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Molokans in the Amur Region

At a time when national and cultural processes are undergoing revitalization in Russia—as expressed, in particular, in a striving to revive the national culture, traditional moral foundations, and spiritual values—it is essential to factor in the experiences, both positive and negative, of the Russians and their historico-ethnographical and ethno-denominational groups. One such group was the Molokans, a subset of the Spiritual Christian sect in Russia.

Molokanism took shape as a sect at the very heart of Christianity in Tambov province during the eighteenth century, subsequently spreading through certain areas of Russia (Voronezh, Saratov, Samara, Riazan, Vladimir, and Astrakhan provinces, the Transcaucasus, etc.) and to Canada, the United States, Syria, Iran, and Mexico. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, in response to persecution from the official Church and the Orthodox authorities, the Molokans began to resettle in eastern areas of Russia (Siberia and the Far East).

The first Molokans to arrive in the Amur region in 1859 were Jumpers [*pryguny*]. These were state peasants who had been exiled to the Amur from Taurida province as punishment for their adherence to Molokanism.¹ All of them (thirty-six men, women, and children) belonged to

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the well-to-do families of Kirei Popov and Matvei Lepekhn,² who in the summer of 1859 founded the village of Novo-Astrakhanovka³ (later called Astrakhanovka) by the Zeia River not far from Blagoveshchensk. Little by little, other Dukhobors and Molokans came to join this first Molokan community, a move facilitated by the abolition of serfdom. The Regulations [Pravila] of 26 March 1861, which granted settlers a raft of substantial benefits (including a land allotment of 100 *desiatiny* [1 *desiatina* = 2.7 acres] per family, the opportunity to purchase freehold land for 3 rubles per *desiatina*, and exemption from military service for ten years and from land-use taxes for twenty years), significantly facilitated the move to eastern areas of Russia.

These privileges sat well with both Molokan peasants and the Molokan petty bourgeoisie [*meshchane*], which had suffered not only religious persecution but also economic harassment. They motivated the Molokans of Samara, Saratov, Tambov, and Astrakhan provinces, the areas with the largest Molokan populations, to petition for permission to settle by the Amur.⁴ By this means, twenty-five Molokan families (the Saiapins, Bolotins, Kositsyns, Lankins, Semerovs, Leshtaevs, Pivovars, Korotaevs, Kondrashovs, Efremovs, Tulupovs, Sychevs, and others—230 men, women, and children in all) found their way to the area in 1865–66.⁵ These former serfs, who were recategorized as state peasants after their relocation to Amur oblast, were “Sunday Molokans”* from the village of Tiagloe Ozero (Nikolaevskii district, Samara province), most of whom became well-known entrepreneurs once they had settled in the Amur region, where they founded several new Molokan settlements, including Samarskoe.⁶ Official data for Amur oblast indicate that in the spring of 1868, 1,008 Molokans of both sexes⁷ were living there, in the village of Sergeevskaia by the Amur, in the village of Astrakhanskaia on the right bank of the Zeia River, and in the city of Blagoveshchensk.⁸

Official statistics significantly undercounted the number of Molokans in Amur oblast, even as that number grew steadily, reaching 28,340 in the early twentieth century.⁹ At the end of the nineteenth century, Molokans lived in discrete settlements in several townships [*volosti*]¹⁰—notably, thirty-six families in the village of Beloiarovo (Krasnoiarsk township) and sixty in the village of Andreevka (Ivanovka township). But most were found in Gil’chin township—for example, sixty families in the

**Molokane-voskresniki*, because they celebrated the Sabbath on Sunday rather than Saturday.—Ed.

village of Novo-Aleksandrovka, fifteen in Verkhonii Urut, and five in the recently settled Lipovka. The Molokan families in several villages of that township—159 in Tambovka, 100 in Gil'chin, 97 in Zharikovka, 76 in Tolstovka, and 51 in Chuevka—were listed in the official statistics as Molokan-Baptists.¹⁰ In addition, quite a few of Blagoveshchenk's petty-bourgeois Molokan families with farming and commercial interests had settled on numerous individual holdings [*zaimki*] near Blagoveshchensk or not far from it, in Ivanovka and Gil'chin townships. Most such holdings were in Gil'chin township and shared their names with their owners. There was Neverovskaia [presumably named for a Neverov family—Trans.], as well as the lands of Ivan Leshtaev, Vikul Metelkin, Nikita Iakovlev, Semen Zharikov, Epifan Lankin, Semen Kositsyn, Zakhar Boblikov, Vasilii Metelkin, Filipp Semerov, Anton Semerov, Trifon Bolotin, Prokhor Bolotin, Ivan Zharikov, the Saiapin, Kositsyn, and Lankin brothers, and others.¹¹

