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## **ETHNO-CONFESSIONAL PROCESSES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MORDOVIA AT THE BEGINNING OF XXI CENTURY (IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP CONFESSIONS AND THE STATE)**

### **Abstract**

This article offers a general overview of the most important events in the religious life of Mordovia in the early 2000s - mid 2010s, on which basis it is possible to trace the main trends in the religious situation in the country at the present stage. Particular attention is paid to the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Muslim Ummah (community) in the territory of the Republic of Mordovia as the most influential denominations in the region. These denominations have established close relationships and diverse social partnership with government agencies of Mordovia. The author shows that the main problems of religious life of the Republic of Mordovia are: attempts to spread Wahhabism in the republic, as well as the rivalry of individual spiritual administrations of Muslims. However, in general, ethno-confessional situation in the Republic of Mordovia in early 2000s - mid 2010s, has been characterized as stability.

**Key Words:** Republic of Mordovia, ethno-confessional situation, social partnership of denominations, religious radicalism, church

The Republic of Mordovia (RM) is located in the center of the European part of Russia, between the Oka and Sura rivers, at the junction of forest and steppe zones. The territory of the republic is 26.2 thousand km<sup>2</sup>. Currently RM is a part of the Volga Federal Region. The peculiarities of its geographical location include common borders with the more economically developed areas of Center and Volga Region.

Mordovia is traditionally a multiethnic region. On its territory, the following nations live: Mordvinians, Russians, Tatars, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Lithuanians and others. According to the national census of 2010, the most numerous ethnic groups in the country are Russians (53.36%), Mordvinians (40.06%) and Tatars (5.22%).<sup>2</sup>

Mordvinians – the titular ethnic group - is the largest of the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia (about 800 thousand people), divided into two sub-ethnoses

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2 Population of Mordovia, [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Население\\_Мордовии](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Население_Мордовии) (accessed May 2015)

- Moksha and Erzya. Moksha are settled mainly in the western and southern regions of Mordovia, in the basin of Moksha, Erzya - in the east. The remark of ethnologist N.F. Mokshin, that Mordovia "is the kind of ethno-social organism whose home is outside its territory for the most of the indigenous ethnic groups, that are now in the state of heterogeneous - and homogeneous in the form of small groups", is very accurate.<sup>3</sup>

Due to the steady increase of ethnic and religious factors' importance in the political life of the Russian Federation, the need for some adjustments of the state policy in the complex and "delicate" sphere of ethnic religious policy has become increasingly apparent. The implementation of such an adjustment is now actually needed at the level of subjects of the Federation in particular - the institutions of local government, municipal government, where all the issues of ethnic-religious policies are implemented and practically solved.

The climate of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in a particular region is highly dependent on the characteristics of the policy of regional authorities. Ethno-confessional regional policy, with all this, should take into account the needs of all ethnic and religious groups, as well as the specific conditions of political, socio-economic, demographic and cultural development in the region. Priorities of regional ethnic and religious policies should be the following: coordinated employment policy, regulation of migration processes, creation of a favorable atmosphere for the representatives of different ethnic groups and religions. In this case, the ethno-confessional politics in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious region becomes a consolidating factor if it adequately helps to meet diverse ethnic and religious needs.

The process of "religious renaissance" that actively developed in Russian society at the end of the 1980s - 1990s, fully affected the Republic of Mordovia, in the territory of which, after decades of artificially implanted atheism, confessional life again began to revive.

In the early years of the XXI century, in Mordovia, various denominations continued to flourish - from the traditional ones to the most exotic. Russian Orthodox Church and Sunni Islam are of the greatest influence there. In addition, as in other regions of the Russian Federation, various Protestant communities are also very active in the Republic of Mordovia.

In the Republic of Mordovia, in total, 341 religious organizations representing 10 confessions, are registered. They are: Russian Orthodox Church (284 faith-based organizations), Sunni Islam (43 organizations), Baptists (3 organizations), Jews (1 Organization). There are also Seventh-day Adventists, Pentecostals, Church of Ingria, Evangelical Christian, Jehovah's Witnesses and Hare Krishna adherents.<sup>4</sup> Rare adherents confess Catholicism, Shia Islam, Christianity the Arme-

3 Mokshin N.F., *Ethnic History Mordovians*, Saransk, 1977, p. 219.

4 *Proceedings of Mordovia*, Periodical, 14 February 2007, p. 3.

nian Gregorian Church, the Baha'i religion<sup>5</sup> and even neo-pagan cults.<sup>6</sup>

### **Russian Orthodox Church in the RM in the early 2000s**

Christianity has played a special historical role in the cultural life of Mordovia. Penetration of the Russian Orthodox Church in this region belongs to the XVI - XVII centuries; in XVIII - XIX centuries, the Christianization of Mordovians completed. During the Soviet period the church in the territory of Mordovia was persecuted and experienced limitations. In the 1990s, the ROC revival under the auspices of the Diocese of Saransk and Mordovia began.

