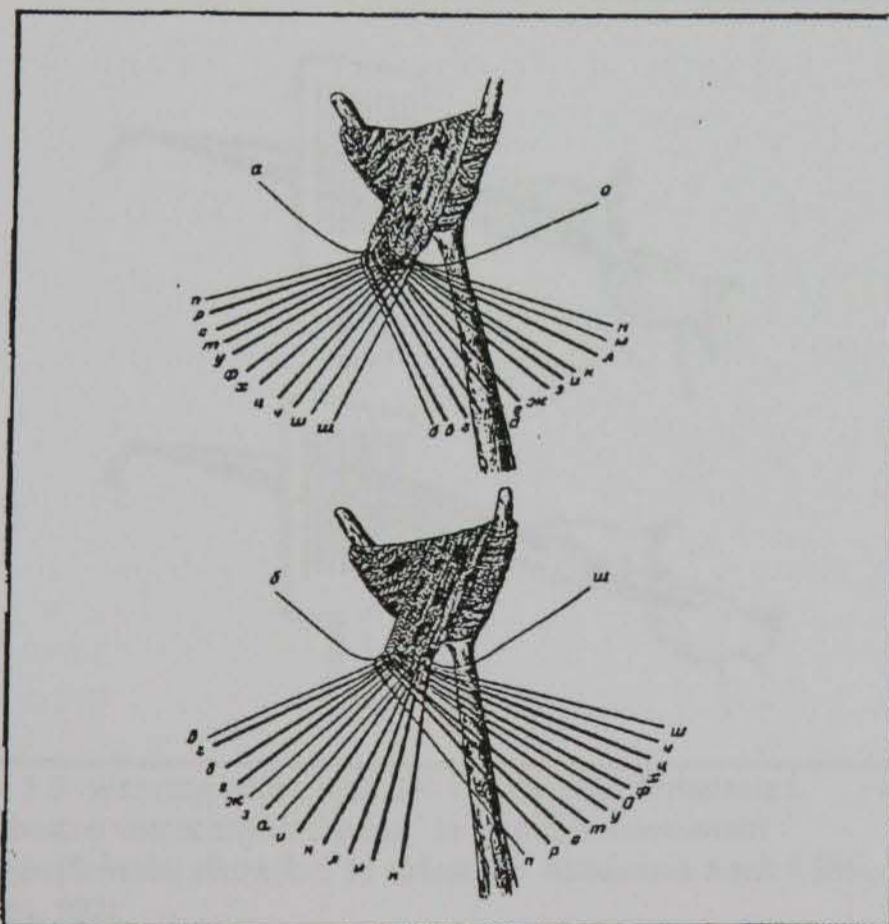


FIG. 5.3 Plaiting on a forked stick. (N. I. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie i tkachestvo vostochnykh slavian,' in *Vostochnoslavianskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, t. 31 (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1956), 502).

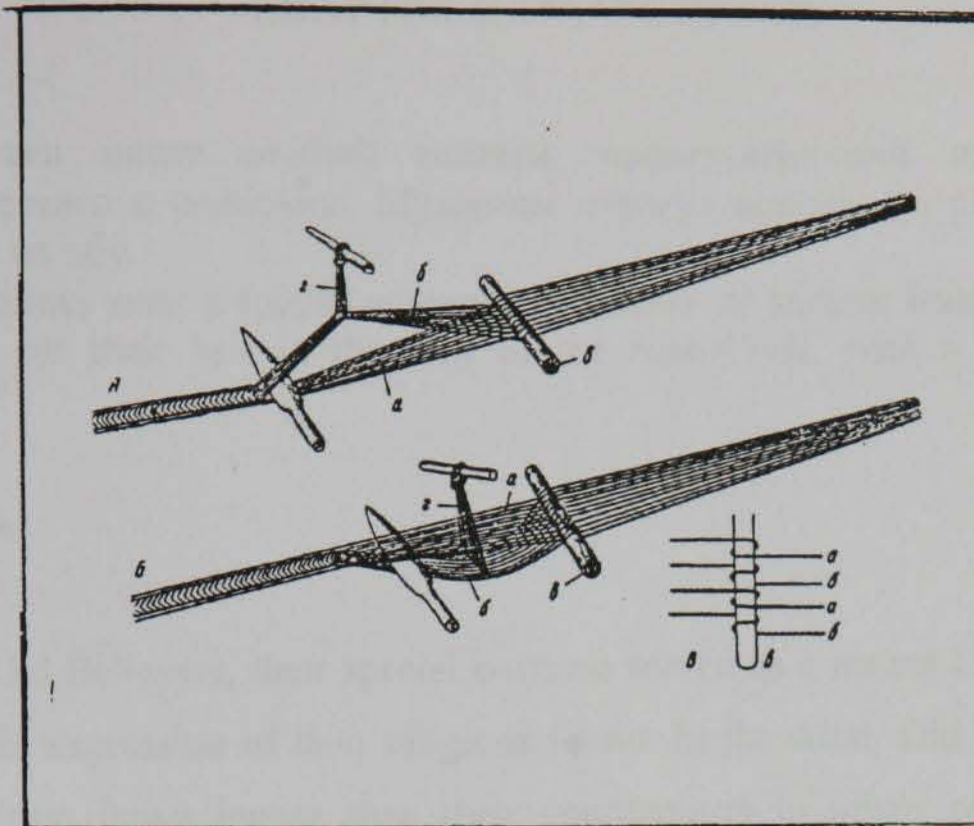


FIG. 5.4 Weaving with a heddle. (N. I. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie i tkachestvo vostochnykh slavian,' in *Vostochnoslavianskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, t. 31 (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1956), 508).

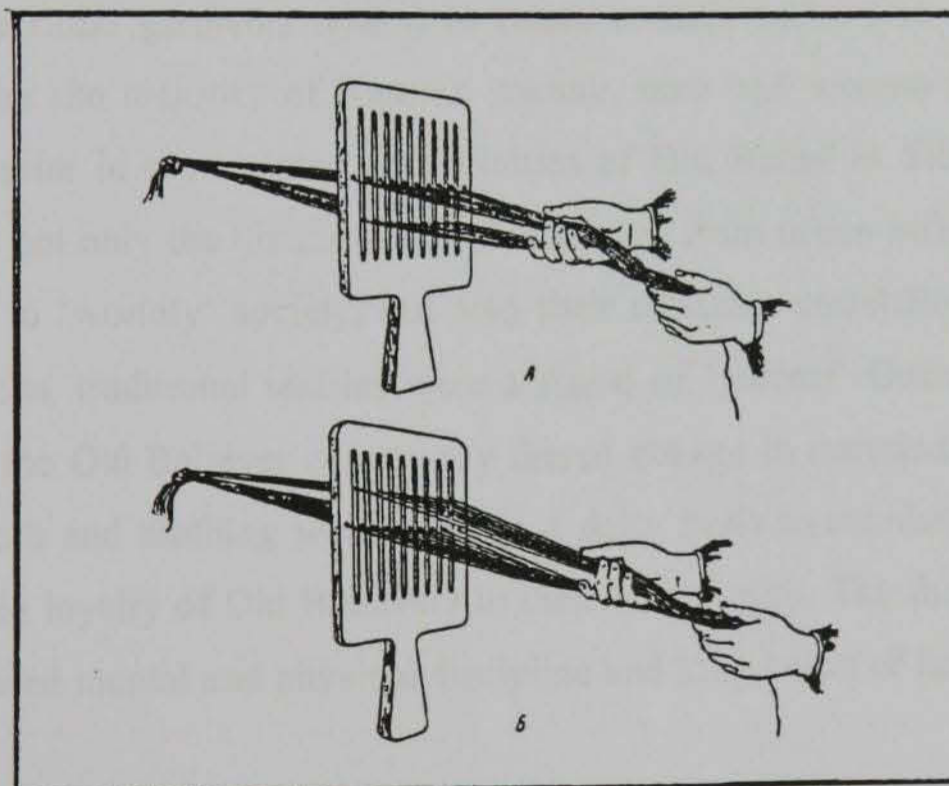


FIG. 5.5 Weaving with a reed. (N. I. Lebedeva, 'Priadenie i tkachestvo vostochnykh slavian,' in *Vostochnoslavianskii etnograficheskii sbornik*, t. 31 (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1956), 507).

CHAPTER 6. The Old Dressers

Все поляки носят особый костюм, представляющий из себя смесь древнерусского с польским. Мужчины стригут волосы по раскольничьи, с «челкой» на лбу.

All the Poliaki wear a special costume, a mixture of ancient Russian and Polish. The men cut their hair in the way of the *raskol'niki*, with a 'fringe' on the forehead.¹

Introduction

For Old Believers, their special costume served as a means of identification and as a symbolic expression of their religious views. In the Altai, Old Believers kept this traditional dress intact longer than their counterparts in urban centres such as the Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Cemeteries of Moscow or in the Kerzhenets communities near Nizhnii Novgorod, although they too continued to use traditional garments for ritual purposes.²

These ritual garments tended to retain archaic traits. For example, unlike the dress worn by the majority of Russian society, men and women's clothing remained markedly similar in the isolated communities of Old Belief in Siberia and the Altai.³ This reflects not only the distance of Old Believers from urban influence and their lack of exposure to 'worldly' society, but also their religious conviction that like the holy texts and icons, traditional textiles were a signal of 'correct' Orthodox practice. Since members of the Old Believer community feared change in outward expressions of faith as sinful, cloth and clothing were used on a daily basis to reinforce the bonds of Old Belief and the loyalty of Old Believers to their community. The fact that creating these textiles required mental and physical discipline and long hours of hard work added to its value.

Apart from clothing, ritual towels, floor coverings, tablecloths, and other household linens decorated a home, displaying the skill and attention to detail of the women who lived there. These details related not only to the fabric, form, and decoration of certain textiles, but also to their very existence. A specific garment or ritual towel was in itself a sign of 'correct' religious practice.

¹ Shvetsova, 29.

² LMAB RO, Mel'nikov (Pecherskii), 'Otchet,' F.135-137.

³ Grinkova, 'Odezhda,' 372-374; Iadrintsev, 99.

While many of these forms had archaic Slavic origins, after the introduction of Christianity they were adapted to support Russian Orthodox ritual and belief. Christianity added new observances and meaning to the Slavic interpretation of the cycles of life, but many of the celebrations connected to Russia's pagan past became intertwined with the rituals of Christian worship.⁴ In celebrating the life of Christ and the Holy Saints, new rites were incorporated into the calendar of seasonal folk tradition and determined when special clothing had to be made.⁵

A: А что одевали в праздники?

B: К празднику, примерно, к Рождеству, к Пасхе, вот славилась эта Пасха сильно. Каждому новый поясок, сарафанчик, примерно, новый, рубашку там или платице. Всем обнова, чтобы всем, всем обязательно.

A: And what did people wear on holidays?

B: For a holiday, for example for Christmas or Easter – Easter was really known for this – everyone had a new woven belt, a new *sarafan*, for example, a shirt or a child's dress. Everyone wore something new, it was obligatory for absolutely everyone.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

These were not just any holiday clothes. In the Bukhtarma and Uimon communities for example, everything had to be made '*po-kerzhatski*' (in the Kerzhak way). The importance of dressing '*po-nashemu*' ('in our way') was reinforced at every holiday occasion.⁶ Since Old Believers travelled to other villages at holiday times, their appropriate attention to dress provided an opportunity to display the visual keys of Old Belief.

Concern about what others would think ensured that Old Believers strictly observed even the smallest details of their dress, fearing that changes would bring censure from the rest of the community, which considered it a sin to wear 'worldly' clothes.⁷ In the past this included not only the form that garments took, but also the cloth they were made from. The Old Believers would not buy 'worldly' cloth, since it might have been made by irreligious Russians who worked when work was not allowed.⁸

⁴ Mary B. Kelly, *Goddess Embroideries of Eastern Europe* (Mclean, New York: Studio Books, 1996; orig. pub. Winona, Minnesota: Northland Press, 1989), 18–20.

⁵ For example, the festivals of *Maslenitsa* and *Ivan Kupala* both had pagan origins but coincided neatly with the beginning of Lent and with the Feast of the Holy Trinity in midsummer.

⁶ E. F. Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda staroobriadsev iuga Zapadnoi Sibiri (konets XIX – nachalo XX v.),' in *Traditsionnaia dukhovnaia i material'naia kul'tura russkikh staroobriadcheskikh poselenii v stranakh Evropy, Azii i Ameriki*, ed. N. N. Pokrovskii and Richard Morris (Novosibirsk: Nauka, 1992), 241.

⁷ Shvetsova, 34.

⁸ Grinkova, 315.

In general, the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers decorated their clothing and textiles in the subdued manner typical of their northerly background, while the costume and textiles of the Poliaki were decorated abundantly with colourful embroidery and beadwork typical of southern Russia and Ukraine. With the addition of fringe or little bells at the end of shawls, belts, or tassels, movement and even sound were part of their costume.⁹ No detail was overlooked.

Прежде не только женщины, но и мужчины носили узорчатые чулки из разноцветной шерсти, с разноцветной же бахрамою, которую выпускали поверх сапог.

In the past not only women, but men as well wore patterned stockings of different coloured wool, with a coloured fringe which came out over the top of their boots.¹⁰

On the other hand, in some recently discovered remote settlements of Siberia, Old Believers dressed severely in dark home-woven cloth. Light, colourful or purchased cloth was prohibited for clothing but intricate designs were woven for towels and tablecloths.¹¹ In larger villages, certain individuals such as a *staraia deva* (unmarried woman, like an elderly nun) also dress in black but in the Altai, Old Believers generally made and wore an elaborate and decorative costume.