The first Molokan settlers were well-to-do peasants. For example, the Lepekhins and Popovs, founders of Astrakhanovka, received more than 5,700 rubles for the property they left behind, which was sold at auction. Additionally, when they passed through Irkutsk on their way to the Amur, the administration there granted them an additional 100 silver rubles to set up housekeeping.¹² All twenty-five Molokan families in the village of Tiagloe Ozero (Samara province) had the wherewithal to move to the Amur region in the 1860s. The opportunity to own and work vast tracts of land coupled with the impossibility of finding additional field hands in a region with a low population, however, forced the Molokans to seek workers from outside. Prosperous Molokan notables loaned money to their impoverished coreligionists so that they could move to the Amur region and settle there.

The way to the Amur region, through the harsh expanses of Siberia, was no easy journey. Mikhail Sushilin of the village of Tambovka (Tambovskii district, Amur oblast), for example, recalled how Pelageia Emel'ianovna Sushilina, his paternal grandmother and a locally famous healer, spent three years traveling on horseback with her family in the 1880s, interrupting their journey to work and earn a little money, then continuing on. Sheer zealotry, the determination born of religious fanaticism, helped overcome the difficulties. Loans from wealthy coreligionists were either paid off or worked off.¹³ A.V. Kirillov, a famous public figure and expert on Amur oblast, offers this description of the assistance provided to insolvent Molokan settlers: "Affluent settlers, because they

wanted either to start off on a sound financial footing as soon as they reached the Amur or to turn a profit, would buy in Tomsk more horses than they needed for transportation and, to reduce the burden of caring for them en route, hand them off to settlers who had no horses, for their personal use and, of course, free of charge. The one condition was that they would feed and care for them.”¹⁴ In fact, the Molokans introduced Tomsk horses to the environs of Blagoveshchensk and especially to the area around the Gil’chin River. The famous agronomist N. Kriukov attests that horses bought by rich Molokans in Tomsk for 30 rubles each would fetch 150–200 rubles in Blagoveshchensk.¹⁵

Molokans also hired Orthodox settlers to work their fields. Although financially distressed after their long journey, the Orthodox did not routinely receive any help from their pastors. By contrast, Molokan preachers and affluent peasants were diligent in their visits to the locations where the new Amur settlers congregated—the steamers, the wharves, and the barracks for recent arrivals. Driven by destitution and the need to feed their families, new Orthodox settlers placed themselves at the service of Molokan masters—a fact that attracted the attention of church leaders. A Kamchatka Diocese report¹⁶ for 1886 stated that Orthodox settlers from Chernigov, Poltava, and Tambov provinces “arrive at the Amur in extreme indigence and poverty, which is why in the early days of their life [there] they are in need of material assistance, which they receive from the Molokans—usually from those who previously lived in the same parts and even the same village, especially such as hail from Tambov province.”¹⁷ The report also noted the Tambov settlers’ complete ignorance of the Orthodox canons, which may well have expressed itself only relative to the veneration of icons. Yet they were “quite familiar with Molokan concepts, laws, and customs, wherefor their conversion here to Molokanism comes about almost imperceptibly.”¹⁸ The Molokans themselves were apprehensive about openly “seducing” the Orthodox, because both administrations—secular and especially ecclesiastical—were on the lookout for that.

To prevent this, the diocese employed a full-time “antischismatic” proselytizer whose duties included delivering the appropriate sermons and distributing special-purpose literature.

Even so, a number of Orthodox converted to Molokanism, although the Church did all it could to suppress or downplay the information.¹⁹ It also took a dim view of Molokans hiring needy Orthodox. Most of the hires were adolescent girls whose parents sent them out to work as nannies (one diocesan report mentions a peasant in the village of Ivanovka who

handed his daughter over to a Molokan man for a ruble), but numerous adults were also among them.²⁰

At one time, Molokans had been forbidden to have Orthodox servants. On 3 May 1883, however, the State Council, swayed by a long series of appeals from Orthodox petitioners, granted schismatics certain civil rights,²¹ permitted them to meet their spiritual needs, and abolished the article of the law that had prohibited them from employing Orthodox servants.²²

Sometimes Molokans took and raised poor Orthodox children²³ and orphans without relatives.²⁴

Secular officials—and even more the ecclesiastical power structure, which feared losing its flock—tended to regard everything that Molokans did—the care of orphans, employment for settlers who had been beggared by the journey, sizable loans and other forms of outreach to the needy, farming, trade, and all the rest—one-dimensionally, solely as the result of the Molokans' desire to make all others economically dependent on them.

