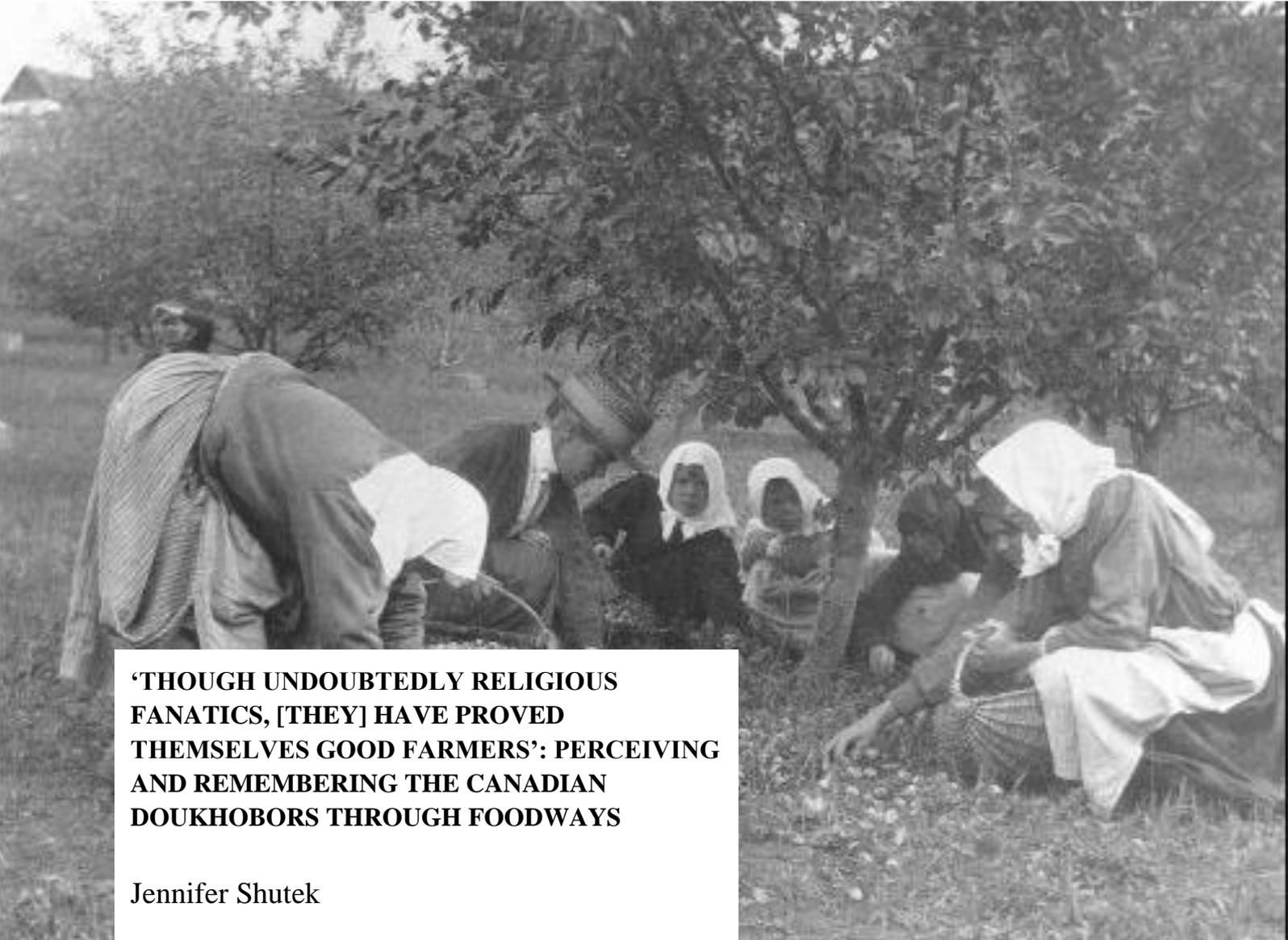


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‘THOUGH UNDOUBTEDLY RELIGIOUS FANATICS, [THEY] HAVE PROVED THEMSELVES GOOD FARMERS’: PERCEIVING AND REMEMBERING THE CANADIAN DOUKHOBORS THROUGH FOODWAYS

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Abstract

In 1898/1899, approximately 7,000 Doukhobors migrated from Russia to Canada. This migration ostensibly solved the problems of the Doukhobors, who faced persecution in Czarist Russia, and the Canadian government, which required people with farming experience to settle the ‘last best West.’ Tensions between the Doukhobors, an agrarian, pacifist, and largely vegetarian group, and Canadian governmental officials can be seen through an examination of Doukhobor foodways. In the context of the nation-building project of the early twentieth century, the Doukhobor’s vegetarianism, communalism, and pacifism did not conform to the Canadian government’s articulation of what it meant to be a ‘proper’ Canadian citizen. Within Doukhobor communities, foodways historically were and continue to be a significant facet of identity construction, self-perception, self-representation, and memory. Food production and consumption are outward manifestations of Doukhobor identity and religious beliefs. An exploration of the social and religious significance of the Doukhobors’ foodways and the reactions of the Canadian government and citizens to these foodways provides insights into aspects of the dynamics between immigrant groups and the federal and provincial governments in the early-Canadian nation-building project.

Key Words: Doukhobors, foodways, vegetarianism, Canadian history, memory

‘Big Vegetarian Colony out in Canada’s West’

In the early twentieth century, several thousand Doukhobors emigrated from Czarist Russia to the newly created Dominion of Canada, where they hoped to be able to realize their slogan of ‘toil and peaceful life.’ Although the Doukhobors contributed to the Canadian government’s project of settling Canada’s western frontier through their highly successful communal farms, they attained notoriety for other reasons. In particular, the Doukhobors’ non-recognition of external authority, unwillingness to register property privately, resistance to sending their children to public schools, and their strict vegetarian diet were largely seen as cultural peculiarities that threatened the identity of the nascent Canadian nation.