6.1 The shirt

On holidays the Poliaki wore 'without fail' an old style Russian attire, including 'hand-sewn shirts, *kichki* (head-dresses), flowers, and patterned trousers'. But their everyday dress was like that of peasants in the most isolated villages of European Russia. They wore 'white linen shirts with red insets and embroidery on the sleeves'.¹²

A *rubakha* (shirt) was the fundamental garment in Russia for men, women and children. It was considered a sin to sell one's shirt, as this signified the selling of luck and happiness. In popular belief, a sorcerer could use the shirt to cast an evil spell on its original owner.¹³ Until the introduction of prepared cotton thread or manufactured cloth allowed a choice of materials, the shirt was made from homespun, home-woven linen or

⁹ Shvetsova, 33.

¹⁰ Shvetsova, 33.

¹¹ Pokrovskii, *Puteshestvie*, 20, 36.

¹² Shvetsova, 35–36.

¹³ Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 601.

hemp.¹⁴ Although hemp shirts were more durable, the ritual and holiday shirt was made of finely woven, snow-white linen.

In its most elaborate form, highly decorated with embroidery, the shirt was an essential ingredient of marriage preparations, and was worn by newly married women at certain times of the year.¹⁵

In its description of appropriate wedding ritual, the *Domostroi* instructs that a man's and a woman's shirt, the *chekol*, be laid on a table as part of the ceremony.¹⁶ In the Bukhtarma Old Believer communities, it was customary for a bride's wedding shirt to be placed on a platter after her ritual bath, shown to the guests and put away unwashed for future use. Children could later be wrapped in the shirt as a protection from illness.¹⁷ Its sacred place in ritual attire is underlined by the fact that Old Believers made by hand a white linen shirt for burial.

There were two basic forms of shirt worn by Old Believers in the Altai. One was a tunic-style garment, the other a composite shirt.

6.11 The Tunic Shirt

The *skvoznyi* (tunic) shirt was made from a folded length of cloth, with a slit for the head made at the neck.¹⁸ This opening could be collarless or have a small fold-over or standing collar. Sleeves were usually made from additional sections of cloth. In Russia, a *golosheika* (collarless shirt) was the most archaic and characteristic man's shirt. The vertical cut in the front was originally centred under the chin but in a *kosovorotka*, a changed form apparently unique to Russia, the slit was made on the left side of the neck.¹⁹ In the nineteenth century the Bukhtarma Old Believers, the Poliaki,

¹⁴ By the fifteenth century, imported cotton cloth was in use even among the peasants, but most of their clothing was sewn from homemade cloth. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 568–569.

¹⁵ Particularly in northern Russia, on the day animals were brought to the fields for the summer months young women in their first year of marriage dressed in their most decorated garments, sometimes adding one over the other, so all the villagers could examine their needlework skills. It was also thought that if she went to the river for water in this costume, it would help the cows produce more milk. Maslova, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 117.

¹⁶ *Domostroi*, 174. The archaic word *chekhlik* was used by the Poliaki to describe the decorated upper front section of their shirt. This appears to be related to *chakhlik*, the word used in Belarus'. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 602.

¹⁷ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 243.

¹⁸ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 243. For women, a tunic style was more common in the south and central regions of Russia than in the north, where a composite shirt predominated. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 602.

¹⁹ The tunic-style shirt with a centre neck opening was widespread in Ukraine and in parts of Belarus'. With a side opening, the shirt was made with and without a collar. In the burial shirt of Old Believers in

and Semeiskie all wore a version of this shirt. A slit was made for the head on either the left or right of the shirt which had no collar, only a facing. Another archaic feature was the length of the shirt, which fell to the knee or below.²⁰

Apart from the treatment of the neck opening and the position of the slit, the tunic-style shirt had pattern variations which added fullness and detail to the design. If the cloth was sufficiently wide, a shirt could be made of one width, but since home-spun and woven *kholst* (plain or tabby weave linen) was usually 38–39 cm. (15 in.) wide, additional widths had to be added to the sides of the tunic for comfort. These were sewn to the central panel in front and back, forming two symmetrical side panels.²¹ A tunic shirt was also made from a straight central panel with added gores (tapered, A-line panels) at the side, a design typical of the man's shirt in the Altai. In the Bukhtarma communities, in addition to side gores, the man's shirt sometimes had a further gore added to each side of the back to give a total hem circumference of five widths, making it particularly full and requiring gathers under the arm to accommodate the unusual design. These could be stitched down as tucks and embroidered.²²

The shirt of the Poliaki was nearly as lavish in its use of cloth, having essentially the same cut but without the additional back gores. However, it had a distinctive decorative detail. Inset strips of *kumach* (red calico), sometimes embroidered, formed four vertical stripes of colour at the joining of all the widths of cloth. The Bukhtarma Old Believers on the other hand, used embroidered red calico to highlight only the joining of the sleeves to the shoulder of the tunic. This formed a right angle of colour parallel to the neck slit and under the arm on either side rather than continuous vertical stripes.²³

The presence of calico insets along seam joinings in the Poliaki shirt is most likely an indication of an archaic antecedent in which separately finished pieces of cloth were fastened together not with blind-stitched seams (with finished ends not visible), but with some kind of braiding or crochet-like work. Like the calico insets this emphasised rather than disguised the joining.²⁴

the Perm' region, the slit was made on the right side, in keeping with very old local wedding shirts.

Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 580–581, 584–585; idem, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 87.

²⁰ Grinkova, 362–363, 365; Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 584; Selishchev, 8.

²¹ Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 584.

²² Grinkova, 363, 367.

²³ Grinkova, 363–6.

²⁴ E. F. Fursova, 'Polikovye rubakhi krest'ianok Iuzhnogo Altaia vtoroi poloviny XIX – nachalo XX v.,' in *Kul'turno-bytoye protsessy u russkikh Sibiri XVIII – nachalo XX v.*, ed. L. V. Ostrovskaia (Novosibirsk,

The *rukava* (sleeves) of a tunic-style man's shirt were usually made of a straight width and a half of cloth which in its earliest form was not gathered at the shoulder or wrists. Typically, a gusset of red calico was added for movement underneath the armhole of the shirt.²⁵ In later adaptations, the sleeves were tapered toward the wrist or gathered at the wrist as they were in later women's shirts.²⁶

The side-fastened tunic shirt worn by Old Believers in the Altai was distinguished from the general Russian shirt by having both gathers and embroidery on the gores. The chest and back were embroidered to the waist. The hem and bottom of the sleeves were also embroidered, providing the Bukhtarma and Poliaki embroiderers a large canvas on which to display their talents.²⁷

The decoration of the neck area, upper chest, and sometimes the upper back were stitched in red or red and black embroidery. The work was sometimes extremely elaborate. For example, a square area of embroidery on the shirt was centred under the chin. One side of the square was elongated in a decorative continuation of the neck opening. An interesting feature of both, but more pronounced in the Bukhtarma shirt where it was less hidden among other motifs, was the placement of an embroidered cross at the bottom of the side neck opening. This positioning created an asymmetric design on the front of the shirt. Sometimes the area around the cross was filled in entirely with embroidery, creating an overall diamond shape and sometimes the complex decoration continued down the front or back of the shirt. Vestiges of this form of embroidered decoration have been found only in Voronezh province where a small cross was embroidered in red on the front and back of a shirt with a central neck opening.²⁸

As in other Old Believer communities in Russia, in the Bukhtarma region Old Believers traditionally wore a wooden or metal cross around their neck, which hung from a cord of plaited linen yarn.²⁹ It is possible that the asymmetric placing of an embroidered cross under the side neck opening has its origins in an older style of shirt which had a centre neck opening and with a time when a cross was worn on a chain outside the shirt. When it became the custom to hide the cross inside the shirt, the

1985), 185.

²⁵ Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 584.

²⁶ Grinkova, 364.

²⁷ Grinkova, 364–365; Shvetsova, 30–31.

²⁸ Grinkova, 366.

²⁹ Grinkova, 360. These chains were known as *gaitany*. Wealthier Old Believers had them made of gold or silver, but this was generally frowned on as contrary to the traditions of Old Belief. Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 245. In the Semeiskie communities, the chains were made of hemp. Bolonev, 'Priadenie,' 160.

embroidered motif may have replaced the cast or carved form.³⁰ In some shirts made by the Poliaki, a small cross was embroidered on the back of the shirt as well, but in a symmetrical position at the apex of an upside-down triangular design.³¹

Apart from the symbolism of the cross as blessing and protection in a Christian context, the tradition of decorating the neck opening, wrists, or other specified zones with embroidered designs has more distant origins. Since the wearer is most vulnerable to outside, potentially dangerous or evil forces at the point where a garment opens, from ancient times these areas were treated with protective messages in particular colours and patterns.³²

Since the practice of embroidery was older than the printed word, it is not surprising that the distinctive embroidered motifs on Old Believers' shirts resemble a coded notice board containing a language of geometric patterns. Perhaps this code is not unlike the alphabet created by St. Stephen of Perm' in the fourteenth century. While trying to convert Slavic tribes to Christianity, he formed an alphabet from the motifs of folk art, weaving, and embroidery.³³ Because of the stitching techniques used by Old Believers to create these intricate designs, the embroidery resembled woven cloth. It seems likely that earlier experiences of weaving and plaiting as methods of fabric construction and patterning gave rise to such forms of embroidery. Like a weft yarn, the needle crosses a piece of linen using the same forward 'over and under' motion as that used to construct baskets or plaits.³⁴

6.12 The Women's Composite Shirt

The Bukhtarma women sometimes wore the tunic shirt as a work garment under a *sarafan* (sleeveless robe) of dyed linen or hemp.³⁵ However, the composite shirt worn for holidays was cut in a variety of more complicated patterns. A distinguishing feature of this shirt is the addition of rectangular *poliki* (inserts) across the shoulders. These separated the front and back sections and were joined to the sleeve sections. The

³⁰ Grinkova, 368–369.

³¹ As with other unusual details found in Old Believer garments, the presence of this decoration has led ethnographers to surmise that it represents traces of the central neck opening of Russian shirts, which had probably been replaced by side openings in Russian tunic-style shirts no earlier than the fifteenth century. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 580; Grinkova, 369–371.

³² Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 192.

³³ Fedotov, 2: 234, 243; Zenkovsky, *Russia's Epics*, 259–262.

³⁴ Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 201.

³⁵ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 243.

considerable width of the inserts required that they be narrowed into gathers or tucks at the neck opening, which was close fitting with a central slit for the head. In addition, these sections were often decorated with embroidery, forming a focal point around the neck and shoulders.³⁶ The shirt neck had either a low standing collar made from a folded rectangle of cloth or a high collar worn either standing or folded over.³⁷ The shirt with shoulder inserts and gathers at the neck was called a *borenaia rubakha* (gathered shirt) or *vorot na borakh* (gathered collar) by the Bukhtarma Old Believers.³⁸ (Plate 70).

Traditionally, this shirt was worn in northern Russian. The *lastovki* (inserts) were sewn to the *chekhlik* (top section of the shirt) and to the sleeves. All were separate pieces. In a later variant another insert was added under the arms forming a gusset also known as a *lastovka*. The sleeves of this shirt were cut to be long and full, using a width or a width and a half of cloth. The wrist ends were gathered and trimmed with a narrow edging.³⁹

Unlike the one-piece shirt, the composite shirt was divided horizontally by separate upper and lower sections, a characteristic which suggests the putting together of what were once two separate garments. This is evident from the joining of upper and lower sections of the shirt *cherez krai* (across the edge), over stitching together two already hemmed and finished pieces of cloth, while the other details of the shirt were securely stitched together using ordinary blind seams.⁴⁰

The *rukava* or *stan* (upper part including sleeves) consisted of a short bodice and the sleeves which were all visible when worn under a *sarafan*. In addition to embroidery, the upper section of the shirt was sometimes decorated with another fabric, usually red calico, used as underarm gussets, binding around the wrist or neck openings, along the sleeves, or as insets between seams. Red was the colour traditionally used by the Old Believers to decorate their shirts as soon as they became engaged.⁴¹ The *podstavka*

³⁶ In general, ethnographers view this shirt as a later form of a garment with shoulder buckles or straps from which the inserts evolved and, like the one-piece design, is also considered to have ancient origins. Whether it is an older form than the tunic-style shirt is a disputed point. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 584–585, 605, 607; Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 180.

³⁷ On the difference between a shaped curvilinear turn-down collar and a rectangular 'fold-over' collar found in the shirts with shoulder inserts see Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 197–198.

³⁸ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 243.

³⁹ Grinkova, 321.

⁴⁰ Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 181, 184; Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 602–604.

⁴¹ The use of red calico inserts and coloured embroidery was most elaborate on the shirts of young married women. As women grew older, the amount of decoration declined, and old women often wore white shirts with no decoration. Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 194; Maslova, 'Russkaia narodnaia vyshivka arkhaiskogo tipa i ee obrazy,' in *Izobrazitel'nye motivy v russkoi narodnoi vyshivke*, ed. G. P. Durasov and G. A. Iakovleva (Moscow: Sovietskaiia Rossiia, 1990), 22–23; and Sheila Paine, *Embroidered Textiles* (London: Thames

(lower section) did not show when worn under the *sarafan* and was made of a coarser, less valuable cloth which could easily be replaced when it wore out.⁴²

In the Bukhtarma and Poliaki composite shirt, the excess width of the shoulder inserts was gathered into the neck in *bory* (very fine pleats), using a sewing technique which required considerable skill. The cloth was gathered on up to eight rows of thread, creating a necklace-like effect below the collar. The gathers could be held either with a minuscule straight or angled stitch, the former favoured by the Poliaki, the latter by the Bukhtarma Old Believers.⁴³ To wear a shirt without these gathers at the neck was considered sinful.⁴⁴ The neck opening and collar were historically important elements of design for Old Believers, since until the reign of Catherine the Great *raskol'niki* had been obliged to wear closed garments and a standing collar attached to their coat.

