

**THE KUBAN COSSACKS OF MANYAS TURKEY AND
«THE COSSACKS» OF LEO TOLSTOY**

BEĞLÂN B. TOĞROL

Istanbul University, Turkey.

Abstract

The Kuban Cossacks that have lived for two hundred and fifty years in western Turkey around Lake Manyas to the South of the sea of Marmara is compared with the Terek Cossacks of Caucasia as described by Leo Tolstoy in his novel «The Cossacks». The similarities and differences between these two groups is discussed by the writer of this paper, who had a chance to study the Manyas Cossacks for a period of two months in 1954. The community of Cossacks in Turkey, who were probable descendents of the Dnieper Cossacks, belonged to the Sect of Old Believers who refused to accept the obligatory reforms made in the Russian Orthodox Church approximating the customs of the Greek Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century. Having been persecuted and oppressed and finally excommunicated by the Head of the Official Church during the reign of Tsar Peter I, these deeply religious people chose to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire of Sultan Ahmet the Third, probably around the year 1710. Under the protection of the Ottoman policy of religious liberty and tolerance their community was able to remain faithful to their way of life and to the Sect of Old Believers. Because non-Muslims were not called to military service during the Ottoman Empire the Kuban Cossacks flourished and concentrated all their energy in remarkably efficient economic management for themselves. Tolstoy's Cossacks were probably descendents of the Don Cossacks, who also belonged to the same Sect of Old

Believers, but in contrast to the Manyas Cossacks the Don Cossacks had been militarily organized by the Tsars and were given the duty to protect the Caucasian borders by fighting the rebel tribes around them. The implications of these differences and the similar determination of both communities to observe their Faith and to continue their colourful way of life for centuries is discussed.

Introduction

Change is an inevitable condition of animate life as well as inanimate. We can see with our eyes the day to day changes that occur in the individual child from its birth onwards. The changing seasons bring along changes in the environment; the weather changes, vegetation changes, and animals and insects change. A child born in the summer encounters the discomforts of cold and winter before the first year of its life is out. Change brings development. The dependent baby gradually and patiently develops its individuality and along with it gradually gains its independence. So, change, and through change, development, and through development, independence, are facts of life that a normal healthy individual cannot help but experience.

Groups of people whether they be communities, societies or clans, or nations or states or kingdoms or empires also undergo change. The passage of time brings about changes in their historical and geographical destinities. As a result, their life-styles undergo changes. Change is an almost inevitable feature of the life of groups as well as of individuals. Nevertheless all of us must have come across a particular individual, who, in his lifetime, even though he could not resist the biological changes that he had to endure, has obstinately resisted the intense environmental, social changes that have taken place around him. Such individuals exist like living museums, and they add colour to our society.

The attitudes of a group of people, I think, are usually apt to be less resistant to changes in their surroundings than particular or certain individuals, because a group is inevitably formed of people of different age groups. Even though most of the elderly members

of a group are resistant to change, there are always young members within that group who are, in the majority, open to change. The young people crave change, perhaps because their biological make-up undergoes constant change. Possibly as a result of these pressures, groups of people cannot help but change their life styles with time.

Yet there are some communities in the world that somehow resist this inevitable condition and manage to maintain their life-styles with little or no change at all. In this paper, I shall present such a group of people.

There are hundreds of sociological, anthropological and social psychological studies on isolated primitive groups living in forests and jungles. Whatever the details of such individual groups in general they have not changed because their forest surroundings have imprisoned them within that particular geographical location. Because of lack of contact and communication with other human societies they have only been able to advance as far as their collective imagination and intelligence could carry them. Unchanging geography, lack of contact with different communities, intermarriage inevitably mummify the life-styles of the peoples of such cultures. The group that I am going to present here was a perfectly civilized group of people, not nomadic but happily settled in a village, well-to-do, yet voluntarily and incredibly resistant to changing their culture and their life-styles. Even though they were a Christian community belonging to the sect called the Old Believers¹ (Raskolniki) in Russia, they have lived in that village in the Western part of Muslim Anatolia for about 250 years, out of their own choice, in order to protect themselves against the changes that they would be vulnerable to if they had stayed in their own homeland. This community was called the Kuban Cossacks of Manyas, Turkey which I had the chance to study for about two months in the summer of 1954².

