

*A. Novik, Yu. Buchatskaya,  
A. Dugushina, D. Ermolin, M. Morozova*

**“PRIAZOVSKIY OTRYAD”.  
LANGUAGE AND CULTURE  
OF ALBANIANS IN UKRAINE**

**Summary**

**Part I  
Volume 1**

***Alexander A. Novik. Albanians in Ukraine, “Priazovskiy otryad”,  
Balkan mountains and Black Sea steppes: myths and stereotypes. Preface***

The Preface tells the history of the ethnographic fieldwork unit “Priazovskiy otryad” (1948–2016) that studied the traditional culture and language of the Albanians of the Budjak and Priazovye regions. Yulia Vladimirovna Ivanova (1929–2006) was the founder and organizer of this academic project. Her first fieldwork trip to the region took place in 1948. In the years that followed, her initiative was continued by a group of young researchers who have contributed to Yulia Ivanova’s work by means of this volume. The Preface outlines the main research objectives, explains the significance of the topic and pays attention to the current state of affairs in both the western part of the Balkans (where the majority of Albanians live) and the villages with Albanian populations in Ukraine. The aim of this work is to give a thorough analysis of the maintenance of traditional culture by the local Albanian community and to describe their dialect, from the time of their migration to the Russian Empire up to the present day. We see the significance of this work in studying the given Albanian community in an ethnically mixed environment and in identifying conditions for preservation of the group ethnic attributes under the circumstances of active language and cultural contacts in multiethnic regions where tradition tends to wither away quickly, giving way to a set of novel supra-ethnic realities.

## **Chapter I. ALBANIANS IN UKRAINE: THE HISTORY OF ETHNIC GROUP AND ITS STUDY**

### ***Alexander A. Novik. Albanians in Budjak and Priazovye regions: facts and figures***

This section contains basic information on the demographic dynamics of Albanians in Ukraine and places of their settlement in the area between the Prut and Dniester rivers and in Priazovye regions (today's Odessa and Zaporizhia oblasts). It also discusses the main milestones of colonization of these territories by migrant groups originating from the Balkans. Based on the previous literature and his own archival research and ethnographic data, the author reconstructs the places of original settlement of the Ukrainian Albanians' ancestors in South-Eastern Albania and discovers the routes of their migration to the north-east of Bulgaria and then, in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, to the Russian Empire. He concludes with an inquiry into the purposes of this resettlement. This section relies on the available statistics on the number of Albanians in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as on heretofore unpublished data from rural household registers and other sources collected during fieldwork. The author meticulously analyzes the phenomenon of the preservation of the ethno-local Albanian community surrounded by alien cultures and languages for about 500 years. The core findings of the section are supported with numerous narratives and archival documents that illustrate changing stereotypes and approaches of the Albanians of Ukraine towards their own history, tradition, language, and culture.

### ***Denis S. Ermolin, Maria S. Morozova. History of ethnographic and linguistic research of Albanians in Ukraine***

This section reviews the history of almost a century's research on the language and culture of Albanians in Ukraine starting with academician Nikolay Derzhavin's pioneering studies (in the 1910s-40s) and proceeding all the way to the most recent ethnographic and linguistic research based on the materials collected during numerous multipurpose fieldwork trips to the Albanian villages in Ukraine undertaken by the authors of this volume. Whenever possible, the main milestones of the history of research and the names of those researchers who devoted their attention to study the Albanian ethnic community in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods are given in chronological order: the contributions of Yulia V. Ivanova, Nadezhda V. Kotova, Oleg S. Shirokov and Lyudmila Ya. Demko; fieldwork and publications of the Leningrad / Saint Petersburg school of Albanian studies (Agnia V. Desnitskaya, Gertruda I. Eintrei, Irina I. Voronina, Aleksey P. Sytov, Lubov V. Sharapova, Alvina V. Zhugra, Marina V. Domosiletskaya, Aleksander Yu. Rusakov, and others). Currently, apart from regular fieldwork trips to the

Albanian villages and numerous publications concerning traditional culture, dialect, and identity issues of the Albanians in Ukraine, of particular importance are the joint projects of Russian and foreign scholars, museum and archival activities in MAE RAS, as well as the initiatives of native intelligentsia in studying their own language and culture on the local level. The list of references for this section could be regarded as a relatively full overview of ethnographic and linguistic research on Albanians in Ukraine both in Russia and abroad (see also “The List of authors’ publications on the Albanians in Ukraine”).