It should be recognized that, in comparison with other confessions, Saransk and Mordovia Diocese of ROC initially found themselves at the most privileged relations with the republican authorities. This was manifested in such preferences as financial donations from the national budget and return to the ownership of the Diocese of lands confiscated during the Soviet period.

In addition, it should be mentioned that the budget of the Republic of Mordovia includes funds providing assistance to parishes and monasteries in the reconstruction of the destroyed buildings. It also should be noted that the canonization of Admiral Feydor Ushakov, in August 2001, was prepared by the Diocese together with the administration of the Head of RM, as an event of national significance. Opening of the Cathedral of the Holy and Righteous Theodore Ushakov also became possible with direct financial participation of the supreme bodies of state authorities of RM. Another manifestation of cooperation between Saransk and Mordovia dioceses and the republican leadership can be seen in the activities of the Public Council for the Development of Orthodox Culture has become. The Council was formed by the Head of the Republic of Mordovia. This Council is a consultative body formed for the purpose of development of Orthodox culture, spiritual, moral and patriotic education of population in the Republic of Mordovia. It leads an active cultural and educational set of activities, as among its flock, so in a number of educational institutions of RM. The most important focus of the Russian Orthodox Church in Mordovia at the beginning of the 2000s, its socially oriented activities, these, being implemented under the auspices of the two structural units of Saransk and Mordovia Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church - Department of Religious Education and Missionary Department. An integral part of this activity – is the revival of spiritual and social institutions of the Orthodox missionary. So, since 2004, under the leadership of the Missionary Department of the Saransk diocese, missionary courses have been held.

Russian monarchists' sociopolitical movement has become an integral part

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5 Martynenko A.V., Baha'i in Russia, *Bulletin of Eurasia*, № 1, Vol. 31, 2006, pp. 143-144.

6 Mokshina E.N., *Mordovians Religious life in the second half of XIX - beginning of the XXI century*, Saransk, 2003, pp. 212-217.

of the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church. In the course of formation of Russian political movements, doctrinally and structurally related to Orthodoxy, Russian monarchists form the most influential socio-political trend, whose ideological program installations are based on the values of the Orthodoxy. This is largely natural, because the history of the Russian state for centuries has been inextricably linked with Orthodoxy: the institution of the Russian monarchy has always relied on orthodox principles, and this is reflected in the state ideology of the Russian Empire (here we have enough to recall such concepts as “Moscow – is the Third Rome of XV century, and “Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality” of the XIX century).

In Mordovia, the monarchist movement was born in the Soviet period, in the course of the first anti-communist rallies held in Saransk in the late 1980s - early 1990s. However, in its institutional and organizational form, it finally took shape in October 1994, when the All-Russian representative Monarchic Center was founded and enhanced its activity in Saransk. In 1998, as part of the I<sup>st</sup> and II<sup>nd</sup> meetings of Saransk Monarchic Center, in the course of its reorganization into the department of, probably, one of the most influential and respected monarchical political organizations - the RIU-O (Russian Imperial Union - Order), Mordovian RIU-O was established. Start of activity of the organization is inextricably linked to the “White” emigration of the period 1920 - 1930-ies. Activities of Saransk branch of RIU-O is closely connected with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Under its initiative, in Saransk churches and chapels, prayers are held confined to important for the Russian monarchist movement events and dates, for example, the Commemoration Day of the Holy Royal Martyrs (July 17). Monarchists do not accept the practice of official celebrations associated with the Soviet system, preserved until now. So, every November the 7<sup>th</sup>, in the “Day of consensus and reconciliation,” which, as we know, originates from the events of October 1917, Saransk monarchists hold pannikhida to commemorate the victims of the communist regime.

It is noteworthy that this action is always of interest and understanding of citizens, including older people, which is further evidence of a certain revision of spiritual values in the public mind of the post-communist Russia. Monarchists oppose to now adopted official dates, suggesting instead of them traditional celebrations of the Russian Empire: for example, as real alternative to The Defender of the Fatherland Day, celebrated on February, 23<sup>th</sup> and symbolizing, in fact, the succession of the Russian Armed Forces from the Soviet (Red) Army, monarchists offer Knights of St. George’s Reward Day (December, 9<sup>th</sup>).

In recent years, Saransk monarchists have been actively campaigning for the return of the pre-revolutionary names to the old streets of Mordvinian capital for abandoning the current name, symbolizing the Soviet era: “Bolshevik str.,” “Lenin str.,” etc. General requirement of official condemnation of communist ideology and political system plays an important role in software installations of RIU-O.