This is not to say that all Molokans were well-to-do. But the Amur Molokans included a good number of rich and middle-income households—far more, at any rate, than among the Molokans of European Russia. Unquestionably, no small role in this process was played by the economic privileges and other incentives offered by the government to those willing to settle the Far East. But the everyday productivity, the traditions of work, the entrepreneurial spirit, and even the Molokanism of the proprietor rested on quite different foundations.

It is well known that any ethnic group, including the Russian ethnic group to which the Molokans belonged, has a distinctive style of economic activity and daily life. For Russia, as for most European countries, Christianity had a decisive influence in molding traditions, including those that govern business. Without a doubt, a common Christian work ethic existed alongside a range of variants that characterized the three basic Christian creeds (Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism) and the numerous Christian sects that had been engendered by “heresy” and ran counter to the chief Christian confessions. One such sect was the Spiritual Christians and its Molokan subset. Although Orthodoxy was historically associated with peasant agricultural life and an agrarian economy, the Molokans chose a path analogous to that of Protestantism, focusing instead on “rational” economic pursuits that emphasized industrial and monetary capitalism. The Spiritual Christians' economic

ethic, which was founded on the doctrine of faith that they had originated, “permitted them to organize the work they did and the everyday lives they led so that their standard of living was always far higher than that of their Orthodox neighbors.”²⁵

The Christian value system, work ethic, and, to a certain extent, type of economic activity grew out of teachings about God, the Church, the sacraments, the assurance of salvation, and so on. The doctrine of salvation held a particular significance for the work ethic. The understanding of work as a means of salvation and moral self-development, as a duty divinely imposed on humanity at the Creation, became the basis of various Christian communities’ economic understanding. The Molokans rejected all outward manifestations of Christianity—the Church, the church hierarchy, fasting, icons, the rules of worship, and so on—and relied entirely on the Holy Scriptures for their dogma. All their religious and philosophical views were built on this foundation, but they based their knowledge of God not on inner revelation but on rationality and the development of the human principle. Independent study of the Bible by every Molokan facilitated not only a dramatic rise in literacy but also the establishment of an independent cast of mind. The Molokans had almost 100 percent literacy, which distinguished them from other sects. Molokans regarded the pursuit of knowledge as a crucial virtue, which helped them with the formulation of an innovation that distinguished them from Orthodoxy and the other sects: the introduction of rationality into economic activity, which then created the psychological groundwork for and the drive toward bourgeois entrepreneurial activity and extensive agricultural mechanization. Under different historical conditions, they could well have played a positive role in the development of the Russian economy: it is no coincidence that the Amur Molokans had extensive ties with the Russian reformer Petr Arkad’evich Stolypin.²⁶

Molokanism was able to fashion a worldview that met the needs of the new stage of society’s socioeconomic development and expressed the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, the prosperous peasantry, the rural and urban bourgeoisie, and other social strata that represented the new bourgeois forms of economic management. The Molokans, with their greater educational potential, were easily capable of economically outstripping Orthodox rustics. Wherever it fell to them to live (administrative and ecclesiastical persecution having pushed them to the periphery of the Russian empire), they set up large business enterprises using the latest in agricultural technology and methods and even extended a monopoly

over several sectors of the economy. So, we are told by a St. Petersburg newspaper from 1910 that “the Molokans of the Amur region have taken the helm in all sectors of the area’s economic and social life, organizing and managing steamship companies, the timber trade, flour-milling and cheese-making enterprises, and credit agencies.”²⁷ Farming, which was the main employment and underpinned the existence of the entire Molokan rural population, also underwent significant development. It was not uncommon for one proprietor to have between 40 and 200 *desiatiny* of land under cultivation.²⁸ With their background in the traditionally agricultural Tambov and Voronezh provinces, many Molokans, on arrival in the Amur region, snatched up the best lands in fertile Gil’ chin township and in certain other grain-growing areas. Single Molokan farming enterprises could own up to 500 *desiatiny* of land in excellent locations. In 1895, 23,401 of the 38,444 *desiatiny* of land under private ownership in Amur oblast belonged to Molokans.²⁹

It was the Molokan doctrine’s religious and moral endorsement of the “rational,” capitalist approach to economic management, and the unfettering of individualism and personal initiative on the strength of the particular psychological preconditions thus created, that allowed the Molokans to flourish economically and fed their entrepreneurialism. In endorsing all forms of work, including those that increased wealth, Molokanism also endorsed wealth itself, considering it a test that imposes certain moral obligations on the owner of said wealth. These obligations “consisted, first and foremost, in charitable acts, in the mitigation of inevitable social tensions, and in the use of capital to benefit one’s brothers in Christ.”³⁰

The Molokans’ economic success was thus in many respects predetermined by their religious views, their understanding of the world, and their definition of their place in life. This awareness aids understanding in many aspects of the economic and everyday tenor of life in Molokan communities.