***Alexander A. Novik, Yulia V. Buchatskaya. How it was: History, methods, everyday issues and secrets of fieldwork studies in Priazovye and Budjak***

This section provides an attempt at a reflexive analysis of “Priazovski otryad” fieldwork experience over the years. It consists of two parts and is structured as a debate between the head of the project and one of the participants who intransigently expresses a number of dissenting viewpoints. Attention has been paid not only to the popular genre of critical analysis of fieldwork methodology and management of ethnographic expeditions, but also to relatively new issues discussed within the Russian anthropological community, such as subjective aspects of ethnographic study (relationships within the fieldwork crew, relationships between researchers and interlocutors), critical reflection on productivity versus lack of productivity in the methods of research selected, missed opportunities, and unmet expectations. The discussants have also thoroughly reflected on some issues of everyday life and communication within the expedition crew revealing the materiality, or even “physiological-ness”, of that research process that usually remains unmentioned and hidden from readers.

***Maria S. Morozova, Alexander A. Novik. A Short history of Albanian villages in Ukraine: Facts and myths***

The first part of this section gives the history of resettlement of the ancestors of today’s Albanians living in Ukraine from the southeast of Albanian lands to northeastern Bulgaria, and then to the Russian Empire — first, to the steppes of Budjak and later on to the region of the Azov sea. The authors’ aim is to summarize and consistently describe the available material on this issue found in the documents of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (statistics collected by P. Köppen, A. Klaus, A. Skalkowski, et al.), early works on “Arnaut resettlement” authored by K. Jireček, L. Miletich, V. Marinov, D. Yaranov, and archival data and studies published by N. Derzhavin, as well as researchers from Leningrad / Saint Petersburg (A. Desnitskaya, L. Sharapova, A. Zhugra) and Odessa (Andrey V. Shabashov). The second part of the section is devoted to historical myths within the Albanian community in Ukraine, i.e. legends, local stories and narratives about their own

history that have been transmitted within the community until now. Here we become acquainted with the thoughts and beliefs of Albanians living in Ukraine about their historical homeland, resettlement from the Balkans to the Russian Empire, and the foundation of the village of Karakurt, which was followed by a new resettlement of part of the population eastwards and the foundation of the three new villages. The material for the analysis was recorded in the Albanian villages during our fieldwork trips in 1998–2013.

***Alexander A. Novik, Yulia V. Buchatskaya. The Identity of Albanians in Ukraine: Self-appellation, self-ascription and components of collective historical memory in historic, linguistic and extra-linguistic contexts***

This section comprises a wide range of issues that concern the perception by Albanians in Ukraine of their own position within the ethnically mixed regions of Priazovye and Budjak. We have tried to analyze the historical aspect of cohabitation of originally Balkan communities in the Russian Empire with each other, and later on with their Russian and Ukrainian neighbors during the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Our attention is also focused on the genesis of mutual cultural stereotypes, dynamics of marital preferences and language choices in the given community. The self-ascription issue among the Albanians in Ukraine is also analyzed: the main point here is the lack of an endo-ethnonym, leading to a situation where command of the local dialect becomes the main criterion of community belonging. Linguistic data have also helped to advance the hypothesis about the place of “exodus” of Ukrainian Albanians and support the idea that this original place could have been the region of Devoll in southeastern Albania. Confessional and local identities are also of crucial importance for the Albanian community in Ukraine. Their Orthodox religious affiliation was one of the main factors that determined the migration of Balkan colonists to the Empire of common faith in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Christian relics (crosses, icons) that are inherited in Albanian families, together with the language, have added to a set of identity symbols which help the community to cherish attachments to the home villages and their founders.

