

The Midwest Slavic Association and The Ohio State University Center for Slavic and East European Studies (CSEES)

Dr Tanya Filosofova
Lecturer in Russian
University of Kentucky
Modern and Classical Languages
POT 1049, Lexington, KY 40506
Tel: 859-257-7013
E-mail: tatiana.filosofova@uky.edu

Orthodoxy versus Globalization: The Russian Old Believers in Eastern Europe today

Throughout the centuries, the Russian Old Believers, often living in a foreign and hostile environment, were able both to preserve their own unique cultural identity and find ways of settling down and integrating into their new environment. They also created their own rich literature, folklore, art and culture. Currently, an estimated 10 million Russian Old Believers live in enclosed groups in many countries around the world, including the USA, Canada, Latin America and many European countries. I believe that the study of all aspects of the history and culture of the Russian Old Believer communities is very beneficial for us today, as they can provide us with valuable lessons of the peaceful integration and preservation of the unique cultural identity of an ethnic and religious minority group at the time of ethnic and religious tensions. In my paper I aim to examine how this Orthodox community, that has consciously rejected much of modernity, adapts to contemporary society that favours innovation and integration. I would look at main aspects of everyday life of Russian Old Believer communities today, e.g. customs, traditions, popular beliefs, education etc. In particular, I would focus on the Russian Old Believers in Latvia. This community is fully functioned, well preserved and one of strongest and largest the Old Believers community in Eastern Europe.