1 Old Believer is a general name for the sects that separated from the Russo-Greek Church in the seventeenth century. Tobacco is one of the things prohibited by their rules.

2 I visited the area with a group from the Department of Psychology, Istanbul University, as part of our training program in socio-cultural psychology as well as collecting data on «cultural-changes». The Professor in charge of

The village was called Kocagöl and was situated in the South-Western shore of the Lake Manyas. According to the information given us by our young Cossack guide or informer from the elders of the village, the community had emigrated there from the Kuban region in Caucasia about 250 years ago at the time of Tsar Peter I. They said they were forced by the Tsar to shave their beards, but since they belonged to the sect of Old Believers they refused to do so, and were excommunicated by Peter's Patriarch, and had to leave their homeland. They were such colourful, different and beautiful people that I could not help being charmed by them and I treasure my memories of that summer of 1954 to this day.

When I first read Leo Tolstoy's novel «The Cossacks: a Tale of 1852» only two years ago, I was struck by the similarities between the culture and life style of the community in a village in Caucasia that he was describing and the community that I had observed for a while in Turkey. In that novel, I felt that I found a written proof of two similar groups of people that have resisted to change the main aspects of their culture for at least over a century. Leo Tolstoy and I were almost the same age when we each met our respective Cossack communities. Young Tolstoy seems to have been enchanted with his Cossack community as I had been with mine, he has even accomplished more than I have done by falling head over heels in love with the young Cossack girl, Maryanka, thus bestowing upon this simple «child of nature», a state of immortality through this book.

But here, the similarity between Tolstoy and myself ends, for Leo Tolstoy is the greatest literary artist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, or most probably of all time. His was a remarkable genius with a great interest in and up to date knowledge of all the sciences of his time as well as the arts. His meticulous observation of life around him in this Cossack village is endowed with brilliant artistry along with perfect scientific realism. This ma-

the project was Prof. Mümtaz Turhan (1908-1968), Ph. D. Frankfurt University (1935) and Cambridge University (1948). Head of Chair and Institute of Experimental Psychology, Istanbul University (1952-1968). His most famous works are «Cultural Changes» (1951, in Turkish), and «Where Are We In Westernization?» (1959). "Translated into English by David Garwood (1965)!"

kes it possible for a humble observer like myself to compare these two Cossack communities and to point out the astounding similarities along with some of the differences between these two groups of people that were in fact brothers but lived 102 years and almost 2000 kilometers apart.

Leo Tolstoy had his pen which never failed him. I, fortunately, owned a camera. With my loyal Kodak-Retina I took some sixty black and white stills of the people I met and some scenes from the village. It is thus perhaps possible for me to demonstrate to you my points as I present them. Before comparing these two communities, I think it imperative to give a short summary of the historical background of these people and their sect of Old Believers. There are quite a number of books written on Cossacks starting with Lesur's *Histoire des Kosaques* published in Paris in 1814, *The Cossacks, Their History and Country* by W.P. Cresson (1919), *Cossacks: The Story of a Warrior People* by M.G. Hindus, (1945). The 9th Edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica* published in 1877 gives a detailed account of the History of Cossacks which is lacking in the later editions. There exists a great deal of literature describing the spirited Cossack life. Among novels N.V. Gogol's *Taras Bulba* and Leo Tolstoy's *Kazaki* that I shall be using here, are the most famous.

Historical Background of the Cossack People and the Sect of Old Believers

Cossacks are certain Russian tribes originally settled on the Southern frontiers of Russia in Europe. They probably derive their name, from the Turkish *Kazak* meaning adventurer, or light-armed soldier-figuratively, a «rebel» or a «free-man». Historically, they are divided into two principal sections, the Cossacks of Little Russia, or the Dnieper, and the Cossacks of Great Russia, or of the Don. The Cossacks of Dnieper seem to have grown up in the 13th and 14th centuries, owing its existence to the confusion caused by the invasion of their land by Batu, Genghis Khan's grandson who formed the Kipchack Khanate also known as The Golden Ordu Khanate, where Islam was the prevailing religion and Turkish the official language. Bands of refugees from the surrounding regions, mainly

with Russian blood in their veins gathered together for mutual defense in the islands of the Dnieper. Their numbers were rapidly increased, and before long they formed a strong and active community. In the 16th century they were the vassals of Poland, but were permitted to retain a number of privileges. In 1571 when their leader was put to death by the Polish King, thousands left the Dnieper region and went to join their brethren on the Don. In the following 17th century, the main body which had remained behind after carrying on a successful war against Poland, put themselves under the protection of Russia.

