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## V. A. MOSHKOV: THE BIRTH OF GAGAUZ STUDIES IN RUSSIA<sup>1</sup>

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### Rezumat

#### V. A. Moșkov: nașterea studiilor găgăuze în Rusia

Etnograful rus V. A. Moșkov, fiind în grad de general, a fost membru al Societății Geografice Ruse și a studiat serios tradițiile și viața popoarelor care locuiesc în Imperiul Rus. La sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea a început să cerceteze poporul găgăuz. Rezultatul călătoriilor lui V. A. Moșkov au fost schițele „Гагаузы Бендерского уезда”, publicate în revista „Этнографическое обозрение” la începutul secolului XX. Datorită lui V. A. Moșkov, publicul larg a aflat despre micul popor ortodox care locuiește în mod compact în sudul Basarabiei – găgăuzii. Acest articol examinează activitățile cu mai multe fațete ale cercetătorului care vizează evidențierea diferitelor aspecte ale culturii tradiționale – cultura materială, precum și obiceiurile, ritualurile, credințele și folclorul. Se observă că V. A. Moșkov a încercat să studieze problema originii umane. Curios este că a fost îndemnat să abordeze această problemă din cauza cunoștințelor sale a culturii materiale și spirituale a poporului găgăuz, în care omul de știință a găsit paralele cu alte popoare care nu erau înrudite cu poporul găgăuz prin origine comună. Autorii subliniază rolul savanților găgăuzi care au studiat moștenirea științifică a lui V. A. Moșkov – păstrarea și dezvoltarea identității etnicilor găgăuzi.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** V. A. Moșkov, Republica Moldova, Basarabia, Găgăuzia, etnografie, istoriografie, personalități.

### Резюме

#### V. A. Мошков: зарождение гагаузоведения в России

Русский этнограф В. А. Мошков, будучи генералом по званию, являлся членом Русского географического общества и серьезно изучал традиции и быт народов, населяющих Российскую империю. В конце XIX в. он начал исследовать гагаузов. Результатом поездок В. А. Мошкова стали очерки «Гагаузы Бендерского уезда», опубликованные в журнале «Этнографическое обозрение» в начале XX в. Благодаря В. А. Мошкову широкая общественность узнала о малочисленном православном народе, компактно проживающем на юге Бессарабии – гагаузах. В данной статье рассматривается многогранная деятельность исследователя, направленная на освещение различных сторон традиционной культуры – материальной культуры, а также обычаев, обрядов, верований, фольклора. Отмечается, что В. А. Мошков пытался изучить проблему происхождения человека. Любопытно, что заняться данным вопросом его побудило знакомство с материальной и духовной культурой гагаузов, в которой ученый обнаружил параллели с другими народами, не связанными с гагаузами общностью происхождения. Авторы подчеркивают роль исследователей-гагаузоведов, посвятивших свои работы изучению научного

наследия В. А. Мошкова в деле сохранения и развития идентичности гагаузского этноса.

**Ключевые слова:** В. А. Мошков, Республика Молдова, Бессарабия, Гагаузия, гагаузы, этнография, историография, персоналии.

### Summary

#### V. A. Moshkov: the birth of gagauz studies in Russia

The Russian ethnographer V. A. Moshkov was a general in rank and a member of the Russian Geographical Society and seriously studied the traditions and life of the peoples inhabiting the Russian Empire. At the end of the 19th century, he began to research the Gagauz people. The research “The Gagauz of Bendery Uyezd”, published in the journal “Ethnographic Review” at the beginning of the 20th century was published as a result of V. A. Moshkov’s travels. Thanks to V. A. Moshkov, the general public learned about the small Orthodox people living on the area of a small region in the south of Bessarabia – the Gagauz. This article examines the multifaceted activities of the researcher aimed at highlighting various aspects of traditional culture – material culture, as well as customs, rituals, beliefs and folklore. It is noted that V. A. Moshkov tried to study the problem of human origin. It is curious that he was prompted to consider this issue because of his acquaintance with the material and spiritual culture of the Gagauz people, in which the scientist found parallels with other peoples not related to the Gagauz people by a common origin. The authors emphasize the role of the Gagauz scholars who have devoted their attention to studying the scientific heritage of V. A. Moshkov in the preservation and development of the identity of the Gagauz ethnos.

**Key words:** V. A. Moshkov, Republic of Moldova, Bessarabia, Gagauzia, Gagauz, ethnography, historiography, personalities.

