

Silinskaya Volost of the Simbirsk Volga Region: Discourse Analysis of the Way of Life and Spiritual and Cultural Traditions of the Population

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Abstract: The article presents a number of unknown facts from the history of the Simbirsk Volga region in the second half of the 19th century. They make it possible to show the origin and development of historical and cultural processes in the Silinsky volost of the Ardatovsky district. The features of the geographical location and climatic conditions of the territory, the occupations of the local population (gardening, horticulture, beekeeping, industry, handicrafts, other crafts, etc.) are shown. Attention is focused on the welfare and health of peasants, their poll - tax, redemption funds, payments and other expenses connected with household life, habits, including deviant behavior, are considered. The spiritual and moral practices that existed in the province, Christian beliefs and rituals of observing ancient customs during wedding ceremonies, burials, rituals to combat epidemics, which remain outside the field of view of the scientific community, are presented.

Keywords: way of life, local history, spiritual life, Silinskaya volost, Ardatovsky uyezd, Simbirsk Volga region, "Simbirskie gubernskie vedomosti"

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Introduction

Russia in the XIX century is important for the formation of the “image of the future” or the clarification of “meanings” in the past. The authors have studied the historical, cultural, economic, spiritual and moral communication practices of a particular region. The ways of resolving conflicts in the sphere of national / state identity in the past, which may be important for settlement at the regional level in the future, are considered.

The purpose of the study is determined by two aspects: firstly, the need to recreate a holistic picture of the development of the Silinsky volost’ of the Ardatovsky district of the Simbirsk province in the second half of the 19th century, the introduction of new facts into scientific circulation, which allows not only to identify inaccuracies, but also to revise previously drawn conclusions; secondly, reassessment of the problems that have emerged and the experience of their solution at the regional level. This may be of importance in determining the strategy for the development of the territory.

Materials and Methods

New materials that have not yet entered the scientific circulation, studied in the synergistic context of local studies of local lore and the concept of passionarity of L.N. Gumilyov (4; 7; 8), allow to get a fresh look at the political, socio-economic, cultural, religious and confessional processes that took place in one of administrative-territorial units. Turning to archival documents and materials, including messages from the clerk of the Silinsky volost’ board of the Ardatovsky district, Pyotr Varlamov¹, published in the unofficial section of the Simbirsk Provincial Gazette for 1866, messages from the Secretary of the Simbirsk Provincial Statistical Committee M.V. Arnoldov and at the same time the editor of the indicated newspaper, we will try to compare them to recreate the analytical matrix about the Silinskaya volost’ of the Ardatovsky district of the Simbirsk Volga region.

To form the theoretical and methodological basis of the study, the scientific works of A.A. Akulova, S.A. Arutyunova, O.N. Astafieva, E.A. Zhuravleva, L.Yu. Kompleeva, G.I. Koroleva-Konoplyana, I.A. Kuptsova, N.B. Lebina, L.G. Skulmovskaya, V.V. Shalina, G. Cherner and others, devoted to understanding the imperial heritage of Russia, were taken, however, they did not take into account regional features in the formation of a regional model of government. The source base was the funds of the Central Archive of the Nizhny Novgorod Region, the fund for the Ardatovsky district (Silinskaya, Talyzinskaya volosts) of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Mordovia, the People’s Archive of the Samara and Simbirsk provinces, and other materials on the history and statistics of the Simbirsk province.

¹ Here and further, when mentioning P. Varlamov, the following sources will be used: Varlamov P. Description of the Silinsky volost’. Simbirsk provincial gazette. 1866. No. 5, 15 Jan.; No. 6, 18 Jan.; No. 7, 20 Jan.

In the process of studying written texts as sources, summarizing and interpreting the results obtained, the following scientific methods were used: a systematic method, a synergistic approach to the study of social processes and phenomena, methods of general scientific analysis and synthesis, historical retrospective, historical-genetic, continuity. This made it possible to create an integrative picture of ethnocultural genesis in the province, taking into account the concept of passionarity of L.N. Gumilyov and the functional of culture Yu.V. Bromley. The province is shown as a developing, multifaceted phenomenon with complex spiritual, moral and social relations. When constructing it, the authors proceeded from the principles of historicism, objectivity and consistency of humanitarian knowledge.

Results

In the second half of the XIX century the split has not yet affected the territories of the Ardatovsky district. However, in the understanding of the Russian commoner, the Simbirsk province was considered one of the richest in Russia in terms of specific local beliefs (2; 3), a detailed description of which would take up a lot of space. In this regard, we will only mention the most important of them, which existed within the boundaries of the former Silinsky volost², while characterizing the geographical position of the territory, agricultural facilities, industrial infrastructure and socio-cultural sphere, features of spiritual and moral traditions, habits of the local population.