This paper is interested in the project of nation building carried out in the wake of the 1876 British North America Act, in which the Fathers of Confederation were concerned with expanding their territorial reach while centralizing the government and extending state penetration. It focuses on Doukhobor culinary and agricultural practices to posit that patterns of food consumption and production played significant roles in delimiting communal boundaries, and in defining the Self and the Other. The Canadian government’s assimilationist policies and the interactions between immigrants and the Canadian government reveal a narrow definition on the part of the latter regarding what it meant to be a ‘proper’ Canadian citizen. Certain aspects of this ‘big vegetarian colony out in Canada’s West’¹ did not conform to the official Canadian identity that was being constructed. The dissemination of this official identity required an ambiguous *mission civilisatrice* which, while admiring what it saw as an almost prelapsarian Doukhobor work ethic and heartiness, ultimately felt the need to reform the Doukhobors’ ‘peculiarities.’

The methodological emphasis upon food as a lens of study is significant for many reasons. Most fundamentally, food is an archetypal example of Marcel Mauss' *fait total social*, a phenomenon or object that can only truly be understood by viewing it as the intersection of multiple facets of life.² A discussion of food, in this paradigm, is incomplete without taking into account the various ways in which food is simultaneously a physical, material, economic, political, social, gendered, historical, cultural, and religious entity. An examination of the Doukhobors' foodways sheds light on multiple aspects of their experience as an immigrant community in early-twentieth-century Canada.

In the case of the Canadian Doukhobors, food played a central role in demarcating communal boundaries even before their emigration from Russia to Canada. The Doukhobors began to abstain from alcohol and tobacco and follow a vegetarian lifestyle prior to their departure from Russia. Once living in Canada, the Doukhobors' dietary restrictions and strong emphasis upon communal farming and self-reliance in terms of food production and preparation created tangible manifestations of their theological commitment to communitarianism and the love of all of God's creatures. It also allowed the Canadian and provincial governments, as well as the Doukhobors' Anglo-Saxon neighbours, to define a Doukhobor Other against which a civilised, progressive, and modern Anglo-Saxon Canadian identity could be articulated. More broadly, an exploration of the Doukhobors' foodways provides insights into aspects of the dynamics between immigrant groups and the federal and provincial governments in the early-Canadian nation-building project.

Doukhobor Origins and Migration

Living on the physical and symbolic margins of societies was not abnormal for the Doukhobors. The groups of Doukhobors now living in the Kootenays, British Columbia and Canada's Prairie provinces have their origins in Sloboda-Ukraine, the eastern part of the Russian empire.³ The name 'Doukhobor' derives from the Russian *dukhoboretz*, which literally means 'Spirit Wrestler.' This was originally a derogatory epithet used by Archbishop Amvrosii Serebrennikov of Ekaterinoslav in the late-eighteenth century to describe a community of people that he saw to be wrestling against the spirit of God and the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church.⁴ The Doukhobors adopted the moniker, and changed the subject of spirit wrestling to an internal struggle against worldly vices in a quest for spiritual truth. Doukhobor theology democratized notions of God, advancing the idea that God was indwelling in every individual and, consequently, that external authorities were illegitimate.⁵ Hospitality, sharing of personal goods, and the love of all of God's creatures were integral parts of Doukhobor theology; however, the third tenet was expressed through a vegetarian diet only in the 1890s under the leadership of Peter Lordly Verigin.⁶



Fig. 1: Doukhobors eating borshch and souhari (dried bread) on Lake Huron, Jan. 1899.⁷

Relations between the Doukhobors and the Russian state were relatively amicable for nearly two centuries, as the Doukhobors were agriculturalists who drew little attention to themselves and, despite advocating pacifism, served in the Russian army (notably in the Russo-Turkish War).⁸ However, under the leadership of Peter Verigin, the Doukhobors began to take a less compliant attitude toward the Russian state. Their opposition culminated in a massive arms burning in 1895 in protest of the Czarist state's forced conscription, a formal request to emigrate, and the subsequent departure of over 7,000 Doukhobors in 1899.⁹ Thus, in 1899, several thousand conscientious objectors left Russia, destined for the Canadian Prairies.

The Doukhobors' desire to emigrate coincided with the Canadian government's efforts to populate its western frontier. Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton had been assigned the task of settling the western frontier as part of the nation-building project of the newly formed Dominion of Canada and, following federal policy, favoured people who were thought to have experience with open-prairie farming and difficult climatological conditions.¹⁰ With political and economic support from Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, the Society of Friends' Doukhobor Committee (an English Quaker committee formed in 1897), and Minister of the Interior Sifton, over 7,000 Doukhobors came to Eastern Canada in 1898/1899 aboard *Lake Huron* and *Lake Superior*.¹¹ Their immigration elicited some logistical concern, as the Canadian Deputy Minister of the Interior and the Commissioner of Immigration were faced with the challenge of providing sufficient food for several thousand vegetarians, which involved the procurement of massive amounts of vegetables, and especially of potatoes (over ten thousand bushels of potatoes were purchased to provide sustenance for the Doukhobors).¹²