## **Chapter II. TRADITIONS AND PRACTICES IN THE CULTURE OF ALBANIANS IN UKRAINE**

### *Family rites and lifespan*

***Alexandra S. Dugushina. Birth rites among the Albanians in Ukraine***

This section is devoted to the analysis of traditional beliefs and practices concerning child delivery in the Albanian community in Ukraine. The ethno-

graphic material was collected by the author during six fieldwork trips to the Albanian villages in Priazovye (2007–2011) and one visit to the village of Karakurt (2013). Notably, it reflects the experience of the interlocutors in previous time periods when trained medical personnel and maternity homes were absent in the countryside (the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century). This section includes the description of beliefs and practices associated with the pregnancy period and the period after child birth (the first 40 days after the delivery, birth celebrations), peculiarities of traditional obstetric aid given by village midwives, and socialization rites (baptism, name-giving and the institution of godparents). Some parts of this section describe the set of rules of dealing with a newborn, charms and amulets (against water witches, evil eye, etc.), and special techniques of baby care (swaddling, bathing, bringing to the cradle, ritual salting, breast-feeding). Particular attention is paid to the topics that are connected to folk magic practices and mythology: beliefs about the spirits of Fate and ritual abandonment of a baby. The comparative analysis of the birth rites practiced by ethnic communities of the region (Bulgarians, Gagauz, Russians and Ukrainians) and the people living in the Balkans (primarily Albanians) helps to identify among the birth rites of Albanians in Ukraine specific traits that are, on the one hand, a result of long-standing interethnic contacts, and on the other — archaic survivals. The analysis of ethnographic data is accompanied by an analysis of lexicon, speech formulae, and expressions that mark ritually important aspects of birth rites.

**Alexander A. Novik. *Babin day* (Old Women's day) in the culture of Albanians in Priazovye: at the crossroads of spatial and temporal aspects**

This section analyses *Babin day* (Old Women's day, Alb. dial. *A bábos díta*) — the feast of midwives and their patients — which was celebrated among Albanians in Priazovye till the 1970–80s and can still be observed in the region of Budjak. This feast is deeply connected to the birthing process and the socialization of women and girls. It is still very popular in Bulgaria, where, according to our research, the Albanian colonists appropriated the practice of its observance. Nowadays we can speak about several different motivations and versions of this celebration in Priazovye in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: from the honouring of the village midwife by the women of the community (in the village of Devninskoe) to simply presenting gifts to the eldest woman in the village (in Georgievka). However, in all cases the tradition of ritually venerating fertility and woman's ability to give birth remains central. The narratives recorded by the author show one especially significant feature of the celebration, namely, ritual humour. During the performance of ritual humour everything (including what is usually prohibited or tabooed) is allowed. This is because uncontrolled festivities with jokes, mockery, and pranks are regarded as an expected form of behaviour that cor-

responds to the successful and correct honouring of midwives and eldest women in the Albanian villages.

**Alexander A. Novik. Wedding rites and marital traditions  
among the Albanians in Ukraine**

This section is devoted to the analysis of the institution of marriage (the choice of a spouse, economic and social conditions of marriage, local factors, ethnic stereotypes, etc.) and wedding rites of Albanians in Ukraine in the late 19<sup>th</sup> — early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Marriage is one of the main events that drastically changes not only the life of the bridal couple, but also that of their families and relatives, of the whole local community, and in some cases even that of the wider circle of relatives and the region. The ethnographic data collected during fieldwork help the author to reconstruct the performative code of wedding rites by describing in detail the succession of wedding actions in the 1940s regarded by reliable interlocutors as being most “traditional and Albanian”. This section provides an extensive list of lexical units concerning wedding and marriage traditions and rites and also a number of narratives recorded in Albanian and Russian from interlocutors born between 1900 and 2000. These materials help to analyze the current transformation in language and culture. Wedding rites within the Albanian community in Ukraine are drastically affected by out-group ethnic influence (Bulgarian, Gagauz, Russian and Ukrainian) and recent globalization processes, leading to significant structural changes and innovations. Given the increasing disappearance of traditional culture, the author considers it important to describe wedding rites documented by the rich corpus of fieldwork notes and observations. This section is supplemented by a large number of photographs made by Yulia V. Ivanova in 1949 in Priazovye that are kept in the Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology RAS (Moscow).