The name of V. A. Moshkov, a Russian ethnographer, a member of the Russian Geographical Society, is widely known in scientific circles of Russia, throughout the post-Soviet territory and beyond that. He is rightfully called the founder of Gagauz studies. V. A. Moshkov is the author of the essays “The Gagauz of Bendery Uyezd”, published at the beginning of the 19th century in the journal “Ethnographic Review”. The works of the Russian ethnographer have become a reference book for many generations of the Gagauz scholars – ethnologists, historians and folklorists.

V. A. Moshkov wrote and was published in the second half of the 19th century, when Russian eth-

nographic science entered a new phase of its development, possessing already approved methods for collecting material, using the support of scientific public organizations such as the Russian Geographical Society, the Odessa Society of History and Antiquities. These organizations, created in the late 30-40s of the 19th century, entered into full-fledged activity already in the second half of the given century. They published their periodicals, combining the efforts of researchers of the vast territory of the Russian Empire. In the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries, local history and ethnographic trends began to develop in museum centers. By that time, a whole galaxy of professional ethnographers had already formed. V. A. Moshkov, who was a many-sided researcher of traditional everyday culture, language and folklore of the Gagauz people, can be legitimately related to them.

However, in the 19 – early 20 centuries, the professional activity of ethnographers was exclusive. Various people rendered all possible assistance to ethnography. Some of them, like numerous officers of the General Staff and writers invited by the Naval Department, were mobilized by the state<sup>2</sup>. But there were those for whom science became a real muse. V. A. Moshkov is obviously one of them. He was a very successful career officer. But science became a serious hobby throughout his life.

Much has been written about the biography of V. A. Moshkov as well as about his contribution to Gagauz studies. Interest in V. A. Moshkov's personality was inconsistent. It experienced ups and downs due to the internal political situation.

A. M. Reshetov wrote: "In the report of M. G. Khudyakov "Great-power chauvinism in Russian ethnography" at the Institute for the Study of the Peoples of the USSR on February 11 and 13, 1932, "the ethnographic activity of General V. A. Moshkov, who was decorated with a gold medal from the Russian Geographical Society for his notorious «works». But time has put everything in its place, and the name of V. A. Moshkov, as one of the prominent ethnographers, the founder of Gagauz studies, is named among the scientists who have made an enormous contribution to the development of science" (Reshetov 2004: 457).

Particular attention to V. A. Moshkov's work arose in the period of ethno-national revival that was felt by the entire population of the Soviet-era Moldova in the late 80s – early 90s of the twentieth century. The collapse of the USSR and the emergence of independent states gave impetus to small

peoples and the general euphoria of ethnic revival. The publications of S. Kuroglo, S. Bulgar, V. Syrf, D. Nikoglo, M. Dermenzhi, P. Pashaly, L. Lavrentieva and others emphasize Valentin Aleksandrovich Moshkov's contribution to the formation of a separate discipline – Gagauz studies in the ethnography of the peoples of Russia.

V. Moshkov owns a number of meaningful works in the field of Gagauz studies, which have not lost their scientific significance up to the present time (МОШКОВ 1895: 70-83; МОШКОВ 1904). Among them is his ethnographic work "The Gagauz of Bendery Uyezd", in which he presented a detailed description and analysis of the traditional everyday culture of the Gagauz, compiled two hundred fairy tales he had collected, over a hundred proverbs, sayings and riddles.

The Contents of V. A. Moshkov's book cover the main directions of classical ethnography: material, spiritual, social and normative culture of the people. From V. A. Moshkov's own revelations, it becomes clear that he had met the Gagauz by chance. Collecting ethnographic material in the regiments of the Warsaw Military District, he met Turkish-speaking soldiers who were called Bulgarians. Possessing the ability to master languages, V. Moshkov learned the Gagauz language and collected materials for the dictionary of the Gagauz language, which he subsequently supplemented with the vocabulary recorded in the Comrat volost of the Bendery uyezd.

Presenting information and his observations regarding the religiosity of the Gagauz, the researcher drew attention to their adherence to the Christian faith, in spite of the pressure they experienced from the Ottoman conquerors. At the same time, he emphasized that "...some of them have repeatedly suffered persecution from the Turks" (МОШКОВ 2004: 6).