The Doukhobor immigrants were guaranteed acreage in western Canada, religious freedom, and exemption from military service in exchange for working the land. The Doukhobors initially settled in what would be the province of Saskatchewan. However, from 1908 to 1913, approximately 5,000 Doukhobors left Saskatchewan for the interior of British Columbia. This internal migration likely took place for at least two reasons. First, the creation of the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1905 (see Figure 2) further exposed the Doukhobors to what Jaenan has called the 'assimilative institutions' of the state, including mandatory military service and state-run education, from which the Doukhobors had fled when they emigrated from Czarist Russia.¹³ Second, many Doukhobors refused to swear the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown. Consequently, the Canadian government cancelled Doukhobor titles to land, and the Doukhobors were forced to relocate once again.¹⁴



Figure 2: Map of Canada, 1905.¹⁵

The discrepancy between the Canadian government's needs at the turn of the century and those of a decade and a half later lies at the heart of Canadian-Doukhobor misunderstandings. The Doukhobors themselves did not change in their desire for spiritual and political autonomy, commitment to working the land, emphasis on hospitality, or adherence to a communal lifestyle. If anything, the economic, religious, and social importance of agriculture increased with their migration to Canada, where 'the land took on an almost mystical concept for the Doukhobors and [...] farming was seen as the ideal occupation.'¹⁶ The Canadian government saw the Doukhobors as an ideal immigrant group while the early building of the Canadian nation necessitated the population and settlement of the west. However, when the physical acts of settling and working the land became less important and the lifestyle adhered to by the settlers became increasingly so, conflicts between Doukhobor culture and the exigencies of the state drew the attention of the Canadian government.

Canadian Perceptions of Doukhobors

The arrival of over 7,000 Doukhobors and their subsequent diaspora across western Canada did not go unnoticed or undocumented. Numerous articles, books, memoirs, and government documents were written about this agrarian, pacifist, and vegetarian immigrant group from Russia, representing a spectrum of views. Attitudes towards the Doukhobors varied from highly welcoming and positive to openly hostile. This range of opinions may have been due, at least in part, to the division of the Doukhobor community into three groups. One supported private possessions but adhered to vegetarianism; this group largely remained in Saskatchewan. A second group, under the leadership of Verigin, continued to live communally. A third group, known as the 'Freedomites' or 'Sons of Freedom' explicitly and publically opposed the state through the burning of buildings and nude marches.¹⁷ The following discussion of Canadian perceptions of Doukhobors relies principally upon newspaper articles available through the digitized Doukhobor Collection of Simon Fraser University and the Doukhobor Collection of James Mavor.¹⁸ Consequently, it largely, though not exclusively, focuses upon the opinions of middle and upper class Caucasian males.

Those who unreservedly welcomed the Doukhobors seem to have been in the minority. In an article written in 1919 entitled 'The Doukhobors,' the author (name unknown) pens a laudatory description of the new immigrants.¹⁹ He describes the Doukhobors' immigration to Canada as an escape from the barbaric persecution of the Czarist government, but states that their treatment at the hands of the Canadian government had understandably led them to believe that 'all governments are tyrannical and that Russian and British alike are prepared to treat their obligations as "scraps of paper."²⁰ He is impressed by the Doukhobors' ability to transform 'the wilderness into Eden,' their industriousness, their vegetarianism, sexual purity, abstention from alcohol and tobacco, and their 'co-operative commonwealth' which proved that 'Labor is independent of Capital for the means of life.'²¹ He notes the discrepancy between the Canadian government's initial promises to the Doukhobors regarding their exemption from military service and religious freedom, and the government's later cancellation of land titles after the Doukhobors refused to swear the Oath of Allegiance. The author's comparison between the Russian and Canadian governments is telling of perceptions of the self and the Other. When referring to the Canadian government's policies on the Doukhobors, he describes them as 'British,' pointing to an idea that the Canadian identity was fundamentally a British one. It is intriguing that he describes the Doukhobors' communal living and rejection of a capitalist system as a central part of their idyllic lifestyle, given the historical context of the Red Scare that swept across Canada in the wake of World War One and the 1917 Russian Revolution.²² Far from associating these Russian immigrants with a threatening radical communism and peculiar, deviant, and perhaps unhealthy dietary patterns,

the author sees their communalism and vegetarianism as evidence of their peaceful and cooperative nature.

Nina Whilee, a woman who lived with the Kootenay Doukhobors, offered an amicable view of the Doukhobors in an article published in 1919, portraying them as a misunderstood group: 'there were many cruelties enacted and a series of persecutions began [in Russia]. Of these we need not speak, as they are similar to those which are always practiced on an unoffending people who declare an unusual doctrine.'²³ Her amiable tone suggests that she viewed the Doukhobors as a particularly pious and pure group, living in an almost utopian community. Whilee turns away from the Othering trend evident in so many articles, whether friendly or hostile, and thus humanizes the Doukhobors. The subtitle of her article, 'Their Ideas on Co-operation Are Not Those of the Average British Columbian – Interesting Story Takes Readers Into Their Homes,' suggests that, by reading the account of her experiences, the reader will be transported into the private sphere of the Doukhobors. Through this familiarity, the reader can then see the Doukhobors not as alien and strange, but as peaceful and cooperative.

