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**HISTORY OF CREATION AND ACTIVITY OF KHOMIVKA  
ASSUMPTION-TRANSFIGURATION CONVICT**

**Abstract.** *The purpose of the research is to cover Khomivka Assumption-Seraphim Monastery's history and the contribution of the Razdobarov family to the conversion of the Old Believer community of Kharkiv region. The research methods in the article have been selected in accordance with the purpose and based on the principle of historicism. They are represented by a general scientific method of analysis and a special scientific historical genetic method. The scientific novelty consists in the fact that previously unanalyzed sources have been discovered (archival documents, materials of the local press of that time, statistical documents) and introduced into scientific circulation, owing to which it was possible to recreate the history of the monastery and find out new facts in the history of the church in Ukraine. The Conclusions. Special attention in the research is devoted to uncovering the facts of the priest T. Razdobarov's biography, a renowned figure among the missionary movement of Kharkiv region. It was his name that was considered to be associated with the local community of Old Believers involvement into monotheism and the decrease in the number of Old Believers in the region. The influence of Archimandrite Pavlo Prussky on the life and outlook of T. Razdobarov has been traced in the article. There has been elucidated the work of T. Razdobarov in the Old Believer community on the creation of the tenement to the monastery and his constant search of optimal ways of conversion to Old Believers. It has been determined, that one of the causes of the monastery's foundation was T. Razdobarov's experience of communication with the female part of the Old Believer community. As the priest stated that women's fanaticism was considered to be a factor in slowing down the process of converting Old Believers to the same faith. Therefore, according to T. Razdobarov's plan, the place where children of Old Believers and coreligionists could study and communicate together would be the tenement from which the monastery later emerged. In conclusion, the following events have been elucidated in the article: the fate of the monastery during the Soviet era, the closure of the monastery, the immigration of the family of Yo. A. Vasiutin and a gradual destruction of monastery premises.*

**Key words:** *monotheism, convent, T. Razdobarov, Old Believers.*

## ІСТОРІЯ СТВОРЕННЯ ТА ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ ХОМІВСЬКОГО УСПЕНСЬКО-ПРЕОБРАЖЕНСЬКОГО МОНАСТІРЯ

**Анотація.** *Мета статті* – висвітлити історію Хомівського Успенсько-Преображенського монастиря та внесок родини Раздобарових у навернення старообрядницької громади Харківщини. **Методи дослідження** у статті добиралися відповідно до мети та опиралися на принцип історизму. Представлені вони загальнонауковим методом аналізу та спеціально науковим історико-генетичним методом. **Наукова новизна:** введено до наукового обігу виявлені раніше неактуалізовані джерела (архівні документи, матеріали тогочасної місцевої преси, статистичні документи), завдяки яким вдалося відтворити історію монастиря та з'ясувати нові факти в історії церкви в Україні. **Висновки.** Особливу увагу у розвідці присвячено розкриттю фактів біографії священника Т. Раздобарова, відомої постаті серед місіонерського руху Харківщини. Саме з його ім'ям пов'язують прилучення місцевої общини старообрядців до єдиновірництва та зменшення кількості старообрядців у краї. У статті простежено вплив архімандрита Павла Прусського на життя і світогляд Т. Раздобарова. Висвітлено працю Т. Раздобарова у старообрядницькій общині від створення обителі до монастиря та постійній пошук ним оптимальних шляхів навернення старообрядців. Встановлено, що одним із приводів до заснування обителі став досвід спілкування Т. Раздобарова з жіночою частиною старообрядницької общини. Священник відзначав фанатичність жіноцтва як фактор гальмування процесу навернення старообрядців у єдиновір'я. А отже, за задумом Раздобарова, місцем, де діти старообрядців та єдиновірців зможуть навчатися та спілкуватися разом, мала стати обитель, з якої і постав пізніше монастир. На закінчення розкривається доля монастиря за радянської доби, закриття обителі, імміграція родини Й. А. Васютіна та поступове руйнування монастирських приміщень.

**Ключові слова:** єдиновірництво, жіночий монастир, Т. Раздобаров, старообрядництво.

**The Problem Statement.** Khomivka Assumption-Seraphim Monastery (Uspensko-Seraphymovsky Monastery) has not attracted attention of researchers for a long time as it was small in scale and time of activity. However, its history is connected with activities of one of the prominent missionaries in Kharkiv region, Timofiy Razdobarov. However, there are numerous questions: how did Razdobarov come to a difficult missionary activity, how did he build his communication with the Old Believer community and what made his work successful? T. Razdobarov's and his wife Matrona participation in the monastery's creation, and a devoted missionary activity were not previously the subject of scientific research.

