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“Who Are Tolkoviny”: In Regard to the Economic Structure of the Old Russian Population in the Carpatho-Dniestrovian Lands

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«Яже суть толковины»: к проблеме хозяйственного уклада древнерусского населения Карпато-Днестровских земель

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The descendants of Tivertsy, Ulichy and Croats founded the Principality of Halych and played an important part in creating the Old Russian statehood, in the formation of Old the Russian nation and the ethnogeny of the Ukrainian, Polish, Hungarian, Moldavian and Romanian peoples.

A number of Carpathian Rus' inhabitants living in the heterodox and foreign language environment managed to retain their ethnic and cultural identity and self-appellation of “Rusins (Rusyns)” up to this day.

One of the challenges facing contemporary historiography is the study of the evolution and continuity of the economic system set-up by East Slavic (Old Russian) population and their Rusin (Rusnak) descendants who inhabit the Carpathian-Dniester region.

In 907 AD Prince Igor embarked on a campaign against Greeks. Along with the other tribes participating in the campaign, the Tivertsy were mentioned as “those who are the Tolkovins”.

The word “Tolkovins” can be found in the description of Grand Duke Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich's dream from “The Tale of Igor's Campaign” (the 12th century).

The last time Tivertsy were mentioned in the Russian chronicle is

circa 944 AD, when they, together with the other tribes, took part in Prince Igor's campaign against Greeks. A little earlier, about 940 AD, Uliches were mentioned for the last time.

But the chronicler mentions the Russian population of the Carpatho-Dniester lands later too. In 1223, right before the beginning of the Battle of the Kalka River, the Russian Army was reinforced by the "Galician Vygottsy" who came just on time.

The debate over interpreting the notions of "Tolkovins" and "Vygottsy" mentioned in the chronicle, has not abated until now. It is based on a linguistic approach.

As to "Tolkovins", the majority of researchers adhere to two opinions: the word means either allies (or assistants) or interpreters/translators.

The supporters of these theories thoroughly analysed both their own and their opponents' theories, and the arguments they produced raised doubts about the validity of both theories.

In Prince Oleg's Army there were the Viaticy and the other tribes which, not being part of Rus at that time, were in fact Oleg's allies and helped the Kievan prince. Let us recall that, as the chronicle states, in 885 AD Prince Oleg waged war against the Tivertsy and probably conquered them. It is most doubtful that the whole tribe could have served as interpreters.

316 years later the "Galician Vygottsy" who lived in the Carpatho-Dniester lands were mentioned in the chronicle. One of the most common points of view is that this refers to the exiled boyars (nobles). Moreover, it is not known who and when was banished to Ponizie: boyars fled mainly to Hungary. Then after the death of Prince Roman Mstislavich they came back and supported various claimants to the Galician throne, were very influential and influenced Prince Mstislav the Bold too. The inhabitants in Ponizie were loyal to the prince (e.g. the coming of "Vygottsy" to participate in the Battle of the Kalka River and the departure of Prince Mstislav to reign in Ponizie).

As we can see, the Ponizie population that lived in close proximity to the Cumans (Polovtsi) had significant military forces (which could "drive out" anyone) and took an active part in all-Russian affairs. V.T. Pashuto estimated the numerical force of the "Black Sea Vygottsy's" army participating in the Battle of the Kalka River as much as 30,000 to 40,000 people. Even if the chronicler exaggerated the size of the army, it was still a fairly large military contingent whose commanders enjoyed prestige.

Thus, the version of the Galician Vygottsy being "exiles" was not confirmed.

V. D. Koroliuk had previously raised the issue of cattle and sheep

breeding by the Slavs. He highlighted as particularly notable the contact zone including contemporary Moldavia (the Prut-Dniester interfluvium). Constant interaction of nomadic, agricultural and pastoral economies and cultures resulted here in ethnic and socio-economic synthesis and greatly influenced the formation of statehood and ethnic groups. Based on the evidence that Slavs had pastoral and agricultural economy, which had been noted in the works of ancient authors, the researcher believed that since ancient times the Slavs had had two types of economy: agriculture and cattle and sheep breeding. Agriculture was certainly the main economic activity.

Indeed, the word "toloka" (joint work) has another meaning in a number of Russian and Rusin dialects and in Ukrainian, which is a pasture or a cattle range; the word "common" is its synonym. Accordingly, their derivatives "tolkoviny" and "vygontsy" might mean "herdsmen" and "stock-farmers".

Thus, we discuss the specific type of economic and cultural ways and customs of the population, the type that had evolved on the territory of Carpathian Rus' and was different from the types of economic and cultural life in the other regions of Rus'. Besides agriculture, the local population was actively engaged in stock-breeding and the chroniclers thought it appropriate to emphasize the fact. A lot of researchers noted that stock-breeding played a significant part in the life of the local population.

Volokhs (Vlachs) appeared in the territory between the Carpathians and the Dniester in the middle of the 12th century. The word "vlach" – "volokh" – "wallach" is of a Slavic origin. At that time it primarily meant an occupation (herdsmen and stockbreeders) and another meaning was "ethnos". Later this word which entered all major Slavic languages was applied to anyone who was engaged in cattle and sheep breeding.

The Rusins of the Carpatho-Dniestrovian region took an active part in the Vallachian "colonization". Migrants were often referred to as Valachi et Rutheni or Valachi seu Rutheni in the documents written in Latin and issued in the Hungarian Kingdom. Herdsmen of Rusin origin from the East Carpathians were called Ruthenians.

In the second half of the 14th century, the Vallachian-Ruthenian (Rusin) Moldavian United Principalities, officially called the United Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, were established in the Carpatho-Dniestrovian lands. The Moldavian ethnos originated from the Vallachian and Rusin ethno-cultural contacts.

In the Middle Ages, stock breeding was one of the main agricultural activities in Moldavia. Moldavian archeologist G. B. Fedorov deemed that if we compared the archeological map of East Slavic settlements

on both banks of the Prut river and the Prut-Dniester interfluve in the 9th – 13th centuries, with the map of the borders of the medieval Moldavian Principality, those two maps would be basically the same.

Keywords

Eastern Slavs, Tivertsy, Uliches, Khorvats, Tolkoviny, Vygontsy, shepherds, Galician Principality, Galician Rus', Volokhs, Rusins, Vallachian colonization, Moldavian Principality, Moldavia, Carpathian Rus'.