The ethnographic expedition that we mounted to the once archetypally Molokan Tambovskii district (formerly Gil’ chin township) of Amur oblast in the fall of 1994 collected supplementary material on the traditional lifeways of the Molokans that enabled a clearer light to be shed on the distinctive features of life and work among ethnic Russians of the Far East in the latter half of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.

Without a doubt, the daily life generated by ancient traditions of peasant farming in European Russia underwent certain changes in response to

the socioeconomic and natural conditions of the Far East—in the system of land use, crop structure, auxiliary occupations, techniques of economic management, and several other components of economic life.

The main grain crops were wheat, oats, buckwheat, and millet. Virtually no winter crops were sown, however, because the rate of winterkill in the Amur region was so high. In addition to grains, the fields carried potatoes, melons, and watermelons. Cabbage, beets, carrots, onions, turnips, and other vegetables were set out in the house garden. Industrial crops—flax and hemp—were sown in small quantities, mostly to make burlap, waxed thread, and oil. Vegetable oil was also produced from sunflower seeds. Flax and hemp were hardly ever used as raw materials to make clothing, since the peasants found it more profitable and cheaper to buy factory cloth, imported sometimes from Russia but more often from China.

The Molokans' extensive use of farming technology did not end all traditional farming techniques. Along with plows, mowers, reapers and binders, and other technical innovations manufactured by various companies, both domestic and foreign, hand sickles and scythes were also extensively used. Purchases of agricultural technology arrived both via Russia and from the Russian Pacific coast, via Vladivostok and Nikolaevsk. Molokans made quite frequent business trips to America to acquire farm machinery, which was delivered to the mouth of the Amur River and taken from there on river steamers and barges to Blagoveshchensk.

Instead of being dried under cover, harvested grain was left standing in stocks of sheaves tied together with sedge grass. On waterlogged soil, the grain was harvested with sickles rather than with mechanical reapers. The stocks stood in the fields through August and September, and in early November they were brought to the farmyard, where they were stacked and threshed. The threshing was a communal effort, performed at one neighbor's house after another. The peasant tradition of mutual assistance, which was also employed in other areas of life, enjoyed great longevity among the Molokans. The equipment normally used for threshing was horse-operated: four horses were hitched to long wooden sweep-arms and driven around in one direction by a man wielding a long whip who stood in the center of the circle. If eight horses were used, the threshing was done out in the field, and the sheaves were brought to a prearranged place by cart. Steam-operated threshers came later; they were mostly of American manufacture and were delivered up the Amur from the coast.

The threshed grain was divided into seed grain, food, livestock fodder, and grain for sale. The last was transported to the grain elevator in Blagoveshchensk and sold at the market there. The proceeds were used to buy wood, building materials, and various farming and household supplies. Home-churned butter, domestically raised meat, and wild game were also sold in Blagoveshchensk.

Animal husbandry was second to agriculture as the mainstay of Molokan farmers. Large, undivided families owned a sizable collection of animals: from six to ten horses; as many sheep, or more; four or five cows; and some thirty domesticated fowl (chickens, geese, and ducks). The more livestock they owned, the better, which is why the farmyards were always so large. Only a few families raised pigs, because the eating of pork was prohibited on religious grounds, so pigs were raised only for sale to the Orthodox. Hunters went out mostly after wild goats, ducks, and geese, stalking the goats at salt licks and during their seasonal migrations, during which hundreds were savagely killed. Wild birds were also hunted in large numbers, also especially during their annual passage.

Of note among the auxiliary occupations were livery, freightage to the gold fields and the delivery of cowberries and sturgeon [locally known as “red fish”—Trans.] from the lower reaches of the Amur. But most of the side occupations—such as hand-churning cow’s milk into butter and, quite often, hand-pressing oil from flaxseed, hempseed, and sunflower seeds—were home-based, even though public churns and mills were available.