**The Analysis of Sources and Recent Researches.** The Old Believers' fate in Ukraine or the research of the history of the Orthodox churches are one of the important issues of the Ukrainian church historiography undoubtedly. Diverse Ukrainian historians covered the above-mentioned issue in their works (Potockyi, 2004; Taranets, 2012; Bublyk, 2012; Khytrovska, (2018); Yeremeev, 2018; Bystrytska, 2020; Kuhutiak & Korolko (2020); Bystrytska & Kostiuk, 2021; Ihnatusha & Hruzova, 2021) as well as the Russian historians (Makarov, 1996; Cherkashin, 2006).

However, a few short histories, written by the local historians (Paramonov, 2013, p. 47; Naidenova, 2019) and individual mentions of its founders in works on the history of the Old Believers of Kharkiv region make up the entire historiographical work on Khomivka Monastery (Yeremeev, 2018, p. 59). The biographies of its founders, Timofiy and Matrona Razdobarov were not covered either.

Yosyf Antonovych Vasiutin (1870 – 1934) described the background history of the women's abode establishment and then the monastery in the book "Fomovsky Uspensko-Seraphymovsky Convent: (History of Establishment and Opening)" as he was the priest

there. The work was published in Moscow, in 1906. There is not much information about the author. This issue required additional research involving new sources. Therefore, in order to restore their biographies and verify the facts of the life of the Razdobarov family and Yo. A. Vasiutin, we turned to Fund 40 “Kharkiv Spiritual Consistory” of the State Archive of Kharkiv Region (hereinafter – SAKhR).

**The purpose of the research** is to cover Khomivka Assumption-Seraphim Monastery’s history and the Razdobarov family contribution to the Old Believer community’s conversion of Kharkiv region

**The Results of the Research.** Yosyf Antonovych Vasiutin was born in 1870 in Karmazynivka hamlet, Kupiansky povit (district). His father, Anton Omelianovych Vasiutin (born in 1841), belonged to the bezpopovtsi (priestless ones) community of Old Believers. In 1866, he came to Moscow in order to learn the Old Believer statutory chant. However, there was no place at Moscow chapel and he went to study at the Old Believer monastery of Pavlo Prussky, a famous Old Believer nachotchyk (Razdobarov, 1877, p. 38). Two years later, Anton Vasiutin returned to Karmazynivka, where he married Maria Prokopivna, born in 1842. They had four children: Dmytro, Yosyf, Darya and Pavlo (SAKhR, f. 40, d. 110, c. 881, p. 1). In 1875, Anton Omelianovych Vasiutin was recorded as a deacon in Karmazynivka. In his work, the son explained the reasons for his father’s conversion to the Orthodoxy by Pavlo Prussky’s influence, who joined the Orthodoxy in 1867: “Father Pavlo’s exit from the schism prompted the Old Believers of Karmazynivka to consider their religious state more carefully ... having heard that Fr. Pavlo joined, at first they were amazed at the act of their “column”, and then they decided to write him a letter, asking him to inform them of the motives by which he was guided in his extraordinary act; at the same time, they asked to send someone to them for a detailed explanation and instruction. In response to this letter, Fr. Pavlo sent to Karmazynivka his first printed conversation with the Old Believers and Ozersky’s book “extracts from old printed books”. The Karmazinovtsi treated these books with special attention, and a movement emerged towards St. Church among them. The Old Believers took the advice of their former parish priest, Fr. Stefan Krasnopolsky and declared their desire to join the local consistory. The Consistory sent them a priest of the same faith from Kharkiv, Fr. Andriy Rumiantsev, who performed the rite of accession in Karmazynivka” (Vasyutin, 1906, p. 3). According to the lists of the clergy of Kharkiv diocese of 1908, A. O. Vasiutin is recorded as the priest in the village of Mykolaivska Kupiansky District 3 (Kharkovskaia Eparkhyia, 1900 – 1929). At least two of his sons followed in his footsteps.

It is known that after graduating from the seminary, Yosyf Antonovych was appointed the first priest of the Assumption community on August 25, 1897. In 1906, his work “Fomovsky Uspensko-Serafymovsky Convent. History of Establishment and Opening”. Dmytro Antonovych, his brother, was a deacon in Fomivka with him (Kharkovskaia Eparkhyia, 1900 – 1929). Yosyf Antonovych was married and had a son. After the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks, Yosyf Antonovych and his family emigrated to the Kingdom of the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes. Yo. A. Vasiutin died in 1934.