In older shirts a small standing collar or *osheinik* of red calico was sewn to the neck opening – a straight cut in the centre of the upper section. This collar, considered a mandatory detail by the Old Believers, was tightly fitted to the neck and fastened with a button.⁴⁵ In the very earliest examples of these shirts, the collar was rather a narrow band of edging than a proper collar.⁴⁶ The folded strip was usually embroidered before being sewn to the neck. The upper edge of the band was finished with an overlocking or blanket stitch. Along the seam connecting the band to the shirt decorative stitching was used, suggestive of small plaits once used to finish and strengthen shirt edges. Embroidered patterns were also stitched along the gathers at the neck opening, and on the shoulder inserts along the seams where they met the sleeves. Embroidery stitched just under the collar was known as *po schetu borov* (by counting gathers). Poliaki women sometimes also added beading at the neck of their shirt.⁴⁷

and Hudson, 1990), 148–150.

⁴² In some areas (southern Russia) *stan*, the word meaning upper part is the opposite to the meaning it had in the north. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 602.

⁴³ Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 181.

⁴⁴ Old Believers in the Altai have shown inconsistency in their attitude to gathering. At a certain point its absence at the neck of a shirt came to be considered improper, while on the contrary its presence along the bodice front of a *sarafan* was considered sinful. Grinkova, 321, 338; Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 406.

⁴⁵ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 241. The closed standing collar of Bukhtarma Old Believer shirts was a detail known to have existed on shirts made in the Pomor'e, Perm', and Nizhnii Novgorod regions of Russia from which Old Believers came to the Altai. It has been suggested that this is indeed a repetition of the standing collar required for Old Believer outer garments by Peter the Great, since it is not common to Russian shirts in general. Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 197–198.

⁴⁶ Grinkova, 323. Although a fold-over collar on women's shirts was rarely found in northern Russia, it was found in the south, in Ukraine, and Belarus'. This makes the Bukhtarma shirt polygenetic, since it had a fold-over collar, and would seem to suggest the influence of other Old Believer groups in the Altai.

⁴⁷ Grinkova, 322–323; Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 185.

In its most archaic form the composite shirt consisted only of rectangular sections of cloth not gathered at either the shoulder or the wrist, but folded artfully to create the sleeve. In altered designs of this shirt, the sleeves were formed by tapered rather than folded lengths of cloth, while gathers at the wrist or shoulder controlled the fullness. However, in the archaic design also sometimes worn by Old Believer men, the wide, untapered sleeve sections formed a *kul'* (sack shape) with considerable fullness under the elbow. The system of folding the end corners of one of two unequal lengths of cloth to create this sack sleeve is a simple device, creating a complex form from untapered pieces of cloth.⁴⁸

The primitive nature of this design was accentuated by the use of crochet to join together embroidered red calico or dyed linen bands inserted between the sleeve sections. This colourful outlining emphasised the unusual design of the shirt. Each section was finished with an overlocking stitch before being joined by crochet to the next section, suggesting that the design was a relic of Slavic garments originally laced together.⁴⁹

In the oldest examples, the ends of the sleeve were finished with a folded band of red calico. Parallel to this band geometric repeat patterns were embroidered in red thread similar to that along the other seams of the sleeve. In these shirts the braided cord stitched to the end of a sleeve or neck opening already finished with overcast stitching provides evidence of more primitive forms of dress and of a time when opening slits for the hand had been edged with braided linen or wool. Braided or knotted bands were once placed at the wrist not as decoration but for greater strength or as protection from perceived evil forces which might enter the shirt and harm the wearer.⁵⁰

The embroidery stitches used to decorate both composite and tunic-style shirts included *zamok* (used by the Bukhtarma Old Believers) and *vtachkiu* (used by the Poliaki), blanket, loop, or lock stitches for overcasting the edge of the neck or wrist area. Also used were *nabor*, a horizontal counted running stitch which produces a negative design on the reverse of the cloth similar to pattern darning, and *rospis'*, a two-sided unbroken line of horizontal, vertical, or diagonal back stitches. *Krest*, the less archaic cross stitch was also used, particularly by the Poliaki embroiderers who often combined

⁴⁸ This most archaic design was used by the Poliaki, while the Bukhtarma Old Believers used an archaic but slightly later sack-sleeve design. In this case the two straight sections were of equal length. Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 184–185, 200; Shcherbik, 'Kollektsiia,' 219.

⁴⁹ Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 185, 201.

⁵⁰ Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 192.

it with the geometric designs of counted running stitch, particularly on the front of men's shirts.⁵¹ In general, running stitch, based on the example of plaiting or basketwork, was typical of the embroidery on these shirts, indicating the evolution of such needlework from earlier devices for strengthening the edges of cloth.⁵²

The technique used for decorative stitching at the neck or collar, along the centre opening, on the shoulder inserts and in later modifications at the cuffs, or cuff bands was known to the Old Believers as embroidery *pa-melkamu*. By the 1920s this type of counted stitch had disappeared from use in the rest of Russia. Like pattern darning, the embroiderer worked across the weave of the linen with small stitches in red or red and black, creating a design which was virtually integral with the cloth and gave the impression of a woven pattern.⁵³

Archaic elements in the composite shirt made by Old Believers in the Altai and still being made in some instances in the early twentieth century point to a prototype of Russian shirt whose separate pieces were not sewn, but laced or buttoned together. The antiquity of such forms suggests that these were the garments made and worn by Old Believers in the eighteenth century before they came to the Altai from Vetka and Starodub'e, Pomor'e, or the Kerzhenets Forest communities.⁵⁴

By the 1920s the traditional composite shirt worn by Old Believer women, sometimes dyed in bright colours, was being replaced by shirts made of wider purchased fabrics. This led to changes in design and decoration, with for example, printed fabric replacing embroidered designs. However, homemade fabric was still used for work and particularly for ritual clothing, since goods originating in the city were, if not prohibited, at least frowned upon for significant religious observances.⁵⁵

Although many innovations were accepted in the design and construction of everyday garments, in the 1930s women in the Poliaki and Bukhtarma villages still made and embroidered shirts for their husbands in the traditional way.

⁵¹ L. E. Kalmykova, *Narodnaia vyshivka Tverskoi zemli* (Leningrad: Khudozhnik RSFSR, 1981), 177–185; Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 405–415; Durasov and Iakovleva, 313–314; Lynette de Denne, *Creative Needlecraft* (London: Octopus Books, 1979), 28, 74; Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 197.

⁵² Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 201.

⁵³ This type of *nabor* was used by Eastern Slavs and required such fine stitching that it was used only on garments, and not for embroidering towels or other domestic cloth. Parallel horizontal rows of small running stitches form diagonal lines at a 45-degree angle to the stitching. The white spaces in between the rows of stitching therefore also form diagonal lines, creating an exact negative design on the back. Simple or highly complex geometric patterns of diamonds and hooked swastikas could be formed. Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 405.

⁵⁴ Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 180–181, 200–201.

⁵⁵ Grinkova, 314–315.

Под ворох че-нибудь подшивали. Для мужей готовили невесток: вышивки вышивали, вот рубаху уже начинает понимать. Вот праздники использовали. Пасху всю не гуляли, а вышивку то вяжи, на полотенце вяжи и скатерть готовь, и мужу к рубахе манишку на холсте я шила сама; сделаешь ее, теперь рукава, обшлага тоже вышитые сделаешь все, теперь воротник плотно застегался набочек и это вышивали. Когда женаты они живут и все равно мужику надо на рубахе хоть ворот вышить. Надо. Не то, что сшил и все. Да и свекру шили рубаху. Сноха выходит замуж, она мужу рубаху вышитую дает и свекру дает рубаху и штаны тоже готовит.

It was the custom to stitch something on under the collar. A bride got things ready for her husband: embroideries were done on a shirt so she would start to understand how it is done. Holiday time was used. You didn't celebrate the whole time at Easter but did embroidery on a towel or tablecloth. I myself embroidered a shirt front on linen for my husband's shirt. After that I made the sleeves. The cuffs were also embroidered. You do everything, then the collar is tightly fastened at the side and embroidered. Even when you're married, you need to embroider the collar on your husband's shirt. You had to. It wasn't enough just to sew it and that was that. And you made a shirt for your father-in-law. When a girl got married, she gave her husband an embroidered shirt and she gave a shirt to her father-in-law and she also made the trousers.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

Men wore *shabury* or *chembary*, wide linen or hemp trousers with the shirt. For holiday wear trousers were woven with a stripe. When purchased cloth was introduced at the end of the nineteenth century, trousers were also made from dark wool and for holidays, wool or velveteen.⁵⁶

6.2 *Sarafan*

In northern and central Russia in the seventeenth century the traditional costume for peasant women consisted of a shirt worn under a *sarafan* which could also be made in the form of a high skirt attached to shoulder straps.⁵⁷ In its most archaic form it was similar to the tunic-style shirt worn by men, having no centre seam.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Grinkova, 374–375.

⁵⁷ The term for this garment first appeared in Russia in 1376, suggesting that it is a relatively new concept. It referred to both men's and women's clothing from then until the seventeenth century. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 636.

⁵⁸ Grinkova, 330.

As a result of the slow pace of change in Old Believer communities, in the 1920s ethnographers identified seven different styles of *sarafan* worn by the Bukhtarma Old Believers.⁵⁹ In 1999 women in Old Believer villages of the Altai still make these robes.

In pre-Petrine Russia the *raspashnyi* (opening) *kosoklinnyi* (with side gores forming an A-line) *sarafan* worn over a linen shirt with a *kokoshnik* (head-dress) represented the predominant costume of urban Muscovite women. The centre front seam of this *sarafan* suggests its development from garments with a centre opening prevalent in Muscovite Russia from the fourteenth century. This style of *sarafan* spread especially to the northern and eastern regions of Russia between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries and became known as the *ruskii sarafan*.

However, even older than the *ruskii sarafan* was the *glukhoi* (closed) *sarafan* used for burial clothing by the Bukhtarma Old Believers. It was made from four straight widths of cloth and had no centre seam and no gores.⁶⁰ A modification of this narrow garment is the *glukhoi kosoklinnyi sarafan* made from a piece of cloth folded at the shoulders to form the front and back, with a small slit for the head but with side gores added for width.⁶¹ Although by the end of the eighteenth century, it had practically disappeared in European Russia, this more archaic design was worn by the Poliaki and the Bukhtarma Old Believers, made of *daba* (blue dyed cotton). Additional *lastovki* (small gores) were cut from the side panels and added to the bottom of the skirt for greater fullness. The bodice of the seamless front was decorated with geometric embroidered designs. An undecorated version of this garment was also made for burial.⁶²

The embroidery designs on this style of *sarafan* were stitched *pa-vymetke*, an archaic technique consisting of stitches of equal length (counted across three or four threads), stitched in alternating vertical and horizontal running stitches first in one direction, then back in the other, to create a chain of little squares. Neither diagonal stitches nor a continuous line of stitching was used in this type of embroidery. Groups of

⁵⁹ Grinkova, 325.

⁶⁰ Grinkova, 326.

⁶¹ A garment similar to this *sarafan* with no centre seam but with side gores was known in parts of central and northern Russia as a *shushun* and was usually made of home-woven red-dyed wool. Straps were not separate, leaving the shoulders completely covered except for the neck opening. It sometimes had long sleeves attached. Maslova mentions the presence of this *sarafan* in Novgorod, Pskov, Olonets, Archangel, Vologda, Perm', Viatka and Tver' regions, and generally considers it a northern rather than a southern garment. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 637. However, Grinkova relates this style to both southern and northern regions of Russia, where it was called by different names, including a *shushpan* (Riazan') or a *saian* (Kursk) and made of fine wool, white linen, or blue cotton. Grinkova, 326–327.

⁶² Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 637; Grinkova, 328–329.

complex geometric forms based on interlocking swastikas, crosses, and diamonds were formed.⁶³

The absence of any trace of a centre front seam or even decoration with buttons or braid along the length of the centre front to imitate a front opening, distinguishes this style of *sarafan* at one time worn in the Old Believer communities of the Altai, from the characteristic *ruskii sarafan*.⁶⁴ This trait also suggests that the oldest type of *sarafan* found in these communities did not originate with the *sarafan* proper, but with something much older.⁶⁵ It is likely that the first Old Believers in the Altai had not yet been influenced by urban Muscovite changes in dress and therefore brought with them the garment with no centre seam.⁶⁶

From the design with tapered side panels but no centre front seam, the *priamoi* (straight) or *kruglyi* (circular) *sarafan* evolved, consisting of at least five untapered widths gathered in tucks onto a small band at the bodice which was sewn onto narrow shoulder straps. This was known also as the *moskovskii sarafan* and may have been in use as early as the seventeenth century.⁶⁷

By the 1920s young Old Believer women in the Bukhtarma communities had begun to wear this *sarafan*, but the older women rejected the innovative form, considering it sinful to wear gathers across the chest. (Plates 71 and 72). By the end of the nineteenth century, in addition to preserving the tapered design, the Poliaki had also begun to make a straight *sarafan*.⁶⁸

When *sarafany* were made of purchased cloth, they usually took their name from the material.⁶⁹ For example the *atlasnik* was made of *atlas* (satin) and the *kashemirnik* of cashmere.⁷⁰ It was essential for a young woman to have a number of *sarafany* when she got married. A good trousseau consisted of 20 *pary* (matching *sarafan* and shirt) but a

⁶³ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 406–408.

⁶⁴ Buttons and braid sewn along the length of a centre front seam are indicative of a garment which was once fastened closed. This detail was typical of Muscovite garments which became widespread in the north of Russia by the end of the seventeenth century. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 460; Grinkova, 335.

⁶⁵ Grinkova, 330–333. The antecedent may have been the *letnik*, a closed pullover garment known in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 637.

⁶⁶ Grinkova, 325–327.

⁶⁷ Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 642.

⁶⁸ Grinkova, 338; Shvetsova, 31.

⁶⁹ In the Bukhtarma region in the mid-nineteenth century, the predominant colours for a *sarafan* were red and blue. Shcherbik, 'Kollektsiia,' 221.