Although there was a leatherworks in Tambovka, where skins were tanned and sewn into boots, several proprietors tanned their own skins from domestic and wild animals, including goats, cows, dogs, and sheep, some of which they used to make clothing and footwear for domestic use. For example, peasants made their own sheepskin or fur coats, and the women knitted socks, scarves, shawls, and mittens out of wool. Itinerant workers traveled from village to village, crafting felt boots out of the owner’s wool for him and his family. Almost every family made, from its own leather, the low-heeled high-topped boots called *ichigi*.

Knitting yarn was home-spun. Clothing was made by hand or on Singer sewing machines and hardly ever from home-woven cloth. In the early twentieth century, as mentioned above, undergarments were made sometimes out of factory cloth from Russia but more often from fabrics imported from China. Some Molokans—such as Ivan Ermakov of Tambovka—were famous for their skill in tailoring and tanning.

The men's traditional everyday outfits included loose trousers of dark-colored factory fabric (known as "devil skin"), a shirt belted with a red sash, and an ungathered shirt with a standing collar that opened in the middle or to the side.³¹ The women wore long skirts, usually black; fitted, long-sleeved blouses; and pinafores. The prevalent form of winter outerwear for both women and men was a short sheepskin coat, while well-to-do peasants wore black fur coats. The soles of their everyday footwear were made of thicker bull leather and the welt attaching sole to upper of softer calf or cow leather.

Since for a long time most rural Molokans lived in large extended families, their homes were sturdy log houses. At the end of the nineteenth century, the walls, ceilings, floors, and high doorframes were painted with oil-based paint, especially in prosperous households. Previously no interior paint had been used, and no less than twice a year the women would wash the walls and ceilings with water, scrubbing them with a brush. The floors were washed weekly. In some localities, walls were plastered and whitewashed. Molokan houses and garments were always spick and span. There was a place for everything, as eyewitnesses attest, for the habits of "German cleanliness" were firmly rooted here. The interiors were a joy to behold, with their whitewashed walls, clean floors, and general orderliness.³²

The houses had one large room and often several small chambers for the married couples (the married sons' families) or at least a separate chamber for the head of household and his wife. In addition to its utilitarian purpose, that room was also used for Bible studies and for the instruction and admonition of family members.³³

The home was heated by a traditional "Russian" stove, which faced the entrance to the living quarters. The stove and stovepipes were of clay or fired brick. Many peasants in Tambov township used bricks from a Chinese farmstead in Kositsino, which had its own small brickworks. The stoves were made by master craftsmen, both Russian and Chinese, who traveled from village to village plying their trade.

To bake bread, the stove was fired with straw, dried sedge grass, or wood kindling. By the early twentieth century, though, Tambov township had been virtually clear-cut and there was little firewood. So they burned tree roots, which were still being turned up by plows long after the forests had been destroyed. Some people imported firewood from China and burned it only on holidays.

Sedge grass was preferred over straw, because it burned longer. It

was cut with sickles, dried, and kept for future use. The heat for stove-top cooking was provided by pressed dung bricks, which were made in summer by tamping dung mixed with straw and chaff into special three-sided, wooden molds. The still-damp bricks were removed from the molds, dried, and stacked under a specially constructed awning, where the breeze would dry them thoroughly. Several dung bricks would be needed to cook a meal.

An invariable attribute of Molokan home life was a brightly polished samovar. All midday meals with invited guests, all refreshments served, and often prayers too, ended with tea. On rest days, when prayers were held in someone's home, there was a lot of singing and a lot of tea was drunk, as much as to twelve glasses per person. If tea was the Molokans' favorite beverage, the favorite traditional dish was "Molokan" noodles, which were made, like dumplings in Siberia, before they were needed—in October, November, and December, when the weather was cold. The recipe usually called for fifty or a hundred eggs mixed with a half liter or full liter of water that had been boiled and allowed to cool. Salt was added to taste, then flour to make a very stiff dough, which was rolled out with a large rolling pin into very thin circles, both sides of which were slightly dried on the stove top. Then two or three of the circles were rolled up together and finely sliced. After being left out on a table to dry overnight, the noodles were sprinkled into a barrel, to prevent them from disintegrating in the open air. When there was a guest in the home, meat (usually goose or duck) was quickly boiled and noodles were added. Everyday food was the usual beetroot and other soups, kasha, mashed potatoes, braised meat, and ground-meat patties.

The Molokans did not keep any of the fasts, but they did celebrate Christmas and Easter. On Saturdays, they worked only until the midday meal and spent the rest of the day in the bathhouse and at prayer. They did not work on Sundays either.