According to the 1st revision (1721), the landlord village of Silino was part of the Verkhopyansky camp of the Alatyry district. According to the “List of Populated Places in the Simbirsk Province” (1863), this was already an owner’s village in the Ardatovsky district, consisting of 33 households (266 people), in which there was a church. There are episodic historical data about the Silinsky volost³, taken from the Fund for the Ardatovsky district, which partly characterizes the activities of the local population:

There is no bank under the Volost’ Board, the big Moscow road from the city of Simbirsk to the city of Moscow passes through the volost’. There are no bazaars in the volost’, but on July 8 in the village of Lipovka there is annually a rather insignificant fair called “Kazanskaya”, established for the needs of the peasants of the surrounding villages. The inhabitants of the volost are mostly engaged in arable farming, but a small part in the summer goes to work in the field. An insignificant part of the inhabitants is engaged in handicraft industry, namely tailoring and blacksmithing, and then in their free time from field work and these occupations do not constitute the main trade in agriculture³.

² The village of Silino is now the Ardatovsky district of the Republic of Mordovia, the administrative center of the Silinsky rural settlement; it is located on the Mena River, 28 km from the district center and 39 km from the Ardatov railway station. Available from: <https://ru.wikipedia.org>.

³ Funds for the Ardatov district of the Simbirsk province. Cases for genealogical information search and lovers of local lore. Silinsky volost’ (1897-1917). Available from: <https://forum.vgd.ru/post/531/72850/p2203418.htm>

According to P. Varlamov's description, the Menya River divided the Silinsky volost" into a mountainous and ravine left-bank part and a lower right-bank part, imperceptibly rising to the forest. Between the villages of Neusypaevka and Soldatskoye, on the right side, the Rumleyka stream with steep banks flowed into it, starting from the forest dachas of the specific peasants of the village of Monadyshi. In the same place, near the village of Ulyanovka, the river Vachka carried its waters to the Menu from the cottages of the village of Chedaevka, Chedaevsky volos"⁴, the so-called Startsev corner⁴.

It was this place that was known for its Spas-Preobrazhensky Monastery, which, according to legend, was plundered by robbers. The clergy subsequently lived there, who moved to Chedaevka after the construction of a new church. Since the 17th century, the annual Spassky Bazaars and the best⁵ fairs (two days on June 26, August 6 and in winter from December 19 to 25, on the feast of Spyridon of Trimifuntsky, highly revered in the vicinity⁶), from Startsev Corner were transferred to the village of Bolshoye Talyzino (2)⁷, later renamed to Torgovoe Talyzino. A half-ruined church and a century-old pine tree, as witnesses of that time, existed in the second half of the 19th century.

Lush meadows stretched along the Mena, while the rest of the land along its banks was cultivated. The total area of all arable holdings in the Silinsky volost, registered with seven owners⁸, was approximately 7,000 hectares, haymaking – 470,88 hectares, for profitable livestock – 87,2 hectares; estates and hemp plants occupied 78,48 hectares of its territory, wood forest and shrubs – 359,7 hectares⁹. There were no other water systems, except Meni, Rumleyka and Vachka mentioned by P. Varlamov. In small oxbow lakes, formed between the mouths of Menya and Vachka, carp lived. It is noteworthy that in the river waters themselves with a width of 2 to 6 meters, apart from minnow and char, no other fish were found¹⁰. In the

4 The Spas-Preobrazhenskaya Hermitage, popularly called "Startsev Ugol", is now located near the village of Gorki, at the junction of the borders of the Republic of Mordovia and the Sechenovsky district of the Nizhny Novgorod region - the starting point for the spread of Orthodoxy in the Mordovian land. A divine service is held here every year on Spirits Day. In deep ravines in ancient times, the elders read prayers, Seraphim of Sarov, St. Luke Voyno-Yasenetsky appeared. Secretly, under the guise of stove-makers, Metropolitans John (Snychev) and Manuel (Lemeshevsky) visited these places. By their petitions, the weak and seriously ill were healed, and the destinies of pious Christians were arranged. There are many legends about "Startsevy Ugol" and Ivan the Terrible's campaigns against Kazan. The desert was abolished and revived. Schema-nun Margarita built the last women's community in this place. In the 1930s, it was destroyed by destroying the cells and chapels, the monks were shot and buried right there in the ravine. According to legend, the church with the monks went underground, where the hill rises now. Four springs with water of different composition were hammered out of it.