According to V. A. Moshkov, the Gagauz came to Bessarabia earlier than the Trans-Danube colonists, settling in the southern part of the Bendery district and in the northern Izmailsky yuezd, mainly in the Yalpuh river basin. At the same time, the author listed all the villages (МОШКОВ 2004: 11-12). It is important to emphasize that the Gagauz originally settled in large groups of several thousand people. Thus, large settlements in Budzhak began to form almost immediately during its development by trans-Danube settlers. According to V. A. Moshkov, "Gagauz people live <...> mainly in the Yalpuh river basin in huge villages, from 2 to 5 thousand in-

habitants in each. Small villages are not found here. It is curious that in Bendery and Izmail uyezds, everyone knows the Gagauz very well and will never confuse them with the Bulgarians, but the Gagauz do not officially exist, since from the day of their re-settlement from across the Danube they have been enlisted by the Bulgarians speaking Turkish, and are called as such up to the present minute (the authors' note – referring to the time of writing the book by V. A. Moshkov)" (Мошков 2004: 10). The modern settlements of the descendants of the Trans-Danube settlers in Budzhak are still amazing by the number of inhabitants. For example, the Gagauz village of Kongaz (98% of the Gagauz population) is the largest village in Europe. It is home to 13,406 people. The length of its territory is about 8 km (Поляков).

V. A. Moshkov cites the hypotheses of the origin of the Gagauz and the ethnonym "Gagauz" known at that time. He is in solidarity with those who consider the Oguzes to be the ancestors of the Gagauz (Moshkov 2004: 14). Some modern researchers also paid attention to the role of the Oghuz in the ethnic fate of the Gagauz people, although the issue of the origin of the Gagauz ethnos has not yet been settled and many controversial issues remain (Губоглю 2010: 249-250; Губоглю 2011: 425-426; Гордлевский 1941: 185-186). From the point of view of M. N. Guboglo, the ancestors of the Gagauz were the medieval peoples: the Polovtsy, Uzyz, Kumans and Pechenegs (Губоглю 1967: 103). G. Atanasov points out the presence of the Kuman trace in the ethnic fate of the Gagauz (Атанасов 2009: 440-444). From the point of view of I. F. Grek and A. V. Shabashov, the Asaruch Bulgarians (Türks) were involved in the ethnogenesis of the Gagauz, some of whom did not undergo Slavization and settled in Dobrudja, from where the 16th century, migrations of this people to Budjak began (Шабашов 2002; Грек 2017: 619-630).

V. A. Moshkov pays detailed attention to the description of gender and family relations among the Gagauz people. Describing children's games, he emphasizes that at the age of seven or eight years old children of different sexes stopped playing together: "From the same age is considered and indecent to play with boys. If the elders of her family do not stop her from doing this in time, the first passer-by who goes by will shame her" (Мошков 2004: 30). The author points out that in the Gagauz community boys and young men (in comparison with girls) had significantly more rights to exercise freedom of expression. For girls and women, as a

rule, there was a strict regulation of play and everyday behavior.

In the traditional everyday culture of the Gagauz people, male dominance over women is clearly traced. V. A. Moshkov recorded the custom, according to which during difficult childbirth, the husband had to wash his hands, after which this water was given to his wife to drink. The researcher cites the words of the Gagauz, who explain the meaning of this phenomenon: "Perhaps", say the Gagauz, "the wife once opposed her husband in something, and God punished her for this". In order to wash away this "great sin", it is necessary to bring public repentance in it, it is necessary to prove your repentance by the deepest humility" (Мошков 2004: 23).

Throughout the entire life span, described by the researcher (from childhood to family relations), the traditional subordination of a woman to a man was emphasized (Мошков 2004: 129-130). V. A. Moshkov pays attention to the regular practice to use physical force against wives and daughters-in-law on the part of husbands and fathers-in-law. At the same time, women had no right to complain about such an attitude, which was considered the norm in the traditional culture of the Gagauz people.

Simultaneously with the demonstrative emphasis on the degraded status of a woman, V. A. Moshkov drew attention to another peculiarity characteristic of this people: "...here is another difference from our Great Russian common people. Our peasant, as far as I have seen, never restrains himself in conversation, no matter how many women are in the room. The most cynical tales and songs are told and sung completely freely in the presence of women, girls and children, as if they were not there at all. The Gagauz do not have this; no man will allow himself any immodest conversation in the presence of women and children. And if he wants to tell an immodest tale, then first of all, he will look around in all directions, whether there is a woman, or whether she can hear him from the next room" (Мошков 2004: 131).