⁷⁰ Grinkova, 331–332.

woman from a wealthy Old Believer family would have 30 or 40 *sarafany* in her storage chest.⁷¹ (Plates 27, 73, 74, 75, and 76).

И в Сибири так одевались и в нашем краю. Кашемирник брали, кашемировые сарафаны шили, – было введено в старину. Уж обязательно, чтоб атласник был, атласную какую-нибудь парочку еще там че-нибудь. And they dressed that way in Siberia and in our area. It was the custom from long ago that they had a *kashemirnik*. They made cashmere *sarafany*. You absolutely had to have an *atlasnik* (*sarafan* made of satin), some kind of a satin *parochka* and something else as well.

Ul'iana Pavlovna (1916)

In the late 1990s women in Verkh-Uimon wear their own or their mother's *sarafany*, made in either plain or printed cotton. They are 'straight' in design and very full. The fullness is gathered into a bodice band in front and back in very fine tucks. The women are proud of this work and value the craftsmanship according to the number of tucks per centimetre, explaining that the fullness of this *sarafan* provides modesty. It is difficult to see the figure of a woman surrounded by so much cloth. In these examples the *spinka* (point in back where the straps join the bodice) has retained its distinctive form. (Plate 72). Often stiffened with an inner lining and edge-stitched for greater support, this section acts as the straps of a rucksack, distributing the weight of cloth so the *sarafan* is comfortable to wear. The *spinka* was also sometimes embroidered. The fact that the shape of this section has changed little with time is a reflection of its importance. The support of the *spinka* helped a woman maintain good posture. Its stiffness made it easier for her decorated shirt to stay in place, displayed outside the *sarafan*. Although traditionally not a separate piece of material, in order to accommodate the gathers on a bodice, in 'straight' *sarafany*, the *spinka* is formed separately and sewn like ordinary straps to the garment.⁷²

⁷¹L. M. Rusakova and E. F. Fursova, 'Odezhda Bukhtarminskikh krest'ianok (XIX – nachalo XX v.),' in *Obshchestvennyi byt i kul'tura russkogo naseleniia Sibiri XVIII – nachalo XX v.*, ed. L. M. Rusakova (Novosibirsk: Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1983), 75; Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 243; Shcherbik, 'Kollektsiia,' 224.

⁷²Rusakova and Fursova, 92. At the end of the nineteenth century, Old Believers in Pomor'e also continued to wear a tapered *sarafan*, or *kostych*. Here too the *spinka* was cut in a specified manner. E. M. Iaskelianinen, 'Kollektsiia predmetov iz tkanei i odezhdy muzeia-zapovednika "Kizhi" kak istochnik dlia izucheniia starovercheskoi kul'tury,' in *Vygovskaia pomorskaia pustyn' i ee znachenie v istorii russkoi kul'tury* (Petrozavodsk: Petrozavodskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1994), 113–114. Clothing from Old Believer communities in the Upper Kama River region indicates that here garments were also made using patterns dating to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, the dark blue or black *dubas*, a tapered *sarafan*, was always constructed with a centre seam, indicating the influence of urban culture absent in examples of the oldest clothing from Old Believer communities of Siberia and the Altai. S. A.

Along the bottom of the *sarafan* rows of different coloured cloth or ribbon were traditionally sewn above the hem at intervals. This decorative detail is reminiscent of the embroidered ends of shirts, pinafores and towels. Decorative borders were added to the hem of a shirt, skirt, or pinafore. Because of their proximity to the earth, the messages contained in these borders were believed to exert a positive effect on the soil or on the crops which grew near them. The neck opening of a shirt, the shoulders, cuffs, bodice, back, waist, and hem were all points where clothing should provide protection or strength and consequently were covered with woven or embroidered messages. The properly made garments in which a person was blessed during religious rites could then be used if necessary to perform ritual acts of healing and cleansing.⁷³

6.3 The Pinafore

In the Altai, an apron-like garment or pinafore known as a *perednik* or *narukavnik* was worn over the shirt and *sarafan*. Although it served a practical purpose, having pockets and protecting the clothing underneath, it could also be a particularly decorative item of clothing and was worn for holiday and ritual occasions such as leading cattle to the fields in spring. The other type of apron worn by the Bukhtarma Old Believers was a *fartuk* or *zapon*, which was tied around the waist, but not usually included in the ritual or holiday costume. For holidays they wore a more festive apron with embroidery along the bottom.⁷⁴

The most recent *narukavnik* was a substantial garment, the lower section of which was made of two widths of cloth. It had full, gathered sleeves with cuffs attached to a yoke, a wide round neck opening in front, gathers under the yoke, and shoulder and bodice insets decorated with embroidery. When the front and back were relatively short, a frill would be added along the hem. Decorated inserts were added at the joining of the top to the sleeves, in the same manner as in the composite shirt. It was sometimes made

Dimukhametova, 'Material'naia kul'tura i remeslo russkogo staroobriadcheskogo naseleniia Verkhokam'ia,' in *Traditsionnaia dukhovnaia i material'naia kul'tura russkikh staroobriadcheskikh poselenii v stranakh Evropy, Azii i Ameriki*, ed. N. N. Pokrovskii and Richard Morris (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1992), 170. I would like to thank L. V. Efimova and O. G. Gordeeva of the Department of Textiles and Costume in the Russian State Historical Museum in Moscow for their commentary on the importance of the *spinka* and for showing me examples of *sarafany* in the museum's collection from communities of Semeiskie Old Believers in Zabaikal'e.

⁷³ S. V. Zharnikova, *Obriadovye funktsii severorusskogo zhenskogo narodnogo kostiuma*, (Vologda, 1991), 11, 17.

⁷⁴ Grinkova, 343–344; Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 243.

of the same material as the *sarafan* and upper section of a shirt. Although for everyday wear this garment was undecorated and made from coloured home-woven cloth, the traditional holiday *narukavnik* was lavishly embroidered *pa-melkamu* or with cross stitch on the sleeves and bodice.⁷⁵

The Bukhtarma Old Believers made a *narukavnik* of white linen without a yoke. Like the *kosoklinnyi sarafan* it had no gathers in front. These aprons were similar to southern Russian garments in their simple tunic-style with a square neck opening cut at the fold of the linen, but to northern Russian garments in their decoration. A wide band of linen woven with red yarn and decorated with geometric embroidery designs as well edged the bottom of the pinafore. The embroidery was stitched *pa-melkamu*, creating intricate patterns similar to the richly embroidered traditional patterns on mens' shirts. Drawn fabric work was also sometimes used to decorate the hem in the same way it was used to finish the end of other ritual textiles.⁷⁶

The Poliaki made a similar *narukavnik* with heavily embroidered or beaded bands of cloth, sometimes of velvet.⁷⁷

6.4 The Belt

The Russians are a people who differ from all other Nations of the world in most of their actions.

Their shirt they wear over their drawers, girded under the navel (to which they think a girdle adds strength). None neither male or female must go ungirt for fear of being unblest.⁷⁸

In a practical sense, useful items such as pouches, axes, knives, or spoons could be hung from a belt, but as a ritual requirement a woven belt was an essential focal point of Russian clothing. The *poias* was a narrower belt than the *opoiások*, which was worn over outer garments. A *poias* was tied over a man's shirt or a woman's *sarafan*.⁷⁹ In the *Primary Chronicle* the importance of wearing a belt at the waist is mentioned in connection with Prince Vladimir's choice of Christianity for Russia. In their travels, his

⁷⁵ Grinkova, 339–341.

⁷⁶ Grinkova, 340–343.

⁷⁷ Grinkova, 342; Shvetsova, 31.

⁷⁸ Collins, 66.

⁷⁹ Grinkova, 379.

emissaries dismissed the religion of Bulgarians who 'stand ungirt' while they pray in the mosque.⁸⁰

Although the custom of being 'girt' must therefore predate Christian ritual in Russia, the belt continued to be a traditional and significant element of Russian dress and was adapted to Christian ceremonies such as baptism, marriage, and burial.⁸¹ For Orthodox Russians it was as sinful to go without a belt as without a cross, but amongst Eastern Slavs the belief had long existed that a belt had protective properties – it helped ward off evil forces and gave strength to the person who wore it. It warmed the body and so protected the wearer from physical illness and from unknown harmful forces. The mystery of a never-ending circle found physical expression in a sash worn next to the body, over underclothes, shirts, dresses, and outer clothing.⁸² Woven into its width were ancient symbols, prayers, or messages of love and protection.

The traditional designs of Russian belts were geometric, with motifs sometimes repeated along the length in the same way they were along the horizontal bands of an embroidered towel or the hem of a holiday shirt or skirt. Some belts were woven with a series of unconnected symbols. Others had slanted crosses, swastikas, and diamonds forming continuous repeat patterns. Inscriptions woven by Old Believers in the Altai had Church Slavonic letter forms.⁸³ The meaning of these symbols has yet to be fully deciphered, but through their recreation on woven belts, some of the oldest indicators of Slavic belief have been preserved to the present time.⁸⁴ (Plates 77, 78, and 79).

⁸⁰ Zenkovsky, *Russia's Epics*, 67.

⁸¹ In the third century B.C. for example, the Hittites, ancient ancestors of the Russians, took the belt from their captured enemies even before their weapon, to symbolise the loss of liberty. Zharnikova, 17; Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 688.

⁸² Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 692, 694; L. M. Rusakova, 'Uzory poiasov: k probleme deshirovki (po materialam staroobriadsev Altaia), in N. N. Pokrovskii and R. Morris, eds., *Traditsionnaia dukhovnaia i material'naia kul'tura russkikh staroobriadcheskikh poselenii v stranakh Evrpyy, Azii, i Ameriki* (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1992), 229.

⁸³ The antiquity of the weaving technique, the absence of repeat patterns, the mixture of geometric signs and figures, and the symbols used to create these motifs are unique and would appear to exist nowhere else in Russia. This has led ethnographers to theorise that these belts represent a pictographic system of communication connected to Bronze Age texts of southern Russia or Bulgaria, where similar belts were woven. Rusakova, 'Uzory,' 234–235.

⁸⁴ Rusakova suggests that these should be examined as a whole and as an expression of ancient man's view of time and space. In her interpretation, among the symbols found on belts, the diamond, also perceived as a circle, represents the temporal ebb and flow of the cosmos which early hunters and gatherers saw repeating itself through the continuum of time. It also represents the safe world protected by the four corners of the enclosed geometric form. In her analysis, repetition of the form increased men's sense of security. 'Uzory,' 230–233. Other analysts of prehistoric Slavic textile patterns interpret the repetition of the diamond or lozenge in woven patterns as straightforward fertility symbols. Barber, *Work*, 61–63.

As wedding, birthday, or holiday gifts, Old Believers wove *imenniki*, belts with the recipient's name. They also wove verses, riddles, messages, proverbs, and prayers into their belts. For example, this reminder was woven into a belt in Verkh-Uimon.

Грех низлагает совесть, а покаяние служит ей жезлом. Кто попирает совесть тот изгоняет из сердца добродетели.

Sin debases the conscience, but repentance serves as its rod. He who flouts his conscience drives virtue from his heart.

Young girls wove this message into a belt intended for their husband.

Кого люблю, того дарю.
I will give this to the one I love.⁸⁵

Traditionally made of wool, a material signifying wealth in the Old Believer communities of the Altai, belts were also made from combinations of linen and wool or more recently of cotton and silk.⁸⁶ The ends of the belt were finished with fringe, a variety of tassels, mother-of-pearl buttons, sequins, glass beads, beading, pompoms, or braid.⁸⁷ The fringe and tassels varied from community to community, each recognisable by its decorative finishes. The Bukhtarma Old Believers tied complex knots, not unlike macramé work, at the top of the fringe which gave it more substance or helped it swing. Warp ends were layered to create several rows of fringe.⁸⁸

Analysts suggest that the fringe was an integral part of the overall symbolism of the belt. In the joining of warp and weft which signifies the joining of disunited elements into a harmonious whole, the uncut warp ends which form the fringe represent the remnants of chaos from which the Universe was created, endowing the belt with all the symbolic threads of life and order.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 690.

⁸⁶ Grinkova, 379; Rusakova, 'Uzory,' 230; Zharnikova, 18.

⁸⁷ Grinkova, 383–384; Shvetsova, 31. In European Russia Old Believers also made and wore these belts. An Old Believer from Pskov, born in 1913, described the belts as 'very pretty'. They were presents from her mother's brother who plaited them from various colours of linen yarn. *Riushechki* were woven into the ends. 'They were balls in the shape of little bells. My sister and I tied our holiday clothes with these belts. For everyday we tied our clothes with plain cord.' I would like to thank V. A. Nosova for providing this description.

⁸⁸ Shcherbik, 'Kollektsiia,' 228–230.

⁸⁹ Rusakova, 'Uzory,' 233. Again, it is interesting to compare Rusakova's analysis of the fringed belt with that of Elizabeth Wayland Barber who suggests that the fringe of women's skirts or sashes in prehistoric Slavic and other folk cultures carried messages of fertility, as the swing of the fringe called attention to a woman of child-bearing age and at other times was thought to safeguard her during difficult childbirth. Barber, *Work*, 63–68. On the other hand, men also wore these belts.