A more ambiguous (and quantitatively preponderant) position seems to have viewed the Doukhobors as uncivilized, uneducated, and fanatical, certainly, but also as essentially noble and pure: in short, as noble savages. In this perspective, the Doukhobors would benefit from the civilizing effects of the state, which would have a corrective effect on their unrefined style of life. Yet, at the same time, they were seen to have retained a venerable wholesomeness and simplicity of life. Attitudes toward the Doukhobors' vegetarianism and agricultural practices encapsulate this ambiguity, as most authors discussing the Doukhobors' dietary habits express bewilderment that a group of people would be able to survive, and indeed thrive, on a simple, unrefined diet crucially lacking in meat. In the 1920 *Sunday World* article 'Big Vegetarian Colony out in Canada's West,' the author describes the Doukhobor diet as 'what confirmed meat-eaters would doubtless be tempted to call a "poison-squad" experiment.' He notes that they have proven the viability of successful farming while subsisting on a vegetarian diet, thus expressing admiration for their agricultural successes while indicating misgivings about their consumption habits.²⁴

In 'The Despised Doukhobors. A Good Word for Them,' the author (name unknown) refers to an earlier article by one Mr. Foster Fraser who wrote about the failure of an 'All-British colony' in Saskatchewan due to the settlers' ignorance of agricultural practices. Fraser, notes the author, was positive about the Doukhobors, 'who, though undoubtedly religious fanatics, have proved themselves good farmers, frugal, virtuous, honourable in their dealings, and capable of great self-sacrifice.'²⁵ This author, while noting many positive things about the Doukhobors, clearly expresses some objections when describing their lifestyles and beliefs. His assessment of the Doukhobors is not entirely negative. However, he mostly praises the Doukhobors for those behaviours and values that he perceives to be sufficiently 'Anglo-Canadian,' noting approvingly that already many Doukhobors were losing their 'Russian prejudices' and adopting 'Canadian ways.'²⁶

In the 1903 newspaper article 'Imitating Adam and Eve,' the author states that the most significant positive attribute of the Doukhobors is their industriousness. He then describes the 'strange fanaticisms' of a few of the Doukhobors, attributing their vegetarianism to Adam and Eve's diet of fruit.²⁷ The author describes a meeting of Doukhobors where the second coming of Christ was discussed; he visited this meeting with General Colonization Agent Speers, who identified several 'agitators' in the room who incited other members of the community to undertake disruptive pilgrimages, and began to interrogate some of the men. The author observed: 'official authority and conscientious conviction were at close grips, and none could say which of them would emerge in triumph for the struggle.'²⁸ A conflict between 'official authority' and 'conscientious belief' seems to have been at the heart of the struggle between

assimilationist, centralizing policies and the Doukhobors' resistance to external authority. Agent Speers, attempting to stem preaching of Christ's second coming, stated: 'when Jesus comes, He will find them working on their land,'²⁹ yet again expressing the duality of official attitudes toward the Doukhobors. Their agricultural labour was welcome, but their 'strange fanaticisms' were not.

An article written by the Rev. Dr Roberston, Superintendent of home missions for the Presbyterian Church published in the *Manitoba Free Press* in 1898 advocated strongly for assimilation of the Doukhobors: 'the interest of the state lies in its doing all it can to assimilate these and other foreigners, and make them Canadians. They should be put into the great Anglo-Saxon mill and be ground up; in the grinding they loose their foreign prejudices and characteristics.'³⁰ This particularly blunt expression of opinion on how to deal with Canada's Doukhobor population is not unique. An article also published in the *Manitoba Free Press* in 1919 voices a similar sentiment. The author writes, 'if they [Doukhobors] stay and obey the laws we hope in time their children will become good citizens.'³¹ Both authors voice displeasure with the current Doukhobor situation and convey their belief that the Doukhobors can only become productive Canadian citizens if they assimilate. The Doukhobors' vegetarianism was identified as unpatriotic in one article, in which the author notes that the Doukhobors ignored calls to raise more pigs during the war to help the war effort. He concludes, 'imagine a people with a religion like this being considered an "asset" in this country.'³²

While most of these sources voice the perspectives of Caucasian males, an alternative voice is available in a published memoir entitled *Doukhobor Daze*, written by Hazel O'Neil. She was a teacher employed by the provincial education board of British Columbia who was sent to run a school within the Doukhobor population of Brilliant, British Columbia, in the 1930s. Her memoir represents the centralizing and homogenizing force of a bureaucratic state, and the instrumentalization of the education system to further the aims of such a state. It further reveals some of the tensions that existed within such a state, as her views vis-à-vis the Doukhobors amongst whom she lived and the government for which she worked are neither uncomplicated nor static throughout her memoirs.

O'Neil expresses shock and consternation throughout her memoir as she discovers, for example, that the Doukhobors spoke poor English, had no hot running water, did not conform to normative family structures, had different aesthetic taste regarding the body and clothing, and did not know the words to the Lord's Prayer.³³ O'Neil's corrective presence exemplifies public schools as agents of 'Anglo-conformity,' which did not teach ideologically neutral subjects, but instead were part of a system aimed at producing Anglophone, Protestant, and law-abiding citizens.³⁴

The afterword includes a brief authorial biography, which somewhat patronizingly juxtaposes quaint Doukhobor rusticity with Anglo-Canadian refinement, stating that 'the colorful, uninhibited vocabulary of the Doukhobors was as much a part of the everyday situation as were the borsch and the kerchiefs. If their earthy language startles the reader, Mrs. O'Neil is successfully conveying the impact of their habits on a well-brought-up young girl.'³⁵ The contrast between the Doukhobors' 'uninhibited vocabulary,' borsch, and kerchiefs with 'a well-brought-up young girl' reinforces the dichotomy expressed in so many articles about the Doukhobors published in the early twentieth-century: Doukhobors could either maintain their traditional values and lifestyles *or* become civilized, rational Canadians, but not both.