Similar behavior, as Moshkov writes, reminiscent of something "biblical" refers to the Gagauz people's tradition for sons not to show themselves naked in front of their fathers, and vice versa, it was considered a great sin and shame for a father to appear naked before boys "in this respect, boys are for some reason completely equated with women". (Мошков 2004: 175). This behavior was likely a traditional form of avoidance.

Attention is drawn to the author's detailed presentation of the family rituals of the Gagauz people and the associated social and normative culture.

From the description of intergenerational ties and the hierarchy of relationships in the family and between relatives, it becomes clear that among the Gagauz, paternal single-line and paternal multi-line family communities became widespread as a manifestation of complex forms of the family<sup>3</sup>.

As Moshkov emphasized, "At the head of any well-to-do family there must certainly be the man. The head of the family is the paternal grandfather. If he is not alive, then the head of the family is the father. And if the father also died, then his older brother replaces him. Among the Gagauz people, sons live with their father in the same house, who, according to customary law, is considered the direct heir to all of the father's property. It is obligatory for the son to arrange his own home together with the marriage. But all this does not prevent adults, married and separately living children of the same father not only to show him external signs of respect, but to obey him in everything, to consult with them until a very respectable age, to feel the power of the father over themselves even in the case of complete material independence from him" (Мошков 2004: 174).

The material collected by V. Moshkov is also important because it contains archaic components that have been lost at the present time and are an important part of the cultural memory of the people<sup>4</sup>.

One of the past elements is the practice of a newborn child (Мошков 2004: 130). This practice is known to the Turkic-speaking peoples (Ходжайов 2000: 22-45) and other ethnic communities (Балабанова).

The custom performed on the first wedding night is archaic: "The bloody linen of the bride and groom is not washed, but hidden and stored in chests, because the bride and groom must subsequently be buried in it" (Мошков 2004: 122).

The section in which V. A. Moshkov examines the funeral and memorial rituals of the Gagauz can be called saturated with archaism. Comparison of the materials collected by V. A. Moshkov with the results of research by modern ethnologists (Никогло, Степанов 2011: 393-413) indicates that a lot of elements of the funeral and memorial cycle have almost been lost. These include, for example, the practice of composing the life story of the deceased person that was memorized by loved ones

and chanted from mouth to mouth for a long time after burial and commemoration (Мошков 2004: 90-96).

Folk beliefs dating back to the pre-Christian tradition are related to a huge stratum of lost folk knowledge, but preserved thanks to the works of Moshkov. These are demonological notions (Мошков 2004: 205-206, 211-213, 224, 313), legends about giants (Мошков 2004: 277-281), elements of folk Orthodoxy (Мошков 2004: 119, 200, 206, 223), folk signs, trust in dreams, knowledge in the field of traditional medicine (Мошков 2004: 213-215, 217), views in the field of zoology (Мошков 2004: 261,263), etc. In spite of the great liking for the Gagauz people, V. A. Moshkov, having studied their cosmogonic ideas (Мошков 2004: 254-259), uses in relation to the Gagauz the concept of "uncivilized people"<sup>5</sup>: "Cosmographic and geographical information among the Gagauz, like most modern uncivilized peoples, is presented as a mixture of fragments of ancient myths, later myths and, finally, scraps of modern information gleaned from schools" (Мошков 2004).

The cited quotation testifies that the researcher knew about the existence of educational institutions in which the Gagauz people studied. At the same time, the population of Bessarabia in general and the Gagauz people in particular acted as a frontier territory for the Russian scientist. At the time of its incorporation into Russia, Bessarabia did not have an independent status. It is well known that only 47% of the territories included in the Russian Empire belonged to the Moldavian principality, the rest – 53% were part of the Turkish *rayah* and were directly subordinate to the Ottoman sultan.

In addition, the Gagauz, as well as the Moldovans, for the scientists of that time, were a kind of exotics, like the peoples of the North or Siberia.

Numerous archaic elements of culture that have sunk into oblivion, but have been recorded by the scientist, are interspersed with tenacious folk ideas about the good and evil, about the norms of behavior. Attention is drawn to the fear of public opinion, described in detail by the scientist: "Public opinion is for them such a despot, such a monster that not only people of poorer or average income, but even the village rich tremble. In Bendery uyezd there are many rich people among the Gagauz, whose fortune has exceeded one hundred thousand and who cannot part with bast shoes and footcloths only for fear of public opinion" (Мошков 2004: 188).