When the lid of a bride's wedding chest was opened, it revealed her skill as a weaver. Neatly coiled and strung along a cord on the inside of the lid were well over a dozen belts of varying widths, each designated for different kinds of attire.⁹⁰ With the need for fine belts considerable, it was not unusual for an Old Believer community to support several weavers who made belts to order.⁹¹

Even at home, even at night, Russian women did not take off their belts. Like ceremonial towels, belts were hung in a window to signify that a birth was taking place or were hung decoratively on the wall in the icon corner. Young girls sometimes hung newly woven belts beside an icon and used them as part of a ritual to guess the future and they were also used for engagement rituals. Before baptism, a small belt was wrapped around a newborn child. As well as towels, woven belts were used as part of the marriage ritual to bind the bride and groom symbolically in faithful union and the two families in friendship. In order to win the favour of the spirits of her new home, a young bride sometimes threw a new belt into her bucket the first time she went to fetch water. To show respect for the most important areas of her new home, she would throw a belt into the stove and bow three times to the stove and to the icons which hung in the corner. For burial, a corpse was sometimes wrapped in several belts and a belt was used to lower a coffin into the grave and then left there, as though connecting the living to the spirit of the dead. It was thought that ancestral spirits could re-enter their earthly home along the length of a towel or belt.⁹²

6.5 The Head-dress

In Slavic cultures, a woman's hair was associated with powerful forces of magic and sexuality.⁹³ From the time of marriage her hair was kept from view. In popular belief, if a woman entered the farmyard with uncovered hair, she might bring misfortune to the livestock. If her hair was not properly covered in the presence of her father-in-law, she shamed her family.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ The wider the belt, the richer the wearer was thought to be. However, certain widths of belt belonged to certain garments and it was considered *gauche* to appear in a belt which was too narrow or too wide for a particular garment. Grinkova, 385.

⁹¹ Rusakova, 'Uzory,' 230. L. I. Iakunina, *Slytskie poiasy* (Minsk, 1960), 214.

⁹² Iakunina, *Slytskie poiasy* (Minsk, 1960), 214; Maslova, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 45–47; Zharnikova, 18.

⁹³ Some groups of Old Believers even used human hair to stitch their burial garments. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 616.

⁹⁴ Part of the marriage ritual emphasised the grief of a young girl for the loss of her single plait,

While voyaging through Siberia to their place of exile, Archpriest Avvakum and his wife encountered a violent storm. The archpriest was shocked at the sight of his wife with uncovered hair.⁹⁵

Егда будем в Тунгуске-реке, бурю дощеник мой в воду загрузило; налился среди реки полон воды, и парус изорвало, одны полубы наверху, а то все в воду ушло. Жена моя робят кое-как вытаскала наверх. А сама ходит простоволоса, в забытии ума, а я, на небо глядя, кричу: «Господи, спаси! Господи, помози!»

When we were on the Tungusk River, my boat was swamped by the storm. It was filled with water in the middle of the river, the sail was torn, only half the deck was above water, and everything fell in. My wife somehow or other dragged the children above deck, but completely forgetting her senses, went bareheaded, and I, looking to the sky, shouted, 'Lord save us! Lord help us!'⁹⁶

The form of head covering indicated much about a woman – her age, her wealth, her geographic origins, or her status in society. A formal head-dress consisted of parts of a relatively small size requiring fine, detailed work to make, fit, and decorate.⁹⁷

Elements in the design of nineteenth and even twentieth-century head coverings can be traced to a distant past when all Slavic women covered their hair with simple pieces of cloth like a kerchief, often wearing one veil over another. In time, this kerchief or *shirinka* evolved into an elaborate and richly decorated head-dress, often acquiring anthropomorphic shapes, such as one or more horns or a bird-like crown. It is curious to note that in an *ukaz* of 1724, wives of *borodachi* (bearded men) were ordered by Peter the Great to wear a 'cap with horns'.⁹⁸ The terminology for some head-dresses also had anthropomorphic labels such as 'wings', 'crests', 'horns'. Other head-dresses resembled a spade, a tiara, a pointed 'witches' hat, or a beret, embroidered, quilted, beaded, or covered with pearls which in some cases hung like a net or fringe over the forehead or ears. The flowers, feathers, and grasses associated with good health in Russia could be

symbolising her move and submission to the unknown family of her husband. N. I. Gagen-Torn, 'Magicheskoe znachenie volos i golovnogo ubora v svadebnykh obriadakh Vostochnoi Evropy,' *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* 5–6 (1933): 76–80.

⁹⁵ The Russian verb *oprostovolosit'sia* (to make a blunder) derives from the shame of a married woman's being seen with uncovered hair. Zabelin, 88.

⁹⁶ Avvakum, 'Zhitie,' in *Zhitie*, ed. Robinson, 40.

⁹⁷ In some parts of Russia a complete head-dress consisted of up to fourteen separate parts and weighed as much as seven kilos. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 666–667.

⁹⁸ Esipov, 182. The representation of horns on women's head-dresses is generally considered to be a symbol of fertility, as they were not worn by unmarried young or older women, but particularly by young married women until the birth of their first child. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 670–672; idem, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 57–58.

fastened to a woman's head-dress and worn for important holidays and celebrations to ward off evil or promote health and healing.⁹⁹

Young Eastern Slavic girls had once worn their hair loose or with a *venets*, a little garland or crown. In folk tradition, the magical power possessed by loose hair was allowed its freedom during certain rituals such as mourning or ploughing the fields when girls did not plait their hair. For holidays, at their wedding, for burial, should they die at that young age, their hair was unplaited.¹⁰⁰

In the Altai as elsewhere in Russia, young girls wore their hair in a single plait, often decorated with ribbons, flowers, beads, or embroidered hairpieces. In the Poliaki villages girls used beef fat to keep the plait neat and to form little curls in front of their ears. Girls in the Bukhtarma communities also used melted fat to keep their hair in place and their heads smooth and neat. The tail of the plait was decorated with ribbons, beaded tassels, braided cord ending in swinging tassels like little bells, or fringe. Sequins, buttons, or knitted woollen bands were also braided into a plait.¹⁰¹

For older girls, a rolled up scarf or piece of cloth tied as a headband in front and knotted behind allowed the back of the head and a girl's plait to be seen.¹⁰² In the Bukhtarma villages, from the time they were eight years of age, girls began to wear such a headband. If a shawl was used, the ends were crossed at the back and wrapped and fastened in front, forming an elaborate turban. Sometimes one or both ends were left free to hang from the back of the head. Tassels of beads hung from the shawl around the ears from the back of the head to the forehead, and flowers were stuck along the side for special holidays. During a marriage ceremony, the ends of the shawl were crossed at the back and then both fastened in front of the bride's head, creating the impression of a high crown.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *Ivanovskie travy* (plants gathered at the time of the summer solstice on the pagan holiday of *Ivan Kupala* which the Eastern Slavs associated with maintaining good health through ritual cleansing in water, fire, or with plants) were made into garlands and worn in the hair. R. D Drazheva, 'Obriady sviazannye s okhranoi zdorov'ia v prazdnike letnego solntsestoianiiia u vostochnykh i iuzhnykh slavian,' *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, 6 (1973): 109, 116.

¹⁰⁰ Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 652.

¹⁰¹ Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 57; Grinkova, 60.

¹⁰² Sometimes a hoop made of a hard material such as bast, birch, or cardboard was used to make the base of a band or crown which could resemble a tiara. The hoop was covered and beaded or embroidered. Wealthy families used gold thread, pearls or stones in the embroidery. Sometimes the hoop did not meet at the back, but was held together by ties and covered with a decorated band of cloth which hung down the back. In other designs, wide bands of cloth or ribbon trailed from the band down one side of the head-dress. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 655–657.

¹⁰³ Grinkova, 354–355.

Older unmarried girls in the Poliaki communities also wore a wrapped and tied cloth head-dress which had disappeared from use almost everywhere else in Russia. It was 'very pretty and somewhat like a crown'.¹⁰⁴ On some occasions the ends of the headband were wrapped and tucked in an artistic manner in front, creating a raised shape reminiscent of the head-dress resembling *roga* (horns) normally reserved for married women. Real flowers or if necessary flowers made of wool, paper, or even sweet wrappers, were tucked in all along the headband for decoration. On certain holidays wild duck feathers were stuck under the headband to hang over the forehead like a fringe.¹⁰⁵

Everywhere in Russia the ritual of marriage focused on the freeing of a girl's hair from its single plait. The hair was then ceremoniously rebraided by the bride's relatives into two separate plaits which were wrapped around the head, crossed and fastened in front, and then worn under a head-dress for the rest of a woman's life.¹⁰⁶ This ritual is described in the *Domostroi*.

И как зачесав голова у княгин молодые – розплеть коса, и заплетати косы, и укрутити княгиня молодая, и укрутя покрыти покрывалом, и на покрывале нашии крест,

And when the young princess' [bride's] hair has been combed out – the plait is undone and the hair replaited in braids, the bride turns around and as she turns, she is covered with the veil, and on the veil is an embroidered cross,¹⁰⁷

When a Bukhtarma Old Believer got married, the two plaits were never allowed to cross at the back of her head, as this would suggest a desire to return to one plait, an unacceptable notion for a married woman.¹⁰⁸

The close-fitting cap covering the hair was the essential prerequisite of a head-dress. The *Domostroi* outlined how the *kika* (or *kichka*) should be 'placed on the newlywed princess and covered with a veil' during the wedding ceremony.¹⁰⁹ Other components of the head-dress – the *podzatylnik*, *podubrusnik*, and *volosnik* were also enumerated in the *Domostroi*. During the wedding ritual they were laid out on a platter

¹⁰⁴ Shvetstova, 32.

¹⁰⁵ Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 57–58; Shvetsova, 32.

¹⁰⁶ In some parts of Russia, a married woman's hair was not plaited in two braids, but wrapped and fastened around a hoop, a method of hiding the hair under a head-dress which probably corresponded to a time when young girls also did not plait their hair. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 568–59; Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 58; idem, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 242.

¹⁰⁷ *Domostroi*, 169.

¹⁰⁸ Grinkova, 348.

¹⁰⁹ *Domostroi*, 167.

along with the *kika* and veil.¹¹⁰ In the twentieth century, Old Believers in the Altai used a *polushalok* (shawl) during the marriage ritual. Typically the shawl was red.¹¹¹

There were two styles of cap worn by married Old Believers in the Altai to cover their hair. The *kichka* associated with southern Russia and Ukraine was common in the Poliaki communities, while a *shashmura* was more common in the Bukhtarma communities. The *kichka* consisted of a stiff front section of bast, birchbark, quilted cloth, or cloth treated with glue, sewn to a piece of linen. This was closely fitted to the head and tightened with cord drawn in at the back. The front section was made in a variety of shapes, frequently representing single or double horns and usually creating a high, crown-like effect.¹¹² The *shashmura*, also *sashmura*, *samshura*, or *shamshura* common in north-eastern Russia in particular, but not known in the south, was a cap with a circular or horse-shoe-shaped base. It was a changed form of the more archaic *soroka*, a head-dress made from a rectangular length of cloth or side ties fastened to a *shirinka*. This could be worn over a stiffer under cap.¹¹³ The antiquity of the *soroka* is highlighted by its use as a burial head-dress in the Altai. The *shashmura* evolved from combining the *soroka* with some sort of a stiff base and may originally have been designed to wear over the shaped *kichka*.¹¹⁴ Apart from the *soroka*, the Old Believers also used a *shashmura* made of white linen as a burial garment. This cap was sometimes referred to as a *shashmura-kichka*.¹¹⁵

The cap could be removed for sleep, but was not worn on its own either outside the home or at home during the day.¹¹⁶ For everyday, a shawl or a plain second cap was worn over it but for formal occasions a soft decorated outer cap, a *kokoshnik*, was worn over the *kichka* or *shashmura*. Like the *shashmura* and shawl, in its role as a second

¹¹⁰ *Domostroi*, 166. Zabelin, 583–585.

¹¹¹ The red shawl which sometimes had dangling beads, may have been thought to protect a young woman from evil spirits. Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 58–59.

¹¹² Parmon, 133.

¹¹³ A *soroka* was often horn-shaped as it formed the decorative outer casing for a horn-shaped *kichka*, but the terminology associated with it related to bird forms. It had a *khvost* (tail) and side panels, *kryl'ia* (wings). It is also possible that since its name corresponds to the button-on collar of a Russian shirt it was considered a continuation of that part of a costume. Its name is also closely related to an old Slavonic word for shirt, *sorochka*. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 668, 670.

¹¹⁴ Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 60, 62.

¹¹⁵ There were two variations of the *shashmura* in Russia: one with a hard base like a hoop and the other with a stiff frontal part, quilted or reinforced with birchbark, sometimes referred to as a *shashmura-kichka*. Maslova describes the *shashmura* proper as having a hard circular or semi-circular bottom with a soft top, while the *shashmura-kichka* has a more vertical or inclined stiff semi-circular articulation at the front of the cap. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 682–83; Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 59–60.

¹¹⁶ In the house, only elderly women could wear the cap on its own. Grinkova, 347.

layer, the *kokoshnik* derived from the *soroka*. According to Shvetsova, in the Poliaki villages the 'ensemble of a *kichka* together with the shawl which covered it – was called a "*shashmura*" and was worn for everyday'.¹¹⁷

The Old Believers used a range of traditional shawl-tying techniques associated with different regions of European Russia. Tying and wrapping a large shawl was an art in itself, sometimes requiring such skill that few could master all the permutations. There were methods of tying used for all occasions – work in the field, holidays, travel, and for protection from insects, heat, or snow. An untied shawl was also used as a burial head-dress.¹¹⁸

For holidays a brimless *kokoshnik* was worn over the *kichka*. Attached to this was a decorated *podzatylnik*.