Many of the newspaper articles available through the Doukhobor Collections of SFU and James Mavor express suspicion, negativity, and hostility, toward the Doukhobors. These articles repeatedly refer to the Doukhobors' religious fanaticism, unrefined manners, and refusal to: take the oath of allegiance, agree to census-taking, pay taxes, serve in the army,

participate in the public education system, follow a normative diet or style of dress, and support a capitalist economy.³⁶

Doukhobor Self-Perceptions: Memories of Migration, Memories of Identity

How have the Doukhobors remembered themselves? How have second, third, or fourth generation Doukhobors contributed to modern understandings and perceptions of the first few generations of Doukhobors? Documents and events from the second half of the twentieth century illustrate ways in which Doukhobors remember the nature of the early Doukhobor community. These memoirs often stand in stark contrast to contemporary Canadian views expressed in the newspaper articles discussed in the previous section.

Quotations and images from within the Doukhobor community provide an idea of the views of some members of the first-generation community of Doukhobor immigrants. In 1927, a Doukhobor elder observed that, ‘the “Anghlikes” want us to give up our mode of living and go to their schools to be like them. [...] To us education means doing useful things, loving all creatures, eating no meat and shunning liquor and tobacco. These things *we* teach our children.’³⁷ His perspective is telling: it points to perceptions of the public and the private spheres, priorities, and values that diverge from the perspectives of the Canadian government and Canadian citizens and sees assimilation as a grave threat to what he values most about Doukhobor culture. This Doukhobor elder’s statement highlights the importance of consumption habits and dietary taboos that stem from theological beliefs in defining a communal Doukhobor identity.



*Fig. 3: Left: Raspberry Village with fields of raspberries slated for Brilliant Jam Factory, c. 1930s. Right: Doukhobor women at Brilliant Jam Factory, c. 1930s.*³⁸

From a reading of O’Neil’s book, one can gain indirect information about early-twentieth-century Doukhobor attitudes toward an encroaching state and the line between the public and private spheres. O’Neil relates an anecdote in which the father of one of her students becomes infuriated that she is teaching the Doukhobor children military drills as part of their physical fitness education and threatens to tell the government if she turns his children into soldiers:

“Wyll, you stawpit doing like dot,” he growled menacingly. I was puzzled and asked, “But why? It’s good for the children to have exercises out in the fresh air.” [...]

“And stawpit, I tyell you! Dou’hobors don’t want no soldiers! And you don’t stawpit, I gonna tyell gawverment!”³⁹

From O’Neil’s description, one can easily discern that this father saw the military (and anything associated with it) as an assimilationist institution and an illegitimate external authority. Externally-run and, in the case of the military, inherently war-related organizations were regarded with mistrust by the Doukhobors and contributed to a construction of their identity by providing a concrete aspect that was not a part of their way of life. The

observation that the ‘life of the [Doukhobor] village’ was centred on food production is demonstrated by the importance of communal organizations such as the Brilliant Jam Factory (see Figure 3). This factory contributed to the physical, social, and economic well-being of the community and to the construction of Doukhobor identity.

The Brilliant Jam Factory (actually called the Kootenay Columbia Preserving Works, see Figure 3) was relocated from Nelson to Brilliant in 1915.⁴⁰ This factory microcosmically exemplified the communal and self-sufficient Doukhobor lifestyle, as it was constructed and operated by Doukhobors, the produce used to make the jam was grown and harvested by Doukhobors, and even the irrigation systems for the crops had been built by members of the Doukhobor community.⁴¹ James Dunn, a field reporter for *Farm and Home*, approvingly described the jam factory as ‘clean and bright as a new linen tablecloth.’ Significantly, Dunn observed the importance of communal work and use of fresh, local ingredients in the jam factory, writing that the gooseberries ‘are always taken from the pickers and delivered at the factory the day they are picked. [...] The community has reason to be proud of its jam factory and of its entire organization.’⁴²

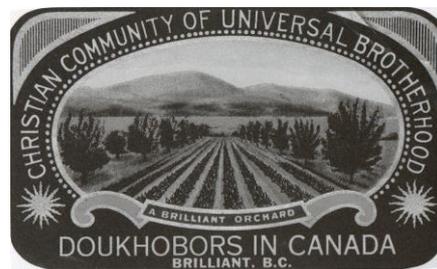


Fig. 4: Brilliant Jam Factory jam jar label.

A label from the Brilliant Jam Factory (see Figure 4) exemplifies pictorial Doukhobor self-representation. Bracketed by shining stars or suns is the phrase ‘Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood.’ Underneath this is an image of straight rows of crops bordered by large trees, with the caption, ‘A Brilliant Orchard Doukhobors in Canada Brilliant, B.C.’⁴³ The jam jar label is a tool of image management, as it would have gone not only on products consumed within the Doukhobor community, but would have also visually represented (an admittedly reductive depiction of) Doukhobor life to people living outside of the community who purchased the jam. The depiction of the orchard reminds consumers of the Doukhobors’ agrarian lifestyle while also reinforcing the freshness and quality of the produce used in the jam. Here, Doukhobor self-representations intersect with external perceptions in their emphasis upon agrarian toil. The label suggests a biblical pristineness and well-ordered, productive agricultural enterprise that are the results of communal toil and spiritual brotherhood.

Within Doukhobor communities, foodways continue to be a significant facet of identity construction, self-perception, self-representation, and memory. Cookbooks constitute one genre in which the voices of Doukhobor women have dominated. The cookbooks available through SFU’s Special Collections are written or compiled exclusively by women, and, without exception, women submitted each recipe that appears in these communally compiled cookbooks.