While on an expedition in one of the Gagauz villages of the Comrat region, we encountered a similar manifestation of fear of public opinion. When we were the guests of a well-to-do owner, who is usually called the “leader”, the members of the expedition were invited by him to the cellar. The owner’s behavior was very strange, since he very often looked around and fussed. As it turned out later, the owner did not want his neighbors and other fellow villagers to scold him for the fact that the feast was held during working hours. “They will talk a lot!” – he said<sup>6</sup>.

The significance of V. A. Moshkov’s research also is related to the fact that he not only fixes and conveys a number of rites or some phenomenon from the life of the people, but tries to explain them. For example, the author explains the phenomenon of the strength of public opinion in the Gagauz community by the fact that during their stay in the Ottoman Empire, the Gagauzians were persecuted: “If at that time the thunder and lightning of the Gagauz public opinion were aimed at preserving their isolation among the Turks and the purity of their Orthodox faith, but now they have no other object than recent innovations” (Мошков 2004: 190).

It is important to pay attention to the breadth of the researcher’s scientific outlook. This is evidenced by the notes to each section of the book. These notes contain comparisons with the culture of the neighboring Bulgarians, Moldovans, Rusyns, Ukrainians. At the same time, the researcher draws parallels with Russian Belarusians, Turkic-speaking peoples and the population of Europe.

Along with ethnographic elements, V. A. Moshkov was one of the first to illuminate the oral folk art of the Gagauz people, in particular, songs of religious content (Мошков 2004: 1-27). As the authoritative folklorist V. I. Syrf emphasized in his research, “After V. A. Moshkov, practically no one was engaged in the collection and study of Gagauz folk narratives of religious content, although they continued to be widely used among the local population” (Сырф 2011: 215). Having an excellent musical education, V. A. Moshkov paid serious attention to the musical heritage of the Gagauz people and their dance culture.

Moshkov drew attention to the role and significance of musical culture in the life of the nation: “When you get acquainted with the instrumental music of the Gagauz people, you involuntarily come to the conclusion that this nation is very mu-

sical. The very word they use to designate a melody – “hava” – bears some poetic connotation, since “hava” means air” (Мошков 2004: 87). At the same time, the author also expresses his subjective critical comments on the quality of the songs performed by the Gagauz: “Listening to the singing of the people and knowing nothing about their ability for instrumental music, one might think that it is the most mediocre in musical terms. This is especially noticeable if you visit the Gagauz church during the festive divine service” (Мошков 2004: 88).

Such a skeptical attitude towards the song culture of the people did not prevent V. A. Moshkov from carrying out serious work on collecting folklore material and fixing “samples of Gagauz fairy tales, songs, proverbs, sayings and riddles according to the system of Academician V. V. Radlov, who actively supported the ethnographic research of his colleague” (Решетов 2004: 455).

The researcher his professional attention to the whole spectrum of the material culture of the Gagauz people: the structure of the estate, traditional folk cuisine, clothing and its manufacture, the main occupations (arable farming, horticulture, winemaking, gardening and cattle breeding), as well as its trades and crafts.

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Thus, V. A. Moshkov made a significant contribution to the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Gagauz people. His liking for the small Turkic-speaking people was sincere. He was sensitive to the traditional everyday culture of the Gagauz people. Possessing the intuition of a professional ethnographer, being a unique collector of folklore and ethnographic material, V. A. Moshkov carefully studied the traditional culture of the Gagauz, immersing himself in the culture of everyday life. At the same time, he tried to demonstrate kindness and humanity, that is, those qualities that were cherished by the Gagauz themselves.

V. A. Moshkov sincerely admired the meaning the Gagauz people put into the word “hospitality”: “The meaning of the word, which the Gagauz people use to denote the concept of hospitality, does not quite correspond to ours (that is, Russian – D. N., V. S.). It is, actually, even wider than ours. We are talking about the «guest», that is, about the private concept, since no one considers every person a guest, and the Gagauz people call hospitality «adamlyk», that is, it comes from the word «adam» – man in its broadest meaning of this word, without distinction of their position, nationality, language, skin

color, etc. In the literal translation into Russian, the word «adamlyk» would sound something like «humanity», emphasized Russian general, passionate Gagauz researcher V. A. Moshkov in his study” (Мошков 2004: 185).