A '*kichka*' consisted of the *kichka* proper, that is the hooped arrangement over which the *kokoshnik* is worn. This was made of silk or velvet embroidered all over with silver and gold and made in the shape of a beret with a wide cap-band in front. At the back a '*podzatylnik*' is fastened to the *kichka*, covering all the back and also made of silk or velvet with silver and gold embroidery. Underneath the *podzatylnik* a fringe of silver or gold is sewn; the gap between the *kokoshnik* and the *podzatylnik* is covered by a shawl, which is wound around the head, and into which young women also stick flowers. For travel they also wrap themselves up with a shawl, fastening it at the waist.¹¹⁹

This head-dress was still in use during the 1950s for formal occasions.¹²⁰ The Poliaki women were skillful embroiderers who had 'attained virtuosity in their works of embroidery. They embroider *kokoshniki* with gold and silver, laying one thread beside another, as in satin stitching'.¹²¹ Not everyone possessed all the necessary sewing and constructing experience to make a *kokoshnik*. Women sought out those who did in other villages and paid them for their work.¹²²

In the nineteenth century the Bukhtarma Old Believers made a *kokoshnik* or stiff head-dress similar to the cap or *shashmura* which later replaced it. However, contrary to

¹¹⁷ Shvetsova, 32. Over fifty years later, Professor Maerova found that a '*shashmura*' described the holiday head-dress of Poliaki in Bobrovka.

¹¹⁸ Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 59, 61–62.

¹¹⁹ Shvetsova, 32–33, 75–76.

¹²⁰ I am indebted to Professor Maerova for allowing me to use her drawings of these head-dresses as illustration.

¹²¹ Shvetsova, 75. Similar embroidery was used by the Semeiskie in Zabaikal'e for their head-dress. For a detailed description of this work, see Okhrimenko, 'Zhenskii kostium,' 210–13. On the use of gold and braid in the Semeiskie head-dress see Selishchev, 7.

¹²² Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 61; Parmon, 134; Okhrimenko, 210.

northern Russian tradition where it was worn directly over the hair, in the Altai the *kokoshnik* had been the everyday head-dress worn over the *shashmura*. It was held in place by a rolled up shawl laid across the forehead and tied at the back with the ends hanging down. This covered the undecorated part of the *kokoshnik*, which was made of cotton for everyday use and velveteen for holidays. For holidays a *pozatyl'nik*, decorated with beads and gold embroidery was tied to the *shashmura*. Beaded tassels were also added. Although these *kokoshniki* had disappeared from use before the 1920s, they were still being made of white linen, along with a linen *shashmura* as part of the burial attire of the Bukhtarma Old Believers. The more recent *shashmura*, made of linen, chintz, or satin followed a design similar to that of the *kokoshnik* but had an additional section, the *nalobnik* (brim) sewn to a *makushka* (oval-shaped crown). This covered the forehead, eliminating the need for the tied band with which the *kokoshnik* had been worn in the past. Along the joining of brim and cap, a thick roll or bolster of quilted layers of cloth or wool, a *kishka*, was sewn. When a shawl was tied over this, it emphasised the high front section, not unlike the horns of a *kichka*. At the back of the crown, ribbon or cord was threaded through the cap to help hold it to the head. This style was analogous to the southern Russian head-dress where a stiff *kichka* was worn under a soft *soroka*.¹²³ Older women in Verkh-Uimon still wear this *shashmura*, but without the bolster. A shawl is tied over it. (Plate 80 and 81).

Although in the Altai, married Old Believer women wore a variety of archaic head-dress forms, since they were worn in ways not recorded elsewhere in Russia, contemporary researchers conclude that such innovation occurred as a result of interaction between Old Believer groups after their arrival in the Altai. For example, the horned *kichka* associated with southern Russia and Ukraine, although still used for holidays, had largely vanished from the everyday wear of the Poliaki by the twentieth century. Instead, they wore for everyday something more akin to the *shashmura* associated with northern Russia and worn by the Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers.¹²⁴ (Plates 82, 83, and 84).

¹²³ Grinkova, 346–347.

¹²⁴ E. F. Fursova therefore suggests it is incorrect to surmise that these head-dresses remained uninfluenced by contact with other Old Believer groups in the Altai or that they were originally a composite form of *shashmura-kichka* brought from northeastern Russia, as suggested by other scholars such as Maslova. The existence of more archaic forms in ritual head coverings for marriage, prayer, and burial leads Fursova to conclude that head-dresses worn in the nineteenth century by the Poliaki were transitional forms based on more archaic models. Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 62–63; Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 683. See also Rusakova and Fursova, 102.

However, for the most part, in the late twentieth century, descendants of Old Believers who made these elaborate head-dresses have reverted to wearing the simple *shirinka*, a folded white linen kerchief to cover the hair. They still distinguish the methods of tying the scarf for everyday or holiday wear and the custom of covering the hair is still observed. Older women in the villages wear a larger, finer colourful woollen shawl for special occasions. When worn with a traditional shirt, *sarafan*, and belt, the shawl is fastened with a safety pin under the chin.

6.6 Prayer Clothing

The colour of prayer garments was dark blue or black. Preferably, a tunic-style shirt was worn. Considered a departure from traditional clothing, aprons were not worn. Women's heads were covered with a *soroka* or *shashmura* and a dark shawl folded on the diagonal and fastened under the chin with a safety pin. This attire was also worn during fast periods and at burials.¹²⁵ In 1999 some of the women who gathered in Zamul'ta to sing spiritual songs changed into black clothing. This was a spontaneous event, but during the course of the gathering the oldest member of the group, a *staraia deva* dressed in black, changed her outer garments and head shawl three times.

In prayer clothing generally, archaic patterns and styles were mandatory, with particular attention paid to the cut of a *sarafan* or the method of tying a shawl around the head.¹²⁶ In the Bukhtarma communities, women wore a traditional *kosoklinnyi sarafan*, also worn during Lent and during the period of mourning for a relative.¹²⁷ In Zamul'ta, women showed us a black garment normally worn for prayer. Although sleeveless like the *sarafan*, it has no straps but slips over the head.

For prayer, the Bukhtarma women also wore a special dark-coloured veil, a *paushka*, over their head-dress. It was gathered in folds across the forehead, knotted at the back so it covered the head-dress, leaving two equal ends to hang down at the back. Older women added another veil of the same material over this, but tied it under the chin so the long ends hung down in front as well. Even little girls wore a *paushka* to prayer.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 246.

¹²⁶ Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 558.

¹²⁷ Grinkova, 388–389.

¹²⁸ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 246; Grinkova, 389. The Bukhtarma Old Believers also wore the *paushka* in mourning and during Lent. Rusakova and Fursova, 73

In the late 1920s men and boys in the Bukhtarma villages wore a *podobolochka* (caftan) of a particular local style to prayer. Other clothes might be hidden underneath, since the caftan was long and loose, and not fastened with a belt.¹²⁹ The *nastavnik* conducting prayer services wore the same garment. With the easing of prohibition on non-homemade cloth, these were usually made of purchased black or blue wool. Similar caftans were made of expensive material such as silk or brocade for holidays.¹³⁰

In addition to prayer clothing, there were accessories such as the *podruchnik* to be made. The owner's initials were usually embroidered on the *podruchnik* which was kept in a chest or hung on the wall beside the *lestovka*. Traditionally plaited from leather, this could also be made with cloth and beadwork, with gold and silver embroidery and as in the case of burial attire, of white linen. In Verkh-Uimon some villagers made linen *lestovki* with prayer beans made of rolled cloth.

6.7 Burial Costume

Two important considerations influenced the preparation of traditional *smertnaia* or *pogrebal'naia odezhda* (burial clothing). The spirit of the deceased needed to escape from its earthly existence as easily as possible so that it could not return and claim someone else from the family. Burial clothing of the Bukhtarma and Poliaki Old Believers reflected this need in that it was made from uncomplicated patterns and sewn with no knots in the thread and no backstitching. The cloth was torn, never cut with scissors and no buttons or hooks, only tie fastenings, were used. In addition, the seams of burial garments were never finished with an overcasting stitch. In other words, everything was left as open as possible, to allow the spirit its freedom. Secondly, in the belief that burial garments should reflect all the details of tradition, they were often made from archaic patterns no longer worn by the living.¹³¹

The Poliaki and some of the Bukhtarma Old Believers made a narrow insert-less tunic-style shirt for burial. It was made of fine white linen and cut very economically.¹³²

¹²⁹ Grinkova, 387.

¹³⁰ Grinkova, 377–378.

¹³¹ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 246; Grinkova, 390. There were generally in Russia varying traditions regarding burial clothing. For example, it was not unusual for wedding shirts to be used. However, in the Altai Old Believers made new garments specifically for burial. Old Believers in some parts of Russia were even known to wrap the dead in new, unbleached linen cloth rather than in clothing, burying them directly in the ground. Maslova, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 85–87, 95.

¹³² They cut the shirt *po-topornomu* (like an axe) using a forgotten technique known in Pskov and

The Bukhtarma Old Believers could not show 'worldly' or 'impure' outsiders their burial shirts, since no washing and no prayers could then purify the garments.¹³³

The Bukhtarma Old Believers sewed every detail of their burial garments by hand according to tradition and entirely from their own handwoven white linen. They considered it a sin to use a sewing machine for this purpose.¹³⁴ Their burial garments consisted of a shirt with no gathers at the neck or sleeves, sewn from four widths of linen either with two in front and two in the back or with centre panels front and back, and two side panels. The sleeves were narrow, of only one width of cloth. The burial *sarafan* was a 'dubasik' with a whole front panel and side gores. A head-dress of *shashmura*, *kokoshnik* and *podviazal'nik* (kerchief) was also made. Footwear consisted of sack-like socks made of white linen in the shape of feet. A *savan* (shroud) was made of two white linen strips, sewn together at the back and narrowed toward one end for the head. A third section was added to the front so that it covered the chest and was folded under the arms. A *lestovka* was made of white linen and added to the coffin along with a *podruchnik*. Men were buried in an undecorated white linen shirt and trousers. Women never completely finished making their burial clothes, for fear of dying before their time.¹³⁵

The *smertnyi kostium* of the Poliaki was also made of linen woven, sewn, and embroidered by hand. In keeping with the concept of an uncomplicated open shirt, no inserts were added to the tunic-style design. Women made a *kosoklinnyi sarafan* for themselves. In the 1890s, these women too considered it a grievous sin to show burial clothes to an outsider.¹³⁶ A linen *shashmura* of a *soroka* design was and still is made for burial.¹³⁷ When a young girl died in the Poliaki community, a shawl turned to the inside or a muslin veil held with braid around the head were used to cover her hair which was combed and fastened with a little tassel. During wedding ceremonies a veil was also placed over a bride's hair, partially covering her face, suggesting that in both instances the veil provided protection from evil eyes or spirits or that it served as a protective screen between the mysteries of one world and the next.¹³⁸

Novgorod. The side sections of the shirt were cut in an L-shape and very small gores were cut off the resulting angle to create a tapered panel. Maslova, 'Odezhda,' 602; Fursova, 'Rubakhi,' 200.

¹³³ Grinkova, 323; Shvetsova, 31.

¹³⁴ Grinkova, 390. Among Eastern Slavs white was the traditional colour for burial. The introduction of black garments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was considered an urban influence. Maslova, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 96–97.

¹³⁵ Grinkova, 331–332, 390; Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 246.

¹³⁶ Fursova, 'Zhenskaia odezhda,' 246; Grinkova, 390; Okhrimenko, 69; Shvetsova, 31.

¹³⁷ Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 60.

¹³⁸ Fursova, 'Golovnye ubory,' 58.

In 1999 women in Verkh-Uimon described their traditional burial garments.

Венчик вкладывали; такая вот бумага узенькая, на ней нарисованы такие кружочки и крестик. Платок, носки. На женщин одевали сарафан, а на девушек – платье. Белая чтобы одежда была. Для этого лен выткут, потом его в золе варили и на снег стелили. Потом его еще в речке мочат.

Вот шили саван. Он как военная накидка без рукавов. Положат и завернут. И вот так вот покойника завязывали, чтобы три креста было на покойнике, один на животе, и на ногах, что, дескать, боятся нечистые духи.

A narrow paper headband, a *venchik*, was placed on the deceased. Circles with a cross were drawn on it. There was a head scarf, and socks. A *sarafan* was put on a woman, a dress on a young girl. Everything had to be white. You wove the linen, bleached it in ash and laid it in the snow. Then you soaked it in the river.

Then a shroud was made. It was like a military cape without arms. The deceased was laid out and wrapped in it. And the body was wrapped so there would be three crosses on it, one on the abdomen and one on each leg, because they say that evil spirits are afraid of them.

Malan'ia Vasil'evna (1922)

6.8 Ritual Towels

Having begun her embroidering at the age of eight or nine, by the time of her marriage, a young girl might have made as many as forty *rushniki* (ritual towels).¹³⁹ They were given as presents by a bride to the groom and his family, used in the rituals of the marriage ceremony, and to decorate and safeguard the home and family. They are frequently mentioned in the *Domostroi* as part of the marriage ritual, either given as presents to the guests or used by members of the two families to offer greetings to one another.¹⁴⁰ (Plates 85–95 inclusive).

In Russia, decorated towels or kerchiefs also played a part in births and burials, as well as in the ritual remembrance of offering food and drink to deceased relatives at their graveside on holy days.¹⁴¹ A *rushnik* was hung in the window when a member of the household died, and sometimes left there for forty days along with a glass of water, during which time the deceased was expected to visit his former home each day, washing and drying himself with the towel. In some parts of northern Russia it was believed that the spirit of the dead was on the towel. Towels were used to carry a coffin

¹³⁹ Durasov, 'Narodnaia vyshivka,' 7; L. M. Rusakova, 'Arkhaischeskii motiv romba s kriuchkami v uzorakh polotenets sibirskikh krest'ianok,' in *Kul'turno-bytovye protsessy u russkikh Sibiri XVIII-nachalo XX*, ed. L. V. Ostrovskaiia (Novosibirsk, 1985), 122.

¹⁴⁰ *Domostroi*, 166, 170, 171.