A 1972 cookbook, *Practical Cook Book: Selected Doukhobor and Quaker Recipes*, begins with a preface that discusses the Doukhobors’ vegetarianism, reminds the reader that no two chefs are alike and thus differences in the end product are inevitable, and expresses the editors’ desire that the users of the book will enjoy and be enriched by the recipes.⁴⁴ Each

thematic section contains an epigraph under the title that refers to religion, peace, and virtuous living (for example, the chapter entitled ‘Vegetables’ begins with the phrase attributed to Peter Verigin, ‘toil and a peaceful life,’ ‘Cheese and Eggs’ begins with ‘the best way to teach a virtue is to live it,’ and ‘Fruit and Vegetable Canning’ begins with ‘not by power nor by might but by my Spirit, sayeth the Lord’⁴⁵). The act of compiling a cookbook thus involved remembering traditional recipes, recalling traditions within a community with a shared past, and establishing links between traditional foodways and adages that encapsulated Doukhobor religious and moral values.

Doukhobor Favorites, compiled by the Shoreacres Ladies Club of Shoreacres, B.C. reflects the use of culinary culture and consumption patterns to preserve the history of the community and define communal identity. In the preface, we read that the tradition of oral transmission of knowledge within Doukhobor communities has led to the recipes’ evolution over time. However, the compilers hope that ‘the original Doukhobor recipes such as borsch, perogi, blintsi, kartoshnik, lapshevník, etc., will enrich your cooking and add to your enjoyment in life.’⁴⁶

A recent cookbook, *Canadian Vegetarian Cookery: Family Collection* written by Elaine Podovnikoff, uses the Doukhobors’ food history as an allegory for their communal history. She notes that the Canadian Doukhobors have received ‘an inherited bounty of recipes’ because they have observed a vegetarian lifestyle since the 1890s.⁴⁷ Further, the Doukhobors’ belief in communalism and sociability is reflected in the sharing of recipes within the Doukhobor community. Podovnikoff emphasizes the Doukhobors’ pacifism, work ethic, and compassion as evidenced in their farming and vegetarianism. In both *Doukhobor Favorites* and *Canadian Vegetarian Cookery: Family Collection*, we can observe the presence of change and continuity in Doukhobor identities. The evolution of Doukhobor cuisine reflects their several migrations and interactions with the world around them, while the continuation of vegetarianism, a Russian culinary heritage, and the use of fresh produce continue to define them culturally. These books suggest that the nature of the Doukhobor community can still be perceived by its dietary habits and culinary heritage.

A 1994 collection of short stories written by Canadian Doukhobor author Vi Plotnikoff presents a relevant and revealing reflection upon Doukhobor identity in 1950s Canada, and merits being quoted at length for its reflections on identity and food:

My Aunt Sofie was what we called stylish. [...]

Aunt Sofie even changed her last name from one ending with a double “ff” to a “v.” This way, no one from out of town would connect her with her ethnic origin. And she never, ever ate sunflower seeds, even though every garden had them growing in profusion [...]. Aunt Sofie never spoke Russian outside the house, and no one could tell she wasn’t a good Anglo-Saxon girl. [...]

Whenever baba came to visit, she brought along her standard lecture. [...]

“And what man want wife who spend all his money and buy clothes and go to dances at Oddfellow Hall? No. Man want wife who cook good borsch and pirahi, grow garden, milk cow.” [...]

I didn’t dare tell her I wanted to be exactly like Aunt Sofie when I grew up.⁴⁸

In this chapter, the narrator identifies sunflower seeds as one marker of Doukhobor alterity and lack of sophistication. Her father’s reaction to Aunt Sofie suggests that women’s ability to cook traditional foods and provide sustenance for their families as hallmarks of traditional Doukhobor values. Plotnikoff’s story reveals an internalization of assimilationist values,

especially by second and third generation Doukhobors, but even this is not straightforward. While her story describes a young girl's wish to conform to a normative Anglo-Canadian lifestyle, Plotnikoff herself contributed a chapter to *Castlegar: A Confluence*, writing about the history of the Doukhobors in the interior of British Columbia, demonstrating her connection to traditional Doukhobor beliefs and practices, as well as her commitment to their documentation.

Food also continues to play an important performative role among Doukhobor communities. It is central to the physical, daily demonstration of the Doukhobors' inward, spiritual beliefs. The communal preparation and provisioning of food reflects the Doukhobors' belief in the importance of hospitality and sharing with those in need.⁴⁹ The method in which food is prepared, the ingredients used, and the donation of profits raised from its sale reveal the continuation of Doukhobor commitment to communalism, a connection with the land, and love and respect for all living beings. This can be seen at the Doukhobor venue of the Saskatoon Exhibition, where the Doukhobor Society of Saskatoon's venue sells some 7,000 loaves of traditional, organic bread baked in wood-fired ovens.⁵⁰ The venue is staffed by volunteers, and profits are donated to various local charities. The communal baking and altruism demonstrated at the Doukhobor venue of the Saskatoon Exhibition represent more than a dedication to collectivism and love for others, however. Bread, along with salt and water, holds a central role in the Doukhobors' religious beliefs and practices. During religious services, these three items are placed on the table to represent the Doukhobors' agrarianism, non-violence, and non-materialism.⁵¹

Conclusions

The Doukhobor lifestyle, with its opposition to violence, militarism, and private property, threatened the projects of state and nation building that the federal and provincial governments undertook in the early twentieth century. To settle the Canadian West, and thus to bring it under the purview of a centralizing state, was undoubtedly seen by the Canadian government as essential. However, when officials found themselves faced with settlers who refused to comply with many of the laws and expectations of the Canadian government, they saw a major impediment to their imagined Canadian community. It is clear from newspaper articles and books that the Doukhobors did not conform to the ideal tax-paying, patriotic, provincial-school attending, meat-eating, Anglo-Protestant settlers that were desired by many Canadians. As a result, they were almost inevitably the targets of an assimilationist *mission civilisatrice*. The Doukhobors were often seen in a patronizing light; there was hope for them, but only if they would conform to Anglo-Canadian values.