Thus, the monarchist movement in Mordovia, in spite of the relative scarcity of its members, is very active, and its activities, as a whole, meet a positive reaction in the society.

The Saransk Religious School (hereinafter - SRS), founded in 1995, is an important center of Orthodox cultural life in Mordovia. To date, the SRS is not only the officially registered religious educational institution in Mordovia, but also acts as the initiator and organizer of a number of cultural and educational events. As examples of such activities, we can mention the SRS annual scientific theological conference "Maslovsky readings" and the festival of traditional Russian martial arts "Spring ristaniya (dueling)."

Very important events for the Orthodox life of Mordovia events occurred in 2006, when spiritual (Orthodox) School (SRS) presentation of the translation of the New Testament in Erzya language passed in Saransk. The edition was published by the Mordovia Publishing House. Seven thousand copies were printed. Work on Erzya translation of this important part of the Christian Bible began in the late 1980s. At the source of this great work, an outstanding scientist – specialist in Finno-Ugric Studies, one of the founders of the Mordovian national movement "Mastorava", D.T. Nadkin accomplished his exploit. After his death in 1992, the project continued and was completed by a group of translators.

At the presentation ceremony of the book, which was headed by the Archbishop of Saransk and Mordovia Varsonofy and rector of the SRS, the candidate of theology A. Pelin, a representative delegation of Protestants from Scandinavia was present. It was composed of members of the Bible Society of Finland, the Helsinki Institute for Bible Translation, as well as a specialist from the Stockholm Institute for Bible Translation K. Franzen, and Pastor of the missionary organization "Avainmedia" K. Pëlënen. These organizations of the Lutheran branch directly supervised and supported (including financially) the preparatory stage of this publication.

It must be recognized, that the activities related to the Erzya translation of The Scripture, received a mixed reaction from the Orthodox community of Saransk. Many people from both the clergy and laity have seen in these events the manifestation of ecumenism and strengthening of the Protestant influence. In fairness, we should note that, indeed, this translation was originally created for Mordovian Lutheran-Evangelical Church, and, only in the late 1990s, it came under the patronage of the Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church of Saransk. Thus, the question of how the publication of the New Testament in Erzya language will contribute to the harmonization of interethnic and interfaith relations remains open.

On 5-6 August, 2006, the pastoral visit to Mordovia of Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexy II-nd was held. The arrival of the spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church was dedicated to a variety of commemorative dates - to the millennium of Mordovians entry into the Russian state, the 15th anniversary of

the Diocese of Saransk and the fifth anniversary of the canonization by ROC of Admiral Feydor Ushakov.

In the Orthodox life of Mordovia the year 2006 ended with an event, the consequences of which were also very important for the social and cultural life of the country as a whole. A group of scientists under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Mordovian Historical and Sociological Institute (HSI) and The Mordovian State University (MSU), named after N.P. Ogarev, published a textbook "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture", which from September, 1, 2006, was introduced in the secondary Mordovian schools' educational course for teaching in the seventh grade. By the way, an advance copy of this educational publication was presented to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexy II-nd during his August visit to Saransk.

It must be recognized that the adaptation of religious and philosophical material to the school course was accompanied by sharp debates in which the leadership of the Diocese of Saransk and Saransk ROC, and also spiritual (Orthodox) schools actively intervened. Suffice it to say that during the five years of work on his textbook, the writing team changed several times; accordingly, there were changing concepts and plans for the textbook. As a result, the authors of the textbook became employees of the Institute of History and Sociology of Moscow State University - Doctor of Philosophy M. Gryzhankova and candidate of historical sciences A. Belkin.

The new subject "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture" is taught, mostly, by history teachers that had learned the fundamentals of this course at the special training under the guidance of the Republican Ministry of Education. It is also expected that, in the future, this discipline can be used as an addition to the lessons and elective courses by teachers for not only the seventh school grade. As is well known, in many regions of Russia such a course has long been introduced into the school curriculum based on local educational project.

There is a need to take into account that the introduction of Orthodox culture in schools of the Republic takes place in conditions of acute debates on this issue at the national level. In a dispute about whether Russian children are obliged to comprehend the Orthodox tradition in the school curriculum, representatives of different layers - school teachers and university professors, government officials of all ranks and journalists, and finally, the Orthodox and Muslim clergy - were involved. Unfortunately, in the general chorus of debaters of this problem the extreme points of view dominate: a categorical "yes" or not less categorical "no", and in both cases - with ill-concealed irritation against their opponents. The sharpness of the discussion indicates the complex nature of inter-confessional relations in the post-communist Russia, where the dialogue of religions goes hand in hand with their rivalry, and the overall tolerance is sometimes fancifully combined with extreme manifestations of xenophobia.

