

Demarcation and Recollection of Collectivity in Chuvash Village, Russia

Since the decline of Soviet agriculture, a controversy has arisen between defenders of collective farming and advocates of independent farming. Both parties often justify their own opinions by asserting that either a collective or an independent means of farming is consistent with the ancient memory of the people, and thus is orthodox. However, social forms like collective or independent are not connected directly with orthodoxy in personal recollections.

The author will discuss the relation between the demarcation of social categories and the people's recollection of them by taking as an example the history of collectivization of farming in the Chuvash villages in Russia. A large part of the Chuvash, along with Russians and other nationalities in the Soviet Union, joined collective farms during the time of collectivization of farming in the 1930s and 1940s. At that time the people were sharply divided between collective farmers and independent ones. However, later the demarcation was neither recollected exactly as it was, nor was it erased completely, but rather it has been disarticulated and rearticulated repeatedly on each occasion for recollection. This investigation throws light not only on a particular case of the history of collectivization but on the general theme of public memory.