¹⁴¹ Gerhard H. Weiss, *In Search of Silk: Adam Olearius' Mission to Russia and Persia* (Minneapolis,

and lower it into the grave and a towel was hung around the icon at the head of this procession, then tied around the cross at the grave.¹⁴²

Towels were also hung between windows, above a table, from a doorframe. Others were used as icon cloths and in recent times, to decorate mirrors. In the latter case the ends of a towel were sewn together along the lower selvages to better display the embroidery when it was arranged around a mirror. There were skilled embroiderers in the Bukhtarma villages who made towels to order.¹⁴³

Traditionally made of a width of white linen, towels were usually three and a half metres in length. The two decorated ends could stretch to a metre and a half. The Poliaki generally added insets of red calico to their towels, while the background of the towels of the Bukhtarma Old Believers was primarily white. Typically, the long edges of the decorated section were finished with a narrow band of red calico.¹⁴⁴ In former times in Russia, the reflective shimmer of pure white linen, of silver threads, and varying shades of red were all thought to symbolise light and hence beauty, happiness, and abundance.¹⁴⁵

The Bukhtarma women, whose embroidery is considered more archaic, favoured a mixture of woven and embroidered geometric designs in a limited palette, while the Poliaki used a greater range of colour and often added black velvet, lace, braid, and frills.¹⁴⁶ (Plates 85 and 86 cf. Plates 92, 93, 94, and 95).

The Old Believers retained archaic Slavic motifs and techniques of decoration in these towels. Even the traditional division into three distinct horizontal bands repeated identically at either end remained essentially unchanged in the twentieth century, suggesting that these towels may represent designs of a pre-Muscovite Russia when

Minnesota: Associates of the James Ford Bell Library, 1983), 16.

¹⁴² In Russian belief, the energy of the dead could be helpful or disruptive. In some parts of Russia the gates of a house were tied with a towel after a body was removed, in the belief that death would not return to the home. In some places linen was laid on washed floors and benches in the belief that when the spirits of deceased parents returned at night to their home, they cleaned themselves with a towel which had been left for them. Because of this function, it has been suggested that towels represented a symbol or even a replacement image of the dead, while they also acted as an intermediary between the living and their ancestors. On the other hand, this analysis may be too narrow, as not only the towel itself but also the designs depicted on it were significant. In this way towels not only connected the dead to the living, but also helped ensure that people, crops, and domestic animals were not harmed by the spirits of the dead. Maslova, *Narodnaia odezhda*, 86, 94–95; Rusakova, *Traditsionnoe iskusstvo*, 76–77.

¹⁴³ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 419.

¹⁴⁴ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 399–401; Rusakova, *Traditsionnoe iskusstvo*, 127.

¹⁴⁵ Durasov, 'Narodnaia vyshivka,' 22–23.

¹⁴⁶ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 425; G. A. Shcherbik, 'Vyshivka na izdeliakh russkikh krest'ianok (iz fondov Vostochno-Kazakhstanskogo oblastnogo istoriko-kraevedcheskogo muzeia), in *Obshchestvennyi byt i kul'tura russkogo naseleniia Sibiri XVIII – nachala XX v.*, ed. L. M. Rusakova (Novosibirsk, 1983), 171.

regional differences between northern and southern Russian textile design had not yet appeared.¹⁴⁷

Traditionally, the top band was worked in embroidery, the middle band was woven, and the lower band consisted of some form of open work. (Plates 88, 89, 90, and 91). The design of these sections varied endlessly in arrangement and complexity. Additional narrow decorative sections stitched in *azhurnaia vyshivka* (open work embroidery) or *viazanie kriuchkom* (crochet) were often inserted in the middle section. As well as a strip of cloth twisted to form a rick-rack effect, *pletenie* (plaiting) was also used to make narrow inserts between sections of a towel. In addition to several archaic techniques of embroidery, pattern weaving and pattern weaving with pick-up sticks were used for the upper woven band and to finish the ends of a towel.¹⁴⁸ (Plates 92, 93, 94, and 95).

Red was the predominant colour used in the embroidery of folk designs. The uppermost band was embroidered with red or red and black thread on white linen or with white or red thread on red calico.¹⁴⁹ The middle section consisted of woven designs usually in red, red and black, or blue. The *nakonechnik* (end section) was usually made from open or drawn fabric work embroidered in red and black or was sometimes done in white thread. *Pletenie na kokliushkakh* (bobbin lace) was usually used to finish the end of a *rukotert* (a less important towel), while a *rushnik* might contain a specially woven band of cloth.¹⁵⁰

The embroidery technique *pa-melkamu* used around the opening of men's and women's shirts was too fine to be used to any effect on towels. However, an enlarged and cruder variation was stitched in the same manner and used to decorate particularly the upper band of towels, creating the impression of woven rather than embroidered cloth.¹⁵¹ Embroidery *pa-vymetke*, the other archaic counted stitch work practised by Old

¹⁴⁷ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 430.

¹⁴⁸ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 399.

¹⁴⁹ The predominance of red thread on a white ground has its roots in the ancient Slavic past, providing the same strong contrast as the red ochre drawings found on bleached mammoth bones dating from the second and third centuries B. C. Zharnikova, 15.

¹⁵⁰ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 400–401; For examples of these laces see *Osnovy khudozhestvennogo remesla: vyshivka, kruzhevo, khudozhestvennoe tkachestvo, ruchnoe kovrodelie, khudozhestvennaia rospis' tkanei*, eds. V. A. Baradulin and O. V. Tankus (Moscow, 1978), 77–85; Rusakova, 'Arkhaicheskii motiv romba,' 122; idem, *Traditsionnoe iskusstvo*, 80.

¹⁵¹ This embroidery produces a reverse design on the back of the cloth. Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 406.

Believers in the Altai was also used on the decorative ends of towels where it was important to have both sides of the cloth finished, again suggesting a woven design.¹⁵²

The Bukhtarma Old Believers also used '*pialy*' (lace-frame) embroidery to finish the ends of a towel, often with a row of large or small zig zags. This embroidery was worked on a piece of cloth stretched over a frame and from which threads had been drawn. Such open work was done everywhere in Russia, but the Bukhtarma Old Believers also then embroidered the cloth with stitching *pa-vymetke*, typically worked on undrawn fabric. The stitcher then added '*iagodki*' (little berries) embroidered over the drawn threads. Since completely different types of stitching were normally used in Russia on these two different backgrounds, the unusual use of the same stitches for embroidery on both whole and drawn cloth practised by Old Believers in the Altai suggests a primitive form of stitching on open cloth.¹⁵³

Another technique used by the Bukhtarma Old Believers to create a band for the ends of their towels was not stitched but woven. '*Peredberdniki*', the weaving technique where warp ends were tied up in groups in front of the reed, made light, airy designs with *iagodki* woven directly into the linen so there was no need for additional embroidery work to create the desired effect at the end of a towel. This weaving was so like drawn thread embroidery done on a frame that the end products were hard to distinguish from one another.¹⁵⁴

Apart from these traditional, often archaic techniques, in more recent time the Old Believers made colourful fringes for the ends of towels on a special frame.¹⁵⁵ Tatting, knotting, knitting, and a variety of crochet stitches were also innovations used to finish the lace-like ends of a towel.

These same stitching and weaving techniques were used with slight variation by the Poliaki. In some cases such as the distinctive treatment of the background in the making of *iagodki* known only in certain southern regions of European Russia, the

¹⁵² This embroidery produces an identical design on the back of the cloth. Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 408.

¹⁵³ Every fourth and fifth thread was pulled from the warp and weft of the linen. Three different methods of embroidering the linen were used to create openwork designs, either with white on white or with coloured threads. These were all similar to embroidery *pa-vymetke*. Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 408–411, 427. For a description of various types of drawn thread embroidery see *Osnovy*, eds. Baradulina and Tankus, 41–53.

¹⁵⁴ Warp ends were grouped together at a specified interval and held with *naberalenki* (narrow wooden pegs). The weft was then interwoven by hand around these groups of warp ends to create the combination of little bumps and open gaps reminiscent of openwork embroidery and over which coloured threads could be added later for emphasis. Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 411–412, 428; Rusakova, *Traditsionnoe iskusstvo*, 88.

¹⁵⁵ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 414–415, 418, 425.

Bukhtarma Old Believers may have borrowed techniques from the Poliaki. However, other types of decoration, such as embroidery in *tambur* (chain stitch) or cross stitch were less evident in the Bukhtarma region, where embroiderers showed greater restraint in their textile design. The Poliaki may have learned these stitches from Cossacks who came to live with them in the Altai and with whom they had commercial ties.¹⁵⁶ (Plate 86).

The close relationship between embroidery and weaving is evident in the techniques preserved in needlework of the Old Believers. As the need arose, stitching methods were devised to imitate the double-sided designs of pattern weaving or the lace-like effect of open weaves used for towel ends. Duplicating these techniques with needle and thread produced similar impressions but required less time and energy than weaving.

In terms of their content, the designs were primarily geometric and until recent times showed no influence of naturalistic figurative imagery or product packaging designs derived from plant or animal forms. Rather, they were based on a *romb* (diamond or lozenge), a *repei* (hatch), a slanted cross, and a swastika, simple forms used in weaving and embroidery everywhere in Russia.¹⁵⁷ (Plates 85, 86, and 87). The absence of southern Russian characteristics or of the figurative imagery associated with northern Russia is indicative of the antiquity of these geometric patterns.¹⁵⁸

Although there were striking similarities between the costume and textiles of the Poliaki, Bukhtarma, and Semeiskie Old Believers, even within these closely related communities residents of different villages were identified by such details as the kind of embroidery motifs they stitched or by the patterns they wove on ritual towels.¹⁵⁹ The complexity of the swastika was indicated by the number of *kriuki* (hooks) which extended from the central cross. Each design was named according to the number of hooks. For example, a swastika with eight hooks made a *vos'mikriushnyi uzor* (eight-hook design). There might be as many as twenty-four hooks. Also fundamental to the endless variations of geometric design was the complex diamond formed by the

¹⁵⁶ Embroidery in *tambur* or *po-kirgizski* may also have been absorbed by the Poliaki embroiderers from local Kazakhs. Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 431. However, *tambur* was also used in European Russia and Poliaki embroiderers were familiar with its European name, *v petel'ku* (in a chain). Rusakova, *Traditsionnoe iskusstvo*, 87–88.

¹⁵⁷ Ethnographers surmise that the designs may have been a means of 'identifying' family groups or tribes. For example, a person buried in clothing containing the marks of his ancestors would be recognised by them in the next world. Zharnikova, 16.

¹⁵⁸ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 428.

¹⁵⁹ On similar regional variations within the overall design and symbolism of patchwork quilts made in the Amish communities of the United States see Eve Wheatcroft Granick, *The Amish Quilt* (Intercourse,

intersection of two or more pairs of crossed lines. Sometimes the lines continued and ended in hooks. In some of the more intricate designs, embroiderers gave anthropomorphic or animal names to the individual parts. A smaller diamond inside a larger one was called a *golovka* (head), while the extended lines of the larger diamond were called *rozhki* (horns) and the lower ones *pal'chiki* (fingers). Combinations of diamonds and swastikas were also used. Only in the work of the Poliaki are the hooks sometimes finished in a spiral, a borrowing from Kazakh or maybe southern Russian designs not used by other Old Believer groups.¹⁶⁰ Ethnographers believe the imagery found in these woven and embroidered designs contains symbols of fertility and the renewal of life through death.¹⁶¹ (Plates 90, 92, 94, and 95).

Conclusion

In 1898 Shvetsova noted the virtuosity of the Poliaki when it came to needlework. She emphasised the fact that the need for embroidery exists 'always and everywhere,' and that 'every embroidery, depending on what it is designated for, has a particular stitch and designs, and the observance of all these fine details is considered obligatory'. At the end of the nineteenth century some women in the Poliaki villages lived exclusively by their earnings from embroidery.¹⁶²

Thirty years later Blomkvist observed that the Bukhtarma Old Believer women were masters of their craft, beginning from an early age to embroider their *pridanoie* (*trousseau*). Their art 'attains a rare beauty and diversity and still occupies a leading place in their lives'. She also noted that their work was done in 'an old taste with ancient

Pennsylvania: Good Books, 1989), 73–74.

¹⁶⁰ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 422.

¹⁶¹ In this analysis one triangular half of the diamond stands for the masculine and one for the feminine, but when combined form the life-giving whole. Although a diamond with extended lines suggesting outstretched arms and legs was called a '*liagushka*' (frog) or '*zhaba*' (toad) by the Slavs, scholars accept that it is related to both a frog and the goddess *Rozhanitsa* (the birth-giver, creator of life). The frog was connected to ideas of fertility in many ancient cultures, including that of the Slavs, where it was seen as the begetter of all human life and a being which had been and could become man. In some parts of Russia more realistic representations of frogs were embroidered on clothing and towels. Similarly, in the gold embroidery of women's head-dresses, a stylised anthropomorphic figure clearly depicts *Rozhanitsa* giving birth. This goddess is also sometimes depicted with horns or antlers. Also closely associated with thunder and rain, the frog allies itself to women who are the water element and to the fertility of the land. When these images are combined in intricate bands of geometric pattern they are interpreted as representing the cosmos as a whole. Barber, *Work*, 157; Rusakova, 'Uzory,' 233; idem, 'Arkhaiskii motiv romba,' 137; idem, *Traditsionnoe iskusstvo*, 81, 90–91, 94–95; Zharnikova, 13–14. On stylised goddess motifs, their meaning, and their enduring character in Slavic folk weaving and embroidery see Kelly, 47–61. (Plate 85).

¹⁶² Shvetsova, 75–76.

traditional designs and techniques and would be of the greatest rarity in the European part of the Soviet Union'.¹⁶³

Within the patterns of textiles, an ideal world could be represented, symbolising the desire for certain events to happen, or for certain bonds to be maintained. Certain textiles were thought to protect the home, the farmyard, the village, the living, and the dead. They were needed to mark solemn rituals such as marriage and burial. Others were needed for prayer. (Plates 96 and 97). In the act of creating a ritual cloth with its elaborate embroidery or weaving, a woman created the world around her as well as the symbols of a wider world and spiritual order. Although specific meanings may have been lost, Old Believers used textiles and clothing as visual symbols and reminders of what they believed to be the correct form of Orthodoxy. These textiles were complex. Even when the availability of purchased cloth could have reduced their labours, Old Believers in the Altai continued to weave their own fabric. If a woman did not apply herself to learning these crafts, she could not express the religious discipline embodied in their making and her family would not be dressed *po-nashemu*.

