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Kseniia I. Rodionova

Far Eastern Federal University, Vladivostok, Russian Federation

Harbin's Religious Life: Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals): 1930s–40s

Abstract

The article addresses the activities of the Russian community of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals) in Harbin and other stations of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). It is based on documents from the fonds R–830 "Main Bureau for affairs of Russian emigrants in Manchuria (BREM)" and R–831 "Society for the Unity of the Peoples in the Manchurian Empire

'Kio-Va-Kai'(1932–45)," stored in the State Archive of the Khabarovsk Krai (GAKhK) and previously unintroduced into scientific use, and also on confessional and emigrant periodicals. The study aims to reconstruct the general picture of religious life of the Russian Pentecostal population of Manchuria. It reflects the growing interest in the history of Protestant churches. According to the Federal State Statistics Service (Rosstat), there are over one thousand Pentecostal religious organizations in Russia; thus, they are the most widespread Protestant denomination in the country. Therefore, the history of the development of the Russian community of Pentecostal Christians is of great scientific interest. The researchers' interest in Pentecostalism in Harbin is associated with the activities of the prominent preacher Nikolai Ivanovich Poysti. The history of Pentecostal community in Manchuria has not yet become a subject of special research. The work has used classical methods of historical research: historical-genetic, comparative-historical methods, and method of periodization. The study identifies reasons for and factors of the emergence and spreading of the Pentecostal group in Harbin. Various aspects of relationship of the Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals) with the puppet state of Manchukuo are touched upon. The article presents new conclusions concerning the history of the Pentecostal church. The Pentecostal community in Harbin was the first Russian Pentecostal church in the Far East. Despite its vigorous activities, the Pentecostal church in Harbin was inferior in numbers to many other Protestant denominations due to such reasons as absence of an experienced leader after 1935, cessation of funding in 1941, massive departure of the Russian population throughout the period of its functioning, and its late appearance in the region in comparison with other churches. These factors also led to the schism of the church in 1941, which resulted in the division of both the flock and the clergy.

Keywords

Historical sources, archival documents, Christians of the Evangelical Faith, Pentecostalism, Harbin, Manchuria, N.I. Poysti.

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About the authors

Rodionova Ksenia Igorevna, Far Eastern Federal University, School of Arts and Humanities,

Department of History and Archeology, junior researcher, Vladivostok, Russian Federation,
+7-423-265-24-24, +7-999-681-14-67, rodionovadvfu@gmail.com

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