At the beginning of the 2010s. important and positive changes have taken

place in the organizational structure of the Russian Orthodox Church in the territory of Mordovia. February 1, 2010 "in recognition of his dedicated service at the Church of God and in connection with the appointment of Chancellor of the Moscow Patriarchate", Archbishop Varsonofy was granted the rank of metropolitan<sup>7</sup>, and two years later, it was decided to form two new dioceses in the territory of the Republic of Mordovia. On March 19, 2014, by the Holy Synod decision, Varsonofy was promoted to the position of His Eminence Metropolitan Church of St. Petersburg, and Zinoviev (Korzinkin), who had been formerly Archbishop of Elista and Kalmykia, headed the Mordovian metropolitan.<sup>8</sup>

Currently, the Mordovian archdiocese, based on accumulated over two decades potential of dioceses of Saransk and Mordovia, continues to strengthen the influence and development of spiritual, educational, cultural and social activities of Orthodox Christianity in the territory of Mordovia, including active participation in the large-scale celebrations of nationwide value of the Millennium of unification of Mordovian people with the peoples of the Russia (24-25 of August, 2012).

In general, we can say that the Russian Orthodox Church in the Republic of Mordovia in the early years of the XXI century continues going through the process of revival - both organizational and financial, and cultural and spiritual.

### **Islam in Mordovia in the early 2000s**

Islam spread in the territory of Mordovia region in the XV - XVI centuries. During the XVII - XX centuries, Islam in Mordovia experienced the same ups and downs, as Islam nationwide. Periods of prosperity were followed by ordeal, periods of development of the local Islamic culture interspersed with decades of decline and stagnation. Especially revealing, in this issue, was the twentieth century - a century of major and socio-political and socio-cultural upheavals in Russian society.

So, while in the Russian Empire on the eve of the revolution of 1917, in every Tatar village in the same area of the modern Republic of Mordovia, there were from one to five mosques, depending on the number of inhabitants, that constantly served; then, during the Soviet period, as a result of public authorities' policy of state atheism, their number decreased dramatically. By the mid-1980s, in Mordovia, the only one Islamic mosque in the center of the settlement Romodanovo in one region remained. As for the system of Islamic education, the initial Islamic schools - mektebs - in the country were eliminated by Soviet power even earlier: in 1920 - 1930s. Since the beginning of "perestroika" at the second

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7 Official site of the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/> (accessed February 2015)

8 Magazines of The Holy Synod of 19 March, 2014: Magazine 8, Russian Orthodox Church. Official site of the Moscow Patriarchate, [www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1435204.html](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/1435204.html). (accessed May 2015)

half of the 1980s - early 1990s, there has been a trend towards the revival, as well as towards restoration of the position of Islam in Russia in general, and in the Volga region, in particular. In Mordovia, the Tatar community is the main carrier of Sunni Islam, consisting of about 43 thousand people, ie, of 5% of the population.

In the 1990s - early 2000s, among the Tatars of Mordovia, the movement for restoration of their cultural traditions, for cultural identity, actually increased.<sup>9</sup> This movement is inextricably linked with Islam: Tatar community of the republic applies, as, indeed, the vast majority of Russian Muslims, to orthodox Sunni community ('Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah' – 'people of the Sunnah and the consensus') and Hanafi (one of the four major schools of Sunni law).<sup>10</sup>

In Mordovia, since the mid-1990s, two Muftiat coexist - Regional Spiritual Board of Muslims (RSBM) (headed by Zaki Hazrat Ayzatullin) and the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Mordovia (SAM) (headed by Mufti Rashid Khalikov Hazrat). And if the Regional Spiritual Administration of Muslims focuses on the Ufa Supreme Mufti Talgat Tajuddin, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Mordovia (SAM) supports Moscow Mufti Ravil Gaynutdin.

Thus, the all-Russian rivalry of Ufa and Moscow Mufti has affected also Mordovian Muslims, although, in the republic, it is not so acute as in some other regions of Russia (in any case, Tatars of Mordovia managed to avoid open conflicts as far, such as those that occurred, for example, in the Ulyanovsk region). Moreover, it must be recognized, that this split manifests itself only in Saransk, Ruzaevka, Belozerye and partly in Lyambir, and, virtually, passed unaffected in the most Tatar settlements and villages of Mordovia, where ordinary believers - Muslims - either have a very vague idea about the contradictions between these muftiats, or do not know about them at all.