5 Funds for the Ardatov district of the Simbirsk province. Cases for genealogical information search and lovers of local lore. Talyzinsky volost' (1897-1917). Available from: <https://forum.vgd.ru/post/531/72850/p2203418.htm>?

6 Larkina O. (2003) Schema Nun Margarita. Available from: https://blagovestsamara.rf/public_page_8209?

7 This is confirmed by the information contained in the TSANO documents. Fund 4. Inventory № 1a. Case 18. Fairs of 1780; Fund 61. Inventory № 216. Case 84. Fairs of 1865; Fund 60. Inventory № 236. Case 127a. Fairs of 1906 Also see: Ledrov S. (1920s) Map of the Nizhny Novgorod Region Fair in the XVII – first third of the XX century. Available from: <http://ledrov.ru/history/bazary-yarmarki/64-yarmarki?>

8 There were no forests owned by the peasants.

9 People's Archive of Samara and Simbirsk provinces. Silinsky volost' (2022). Available from: <https://mmdvshg.forum2x2.ru/f22-forum>.

10 The "brother" of the char is a predator from the salmon family, a rare species, useful in its properties, looks similar to trout.

loamy soil on the banks of the rivers, there was an admixture of stone, in the channel – shale, impregnated with oil, brought up along the river by spring waters. The soil was fertile, black earth, the humus content in its humus layer reached 12%; the subsoil composition is loamy. In some settlements, for example, in the village of Monadyshi, bricks were made from local clay.

They enriched the land mainly with manure from the barn, taken out by the peasants to the paddocks they got into the allotment. In the understanding of P. Varlamov, the peasants, “would have started with much more zeal if there were no communal ownership” to such a method of increasing its productivity and quality. The author did not write about the results of fertilizing plots with bone (bone fertilizer), which began on the estate of Mr. Grebner, but about agricultural implements, he noted that they were an ordinary plow and a harrow with iron teeth, for removing bread – a sickle; Grebner also introduced the loosening tool he invented.

Basically, the inhabitants of the village were engaged in arable farming as a means of maintaining life. A small part of the peasants in the summer went to the grassroots places for field work¹¹. According to P. Varlamov, the peasants, having received an insignificant allotment of land, rented and cultivated free land plots. The three-field system of field cultivation did not stand out from the rest in the volost - one field was sown with rye, the other with spring crops, consisting mainly of oats and buckwheat; then peas, spelt, barley and millet were sown (for themselves, not for sale). Until 1846, even spring wheat was grown in these parts, which had to be abandoned (it stopped producing good yields). As a rule, 2/3 of the spring field was sown with oats, the rest with small grain breads. In technical terms, according to the observations of the volost clerk, the process looked like this: for winter crops, the land preliminarily rested, after which it was harrowed twice. Rye was sown with a plow, as the peasants were convinced that this way the ear was larger and the grain more bulky. Seeds for winter crops were always used only from compressed and threshed rye before sowing (“not fresh”, one-year-old cereal lying in the bins was considered unreliable in this regard). The field has been plowed under spring crops since spring, harrowed and sown. Since there were no seeders, it was sown manually for the economic tithe at the rate of: rye – 12 conditional land volumes, oats – 20, peas – 9, millet – 1, barley – 24, buckwheat – up to 16, spelt 55½ measures. The first spring sowing in the district began with oats and peas immediately after the snow melted (with the advent of the opportunity to plow), and ended no later than May 15th. The second in turn in the sowing campaign was millet and barley, the last one was buckwheat (it was planted in the last days of May or in the first days of June).

The voluminous and heavy, boring weeding in spring bread, oats, barley, spelt and millet fell to the lot of women and children. Productivity was reduced by climatic conditions, pests and diseases of agricultural crops. Local frosts harmed buckwheat more than others, and droughts (for example, in 1864) nullified all the efforts of the peasants in crop production. Huge damage to winter crops was caused by a breadworm that destroyed

11 Funds for the Ardatov district of the Simbirsk province. Cases for genealogical information search and lovers of local lore. Silinsky volost' (1897–1917). Available from: <https://forum.vgd.ru/post/531/72850/p2203418.htm?>

entire fields. Young pea seedlings were affected by an unknown gray booger, millet - smut caused by smut fungi, which reduced grain yield by 20–30%. Ergot, which is not uncommon in rye, affected both people and livestock with poultry everywhere (for example, there was a lot of it in the 1863 harvest).