In his work, Yo. A. Vasiutin wrote that the monastery’s founders were Tymofiy Matviyovych Razdobarov and Matriona Yefymivna Razdobarova. T. M. Razdobarov (1831 – 1897) came from the Orthodox peasant family from the village of Blahodatne, Rytsky Povit (County), Kursk Hubernia (Governorate). At the age of 12, his parents sent their son to study literacy with a man, who belonged to the Old Believer community, as a result of which Timofiy became the member of their community. The community sent a skilled boy to study in Moscow, where

he met P. Prussky, who took the boy as his student, intending to raise him as an Old Believer missionary. Pavlo Prussky also helped to arrange the marriage of Timofiy with Matriona Yefymivna Nemtseva (*in the book written by Yo. Vasiutin it was stated that the year of birth was 1813, which is probably a technical error in the text*), a daughter of Moscow bourgeois manufacturer. The Nemtsov family belonged to Old Believers of the Feodosia celibate class. The bride dreamed of a monastic life, and even the birth of a son did not change her intentions. In the end, after giving away their property to the poor, Timofiy and Matriona went to the monasteries. Timofiy was baptized under the name of Petro in a monastery.

After Pavlo Prussky joined the Orthodox Church in 1867, Razdobarov also followed his example (Razdobarov, 1877, p. 32). According to Yo. A. Vasiutin's records, there was a different situation with Matriona: "But Matriona Yevfimovna, although she also joined, had to be persuaded in a special way to restore the broken marriage. Both Father Pavlo and the others pointed out to her that in ancient times those who adopted Christianity did not end the pagan marriage. Thus, joining the church served for her and her husband as a new beginning of a life together" (Vasyutin, 1906, p. 9).

This new life was closely connected with the missionary activity among the supporters of the Old Believers in Karmazynivka hamlet of Kupiansky povit (district). At the request of the locals, P. Prussky sent a priest there in order to explain to the local community the reasons for leaving the Old Believers and to help them follow the same path – "according to the cast lot, he sent T. M. Razdobarov". However, in order not to cause opposition from the Old Believer community, he had to hide his conversion to the Orthodox Church at the very beginning. Anton Vasiutin was one of the trusted people, who knew about the real purpose of the Razdobarovs' visit. Only on March 25, 1871, he became a priest in Karmazynivka (SAKhR, f. 40, d. 110, c. 881, p. 1).

Razdobarov came up with the idea of building a church from the very beginning. After all, the monotheists of the village prayed in a wooden prayer house, a former peasant hut. Timofiy raised money for the construction of a stone temple for more than ten years in order to do that he travelled to Moscow and St. Petersburg many times in search of the patrons. Razdobarov's missionary activity was successful, and in 1887, a stone three-throne monotheistic church in honour of St. Mykolay was built, and in 1892 in the settlement of Krasnianka, Kupiansky povit (district) – a wooden monotheistic church in honour of Olexandr Nevsky was built (Osviashchenye edynovercheskho khrama, 1892, p. 2).

According to missionary data, during the period of 1880 – 1900, the number of Old Believers in Kupiansky povit (district) decreased. In Ye. Yeremeyev's opinion, the researcher, it happened due to the development of monotheism in the povit and the monotheist priest Timofiy Razdobarov's activities (Yeremeev, 2018, p. 170).

Matriona Razdobarov also had a considerable influence, according to Vasiutin's records, it was she who instigated her husband to create a women's monastery: Father Timofiy's wife did not weaken in her inclination towards monasticism and asked several times to let her go to the monastery. At one time, she achieved her goal, was released to Yekaterynoslav Monastery, but due to circumstances beyond her control, she was forced to return home ... Father Timofiy used to say the following: "everyone would call me stupid if I, having the opportunity to arrange my own monastery, I would let my wife go to someone else's" (Vasyutin, 1906, p. 11).

The next reason for founding the monastery for T. Razdobarov was the experience of communication with the female part of the Old Believer community. The priest noted the

fanaticism of women as a factor hindering the conversion of Old Believers. He was pondering over a “monastery” in which children of monotheists and Old Believers would be able to study together “and then, leaving the monastery, they would bring enlightenment to the dark environment of schism/split”.