When Peter I (1689-1725) became the sole ruler of Russia after the death of his mother in 1694 his aim of overtaking the developed countries of Western Europe initiated a series of reforms that affected, in the course of 25 years, every field of the national life - administration, industry, commerce, technology and culture. Beside his useful measures, Peter often enforced superficial Europeanization rather brutally; for example, when he decreed that beards should be shorn and Western dress worn, he personally cut the beards of his boyars and the skirts of their long coats. Merchants and other conservative people were persecuted.

Freedom and independence were necessities to the Cossacks and they had been permitted both under the Polish rule in the 16th and the Russian rule in the 17th centuries to retain a number of their privileges. They had a purely democratic constitution, choosing their leaders every year by popular election. This independent spirit was displayed in their policy and they lent their services in accordance with their interest of the moment either to the Polish King or to Russia or to the Sultan or the Tatar Khan.

The reign of Peter I appeared oppressive to the common people on economic and religious grounds and also through the burden of his endless wars (for 21 years) in the Baltic Area against the Swedes. Peter I also transformed the priesthood into a caste of government religious servants. One of the priests' main tasks was to assist the state in enforcing its laws, particularly those directed against the Old Believers; the church thus became an instrument of persecution and oppression. The Old Believers were Russian religious dissenters who had originally refused to accept the liturgical reforms

imposed upon the Russian Church by the Patriarch of Moscow Nikon which was also supported by Tsar Alexis Romanov in the 17th century. Patriarch Nikon tried to reform the Russian Church by adopting exactly the texts and practices of the Greek Church as they existed in 1652, and this reform was made obligatory for all. But opposition to Nikon's reforms quickly started and was led by a group Muscovite Priests, several of whom were then executed. The dissenters were most numerous in the inaccessible and remote regions of Russia like the east and the south. In some of these places groups have managed to survive to this day, particularly in settlements outside Russia. Opposed to all change, they strongly resisted the shaving of their beards or changing their costumes or any western innovations introduced by Peter I. Old Believers were deeply religious and regarded Peter I as Antichrist. So, during the Swedish War, the famous Cossack Ivan Stevanovitch Mazeppa who was holding the office of Ataman along with his Cossacks, chose to rebel against Peter I and joined the standard of Charles XII of Sweden. But in 1709 Charles XII was defeated by Peter in the battle of Poltava. After defeating the Swedish King, Peter I started to get his revenge on the Cossacks. He deprived them of all their privileges and captured their *setchas* or enclaves on the Dnieper, abolished their military organization, deported them first to Crimea and then to Kuban to defend the Russian frontiers against the Caucasian tribes. Thus, the Dnieper Cossacks after having lived around the Dnieper region which was most probably their second home from the end of the 13th century onwards for about four centuries, had to establish a new homeland for themselves again, this time in Caucasia.

The Cossacks of Manyas, Turkey, probable descendents of the Dnieper Cossacks, must have emigrated to western Turkey roughly around the year 1710/1712 from the Russia of Peter I, to the Ottoman Empire of Sultan Ahmet, The Third, having been excommunicated by the Official Church for their refusal to conform. Under the protection of the Ottoman policy of religious liberty and tolerance their community was able to remain faithful to their way of life and to their sect of Old Believers. Because non-Muslims were not called to military service during the Ottoman Empire, the Kuban Cossacks flourished and concentrated all their energy in their remarkably efficient economic management.

The Cossacks of the Don have all along had more direct connection with the Russian Empire than their brethren of the Dnieper. However, during the reign of Tsar Ivan IV (1530-1584) in the 16th century they had to disperse from their capital Cherkask on the Don, one band pushed eastwards conquering Siberia, another established themselves in the Ural mountains expelling the Tatars from there, while a third found refuge in the Caucasus, where their descendents were known as the Grebenski or Mountain Cossacks. And this was probably the Cossack community that Leo Tolstoy observed in 1852.