**Denis S. Ermolin. Death rites, commemorative rites and burial culture**

This section is devoted to the traditional beliefs and practices connected to death, dying, bereavement and burial in the Albanian community in Ukraine. The ethnographic data were collected and recorded during several fieldwork trips to Albanian villages in the region of Priazovye and Budjak (2007–2011). This section covers a wide range of issues related to these topics: the concepts of fate and prognosticators of death, stages of preparation for burial and the funeral itself, memorial rites and the organization of cemetery space. Some parts are aimed at analyzing the role of the priest and the characteristics of funerals of the unbaptized, the unmarried, and suicides.

The author has paid special attention to the tradition of memorial rituals on certain fixed days throughout the year and its transformation during the

20<sup>th</sup> century. This section also contains an analysis of cemetery culture in the villages of Georgievka and Karakurt. This work helped to follow the process of tombstone transformation and establish the main principles of the spatial planning of cemeteries in the Albanian community in Ukraine.

The Balkan traits (beliefs and practices) of death rites function as strong ethnic and local identity markers. These cultural elements bear resemblance to and have much in common with funeral traditions found throughout the Balkan Peninsula.

## Volume 2

### Chapter III. FOLK MEDICINE

***Alexander A. Novik, Yulia V. Buchatskaya. Folk medical practices as a life sustaining resource in the villages of Georgievka, Devninskoe and Gammovka***

This section is devoted to the description of different domestic healing practices with improvised means and the analysis of cases when medical treatment is sought from folk healers (all of whom are women) that work in the Albanian community in Ukraine. The ethnographic material is compared with the traditions of Bulgarian folk medicine. This section includes a wide scope of data collected by means of participant observation, several interviews with folk healers, and texts of verbal spells. Maintenance of self-treatment practices and the popularity of these folk healers are analyzed taking into account the local level resource scarcity: In the case of Albanians in Ukraine, the village communities lack professional medical care, the technical equipment of medical stations, mobility, and money.

### Chapter IV. FOLK COSTUME

***Alexander A. Novik. Albanian folk costume in the regions of Priazovye and Budjak***

For the first time several sets of Albanian traditional costumes are thoroughly described and analyzed in comparison with the traditional dresses of Bulgarians who moved to the Russian Empire in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Albanians living in the village of Mandritsa, who left the southeastern Albanian lands in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. A long-existing myth, which asserts that Albanians and

Bulgarians in Priazovye wore similar clothes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> — early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and is still shared both by the local Albanians and researchers, is approached critically with convincing examples found in museum collections (mostly in MAE RAS) and private collections of traditional dress kept by Albanian and Bulgarian families. As mentioned above, the traditional dress of Albanians in Ukraine has been analyzed along with the ethnographic material on the Albanian costume from Mandritsa (Bulgaria) recorded in a fieldwork trip in 2014. These data have never been taken into consideration by ethnologists, as the traditional dress of both communities is poorly preserved, while the evidence coming from the Albanian community from Mandritsa has been studied mostly by historians and linguists. This section is richly supplied with the pictures that have been collected by the author during his long-term studies of Albanian dress and its manufacturing.

## Chapter V. LANGUAGE

### ***Maria S. Morozova. The Albanian language in Ukraine: a grammar review***

This section devoted to the language of Albanians in Ukraine is a short grammar overview of this dialect in its current condition. The study is based on the materials collected by the author during her fieldwork in the Albanian-speaking villages in Budjak (2011–2013) and Priazovye (2005–2010, 2012). Some peculiarities of nominal and verbal morphology are compared to other dialects of Albanian and described as either archaic or innovative. The comparative analysis with standard Albanian, dialects of the “parental” Northern Tosk area and with related Tosk dialects in Southern Italy, Greece and Bulgaria, is done by using dialectological descriptions, standard grammars, and the Dialectological Atlas of the Albanian language (Alb. *Atlasi dialektologjik i gjuhës shqipe*). The appearance of innovations in morphology and syntax has been analyzed using the material collected by academician Nikolay S. Derzhavin in Priazovye in the 1920s (both archival and published), articles written by Selim Islami (Priazovye, fieldwork in 1949), Nadezhda V. Kotova (Budjak and Priazovye, 1950–1954) and Lyudmila Ya. Demko (Zhovtnevoe, the 1960s), publications of Leningrad linguists written after their fieldwork in Budjak and Priazovye in the 1960s and 70s, and finally the most recent work based on the expeditions of our research team (1998–2013). The text is supplied with examples of the dialect recorded in the Albanian villages of Ukraine. The appendix to this section contains grammatical tables with the main declensional and conjugational types as they appear in the dialect (see also the Appendix “Dialectal texts in Albanian”).