In the period 2005 - 2008, from both muftiats appeals for the Unity Congress of Muslims of Mordovia were repeatedly heard, calling for the creation of a single (combined) Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Mordovia. Unfortunately, as subsequent events showed, the process of unification of muftiats of Mordovia inevitably confronted with a number of serious obstacles, such as pressure from the Muslim spiritual centers in Moscow and Ufa, as well as with the personal ambitions of individual leaders. The situation of organizational split in al-Umma of Mordovia continues to this day. Moreover, since 2008, it has become even more difficult due to the advent of the third Muftiat – the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of the Republic of Mordovia.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 2000s, the construction of the mosques for the Muslims of Mordovia continued - new mosques were built; for example, in the village Tatar Pish-

9 Salimov M. Sh., Trends in the Muslim community of Mordovia in the 90s. Twentieth century, *Historical and cultural aspects of multi-ethnic regions of Russia*, Saransk, 2006, pp. 225-226.

10 Amin Abu Bilal Philips, *Laws of Muslim life. Evolution of Fiqh*, M., 2002, pp. 124-132.

11 Martynenko A.V., Shilov N.V., Republic of Mordovia. Formation of the Third Muftiat, *Ethnic and religious situation in the Volga Federal District № 143*, 2008, pp. 14-16.



Ilya of Ruzaevsk region of RM, in the village of Bolshye Polyany in Kadoshkinsk District of RM, and others. Also, the information network for Muslims of Mordovia developed. In 2005 - 2008, along with the periodicals "Islam in Mordovia", "Tatar Gazette", "Yuldash", the official website of RM SAM received wide attention of the public Internet. Since 2002, the site has worked in four languages: Russian, Tatar, English and Arabic.

Muslims of Mordovia also carried out educational activities, including ones in the field of religious education of children. Since 2003, near the village of Belozerye, spiritual and educational summer camp "al-Ansar" acts, which work intricately combines activities from the times of traditional pioneer camps ("ceremony and events," sports relay race; children's concerts, etc.) with Muslim activities.

This specificity can be traced in the names of children's groups and sports teams: "Sisters - Moslems"; "Muslim Stars"; "Star of Islam". In addition, the organizers - counselors; young men and women of the Muslim faith - carry out studies and educational activities with children on the basics of Islam.

However, so far, the issue has not been resolved on the establishment of Mordovia madrassas - the Muslim religious educational institutions. Attempts to organize the work of SAM of RM schools-madrassas "Abu Hanifa" in Saransk and the so-called "Islamic college" in the village Sverbeevka in Romodanovo Region of RM, were actually canceled by the Ministry of Education of the Republic.

A list of processes taking place in the Muslim community of Mordovia in early XXI century would be incomplete, if you do not touch the very sensitive and delicate subject of separate manifestations of Islamic extremism in the territory of Republic of Mordovia.

The problem of the availability of supporters of Islamic extremism (Wahhabism or Salafiyya)<sup>12</sup> in the Republic of Mordovia identified itself for the first time in the mid-1990s, when the Wahhabi emissary of the Astrakhan region Abuzar (O. Marushkin) tried to create a Salafi community in the village of Belozerye. Activities of Abuzar and his supporters were localized by the authorities and the security forces of the republic fast enough, as well as by the elders of the village of Belozerye.<sup>13</sup> However, in the early 2000s, the theme of Islamic radical movements developed unexpected continuation, causing a public outcry in the country, which is traditionally characterized by political, ethnic and religious stability. The fact is that during 2005 - 2007 years, at the territory of Mordovia emissaries and even Islamic fighters of various Islamic radical groups and movements repeatedly penetrated ("Hizb-ut-Tahrir", "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan", "Ulyanovsk jamaat"). A unique sensation for a small Volga republic became detention by the FSB in Saransk on Islamic fighter of one of the branches of the Central Asian "al-Qaeda" (2005) and a female suicide bomber from Chechnya, who arrived in

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12 Gerges F., *America and political Islam. Clash of cultures or clash of interests?* Cambridge, 1999, p. 282.

13 Martinenko A., *The Modern Aspects of Muslim Sectarianism in Post-Communist Russia*, *Lo Straniero*, № 35, Naples, Italy, 2002, pp. 21-22.

Mordovia to commit a terrorist act (2007).

In general, however, it can be stated that in spite of the problems outlined above, now the Muslim community (Umma) of Republic of Mordovia has enough strong potential (organizational, cultural, economic), which leads to its rapid and intensive development.

As mentioned above, in the autumn of 2006, under the auspices of the Ministry of Education of the RM, the textbook "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture" for the seventh grade of educational institutions of Mordovia was published (authors – A.I. Belkin, M. Yu. Gryzhankova, researchers of Mordovian State University). However, the leadership of the Ministry of Education of the Republic and, above all, now former, and then The Head of The Ministry of Education V. Kadakin adventured for a kind of experiment. Almost simultaneously with the "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture", another textbook was published - "Fundamentals of Islamic culture" for the eight classes of educational institutions of Mordovia. The textbook was prepared by the Doctor of historical sciences, professor of the Faculty of General History of Mordovia State Pedagogical Institute, A.V. Martynenko. Both the textbook and, accordingly, school subjects are an integral parts of the so-called "republican component" - that is, the part of the school curriculum, which is designed to reveal national and cultural features of the region. Without exaggeration, to date, "Mordovian experience" with the parallel introduction of study of Christianity and Islam in schools is unique and certainly very promising in light of the sharp discussions in Russian society over teaching of foundations of Orthodox Christianity in high school. This experience is, in fact, nothing more than the most compromising way out of the conflict situation.