There is one major difference between the Kuban Cossacks of Manyas, Turkey and Tolstoy's Terek Cossacks, in that the former were exempt from military service during the Ottoman Empire, whereas the latter were deliberately placed around the borderlands of Caucasia and were militarily organized to protect the borders by fighting rebel tribes around the area. As a result, the former developed into a peaceful society, while the latter retained its warrior-like characteristics, although both groups retained their colourful and harmonious existence.

*The Kocagöl Cossacks of Manyas, Turkey and Novomînsk
Cossacks of Terek, Caucasia*

The Kocagöl Village where the Kuban Cossacks lived was situated on the south-western shores of the Lake Manyas, which is to the south of the Sea of Marmara in Western Anatolia.

In 1954 there were two hundred Cossack houses in Kocagöl, and in the northwest section of the village about forty Bulgarian Turkish immigrants' houses. Altogether about 1250 Cossacks were living in the village. Their houses were built on the two sides of the main road which was parallel to the Lake Manyas and also along two other streets which were at right angles to the main road. The general plan of their one storey adobe whitewashed houses was almost uniform. Their layout was almost square surrounding a yard and garden. On one side were two or three rooms placed side by side with doors opening to the yard and to each other. On the second

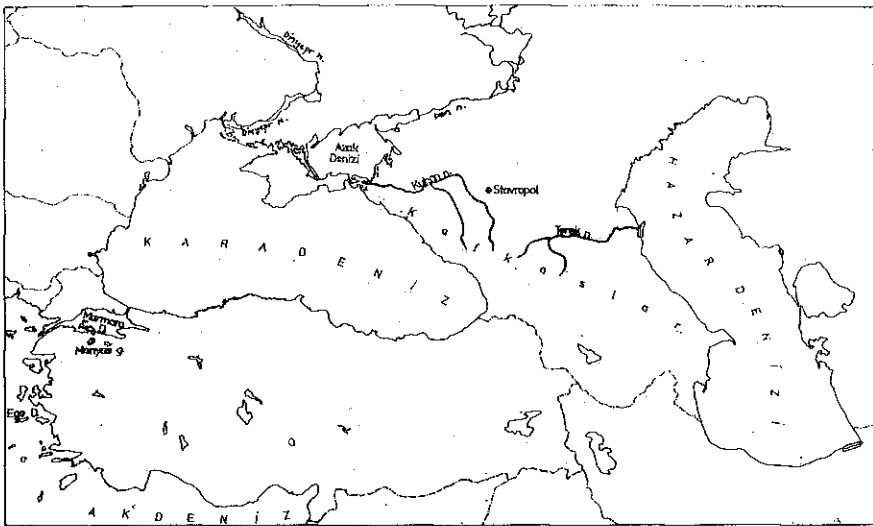


Figure 1. Map of Anatolia and Caucasia showing different homes of the Cossacks.

side was the entrance and the porch and perhaps another room and the closed shed; on the third side were a shed for straw and a lean-to shed; the toilet, kitchen and the garden completed the fourth side of the square. Overlooking the yard and garden was a verandah following the two sides of the house, in which the wedding feasts were usually given. The village elders informed us that their houses used to have thatched roofs up to twenty five years ago, but they now used tiles on their roofs, only the sheds being thatched with reeds. dried dung was used as fuel, and there was another oven for cooking in the kitchen.

The settlements of the Terek Cossacks in 1852 were thus described by Tolstoy :

That whole part of the Terek line (about fifty miles) along which lie the villages of the Grebénsk Cossacks is uniform in character both as to country and inhabitants. The Terek, which separates the Cossacks from the mountaineers, still flows turbid and rapid though already broad and smooth, always depositing greyish sand on its low reedy right bank ... Along the

left bank, back half a mile from the river and standing five or six miles apart from one another, are Cossack villages ... Only a narrow strip about seven hundred yards wide of fertile wooded soil belongs to the Cossacks ... In this fertile wooded strip, rich in vegetation, has dwelt as far back as memory runs the fine warlike and prosperous Russian tribe belonging to the sect of Old Believers, and called the Grébensk Cossacks. Long ago their Old Believer ancestors fled from Russia and settled beyond the Terek among the Chéchens on the Grében, the first range of wooded mountain of Chéchnya. Living among the Chéchens the Cossacks intermarried with them and adopted the manners and customs of the hill tribes, though they still retained the Russian language in all its purity, as well as their Old Faith. A tradition, still fresh among them, declares that Tsar Ivan the Terrible came to the Térék, sent for their Elders, and gave them the land on this side of the river, exhorting them to remain friendly to Russia and promising not to enforce his rule upon them nor oblige them to change their faith. (pp. 176 - 177).