### **In conclusion (Alexander A. Novik)**

In the conclusion to the monograph Alexander Novik not only reviews the topics addressed in the work and respective research findings, but also maps out future avenues for studying the traditional culture and language of the Albanian community in Ukraine. He proposes to concentrate on traditional feasts and festivals, Christianity and sacral objects, jewelry, crafts and household management, wine-making, sheep husbandry, textiles, the sociolinguistic situation, etc. Among future plans is also work on “The Dictionary of Albanian in Ukraine” — a volume that is expected to appear in two parts: Albanian-Russian and Russian-Albanian.

The research foci of our team have broadened recently: for instance, in 2015–2016 fieldwork was undertaken on the Russian coast of the Azov Sea (the Rostov-on-Don region) where the so-called Arnaut (Greek and Albanian) settlement emerged in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as the land had been granted by the Russian government to the colonists in exchange for service in the Imperial army. Several young researchers with new research methods and topics have joined our well established team recently, and the areas of research interests has been expanded from pure linguistic and ethnographic studies to a number of issues in archaeology, museum studies, history of jurisprudence, folklore studies, etc.

## **APPENDIX**

### ***Maria S. Morozova. Dialectal texts in Albanian***

#### ***Alexander A. Novik. Dialectal texts***

The Appendix for the monograph (compiled by M. Morozova and A. Novik) contains several texts and extracts from interviews in the Albanian dialect spoken in Ukraine. These data were recorded during the field work in the villages of Zhovtnevoe / Karakurt (2011–2013), Georgievka, Devninskoe and Gammovka (2005–2010, 2012). The texts and interviews from Zhovtnevoe, Georgievka and Devninskoe, as well as the interview with Anna D. Serbina (b. 1938) from Gammovka were recorded and transcribed by M. Morozova. The interview with Zinaida M. Kayrachka (b. 1929) was recorded by D. Ermolin and Ilya K. Uchitel, and the published extract was transcribed by M. Morozova. All texts are written in phonetic-phonological transcription using IPA notation. The main topics covered in the narratives in the Appendix are as follows: wedding rites (godparents and their roles in the wedding ceremony), the *kurban* ritual in Zhovtnevoe / Karakurt (a process of ritual lamb slaughter, cooking of a ritual dish, the ritual meal), traditional cuisine, folk medicine, observations on the rural lifestyle, and some biographical facts. The Appendix also contains the texts of two folk songs

performed by Elena I. Dzyngova (b. 1922) from Devninskoe. There are also the texts of the Lord's Prayer published in the Appendix for the first time. The first text in the Albanian dialect was recorded by A. Novik from N.G. Kircheva (lives in Zhovtnevoe / Karakurt, rec. in Tirana, Albania, 26.09.2015), the second one — from L.F. Danilenko (née Burlachko, b. 1966, rec. in Georgievka, August 2006). The texts are written in the standard Albanian alphabet with some added symbols.

The collective monograph also contains the following: List of interlocutors; List of sources and references; List of authors' publications on the Albanians in Ukraine; List of authors' dissertations and extended abstracts of dissertations on the Albanians in Ukraine; List of financially supported projects aimed at studying of the language and culture of Albanians in Ukraine; Index of geographical names, Index of personal names; Index of topics and subjects; List of acronyms; Summaries in Russian, English and Albanian; Authors' personal information; Maps.

*(Translated into English by Denis S. Ermolin,  
Matvey Yu. Lomonosov, and Victor A. Friedman)*