The Molokans, like other peasant societies, long observed a gender-based division of labor. The women fed the livestock, milked the cows, kept the home clean, did the laundry, cooked the meals, kept the grain storage neat, cultivated the kitchen garden, did the sewing and knitting, cared for the children, and so on. The men's wide range of duties included plowing, haymowing, taking up the grain sheaves, tending the livestock, and many other farming tasks. Children were given their own daily chores at an early age. For instance, Mikhail Sushilin of Tambovka remembered how from the age of seven or eight, he was sent out every

year with other children and adolescents to spend all summer in the fields, where they lived in a specially constructed hut. Several scholars have noted that Molokan children were not permitted to romp about or to play with toys, it being thought that this would encourage laziness and indolence in them.³⁴ It was also compulsory to teach children to read, at home, from the Bible.

Medical care was also traditional in nature. Treatments used decoctions and infusions of various herbs, roots, and berries; and bespelled water was considered a cure-all. Also widely used were various incantations—against snake bite, against toothache and headache, against hemorrhage, and so on. Shamanic practices were also widespread, although they were not considered exactly Christian. A birth was normally attended by a local midwife, the more renowned of whom had had some formal training. For instance, in Tambovka, Kositsino, Zharikovo, and other villages in Tambov township “Sushilikha”—the Molokan midwife Pelageia Emel’ianovna Sushilina—enjoyed considerable popularity. Only she assisted particularly difficult births, and she was sent for whenever the “birth was stalled.” She also “set to rights” abdominal hernias in both men and women caused by excessive physical strain. Her usual payment was a length of fabric for a skirt, blouse, or dress.

The main events of life, both happy and sad—the birth of a child, a wedding, a funeral—were typically accompanied by the appropriate songs (see Appendix).

Weddings were normally held during the cold months of the year, especially in the period between Christmas and Shrovetide. Marriage between Molokans was the norm, but if there was to be a mixed marriage, the preference was to intermarry with Dukhobors and Baptists rather than with Orthodox Christians. Molokans in an interfaith marriage usually converted to their spouse’s faith. The first formal approach was usually made by the prospective groom and his parents, and when the future bride’s parents had given their consent, agreement was then reached on the day of the wedding and the items that would need to be purchased for it in the nearest town. The dowry usually consisted of a bed plus bedding, and clothing, with livestock figuring rarely as a dowry component.

Marriages were often arranged by the parents. So, for instance, the descendants of Pelageia Sushilina, the famous midwife and healer who was born in 1857, recount that she was married before her sixteenth birthday and had never met her groom, himself just sixteen, before the ceremony. Her mother only alerted her that the next day matchmakers

would be coming from the next village to fetch her. The official betrothal took place at the bride's home, where both the groom's and the bride's party sang and prayed. The bride was dressed in the traditional wedding outfit of a long black skirt and a white blouse. The wedding itself took place at the groom's home, to which the bride's attendant [*druzhok*] and girlfriends and several of her relatives had been taken. There was much festivity and a lot of singing, but no alcohol was consumed.

Although we know that the Molokans' religious views forbade them to use alcohol, the realities of life were such that moonshine of some kind was found in almost every home. It was not put out on the table during festivities, but anyone could slip into a side room on some pretext or other and down a glass or two there.

The Molokans' numerous spiritual songs bear the manifest imprint of formal, literary poetry. They speak of the good that God has instilled in everyone, serve as a reminder of the transience and vanity of everyday life, and express concern for the soul's salvation and the general idea of salvation through faith (see Appendix).³⁵ This element of the spiritual culture of the Molokans of the Amur region still stands in need—as do their traditional culture and lifestyle in general—of scholarly attention. Only the first steps have been taken in that direction thus far.

Appendix: Molokan Songs for Various Life Passages

These songs were dictated in October 1994 by Mariia Dmitrievna Konfederatova, who was born in 1929 and lived in the village of Tambovka (Tambovskii district, Amur oblast).

Marriage Songs

*Song Sung in the Bride's Home When They Come to Lead Her Out**

Rise up, my love,
My fair one, and come away.
O my dove, my dove,
That art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs.

*Based on Song of Solomon 2:8–10, 14. Wording, here and below, is from the King James Bible.—Trans.

Let me see thy countenance,
Let me hear thy voice,
For sweet is thy voice,
And thy countenance is comely.

The Bride's Kinfolk Sing:

The voice of my beloved!
Behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains,
Skipping upon the hills.

My beloved is like a roe
Or a young hart.

The Groom's Kinfolk Sing:

Behold he standeth behind our wall,
He looketh forth at the windows,
Showing himself through the lattice.