The monastery’s establishment began with the arrangement of a shelter for girls of Old Believers and monotheists. Matrona took charge of the shelter. The organization of the shelter was extremely simple, the girls gathered at the Razdobarovs’ house, learned to read and sing. The first girl was Paraskeva Panina, whom the Razdobarovs took as their daughter, the family had no children, none of the eight born survived.

In order to provide shelter, T. Razdobarov was looking for a place to buy land and was talking about the monastery’s founding openly. The necessary amount of land was bought from the bankrupt nobleman Mykhailo Oleksandrovykh Katrukhin in the village of Khomyvtsi, Kupianskyi povit (district) (it was 25 versts from Karmazynivka). The land was put up for auction through Dvoriansky Bank. The purchase of 120 desiatyn of land was brought by Fr. Timofiy in Karmazynivka as a gift for Matrona’s birthday. Later, another 536 desiatyn were bought from Katrukhin’s heirs.

A wooden church from Karmazynivka was moved to the new place “Katrukhivka” along with the Razdobarovs. T. Razdobarov himself was the first priest of the church, which was consecrated in honour of the Assumption of the Mother of God on August 27, 1896. However, in a new place, time was needed again in order to gain trust of local population. Vasiutin mentioned that, given that the service was conducted according to the monotheistic rite, many of the villagers went to the liturgy. There were very few Karmazin girls left in Khomivka.

According to the mentions of Yo. Vasiutin before Fr. Timofiy faced the question concerning organizing the Orthodox or monotheistic women’s monastery. Due to a poor state of health, which prevented the priest from continuing his missionary activities, influenced the decision and the Orthodox monastery was created, which began to take on the appearance of a monastery from the very beginning. In order to do this, he went to Seraphim-Ponetaievsky Monastery in Nizhniy Novhorod hubernia (province). Having received financial support from local patrons S. P. Petrov and S. D. Kulmychev, Fr. Timofiy persuaded the abbess to let the two nuns Oleksandra Mykolayeva and Olena Dmytrivska go to a young monastery.

On June 13, 1897, Fr. Timofiy died several months before the monastery was opened. On October 7, 1897, the solemn opening of the community took place. Matrona Yefimivna became its head. Yosyf Vasiutin was appointed the first priest. There were more than 200 nuns in the monastery. A uniform was introduced for the sisters modelled after the northern monasteries (kamylovka) with the blessing of Archbishop Ambrose. From the first days, the local people nicknamed the monastery “The Razdobarovsky Monastery”. “From the very first days of its existence, the community attracted many, who aspired for a monastic life. Some were accepted without any means, while the others were able to help build the community with their own means” (Vasyutin, 1906, p. 20).

The community itself existed for 7 years. During this time, the monastery grew and, in addition to a wooden church and the building of the old landowner’s estate, had a refectory building, a water mill, a building for singers, a small guest house, and separate rooms for the priest and the mother. In 1902, the construction of the stone temple began, because from the very beginning, a small church was designed for no more than one hundred people and even after the expansion, it could accommodate no more than 400. The funds for construction were collected from various sources, Vasiutin wrote about in detail: “The most important of

them is the collection of books, which were given in abundance under Archbishop Ambrose. Land cultivation also gave some help, sisters themselves did all the field and garden work, and the estate was managed by Moses Yehorovych Vasiutin all the time free of charge. Contributions, although not particularly large, nevertheless proved to be given at the right time in accordance with the need. But the most grateful kind of help is one-time donations, since in this case the monastery was not forced to owe anything to the benefactors, except for a feeling of gratitude. Let us mention here at least the largest donors. Serhiy Petrovych Petrov at various times donated up to 8,000 rubles; St. Petersburg merchant Konstantin Ilyich Driabin loaned 6,000 rubles at a time, of which he accepted only 2,000 rubles for payment, and the remaining 4,000 rubles donated; Petersburg tradesman Dmitry Ivanovich Bashmakov donated 5,000 rubles; Yuzovskyi mine owner Yakov Ivanovich Derevitsky donated 2,000 rubles; Starobelskyi merchant Yakov Dmytryievych Myahkov – 1,000 rubles; in addition, many donated not so significant amounts, and some at the same time brought valuable things as a gift, such as, for example, Serhiy Dmytryievych Kuzmichev, who donated the Gospel with a rich decoration, all utensils and many others” (Vasyutin, 1906, pp. 20–21).