The Cossacks of Turkey also enjoyed complete religious freedom and life style both during the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey.

Novomlinsk village lies about two and a half miles away from the Térék ... On one side of the road which runs through the village is the river; on the other green vineyards and orchards, beyond which are seen the driftsands of the Nogay Steppe ... As one enters the village, one sees below the roof of the gateway written in black letters on a white board : «Houses 266 : male inhabitants 897 : female 1012.» The Cossacks' houses are all raised on pillars two and a half feet from the ground. They are carefully thatched with reeds and have large carved gables. If not new they are at least all straight and clean, with high porches of different shapes; and they are not built close together but have ample space around them, and are all picturesquely placed along broad streets and lanes. In front of the windows of many of the houses, beyond the kitchen gardens, dark green poplars and acacias with their delicate pale verdure and scented white blossoms overtop the houses, and beside them

grow flaunting yellow sunflowers, creepers and grape vines. (pp. 180-181).

The plan and the layout of the houses of the Novomlinsk Cossacks seem to be similar to the Kocagöl Cossacks, a fact which one can discern while reading the story, from certain descriptions such as the one above or below :

Having crossed the yard and entered a cool dark storeroom filled with barrels, Maryanka went on to one of them and repeating the usual prayer plunged a dipper into it. (p. 216).

The choice of the setting of the village of Manyas Cossacks by the Lake was, of course, not accidental since these Cossacks just like the Terek Cossacks depended on agriculture, as well as fishing for their livelihood. Most of the families owned farms of from about 15 - 20 acres up to a thousand acre. They also owned herds of cattle and grazed them on the common pasture of the village. They mostly grew beans, maize, millet and sunflowers. In the gardens all sorts of vegetables, fruits, vines, watermelons, melons and pumpkins are grown. Mostly women worked in the fields and the gardens, whereas



Figure 2. Woman with a heavy burden on her shoulder.

men usually fished in the Lake Manyas during the summer for themselves, and went abroad to other lakes and rivers in Turkey along the Sea of Marmara and the Black Sea Coasts as hired labourers for fishing after summer. The season for going abroad as hired labourers (they used the Turkish word *Gurbet* for this event) started with the beginning of Autumn and lasted to the end of Spring. The whole community was prosperous, well-fed and skillful. Even though they did not use modern equipment, they were able to make and repair the simple tools that they used for farming and gardening like the plough, spade, fork, shovel or the pick-axe or their nets for fishing.

Tolstoy :

A Cossack's livelihood is derived from vineyards, fruit-gardens, water melon and pumpkin plantations, from fishing, hunting, maize and millet growing, and from war plunder. The Cossack looks upon a woman as an instrument for his welfare ... A married woman has to work for her husband from youth to very old age : his demands on her are the Oriental ones of submission and labour. In consequence of this outlook women are strongly developed both physically and mentally, and though they are - as everywhere in the East - nominally in subjection, they possess far greater influence and importance in family-life than Western women. Their exclusion from public life and inurement to heavy male labour give the women all the more power and importance in the household. (pp. 180, 179).

The population of the two Cossack settlements are almost similar. Their religion, probably their language (The Cossacks of Manyas spoke an old Slavic dialect), their occupation for their livelihood as well as their attitude towards their womenfolk seem to have been the same. However, there is a difference in their marriage habits in that the Grébensk Cossacks have seemingly mixed with the Chechen Turks of Caucasia whereas, the Manyas Cossacks have been reluctant to intermarry with the Turks of this area. Possibly due to their small numbers in this area, intermarriage might have brought about gradual assimilation, hence their reluctance to intermarry. But, in 1954 the community in Turkey was faced with a grave problem. Their Old Believer Faith would not permit young people who were cousins to get married. The couples had to be seven generations

apart (*yedinci göbek*) in order to be able to obtain marriage permission from their Priest, who meticulously kept a demographical record of his flock and could easily calculate the generation gap between intending couples. Since they had been intermarrying among themselves for two hundred and fifty years, there were very few families left that were so many generations apart from each other. By 1954 their priest had slackened this restriction up to the fifth generation, but even this step was not sufficient to solve the problems of all the members of the younger generation.