General Moshkov is extremely versatile in his work. He made an attempt to unravel the laws of historical development. He is the author of the concept of the cyclical nature of history. He presented this theory in his work “Historical prophecies about the future of Russia” bringing his predictions to 2062 (Мошков 1907–1910); Мошков (1907).

After his retirement, V. A. Moshkov continued to study science, living in Warsaw, from where, due to the rejection of the Bolshevik power and political instability, he left for Bulgaria, where he died on November 19, 1922. His ashes rest in one of Sofia’s cemeteries. The death of the Russian researcher is still fanned by an aura of mystery.

Fate decreed that V. A. Moshkov, not being a Gagauz himself, acted as a mobilizer and popularizer of the Gagauz identity. Thanks to his works wide circles of the public learned about the small people living in Budjak. It is no coincidence that such a reverent attitude towards this personality persists today, and not only in the community of researchers, but also among ordinary residents of Gagauzia (Dermenzhi). The Gagauz treat the memory of the Russian scientist with special reverence. So, in 2019 in the city of Ceadyr-Lunga, a monument was erected in front of the lyceum that bears his name. The opening of the monument was attended by the descendants of V. A. Moshkov.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The research was carried out with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Fundamental Research under project No. 20-19-00157.

<sup>2</sup> Another prominent representative of the Russian officers, A. I. Zashchuk, in his work of a statistical nature, when describing the Bulgarian settlers, singles out the Gagauz among them. Unlike V. A. Moshkov, the characterization of this people is superficial and biased. The author, in particular, points out that “in some colonies near the Yalpuh River there are Serbs and the so-called *Gagauz* (emphasis added by A. Zashchuk); the latter differ sharply in appearance, character and life from other Bulgarians. (According to local legend, the Gagauz are illegal children of Turks from Bulgarians). The Gagauz is bloodthirsty, cunning and stupid” (Зашук 1862: 169). The cited quote emphasizes not only the fact of mentioning the Gagauz people in the scientific heritage of A. Zashchuk, but also the idea of research mentioned above, that the Russian intelligentsia, including the scientific elite, considered Bessarabia and its population as a kind of exotics.

<sup>3</sup> The analogue approach is confirmed by the research of A. V. Shabashov (Шабашов 2002; Шабашов 2016: 209).

<sup>4</sup> As an illustrative example, we can cite the change in the social status of a Gagauz woman, especially during the years of Soviet power (Курогло, Филимонова 1976; Квилинкова 2005: 27-35). In the post-Soviet period, the social activity of a Gagauz woman is even more pronounced. Now she is forced to work in other countries (Russia and Turkey) to support her family. The unemployed husband often stayed at home with the children. Sometimes there were truly anecdotal cases. While collecting ethnographic information in Gagauzia in 2012, one of the respondents told V. P. Stepanov the story of a neighbor who, being married and raising two children, had left Moldova to work in Turkey. She married a Turk there, but at the same time set a condition for her new husband that he would support her children in Gagauzia, and buy her first husband a car to transport goods ... (The materials are from V. Stepanov’s personal archive). It is important to emphasize that the processes of economic self-assertion of women in Gagauzia in modern times coincided with the acquisition of statehood by the Gagauz in the form of autonomy. One of the most striking evidence of the emancipation of the Gagauz woman is that the Gagauz autonomy is being headed by a woman – Irina Vlah for the second term, who was chosen in a democratic election. Most of the inhabitants of the autonomy voted for her.

<sup>5</sup> V. A. Moshkov is the author of the concept of the humankind’s evolution. It is curious that he was prompted to deal with the problem of the origin of man by his acquaintance with the material and spiritual culture of the Gagauz people, with their language. The description of each component of the Gagauz culture in the works of the researcher is accompanied by comments, which provide extensive comparisons with the traditions of other peoples.

If the similarity of the Gagauz people with the Turkic-speaking peoples, the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula, with their neighbors in Bessarabia, with the Eastern Slavs could still be explained, the researcher was surprised to find parallels with the Scandinavian peoples, with Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians, and also with Australians, Africans and aborigines of America. Here is how V. A. Moshkov himself said about it: “... against my original intention, almost against my will, I was involved in the study of so-called international beliefs and customs” (Мошков 1907–1910; Мошков 1907).

In other words, V. A. Moshkov was struck by the similarity of the elements of the culture of peoples that were not related to each other by a common origin. This is probably why the idea of studying the problem of human origins arose.

<sup>6</sup> V. P. Stepanov’s expedition diaries for 2012 (from the author’s personal archive).

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