My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love,
My fair one, and come away.

Songs Sung to Children

1. On a Birthday

Come, ye children,*
And hearken unto me.
I will teach you
The fear of the Lord

What little one is he that desireth
To live and to love

*Based on Psalm 34 (33 in the Russian Bible).—Trans.

And to enjoy length of days
That he may see good?

Seek peace and pursue it.
The eyes of the Lord are upon
The righteous
And His souls are turned unto their cry.

But the face of the Lord
Is against them that do evil,
To cut off from the earth
The remembrance of them.

Keep thy tongue from evil
And thy lips from speaking guile.
Depart from evil
And do good.

The righteous cry
And the Lord heareth
And delivereth them
Out of all their troubles.

2. To a Dying Infant

The evening over the mountain is quiet,
The little star burns brightly.
In the room, with sorrowing soul,
The mother sadly sits.

The child is dying quietly.
“Soon the angel will fly away,”
He whispers, while his mother sobs
And stares like one run mad.

O, do not weep, be not downcast,
Mother, my sweet mother.
For you have often said
That I am a burden to you.

Mama, I beg most earnestly:
Do not be vexed with Katia.
When she does wrong, I beg you,
Do not scold her but forgive.

The shadows of night fly away
And the star has dimmed,
And the child has closed his eyes
And fallen asleep forever.

The Savior has come to him,
Has carried the young soul away
To that wondrous abode
Where there are no sorrows, no tears.

Songs After Prayer

As many as I love,*
I rebuke and chasten:
Be zealous therefore,
And repent.

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:
If any man hear your [my] voice, and open the door,
I will come in to him, and will sup with him
And he with me

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me
In my throne, even as I also overcame,
As I also overcame,
And am set down with my Father in his throne.

He that hath an ear, let him hear
What the Spirit saith . . .

*Based on Revelations 3:19–22, I Corinthians 15:57–58, and Isaiah 66:1–2.
—Trans.

Thanks be to God,
Which giveth us the victory
Through our Lord
Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren,
Be ye steadfast, unmovable,
Always abounding in the work of the Lord,
Forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

* * *

Thus saith the Lord,
The heaven is my throne,
And the earth is my footstool:
Where is the house that ye build unto me?
And where is the place of my rest?
For all those things hath mine hand made,
And all those things have been, saith the Lord:

But to this man will I look,
Even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit,
And trembleth
At my word.

Songs Sung by Young People on the Street ("Street Songs")

My mother loved me, respected me,
That I was her cherished daughter.
But the daughter has run off with her sweetheart
Into the dark autumn night.

And so I ran through the forest,
The dark forest,
So I ran through the dense thicket
But the fugitive life palled on me.
I remembered the dear voice
And when I shall remember that dear discourse
I shall shed many bitter tears.

* * *

I have lost the little ring,
I have lost love.
Yes, I shall mourn love
As I mourned that little ring,
Day and night.
My sweetheart has gone. My sweetheart has left me.
I with a babe in arms.
Her name is Aniotka.
She looks like him.
Yes, like him.
She looks like him and is like him.
She ever smiles his smile.
O, my own sister,
Be mindful of my babe,
Yes, my babe.
As I would lief be mindful;
My family, too, was large.

* * *

The lilac is in bloom below my window.
The fragrant roses are in bloom . . .
In my aching heart love has awoken,
The happy years have awoken.

How much happiness did I expect from you, my sweetheart,
In that fateful night of mine.
But now I shall go away. I hate you,
Because you love another.

Love her, then, and caress her ardently.
Take pleasure in her beauty,
And forget me, forget me soon,
And I shall forget too, but not soon.

Soon summer will come.
The roses will bloom again
And the blue lilac will bloom . . .

* * *

[Female part]

I met my sweetheart
Yesterday,
And there passed between us
A golden ring.

He made me
A secret promise.
He kissed
My scarlet lips.

Do not kiss me,
Do not cajole me.
If you do not wish to love me,
Do not deceive me.

[Male part]

When I loved you,
I was happy,
When I stopped loving you,
I became exceeding sad.

I became exceeding sad.
I was thrown into prison.
I am locked away in prison,
And I look through the window.

I am locked away in prison,
And I look through the window,
And I look through the window
To see if someone is coming
To see what someone is bringing.

My sweetheart walked by,
Exceeding lovely she was.
She carried past
Scarlet flowers.

She carried past
Scarlet flowers,
Scarlet flowers
Unfading.

* * *

[Daughter]
Sailors, hey sailors,
Where are your dinghies?
If you give but one,
I will kiss you on the lips.