Grain was threshed mainly by machines, giving along with drying grain in rigs, folding it into a barn, transporting straw, according to P. Varlamov's estimates, 15 silver kopecks per 100 sheaves (compared to the manual method, less than 20 silver kopecks for this type of work and did not take due to the lack of grain dryers). The cost of harvesting grown grain from tithes with advance payment from autumn to winter reached 2–5 rubles, with summer hiring – 3–3.5 rubles. There was no export of sheaves by hire. A winter worker, according to his assumption, could be hired for the period from autumn incantation to Easter for 8–10 rubles, in summer - from Easter to autumn incantation – for 20–25 rubles; an employee – 3–6 and 2–8 rubles, respectively. For example, in 1866, the price of approximately 170 kilograms of rye in the city of Ardatov was 4 silver rubles, its transportation over a distance of 20–30 versts was no more than 15 and 20 silver kopecks. Grass was mowed with ordinary scythes in small wet ravines near the Meni River and in forest clearings, as a rule, once a year. The harvest of hay was poor, as cattle grazed there and young grass grew only a little over a month before it was mowed.

According to P. Varlamov, there were 880 cattle with calves, 704 horses, 1,220 sheep and 576 pigs in the volost. Determining the ratio of livestock to the entire amount of convenient and inconvenient land (7,157 acres), he tentatively made the following calculation: for every 10 acres of land there was one horse, for 8 acres – one head of cattle, for 6 acres – one sheep and for 12 a tithe is one pig. Due to the lack of fodder and poor maintenance, local cattle were extremely small in stature. In winter, all of them, together with the sheep, kept in closed, but cold yards. They were fed with spring and rye straw, with the exception of sheep and horses, which occasionally got hay, and mash from all the leftovers for dairy cows and horses. From early spring, after the snow melted, all the cattle, exhausted from winter starvation, were driven out to the meadow, where during the summer they ate a little. More prosperous peasants from the autumn bought at cheap prices for fattening, slaughtering or reselling to larger merchants small and large cattle, sheep. For example, in the fall of 1865, the price, according to the volost clerk, was 1.5 silver rubles. It happened that after the slaughter, up to 3 silver rubles were obtained due to the high cost of fat, which reached 5 silver rubles per 16 kg. As regards cattle, in autumn it was possible to buy an average cow for 8–10 silver rubles. Goats were not kept in peasant farms, but there were quite a lot of piglets. Being picky in care and feed, these animals were considered profitable. Wealthy peasants also bought pigs for fattening with peas, and after slaughter they sold the meat at the Ardatovsky Bazaar, where the price of pork reached more than 1.5 silver rubles per 16 kg. From poultry, they preferred to keep only chickens.

Horticulture in the Silinsky volost was in a miserable state and developed poorly: for their own needs, the peasants grew only cabbage, cucumbers, carrots and onions. Potatoes were sown relatively recently in the fields, which were stored in pits, the surplus was sold at neighboring bazaars at 10–25 silver kopecks per certain volume. Russian hemp, flax and

tobacco were also cultivated in scanty volumes only for themselves. The first crop was sown on the estate, on fertilized land, the second – in the field, the third – in the garden from local seeds. Gardening as a separate branch of the economy was also weak. In addition to 2–3 landlord estates that cultivated various varietal apple trees and some cherries, only peasants in the village of Lipovka were engaged in it. Small gardens were not rented out, and the fruits were sold at the surrounding bazaars. Beekeeping was not a developed branch of agriculture at all; they were mostly used by old people.

There were no water and steam mills in the volost', only "windmills" that were easy to use, with the exception of several mills in the village of Siline. The value of each such windmill, according to P. Varlamov, did not exceed 150 silver rubles, but they grinded badly. There were also two mills that worked horses, and four fairly profitable oil mills for the production of hemp oil, the press cake from which served as excellent fodder for livestock.

Some residents in their free time from field work, not to the detriment of arable farming, were engaged in handicrafts – tailoring, blacksmithing; horse treatment; this is known from an article by a member of the Simbirsk Provincial Statistical Committee, Mr. Fon Grebner; digging wells in the surrounding villages (Silino village); brewing (up to 10 excellent brewers from the village of Lipovka were annually sent around Russia for this). The only one-day fair in the Silinsky volost' in the village of Lipovka, insignificant in terms of turnover, was timed to coincide with the summer holiday in honor of the Kazan icon (July 8)¹². The peasants of the nearest villages brought sheep, calves and small cattle to it. Local residents bought everything they needed for themselves here. However, according to the volost clerk, the turnover of the fair was insignificant, and there were no own bazaars.