The Cossack women of Manyas had completely kept the style of their costumes since their arrival to Manyas two hundred and fifty years ago. They wore a very colourful assortment of skirts and blouses, vests of the Circassian type with red, yellow, pink and green being the dominant colours. Elderly men and bridegrooms wore a Circassian shirt and a *besmet* on it. Young men preferred modern shirts and trousers in everyday life but had to wear their particular Circassian shirt and their *besmet* or *kaftan* on festive days. Women covered their heads by tying either coloured or white scarves around them and usually went about bare footed. Cossack men unlike the women preferred to wear shoes all the time. The children were also dressed in the same colourful fashion.

The people of the village struck one with their beauty. Mostly, blonds with either blue or green eyes, the women had very sweet faces, especially young girls with shapely bodies in their lovely costumes carried themselves like princesses rather than rural peasants. The men were tall and handsome. I quote from Tolstoy :

Novomlinsk village was considered the very heart of Grebénsk Cossackdom. In it more than elsewhere the customs of the old Grebénsk population have been preserved, and its women have from time immemorial been renowned all over the Caucasus for their beauty ... A striking feature of a Grébénsk woman's beauty is the combination of the purest Circassian type of face with the broad and powerful build of Northern women. Cossack women wear the Circassian dress - a Tartar smock, *besmet*, and soft slippers - but they tie their kerchiefs round their heads in the Russian fashion. Smartness, cleanliness and elegance in dress and in the arrangement of their huts, are with them a cus-

tom and a necessity. In their relations with men the women, and especially the unmarried girls, enjoy perfect freedom ... The beautiful and shapely Maryanka enters at the gate and throwing away her switch quickly slams the gate to and rushes with all the speed of her nimble feet to separate and drive the cattle into their sheds. «Take off your slippers, you devil's wench!» shouts her mother, «you've worn them into holes!» Maryanka is not at all offended at being called a devil's wench», but accepting it as a term of endearment cheerfully goes on with her task. Her face is covered with a kerchief tied round her head. She is wearing a pink smock and a green beshmet. She disappears inside the lean-to shed in the yard, following the big fat cattle; and from the shed comes her voice as she speaks gently and persuasively to the buffalo ... (pp. 180, 183).

For a man, to be smartly dressed means to be dressed like a Circassian. The best weapons are obtained from the hillsmen and the best horses are bought, or stolen, from them. A dashing young Cossack likes to show off his knowledge of Tartar, and when carousing talks Tartar even to his fellow Cossack. (p. 178).

Most of the older people could not speak any Turkish or understand very little Turkish. The younger generation, however, spoke Turkish and was proud of it. A primary school had been opened in the village six years ago, so all the youngsters were able to learn Turkish.

The community being very religious, all went to Church on Sundays and afterwards went to the Village Mill, the grounds of which was considered a leisurely promenade ground for the young. Here the girls arm in arm walked in their colourful costumes cracking sunflower seeds, giggling and ignoring the young men. The young men, also walked side by side talking by themselves, also cracking sunflower seeds and obviously eyeing the girls who pretended to pay no attention to them.

The Manyas Cossacks consumed large amounts of fish, mostly made into soups by also adding vegetables, beans, pilav and flour soups. They invariably drank wine and spirits (ethyl alcohol) every



Figure 3. The girls promenading at the mill, cracking sunflower seeds.

day. Smoking was prohibited. Among them there was just one man who smoked a pipe. He was a deviant character, yet was tolerated by his group because he acted as mediator between the patrons of fisheries and the village labourers for the *gurbet* season. On festive occasions like weddings or holidays, all the inhabitants of the village invariably overdrank. Even the *babushkas* (old women) of the village were tipsy and joined the dancing on the streets and merry-making. I know, for I was urged to join them as their friend, *kumak* several times during their weddings, an obligation and honour which no *kumak* and later on a «special matron» (*sagdich*) at a wedding had a right to refuse. The weddings usually took place after the harvest and lasted for three days. It was a very festive occasion more or less the whole village taking part in the festivities. The wedding festivities started after the church ceremony which was very long, full of rituals and very complicated. The first evening after the ceremony a banquet was given in the bride's home to the womenfolk of the bridegroom. On the second day a banquet was given to the mem-

bers of both households and more or less to almost all the villagers. Bride and the bride groom stood side by side and offered the wine one by one to all guests. The third day another banquet was given again in the bridegroom's house, this time to the menfolk. The bridegroom's family had to offer presents such as wine and foodstuffs to the bride's family. Both the bride and the bridegroom wore very beautiful, colourful Circassian costumes, the *beshmet* of the bridegroom being made of a special silk material.