## **Protestantism in the Republic of Mordovia in the early 2000s**

### ***Baptists***

Baptism – is one of the biggest denominations in numbers of adherents of Protestantism. The origins of the emergence of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Russia dates back to the movement of the Doukhobors and their successors - the Molokans, as well as to the resettlement of German Mennonites (Protestants, some of those who laid the foundation of the Baptist movement in Europe during the Reformation) from Germany to Ukraine and Russia in XVIII-XIX centuries.

On the territory of Mordovia religious organizations of Evangelical Christians-Baptists have undertaken activities, actively promoting their group since 1914<sup>14</sup>, when in the village Kabaevo of Dubensky district a certain person Ivan Alekseevich had first adopted that faith. The first Baptist congregation in Saransk ap-

14 Chairkina N. O., Shilov N.V., The activities of a Baptist organization in Mordovia, *Ethnic and religious situation in the Volga Federal District*, № 41, 2002, pp. 9-11.

peared in 1927. Its founder was D. Kozin. But soon he was arrested and put in prison, where he died. The following presbyters were brought to the rank: P.V. Tumolsky, then P.F. Kryolov. By the beginning of World War II, the leaders of the Baptist Union either died or were imprisoned. During the Great Patriotic War, Baptists felt more free, as supervision over them weakened. Moreover, they began to join the army.

Before 1961, in Saransk, the Baptist congregation numbered 150 persons. After the church had been closed, the majority of worshipers met in homes and held a service, reading the Bible. In 1968, the Evangelical Christians-Baptists were allowed to open The House of Worship in Saransk. God-services are held there now.

Currently, there are four Saransk Baptist congregations, and a few elsewhere in various districts of the republic. Finance issues of the Baptist church are formed by the voluntary contributions of the adherents and individuals. They can also be replenished at the expense of cash flows from the implementation of productive and religious activities. In addition, the adherents of the Church monthly contribute to the treasury of the church, the so-called tithe. Funds are spent at the discretion of the general meeting.

Communications of Baptist representatives with other religions, especially with the Orthodox Church, traditionally evolved uniquely.

The number of adherents of Baptist Church (baptized members of the church) in Saransk – is about 200 people and about the same in the regions of the republic. The ethnic composition of communities is very different - Russian, Mordvinians, Ukrainians, Tatars and others. The social composition of the church is not uniform (the unemployed, students of secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, representatives of the intelligentsia with higher education, representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, workers, and others.).

### **Adventists**

Seventh-day Adventists (ASD, from Lat. Adventus - coming) - the representatives of one of the sects of the so-called "late" Protestantism, in which the doctrine is based on the expectation of the "second coming of Christ."

In Russia, Adventists (mainly, adherents of "Saturday") appeared in the 80s of the XIX century among the German colonists of the former Taurian province, of a poor-landed peasantry of Southern Ukraine, the Don, the North Caucasus, the Volga region, the Baltic region, Siberia. In 1908, Adventists established an independent union.

The history of the ASD in Mordovia<sup>15</sup> dates back to the 1920s, probably to the person then living in the area of Romodanovo, one of the participants of The

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15 Shilov N., *Seventh-day Adventists, Encyclopedia "Orthodox Mordovia"*, Vol. IV, Saransk, 2004. pp. 5-6.

First World War, whom, according to the recollections of old residents, "everyone called Nikolai-the Austrian." This religious doctrine received further spread in the 1940s - 1960s in Romodanovo district and Saransk. During this period, the recognized leader of this movement of Protestantism was I.A. Geranin. He was a country doctor by profession. He walked around the surrounding villages and residents and explained to them the essence of religion professed by him. In Saransk, an organized community of ASD was formed in the 1980s.

In the early 1990s, Saransk ASD community was led by Western missionaries (since 1992 - Jim Reyking, since 1993 - Dale Lyman). As a result of programs implemented by Adventists, as well as of their active proselytizing, Saransk community began to grow rapidly. Today, Adventist organization consists of about 220 persons in Saransk, 25 - in Ruzaevka, 5 - in the village Romodanovo, 25 - in Ardatov and of about 25 persons in other areas. Adventists of Mordovia work in close contact with fellow believers, who live in other regions of Russia and in other states. Services take place in the form of seminars and conferences, during a temporary stay of missionaries, religious education in educational institutions, in the form of bonds by correspondence, and so on. Towards other religions, ASD declares intentional tolerance and respect.