Doukhobor reactions to the policies of the Canadian government and hegemonic societal norms have been, unsurprisingly, quite varied. Responses ranged from outright rejection of assimilationist policies, to loyalty to the new networks established within a Canadian context, to attempts to assimilate into what was perceived as a normative Anglo-Canadian way of life. This paper does not wish to adjudicate the authenticity or legitimacy of any of these reactions, but simply to draw attention to the fact that the Doukhobor population was not without tensions and cleavages, and did not act as a monolithic group despite the communitarian aspect of its beliefs and practices and contrary to the attempts of some contemporary observers to depict them as such.

Neither the early Canadian expectations of the Doukhobors nor Doukhobor expectations of what awaited them in Canada turned out as they had incipiently promised. Canadian government officials and Anglo-Canadian citizens appear to have been surprised by the Doukhobors' unwillingness to assimilate and play their part in the imagination of the Canadian nation. Doukhobor expectations were most probably not met as they came into contact with the assimilating institutions of the federal and provincial governments. It is worth

recalling the 1903 newspaper article in which the relationship between the Canadian government and the Doukhobors was characterized as a struggle between ‘official authority and conscientious conviction,’ as this statement contains a nuanced view in which one can understand the perspectives of both the government and Doukhobor population. The history of the Doukhobors and their immigration to Canada points to the complexities and ambiguities of nation building. In the case of Canada, this necessitated immigrant populations to occupy and settle frontier zones, and then to eventually conform to a dominant Anglo-Canadian identity. Despite pressure from the Canadian government to assimilate, Doukhobor populations still exist today. The continuing publication of Doukhobor cookbooks attests to the fact that Doukhobor communities remain active, and that foodways play an important role in the memory of Doukhobor heritage and construction of contemporary Doukhobor identity.

Notes

¹ ‘Big Vegetarian Colony out in Canada’s West,’ *Sunday World* (December 4, 1920).

² Mauss explains total social phenomena as containing ‘all the threads of which the social fabric is composed.’ Marcell Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Norton Library, 1967), Introduction.

³ Svetlana A. Inikova, ‘Spiritual Origins and the Beginnings of Doukhobor History,’ in *The Doukhobor Centenary in Canada: A Multi-disciplinary Perspective on their Unity and Diversity*, ed. by Andrew Donskov, John Woodsworth, and Chad Gaffield (Ottawa: Slavic Research Group at the University of Ottawa and Institute of Canadian Studies at the University of Ottawa, 2000), p. 6 and p. 18.

⁴ Julie Rak, *Negotiated Memory: Doukhobor Autobiographical Discourse* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), p. 34.

⁵ Rak, *Negotiated Memory*, p. 35; Eli A. Popoff, ‘The Doukhobors: The “Enigma” and the Reality,’ in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 25.

⁶ D. E. (Jim) Popoff, ‘Why Doukhobors are Vegetarians,’ (2013) *Doukhobor Website*, <www.usccdoukhobors.org/cuisine/vegetarianism.htm> [accessed 11 July 2014]; Koozma J. Tarasoff, ‘What is the Meaning of Bread, Salt and Water?’ (January 17 2010), <<http://docs.google.com/document/d/18ur0EsZi3e08mYwcVOZ2txuYkTsHeyhXpn8dJOUkNLc/preview?pli/1>> [accessed 21 September 2014].

⁷ ‘The Kids Site of Canadian Settlement’ archived in Collections Library and Archives Canada, <<http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/settlement/kids/021013-2041.1-e.html>> [accessed 21 September 2014]

⁸ Nicholas B. Breyfogle, ‘Rethinking the Origins of the Doukhobor Arms-Burning: 1886-1893,’ in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 63.

⁹ Joshua A. Sanborn, ‘Non-Violent Protest and the Russian State: The Doukhobors in 1895 and 1937,’ in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 88 and p. 92; Popoff, ‘Why the Doukhobors are Vegetarians,’ *USCC website*.

¹⁰ Cornelius Jaenen, ‘The Doukhobor First Perceived as “The Other,”’ in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 103 and p. 105.

¹¹ Jonathan J. Kalmakoff, ‘Afterword,’ in John Ashworth, ‘Visit to the Saskatchewan District Doukhobors, 1901,’ *Manitoba: Manitoba Morning Free Press*, 1901, n.p., Doukhobor Genealogy Website.

¹² Victor O. Buyniak, ‘Doukhobor Immigration: The Potato Dilemma,’ *Doukhobor Genealogy Website*, reproduced from *Saskatchewan History*, 38:2 (1985).

¹³ Jaenan, in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 103.

¹⁴ James Kolesnikoff, ‘Understanding Violent Behaviour: The ‘Sons of Freedom’ Case,’ in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 116.

¹⁵ ‘Historical Maps of Canada: Nineteen Hundred and Five,’ *Canadian Geographic* (n.d.), <http://www.canadiangeographic.ca/mapping/historical_maps/1905.asp> [accessed 11 October 2014].

¹⁶ Koozma J. Tarasoff, ‘Doukhobors,’ in *Encyclopedia of Canada’s Peoples* edited by Paul R. Magocsi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 427.

¹⁷ William A. Soukeroff, ‘The Origin of the Freedom Movement,’ *Doukhobor Genealogy Website* (n.d.), <www.doukhobor.org/Soukeroff.htm> [accessed 19 September 2014].