In 1903, Matrona Razdobarova submitted a request for the transformation of her community into a monastery. The petition was under consideration for almost a year, and finally, in August of 1904, the Holy Synod made the following decision: Khomivska women’s community should be renamed the Uspeno (Assumption) Seraphim Monastery, and Matrona Razdobarova should be appointed as its abbess. Archbishop Arseniy of Kharkiv and Okhtyr decided to open a new monastery personally.

On September 7–8, 1905, the solemn opening of a new monastery took place. Yo. Vasiutin recorded the welcoming speech of the archbishop: “I am very glad, dear sisters, that I have arrived in this quiet haven of your life, in your young St. monastery. I have come to you this time not for one joint prayer with you, not only out of a desire to inspect your monastic community, and not only to give my blessing and a word of instruction. The purpose of my coming to you is to announce, in accordance with the command of the Holy Synod, the opening of the Assumption-Serafim Monastery in this place, where the Dormition community has hitherto been, to take vows solemnly in this temple as a nun of your abbess and elevate the latter to the rank of abbess, to pray with by all of you, may the Lord bring down his grace to this place for the salvation of all who seek monastic life. All these are great events in the life of your Holy Monastery, the memory of which will remain with you forever” (Vasyutin, 1906, p. 21).

The Bishop performed the ceremony of the monastery’s abbess Matrona to become a monk with the given name – Melania. The godmother was the abbess of Starobilskoho Skorbiashchenskoho Monastery Apollinaria. The archbishop expressed his satisfaction to what he saw in the monastery and presented the abbot with an icon of the Assumption of the Mother of God with his signature on the back when he was leaving.

The monastery took on a life of its own, daily services were held, the nuns were engaged in writing icons, decorating kiots for icons, and sewing chasubles. The monastery economy also grew: a small brick factory, its own bakery, carpet production. The number of nuns doubled almost to 400. The monastery managed to survive from fire and a long legal battle for the land with Katrukhin’s heirs, the case even reached the Senate.

Yo. Vasiutin listed the shrines that the monastery had: “The Lord did not leave the monastery without the shrines, of which we will mention the following: 1) a part of the Life-Giving Tree of the Holy Cross of the Lord. This shrine consists of two small sticks, cruciformly attached

to the inner wall of a copper medallion, on the upper wing of which there is an inscription: part of the tree of the cross of the Lord from old Jerusalem. This shrine was handed over to Fr. Timofiy by the palace archpriest Nykandrom Brantsev... 2) An icon depicting saints: Ignatius, Euthymius, Akaki, Niphon. The following are embedded into the icon's board: a part of the Life-Giving Tree of the Lord's Cross and the relics of the depicted saints. 3) Holy relics of the Great Martyrs Barbara, Catherine, Procopius and Mina. These parts of the holy relics were left from the founder of the monastery. 4) As an object of special veneration, in a conspicuous place in the church is the icon of the Mother of God of the Sign. This icon was painted in Ponetaevsky Monastery and sent here in 1898" (Vasyutin, 1906, p. 22).

There was no information concerning the monastery's fate during the revolutionary events of 1917 – 1921, the first years of the Soviet power. At the end of the 1920s, in 1928, the monastery was closed, and the premises and the church were looted. The priest immigrated with his family abroad. The nuns, who were driven out into the street, found shelter at local residents, and then left Khomivka. The nuns visited the village for many more years, appearing for a week or a month and leaving again. A few months after its closure, an agricultural school began operating within the walls of the monastery. However, in 1929, the school was transferred to the village of Dvurichne in Kharkiv region, and the monastery premises, which were left unattended, began to ruin quickly, and in 1943 the monastery was finally ruined. After the war, the idea of creating an agricultural educational institution came up again, and the monastery yard was divided under the construction of Khomivka Agricultural Vocational Technical School, where it is currently located.

**The Conclusions.** Khomivka Assumption-Seraphim Monastery (Uspensko-Seraphymovsky Monastery) was built as a result of fruitful long-term activities of the Razdobarov family. Priest Tymofiy Razdobarov became a renowned figure among the missionary movement of Kharkiv region. It was his name that was considered to be associated with the local community of Old Believers involvement in monotheism and the decrease in the number of Old Believers in the region. The influence of Archimandrite Pavlo Prusky on the life and outlook of T. Razdobarov could be traced. T. Razdobarov placed great hope precisely on education in the process of conversion of Old Believers. The monastery first appeared, based on the educational goal and then Khomivka Assumption and Transfiguration Monastery itself.

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