[Sailor]
If you want to be mine,
Then come with us,
Ask your dear mama
For advice and counsel.

[Daughter]
My mother did not counsel me
To go with the sailor.
The sailor will not take me for wife,
He will jeer and desert me.

I did not want to hear your advice.
I did not want to hear it.
And with a young sailor
I travel the world over.

A year passed, another is passing,
I know no misfortune,
But for my dear mother
I suffer day and night.

[Chorus]
But in the third year,
The day goes by most dismal.
In her arms she carries
A sailor's son.

[Daughter]

Do not rail at me, mother,
My dear mother.
He will grow and call you
His dear grandmother.

[Mother]

You did not want
To hear my advice,
So now go seek in that place
Any other to give you advice.

[Chorus]

The daughter left her mother.
All was cloudy before her eyes,
And with her dear babe
She sank into the sea.

Notes

1. Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East [RGIA DV], f. 704, op. 4, d. 16, l. 55.

2. RGIA DV f. 704, op. 4, d. 16, ll. 1–2. As of 1 January 1861 the number had risen to twenty-nine men and twenty-six women (Russian State Historical Archive [RGIA], f. 1265, op. 10, d. 160, l. 14 ob.).

3. RGIA, f. 1265, op. 10, d. 160, l. 55.

4. N.M. Balalaeva, “O pereselenii molokan v Amurskuiu oblast’,” *Uchenye zapiski Khabarovskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo instituta* [1968], vol. 16, p. 31.

5. RGIA DV, f. 704, op. 4, d. 11, l. 5.

6. *Ibid.*, l. 33.

7. Balalaeva, “O pereselenii molokan v Amurskuiu oblast’,” p. 32.

8. RGIA DV, f. 704, op. 7, d. 538, l. 4.

9. RGIA, f. 821, op. 133, d. 21, l. 386.

10. RGIA, f. 391, op. 2, d. 599, l. 79.

11. Archive of the Russian Geographical Society [ARGO], razriad 56, op. 1, d. 20, ll. 20, 160–278 ob.

12. RGIA DV, f. 704, op. 4, d. 16, l. 7.

13. G.E. Grum-Grizhmailo, *Opisanie Amurskoi oblasti* (St. Petersburg, 1894), p. 430.

14. A.V. Kirillov, “Pereselenie v Amurskuiu oblast’,” *Trudy Priamurskogo otdeleniia Rossiiskogo geograficheskogo obshchestva* (Khabarovsk, 1895), p. 35.

15. N. Kriukov, *Sel’skoe khoziaistvo v Amurskoi oblasti* (St. Petersburg, 1895), p. 57.

16. The entire Far East, including Amur oblast, lay within the jurisdiction of Kamchatka Diocese until the end of the nineteenth century.
17. RGIA, f. 796, op. 442, d. 1132, l. 40.
18. Ibid.
19. According to official records, twenty-six individuals converted to Molokanism in Amur oblast in 1908 (ibid., d. 2257, l. 12).
20. Ibid., d. 1132, l. 40.
21. Originally, the administrative and ecclesiastical authorities designated both Old Believers and sectarians as “schismatics.”
22. RGIA DV, f. 702, op. 3, d. 7, l. 29.
23. RGIA, f. 796, op. 442, d. 1970, l. 122 ob.
24. Ibid., d. 1132, l. 50.
25. T.B. Koval', “Dukhovnye khristiane: religioznoe svoeobrazie i etika truda,” *Mir Rossii*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1993), p. 22.
26. Ibid., p. 51.
27. Quoted from A.I. Klibanov, *Istoriia religioznogo sektantstva v Rossii* (Moscow, 1965), p. 158.
28. RGIA, f. 796, op. 442, d. 1562, l. 39 ob.
29. Ibid.
30. Koval', “Dukhovnye khristiane,” p. 56.
31. L.I. Fetisova, “Kul'tura i byt molokan Priamur'ia,” in *Russkii fol'klor i folkloristika Sibiri. Tezisy dokladov Vserossiiskoi nauchnoi konferentsii, posviashchennoi 80-letiiu so dnia rozhdeniia izvestnogo sibirskogo fol'klorista L.E. Eliasova* (Ulan-Ude, 1994), p. 27.
32. I. Morozov, *Molokane* (Moscow and Leningrad: OGIZ and Moskovskii rabochii, 1931), p. 96.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid., p. 97.
35. Fetisova, “Kul'tura i byt molokan Priamur'ia,” pp. 28–29.

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