However, it should be noted that the activities of Seventh-day Adventists (as well as of other Protestant churches, sects and missions) causes irritation and resistance of Saransk Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church. This largely reflects the general confrontation of Orthodoxy and Protestantism in modern Russian society, and, of course, leads to an increase in sectarian tensions, including the territory of Republic Mordovia.

### ***Pentecostalism***

Pentecostalism - another religious movement in the "late" Protestantism - got its name from the Jewish feast of Pentecost, celebrated on the fiftieth day after Easter.

On the territory of the Republic Mordovia, Pentecostals also have been operating for several decades.<sup>16</sup> In the 1940s, missionaries came to the Republic from Belarus, Ukraine, the Baltic States, Uzbekistan, but they had no success. The new community experienced persecution of the authorities. The adherents were taken for several times for examination in a psychiatric hospital, were tried in the organizations in the workplace; the authorities imposed fines for attending worship and the adherents were prosecuted. Despite persecution, the church service was going on in their homes and the Church gradually grew. In 1991, the Republican Mordovian Bible Center was registered. The church of "Evangelical Christians" adherents rents space for worship. Nowadays, in Mordovia there are

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16 Shilov N.F., *Pentecostalism, Encyclopedia "Orthodox Mordovia"*, Vol. IV, Saransk, 2004, pp. 226-227.

large numbers of Pentecostal church communities: two – Saransk; there are also communities in Ruzaevka, Kadoshkine, Torbeyevo, Krasnoslobodsk, Chamzinka, Atyashevo, Dubenki, Berezniki. The total number of Pentecostals in the RM amounts to about 700 persons, among them - about 500 persons in Saransk and 200 - in the districts of the republic.

### **“Jehovah’s Witnesses”**

This religious organization is considered as an offshoot of Adventism. With Adventism organization, in particular, they unite at eschatological aspects: common faith in the proximity of the Second Coming and in the end of the world.

In RM, Jehovah’s Witnesses appeared in 1995, but their organization was registered only in December, 1999<sup>17</sup>. Jehovah’s Witnesses tend to attract in their environment people who experience mental discomfort or people with disabilities and young people. The development of activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Mordovia has long been out of public attention. The first among public organizations, activists of Russian public organization ‘Coming together’ (“We are always together”) expressed serious concern about the activities of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Mordovia.

So, on April 18, 2004, Mordvinian department of “Coming Together” with the support of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Diocese of Saransk, organized a public protest at the cinema “Russia” square, where Jehovah’s Witnesses of Saransk traditionally held their prayer meetings. Characteristically, the protest was attended by the people whose family members have suffered from the activity of “Jehovah’s Witnesses”. Subsequently, these protest actions were repeated, but the campaign launched against them in Mordovia, has not been of a serious impediment to the activities of “witnesses”.

In general, we see that the activities of Protestant communities in Mordovia have caused undisguised dissatisfaction and opposition from the Russian Orthodox Church. This national trend also has a long-standing historical and cultural roots, in respect of which abbot Silvanus (Tumanov) writes in his textbook on Catechism: «Following the events of the Reformation (XVI century), Orthodox Church was forced to formulate its views on the Protestant world. The Orthodox Church has condemned the numerous Protestant opinions, including justification by faith - *sola Scriptura* (Lat. “Scripture alone”, i.e. the recognition of the absolute probability-doctrinal authority of the Bible alone), as well as Protestants’ denial of icons, rejection of religious services in honor of the veneration of the Virgin and the saints”<sup>18</sup>. As abbot Silvanus emphasizes (and his point of view is very indicative of this situation), “any alleged agreement of the Orthodox Church

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17 Asanova S. Yu., Shilov N.V., Jehovah’s Witnesses, *Encyclopedia “Orthodox Mordovia”*, Vol. IV, Saransk, 2004, pp. 260-261.

18 The abbot Silvanus (Tumanov), *About our faith. Conversations on the basics of Orthodoxy*, Saransk, 2006, p. 272.

with Catholics and Protestants - is more apparent than real, since the Orthodox teaching on religious Authority is of fundamentally different character."<sup>19</sup>

**Other religious organizations in RM** of the early 2000s were not so numerous and influential as described above. In the summer of 2005, for the first time in the history of the republic, a Jewish religious (Judaic) community was officially registered<sup>20</sup>, bringing together about twenty activists. At the very beginning of its activity, Jewish organization of Saransk faced with a number of acute problems in logistics, organizational and cultural aspects. For example, today in RM, in order to profess Judaism, Jews haven't the opportunity to establish their own production of kosher food, and the famous Jewish matzah is missing (for comparison, in 2004 – 2005, in Saransk, Muslim Tatars have already started to produce and deliver halal food to the grocery stores of RM). No less complicated are the organizational problems: professional clergy (rabbis) is virtually absent; there is no room even for a synagogue, not to mention the Judaic schools (Eder, yeshivahs). Among the cultural dimension of the problems it should be noted: the low level of religiosity of local Jews, as well as poor knowledge of their own national traditions (suffice it to say that in Hebrew in Mordovia a little more than ten people are able to speak it). We can say that the Jewish religious organization of RM has made its first steps in its activities, claiming, however, an active participation in ethnic and religious life of the republic.