Afterwards, in the whole of following week the bride and the bridegroom had to pay a visit to all the members of their families and the village elders. The weddings so profoundly reflected the simplicity, happiness, well-being and the contentment of the whole community that noone could help to be carried away by it.

Actually, it is scenes from everyday life and Tolstoy's artistic rendering of them that fills one with a sense of déjà-vu rather than historical facts or quantitative data about these people.



Figure 4. A newly wed Cossack couple.

I quote from Tolstoy :

Few people are to be seen in the streets of the village on week-days ... but the village becomes very animated at that time of the evening. From all sides, walking, riding, or driving in their creaking carts, people move towards the village. Girls with their smocks tucked up and twigs in their hands run chatting merrily to the village gates to meet the cattle that are crowding together in a cloud of dust and mosquitoes which they bring with them from the steppe. The well-fed cows and buffaloes disperse at a run all over the streets and Cossack women in coloured beshmets go to and fro among them. You can hear their merry laughter and shrieks mingling with the lowing of the cattle ... Cossack children, spinning their tops wherever there is a smooth place in the street, are shrieking ... From every chimney rises the odorous kisyak³ smoke. From every homestead comes the sound of increased bustle, precursor to the stillness of night ... (p. 181, 182).

The cattle having been attended to and left for the night, the women came out and gathered at the corners of the streets and, cracking sunflower seeds with their teeth, settled down on the earthen embankments of the houses. Later on Maryanka, having finished milking the buffalo and the other two cows, also joined one of these groups. The group consisted of several women and girls and one old Cossack man ... (p. 217).

Maryanka answered his greeting with a leisurely bow of her head, settled down on the earth-bank, and took some seeds out of the bosom of her smock. Lukashka, keeping his eyes fixed on Maryanka, slowly cracked seeds and spat out the shells ... (p. 219).

The Cossack spends most of his time in the cordon, in action, or in hunting and fishing. He hardly ever works at home. When he stays in the village it is an exception to the general rule and then he is holiday - making. All Cossacks make their own wine, and drunkenness is not so much a general tendency as a rite,

3 Kisyak, fuel made of straw and manure.

the non-fulfilment of which would be considered apostasy. (pp. 178-179).

The young Cossack of Manyas did not have to spend his time in the cordon or in action; yet he too stayed away from the village and the women folk, preferring to go away to works as a hired labourer during the fishing season after summer.

To continue,

The next day was a holiday. In the evening all the villagers, their holiday clothes shining in the sunset, were out in the street. That season more wine than usual had been produced and the people were now free from their labours. In a month the Cossacks were to start on a campaign and in many families preparations were being made for weddings. Most of the people were standing in the square in front of the Cossack government Office and near the two shops, in one of which cakes and pumpkin seeds were sold, in the other kerchiefs and cotton prints. On the earth embankment of the office-building sat or stood the



Figure 5. Old Cossacks of Kocagöl.

old men in sober grey, or black coats without gold trimmings or any kind of ornament. They conversed among themselves quietly in measured tones, about the harvest, about the young folk, village affairs, and about old times, looking with dignified equanimity at the younger generation. Passing by them, the women and girls stopped and bent their heads. The young Cossacks respectfully slackened their pace and raised their caps, holding them for a while over their heads. The old men then stopped speaking. Some of them watched the passers-by severely, others kindly, and in their turn slowly took off their caps and put them on again.