¹⁸ The Doukhobor Collection of Simon Fraser University contains information on the Doukhobors, as well as a searchable database of newspapers, photographs, and oral history projects: ‘Doukhobor Collection of Simon Fraser University,’ <http://multiculturalcanada.ca/dkb>. The Doukhobor Collection of James Mavor, a ‘political economist, teacher, writer and art collector,’ was involved in organizing the Doukhobor migration to Canada in

the late-nineteenth century. His collection also consists of a searchable database of newspapers, photographs, and oral history collections (it overlaps with SFU's collection): 'The Doukhobor Collection of John Mavor,' http://multiculturalcanada.ca/contentdm_search/collections/mavor.

¹⁹ 'The Doukhobors,' *The Semi-Weekly Tribune* (May 19, 1919), n.p.

²⁰ 'The Doukhobors,' *Semi-Weekly Tribune*.

²¹ 'The Doukhobors,' *Semi-Weekly Tribune*.

²² See Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2011), pp. 36-50, for a discussion of the Red Scare in Canada following the 1917 Russian Revolution.

²³ Nina Whilee, 'Kootenay Community Doukhobors Have Co-Operated Successfully,' *British Columbia Farmer* (Vancouver: 1 April 1919), p. 1.

²⁴ 'Big Vegetarian Colony out in Canada's West,' *Sunday World* (1920), n.p.

²⁵ 'The Despised Doukhobors. A Good Word for Them,' *Glasn. Evening News* (November 22, 1904), n.p.

²⁶ 'The Despised Doukhobors,' *Glasn. Evening News*.

²⁷ J. I. L., 'Imitating Adam and Eve,' *Saskatoon* (1903), n.p.

²⁸ J. I. L., 'Imitating Adam and Eve.'

²⁹ 'Imitating Adam and Eve.'

³⁰ Rev. Dr Roberston, no title, *Manitoba Free Press* (November 15, 1898), in Jaenan, in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 109.

³¹ 'The Doukhobors: Phoenix, B.C. Correspondent Explains Why They Are Not Popular,' *Manitoba Free Press* (June 11, 1919), n.p.

³² C. M. Campbell, 'The Doukhobors,' *Manitoba Free Press* (June 11, 1919), n.p.

³³ Hazel O'Neil, *Doukhobor Daze*, illustrations by Ed Cosgrove (Surrey: Heritage House Publishing Co., 1994), pp. 2-3, p. 5, and p. 12.

³⁴ Jaenan, in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 105.

³⁵ 'The Author,' in *Doukhobor Daze* (Nanose Bay: Heritage House Publishing, 1994), p. 142.

³⁶ George Woodcock, 'Peter Vasilevich Verigin,' in *The Canadian Encyclopedia* (Historical Foundation, 2007), n.p; ed. by Julie Rak, p. x-xi.

³⁷ Jaenan, in Donskov, Woodsworth, and Gaffield, p. 107.

³⁸ Raspberry Village image courtesy of Byng Giraud and Cap Sutherland, Plotnikoff, in Farrar, p. 112;

Doukhobor women image courtesy of Florence Novokshonoff, Plotnikoff, in Farrar, p. 116.

³⁹ O'Neil, p. 15-16.

⁴⁰ Plotnikoff, p. 113,

⁴¹ Vi Plotnikoff, 'Shining Waters: The Doukhobors,' in *Castlegar: A Confluence*, compiled and ed. by Karen Farrar (Castlegar: Castlegar and District Heritage Society, 2001), pp. 112-114.

⁴² James Dunn, 'Perfect Co-operation Among Kootenay Doukhobors,' *Farm and Home*.

⁴³ Brilliant Jam Factory label image courtesy of Mary Picton, Plotnikoff, in Farrar, p. 114.

⁴⁴ *Practical Cook Book: Selected Doukhobor and Quaker Recipes*, compiled by Laura P. Verigin and Zoe H. Gulley (Rosland, B.C.: Miner Printing Co. Ltd., 1972), preface.

⁴⁵ *Practical Cook Book*, p. 3, p. 18, and p. 56.

⁴⁶ *Doukhobor Favorites*, compiled by the Shoreacres Ladies Club of Shoreacres, B.C. (Chicago: Women's Clubs Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), n.p.

⁴⁷ Elaine Podovinikoff, *Canadian Vegetarian Cookery: Family Collection* (Yasnaya Polyana village: Yasnaya Polyana Publishing House, 2007), p. 8.

⁴⁸ Vi Plotnikoff, *Head Cook at Weddings and Funerals and Other Stories of Doukhobor Life* (Vancouver: Polestar Press, Ltd., 1994), pp. 13-15.

⁴⁹ Eli A. Popoff, 'Bread Salt and Water,' *Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ* (n.d.), (n.p.), <www.usccdoukhobors.org/culture/breadsalt.htm> [accessed 21 September 2014].

⁵⁰ Peter Wilson, 'Doukhobor Tradition Carries On One Loaf at a Time,' *The Star Phoenix* (August 12, 2010), p. 1, <www2.canada.com/saskatoonstarphoenix/news/third_page/story.html?id=7423d822-72ac-47e6-8770-6f35cd33ad1d> [accessed 21 September 2014].

⁵¹ Popoff, 'Bread Salt and Water.'

* **Cover Image:** "Picking Fruit", Victoria Hayward picking fruit with Doukhobor women, c. 1919. Photo by Edith S. Watson. Accessed through flickr.com

Thumbnail Image: "Doukhobor women winnowing grain", *Saskatchewan*, 1899.

Artist unknown. Available through Library and Archives Canada under reproduction reference number C-008891 and MIKAN ID 3193407. Accessed through Wikimedia Commons.

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