Back in 1991, in Mordovia (Saransk), the local branch of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness was founded - perhaps the most influential neo-Hindu organization in Russia and CIS countries.<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy that, unlike their coreligionists in the large cities of Russia, Saransk Krishnas are hesitant to hold public kirtans in the streets of the capital of Mordovia, apparently fearing intolerance, or a hostile response from the public. Currently, their proselytizing activity constitutes distribution of Krishna literature in public places (markets, public transport, etc.) and in homes, and they primarily distribute Samyang famous Indian epic "Mahabharata" - a mystical poem " Bhagavad-gita "( " Song of the Lord ") with the notes thereto of the founder of the sect.

Currently, Saransk Krishna community is small and brings together about fifteen people (it is noteworthy that, in addition to Russian, Tatars who devoted themselves to "devotional service" for Krishna, play an active role in this group, too). In the community, there are young couples who are raising their children in the spirit of Hare Krishna.

Like the numerous actions in Mordovia of Protestant organizations, commu-

19 The abbot Silvanus (Tumanov). *Edict. Works*, p. 273.

20 Martynenko A.V., Shilov N.V., Republic of Mordovia. Register of Jewish Religious Community, *Ethnic and religious situation in the Volga Federal District*, № 104, 2005, pp. 11-12.

21 Martynenko A.V., Shilov N.V., Republic of Mordovia. Neo-Hindu community in Saransk, *Ethnic and religious situation in the Volga Federal District*, № 103, 2005, pp. 7-8.

nities of Krishna in Saransk faced sharply negative reaction on the part of the Russian Orthodox Church. In particular, even the fact of direct neighborhood of Krishna ashram with Saransk religious school causes constant irritation of Orthodox priests, accusing Krishna community in trying to lead missionary work among the church congregation. In general, despite the fact that Krishna organization is registered by Mordovian Ministry of Justice, their impact on ethnic and confessional situation in the country is very small.

Thus, the confessional situation in the Republic of Mordovia in the early 2000s is characterized by relative stability. Development in the Republic of social partnership of government agencies and traditional religions (Christianity and Islam) has been very promising.

On the other hand, in the religious situation in Mordovia, from the beginning of the 2000s, the complicated relations between the Russian Orthodox Church Diocese of Saransk and Protestant communities have been preserved; meanwhile, the organizational split of Muslims in the republic continues. In addition, in the territory of Mordovia, activities of emissaries of radical Islamist groups was noted. In 2014, a conflict situation between the authorities of the republic and the part of local Muslim community emerged on the issue of the official ban on headscarves for girls ('hedjab') in schools of Mordovia.<sup>22</sup> These factors, of course, contain certain destructive potential, but currently, their manifestations have a local character, and therefore, we cannot speak about serious destabilization of ethnic and religious situation in Mordovia in the near future.

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**Николај В. Шилов**

**ЕТНО-КОНФЕССИОНАЛНИ ПРОЦЕСИ У РЕПУБЛИЦИ  
МОРДОВИЈИ НА ПОЧЕТКУ 21. ВЕКА  
(У КОНТЕКСТУ ДРУШТВЕНОГ ПАРТНЕРСТВА ВЕРА И  
ДРЖАВЕ)**

**Сажетак**

Овај чланак приказује најважније догађаје из верског живота Мордовије у раним 2000тим и средњим 2010тим годинама, а на основу којих се могу пратити главни трендови у верском домену ове државе. Посебна пажња је дата активностима Руске православне цркве и муслиманске заједнице (имтаһ) на територији Мордовије, као најутицајнијим деноминацијама у региону. Управо су ове две деноминације успоставиле блиску везу и разна друштвена партнерства са владиним агенцијама у Мордовији. Аутор показује да су главни проблеми верског живота Републике Мордовије: покушаји ширења вахабизма у републици, као и ривалство појединачних верских центара муслимана. Међутим, може се рећи да се етно-конфесионална ситуацији у Републици Мордовији у раним 2000тим и средњим 2010тим годинама може описати као стабилна.

**Кључне речи:** Република Мордовија, етно-конфесионална ситуација, конфесионална друштвена партнерства, верски радикализам, црква

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