The Cossack girls had not yet started dancing their *khorovods*, but having gathered in groups, in their bright coloured *beshments* with white kerchiefs on their heads pulled down to their eyes, they sat either on the ground or on the earth-banks about the huts sheltered from the oblique rays of the sun, and laughed and chattered in their ringing voices. Little boys and girls playing in the square sent their balls high up into clear sky, and ran about squealing and shouting. The half-grown girls had started dancing their *khorovods*, and were timidly singing in their thin shrill voices ... Here and there the songs of tipsy Cossacks who were merry-making could already be heard. All the huts were closed; the porches had been scrubbed clean the day before. Even the old women were out in the street, which was everywhere sprinkled with pumpkin and melon seed-shells. The air was warm and still, the sky deep and clear. Beyond the dead-white mountain range, which seemed very near, was turning rosy in the glow of the evening sun ... (pp. 310-312).

Olenin had been pacing the yard all that morning hoping to see Maryanka. But she, having put on holiday clothes, went to Mass at the chapel and afterwards sat with the other girls on the earth-embankment cracking seeds; sometimes again, together with her companions, she ran home ... (p. 312).

He passed by the corner where she was sitting in her shining blue satin *beshmet* ... (p. 312).

The Outcome of Religious Restrictions : Back to Caucasia

The religious restrictions for finding suitable mates within the community and the fear of incest gradually grew into serious dimensions for the whole community each year. Finally, in 1958 the Soviet Government, aware of the troubles of the community, offered them resettlement in the Caucasus. This must have been a general policy of the Soviet Government at the time for similar communities from as far apart as Brazil and China were also offered the same opportunity. Decisions had to be made within the community; permission had to be obtained from the Turkish Government; and the other preparations took about four years and in 1962 a special ship sent by the Soviet Government anchored at the port of Istanbul and carried about one thousand of these deeply religious souls back to Caucasia. The Soviet government divided the Villagers into five sub-groups and distributed and settled them in five different villages in the Levakinski Rayon of Stavropolski Kray. They are now mostly occupied with agriculture and gardening and since there does not exist a lake or a river nearby they can not go about fishing any more. The elderly still wear their same national costumes, keep their Faith and the younger generation has a chance to choose any mate that he pleases in Caucasia - without fear of incest. Some two hundred and fifty persons from those families that did not dare to go to Russia were accepted by the United States. Unfortunately, I could not keep track of this group. Only a very few of them stayed behind, and through some of them I know that my friends at the Stavropolski district still get tipsy, make merry and go about dancing at weddings. Thus ends the saga of this astonishing community.

Discussion

These Cossack people present a rare example of an extremely conservative group of people that have consciously preferred cultural stability to cultural change throughout their known history. They have been able to preserve this stability by moving away from any environment, when they felt any threat from it towards their life styles, however happily and prosperously they may have been

settled there. They seem to have successfully resisted any changes that their environments have offered them through the passage of time and through the events of history. They have probably been able to satisfy their love of freedom and independence by jealously preserving the rules of their particular Faith and their customs in a group that has a strong sense of belonging together. Their social structure was tightly knit and their family relationships very clearly differentiated. Thus, they were able to protect their identity and through it their self-esteem. Neither the Tsar Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century, nor the Tsar Peter the Fool (as they called him) in the 17th century could conquer them. The womenfolk of the community seem to have contributed substantially towards this end. For generations they must have been greatly responsible for the strict conditioning of the children to the norms of their Faith and their customs. The women were regular churchgoers, were very conservative in their costumes, still keeping the style of at least a century ago, and showed complete obedience and submission to the ways of their men and community. They have meticulously learned and taught to their children the rituals of every mode of Cossack life. The young were taught to understand the basic laws of their life-styles and no criticism was ever allowed to be levelled against the accepted modes of Cossack behaviour. With some imagination, considering the conversion of the Kievan Rus to Christianity by mass baptism in the Dnieper in 988 as a starting point, we can accept that the Faith of these early believers has survived for a thousand years to this day through the practices of these Old Believers.

They have been able to preserve it by banning any change in their non material culture and by also resisting even small and seemingly harmless changes in their material culture as well. For they must have felt that once the process of alteration starts it never ceases. Yet, the question of why these Cossack people, who were neither primitive, nor nomadic or illiterate, should choose resistance to any change as the goal of their existence, is hard to answer.

Tolstoy says,

This small Christian clan stranded in a corner of the earth, surrounded by half savage Mohammedan tribes and by soldiers,

considers itself highly advanced, acknowledges none but Cossacks as human beings ... (p. 178).

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