¹⁶³ Blomkvist, 'Iskusstvo,' 398.

CONCLUSION

Якоже предаше святыя отцы.

According to the traditions of our Holy Fathers...¹

As set forth in the Introduction, the aim of this dissertation is to shed light on the relationship between textiles and Old Belief and to find in this relationship an explanation for the contribution of Old Believer families such as the Butikovs to the textile industry in Russia.

Old Believers, Schismatics, Old Ritualists, Old Faithful, Christians, Russians, Orthodox, Old Dressers – so many labels for one group of people. In background, Old Believers are no different to other Russians. Nor were they better weavers, nor more religious than other Russians. However, persecuted and rejected by the rest of Russian society, for the most part they had to practise their religious rites in secret. This reality moulded their society, concentrated their commitment to their community, and inspired the creation of a material culture which expressed their religious identity. From the time of the *raskol* it was preordained that Old Believers would establish sanctuaries where they could live in the way of their fathers

As Old Believers sought refuge from the Russian state and church they believed were corrupt, they looked for salvation in tradition. They abided by the words of Maksim Grek and the *Stoglav* fathers who advised that in the correct practice of Orthodoxy, Russians must dress in a manner which identified them as Russian Christians. The fact that for many years Old Believers had to pay to dress in this way is indicative of the role textiles played in their lives.

In the immediacy of its message, dress is a powerful symbol of social status. In Russia, Peter the Great used the psychological power of this symbol to change the attitude of Russians to their status in a political and social context. When Old Believers refused to bend to his command to shave their beards and dress in a European fashion, they were forced to pay an extra tax. However, they were also forced to dress in the 'old way' so they would be recognisable as Old Believers who had to pay this tax or who, as in the case of Vetka merchants in the eighteenth century, were excluded by their illegal status from participating in commercial activities.

¹ *Stoglav*, 103.

The attachment of Old Believers themselves to these symbolic forms, still in evidence at the end of the twentieth century in communities I have visited in the Altai and Lithuania, leads directly back to the conflicts which created the *raskol*. In the mid-seventeenth century, as the Zealots of Piety and their followers began a campaign for religious renewal in Russia, they were confronted by the winds of change coming from Western Europe and the secular politics of their own leaders. Their defensive line against innovation they viewed as heretical was to shelter in a religious culture governed by familiar tradition. For the schismatics who rejected Western influences as anti-Christian, traditional Russian clothing and textiles were material symbols of the ancient piety which future generations of Old Believers continued to recreate.

It is my contention that the fabric of Old Believer society formed by these persecuted traditionalists at the end of the seventeenth century contributed to the ability of Old Believers to maintain, to the last detail, ritual forms such as dress. In larger communities such as Vyg, Vetka, or the Moscow Cemeteries the wealth and security acquired through organisation, industriousness, financial prudence, and mutual support allowed members of the community time to maintain and develop the crafts and artistry which underpinned the richness of Old Believer culture. In many cases this need for detail led to expertise and expertise led to commerce. The money acquired from commercial enterprise brought increased safety to the community and increased its numbers.

In the order and discipline of Old Believer society with its emphasis on conformity, the community supported the practice of textile crafts by valuing them highly. Production of complex clothing and other textile forms requires skill and is time-consuming. It is also an indication of the quality of their lives, that Old Believers in the Altai as elsewhere had time to devote to this totemic and material expression of their religious belief. Since Old Believers valued iconographic forms not only for ritual purposes but also to reinforce community loyalty, religious devotion was also measured by the discipline displayed in the creation of these forms.

In addition, while the structure of Old Believer society supported the creation of such symbols, in Kerzhenets, Vyg, Vetka, and the Altai Mountains it also equipped its adherents for successful entrepreneurial enterprise in any industry. The prevalence of textile manufacturing reflects the predominant role it played in family life. In every home there was a loom. In every home young girls learned to spin and weave. Many

Russians were expert weavers and embroiderers, but in the homes of Old Believers these crafts had added religious meaning.

As evident in the Kerzhenets communities in the nineteenth century, not only were specific garments and religious cloths needed for the correct observances of Old Belief, homes also had to be decorated and furnished to a high standard, reflecting the cleanliness and order Old Believers saw as pleasing to God. This is also evident in the Altai communities where every woman learned to weave and embroider ritual towels, icon cloths, patterned tablecloths, decorated bed linens, rugs, and floor matting. Girls learned to spin and weave as their mothers and grandmothers had done, so the threads of tradition would not be lost.

In the seventeenth century the weaving tradition in Russia was so highly valued that members of the weaving community had exceptional privileges. Allowed to travel and trade, they often became wealthy merchants. Since at least some Old Believers were known members of these communities, the weaving skills and community traditions familiar to them found their way into the wider community of Old Belief after the *raskol*.

At the end of the eighteenth century, while weavers such as the Butikov family were honing their shawl-making skills on domestic looms outside Moscow, the Poliaki, Bukhtarma and Uimon Old Believers were assembling their domestic looms in the Altai Mountains. A comparison of the techniques of spinning and weaving practised in the crown weaving communities and those used by Old Believers in the Altai in the twentieth century indicates that the Old Believer weavers would have been equally at home in either the Moscow or Iaroslavl' weaving centres.

Analysis of the organised and well-developed system of cloth production carried on in the crown weaving centres also shows a marked similarity to the organisation and administration of Old Believer enterprises such as the Butikov Mills associated with the Rogozhskoe and Preobrazhenskoe Communities.

The weaving skills many Old Believers maintained to a high standard for religious reasons provided them with the opportunity to establish weaving workshops and factories. Their organisational skills and resourcefulness allowed them to run profitable textile mills, thus increasing the community's revenue and the population of Old Belief. While they may have paid the double capitation tax for wearing beards and dressing in the 'old way', as they joined the Guchkov enterprise, members of the Butikov family benefited from their connection to Old Belief. In turn, the wider

community of Old Belief, including its geographically distant adherents, benefited from their skills. Despite their geographic separateness, these communities remain connected by their Old Belief.

Priests known to the Butikovs and other members of the Belokrinitsa concord may have visited Old Believers in the Altai, bringing icons or other devotional symbols with them. They may have presided over the opening of new prayer houses in the Siberian villages, keeping the traditional Old Believer network alive. The contacts Old Believers maintained all across European Russia, Poland, the Urals, and Siberia were based on the understanding of a shared religious experience, and the reach of the Old Believer network provided an economic advantage for schismatics as well as a sanctuary for the practice of pre-Nikonian Orthodoxy. These contacts were supported by the commerce of Old Belief and in particular by the textiles of Old Belief.

APPENDIX A

Льноводство, прядение, ткачество в селе Бобровка Восточно-Казахстанской области. I/

Сажали лён фсяво чаши нь-цъляны, ф-свежым мести.

Лён дёргам горстью. Ф-снапти вяжым. Горь набирёш и брасаиш.

Снапти вешьют на жэртъ галофкъм вниё. Пъ-аднаму снапкы развара-
чиваиш и надвае вешаиш на-жэртъ. Канаплё два рас бярут, перва
поеконь бярут, патом канаплё бярут, када атажнуцца. Цосконь,
замашти в-июли бярут, адно канаплё спент да-сентября.

Тут жа на-льнищи малотят, палкам малотят, цапом малотят.

Стукаиш, биз ума эделаишси, лён абмалотицца, мяконький
эделаицца, как пустышешти.

Посли этава слали яво на-пакоси, к балотам ближе, там рбён
падают, а в-засуху вапще на-балота слали, слали большы ни мани-
вали, машёный нихарошый выхадил, зато и ни машивали. Слали на-лу-
га, в балоты, иде сырыи мяста.

А некатарыи мбшат ф-ставу мельнишным, в мошальным ставу.
Весь мир сеил. Цлатоу панааставят, фсе мощут. Озярина, никуда ва-
да из няво. Есть стелют на-прикатку, на-паласы. Жэртъ вазьмут, ло-
паты ахамутают, прикатывають траву и на-прикатку стелют. Ляжыт он
так месеца пьлтара-два. Патом падымать яво, как уляжыт. Прятку
вазьмёш для спробы, уляжал - так падымать, ни уляжал - так цуё
паляжыт.

Если ни-уляжал - прятка красная, уляжал - так белыя, атскака-

I/Данный рассказ представляет собой реконструкцию, составленную на основе рассказов женщин старшего поколения, жителей села Бобровки.

Записи произведены в течение 1953 -1964 года проф. Маёровой К.В. /Москва/и
1996г. Даулинг К. /Дублин/.

До сих пор все респондентки помнят, как они пряли и ткали, у многих еще
хранятся на чердаках /падызбенках/ ткацкие станки, которые еще в 1953-
1964 гг. стояли в домах, где на них ткали.

Для передачи звучания говора используем самую упрощенную транскрипцию.

ваит ат-былошти харашо, ат кастре, бляетит ат-солныкё.

Спытак вазьмёш- ежли вяжалый, кастра ня дёржыцца. Вяжал- бы- ваит он мяхкай. Прятка к сябе, кастра к сябе, кастры мала.

Сняли, ф-снапы бальшыи связали и увязли мять. На-коню падыжжуют и увозят дамой.

В баню насóдим лён, полную насóдим, вязанык па-пяць, паттапливаим, штобы харашо в мялти мять, а то пагрызи-ка на-ей.

Мнём кола бани. Скажыш: "Рабы, едди лён мять ка-мне айдати".

Мялка такая слажена с-дерива, в-ей дырка, ношти, зат на-задници стаит шётя, кацши мнут, била, какой бьёш; рушка дирвянная с-этава жа лесу, ана сквазная, оэтай-жясины. Мялка будит паболи мутру, фсятых наладят, Кто зря ни-сладит.

Мять зачнут, былка фся самнёцца ф-кастру. Астаёцца адна прыдашка,

Патом яму /льну/ тряпанья. Тряпали, бывала да-палноши. Тряпалкай этай апеть яво потчуиш. Атрепы фсе атрепюцца, абабьёцца фсе худо-я.

Тяперь абдирать яво на-гребинь. Посли гребня идут абдирти.

Сядиш на-яво и начнёш часать, абдирти валяцца, лён фсе мякшы и мякшы делаиць.

Посли гребня шеткый яво чёшыш. Шетка слажена: са свиньи шятина и воскым заливаицца, штоб пашыри была. Чёшут ей, тяперь изгрёбы па-валились,

Када лён абрабатывають, делят яво на-дялянти. Пятнаццять дя-лянак- пал кужля, триццать дялянак - кужель.

Кужли кладём в мужетии штаны, штобы лён радилси -варажба та-

Как управим афсем, так нашинаем прясь из-атреп или изгре- кужлем прядё;

Напрядёш за-зиму палумоткаф. Сидим, прядём, фсюжысь он сгубил, этат лён.

На палавити из атреп напрядали, абдирти и изгрёбы на-штаны, да на-станки, пачисы уш палучшы, а кужыль самый харошый, тонна из яво напрядали.

Полумотти ф-пешти сталкаим мокрый, аны там преют день. Патом апеть типятком заливаим, штобы аттислайз-их эта сырось.

Патом начинаем полумотти мыть, в залы их назолим, штобы аны намякшы стали, патом в катэи памокнут день и на решьку вязём. Полумотти там пылаекаим, калотим.

Е-решьти привязём и на-вулицу вытидываим мёрзнуть. Патом белыи аны будут и мяхтии. Патом патеушиваим их.

"Вить падумать только - Великай пос падайдёт, а мы фее яще белим яво, фее таскаимси с-имя"

Вымирзнет пряжа, тяперь яё развивать. Кажный палумотак на-матавила матаим, матавила длиной шееь чатвяртей. Матаиш и шшитаиш: чисменка - три нитошти на-матавилы, триццать чисменак - палупаеак, еемь палупаекоф - палумотак. На халетину нада пять палумоткаф.

Таперь развивать будим на-варобы. Варобы сами шыпка бегает. С варобы фее сматаим на-вьюшку.

/ В зависимости от узора , от того на екольких проножках будут ткать определяется количество вьюшек, некоторые ематывают пряжу: на четыре проножки - четыре вьюшки, на две проножки - две вьюшки, На екатерть требовалось восемь вьюшек./

Таперь пайдем снавать на-снавалки. Снуём в-избы, а есь на-улицы снуют. Снуём тонинька.

Паеля сымаим са-снавалак.

Таперь можна красна сабирать и навивать на-калоду.

Красна у-нае у-кажных еваи. Навьём уснову на-калоду и зачнём ткать. Па-палустенку за-динь ткёш,, а хто сидит и па -стины саткёт, а толетыи палавити и па- две етяны.

Пириткалаеь я , красна разбираю и кладу на падызбенку в еухим мести, штоп ни мокрый былі. А холс мачу и вешаю, пуеь вымярзаит, кажыный день мацу в шелоку и вешаю. С-паста фее мацу.

Вяена придёт, таперика я иду на-берик, раскладаю агонь, шюгунти бальшыи ставлю, туды залы, я камни калёные и холс туда, он типит.

Бывало напьюш там. На-утро паласкать. Патом сушу на-агароди, настялю пад-адно, патомака на бруе тяну, патом каталкай катаю, патом в ящык складар. Ну таперь фсе - управила холе.

Ткали фсе, ткали памногу, узорам ткали и просто жкали.

Из этава рубахи ткали, станки, палавити, скатерти делали, тавару веть ни-было. Палатно выбеливали, как зонтьвае было.

Кажная женшына пряла и ткала, кажная на-сваих краснах ткала.

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