The welfare of the peasants was low. To pay the tax, the peasants brought the last rye or a sheep or a cow necessary for the household to the market. The peasant paid for each family member annually 3 rubles and 20 kopecks podushnja ¹³, pastushnyje ¹⁴ – up to 60 kopecks; for the volost' board – up to 40 kopecks, horses – 17, for the salary of the volost coachman – 15 kopecks; for recruits¹⁵ – 20 kopecks; for repairing roads – 17 kopecks, for bridges – 15 kopecks, for sotsky – 2 and church warden – 2 kopecks. Moreover, the clergy collected 25 kopecks during the year. In total, this amounted to 5 rubles 33 kopecks per person. If we add to the indicated amount money for redemption from serfdom and payments for land, money for drinking in a tavern (67 kopecks), then up to 15 silver rubles were collected. It turned out that each peasant family, consisting of an average of 3 males, spent up to 45 rubles in silver. If we add other expenses associated with household life (buying salt, firewood, various utensils, shoeing horses and partially purchasing clothes), the costs turned out to be large. The life of the peasants would be difficult without free rentable land, from the cultivation of which they benefited. There were few capitalists who had the opportunity to provide loans in the district. If a man borrowed money, then he returned it at least 12% per annum.

12 Funds for the Ardatov district of the Simbirsk province. Cases for genealogical information search and lovers of local lore. Silinsky volost' (1897-1917). Available from: <https://forum.vgd.ru/post/531/72850/p2203418.htm>

13 Podushnja – per capita tax.

14 Pastushnyje – payment to shepherds for grazing cattle.

15 Conscription, established in Russia by the number of souls after the first revision of 1722.

At the same time, the peasant, having become independent, did not lose heart. On the contrary, he used every opportunity to have a drink somewhere. On all holidays, including July 8 and November 8, honored after Easter and the Nativity of Christ, he brewed 6 buckets of hemp beer per person, bought wine, meat or fish to drink during all week long. At that time, he did not take on any economic affairs and did not think about whether the grain perished in the field or not. In general, the level of drunkenness in the volost not only did not decrease, but increased annually. According to the Silinsky and Lipovsky volost's, only in these rural cemeteries in 1865 5 people were dropped from drunkenness. According to P. Varlamov, it was commonplace in the 1860s to bury the dead from drinking in common rural cemeteries, to which the Silin people reacted with sincere indignation. The peasants were firmly convinced that deviation from ancient customs is terrible, which will inevitably entail crop failures, since some deep forest ravine should be a decent place for the burial of a drinking person. In the case of his burial in a common graveyard, in order to avoid the upcoming, in their understanding, misfortunes, the coffin with the deceased is required not to be lowered, but to be thrown into the grave, sticking aspen stakes around it as a talisman against evil spirits¹⁶.

Thus, a vicious circle was that could not be broken: on the one hand, drunkenness ruined able-bodied people, therefore, undermined the economy of the region and the country as a whole, and on the other hand, it was unprofitable for the state to eradicate it. In other words, the active rejection of drinkers existed simultaneously with the tradition of drinking that permeated all sections of society, giving rise to a tolerant attitude towards alcohol (5; 6; 9:46–47, 107; 10; 12).

Belief in slander and whispering also played an important role, especially in wedding ceremonies. For example, for fear of causing damage to the newlyweds by some doctor treating horses¹⁷, who enjoyed great honor in the village, he was plentifully treated. P. Varlamov noted that he drank as much beer and wine as he desired. The Silin peasant, in order to cleanse himself of the disease during an epidemic and mass deaths of livestock, always buried the first fallen animal in the place where it died. Allegedly, this ritual was bound to prevent the general death of cattle. If, nevertheless, the process developed, then the herd was driven through the Living Fire: in the morning, all other fire was carefully poured (extinguished) in all rural huts, and 2–3 hefty guys started rubbing wood against wood. Other peasants chose a convenient ravine, dug a ditch in it so that a small but convenient arch was formed for driving the worldly herd. The holy fire was laid out on top of the ditch above the vault, and all the cattle were passed through it (11).

The state of health of the Silin residents themselves was poor. The peasants, dressed badly, not for the weather, often caught colds. And huts heated with straw harmed health and vision. Huge disasters, as in 1863, were caused to the population, cattle and poultry by

¹⁶ In the pagan traditions of many peoples before the advent of Christianity, aspen was considered an effective remedy against witchcraft and otherworldly creatures; the Slavs especially believed in the saving power of this tree.

¹⁷ So the healer treating horses was called with disdain; and a bad, ignorant doctor; a self-taught healer.

parasitic ergot on cereal plants. It turned out that when eating such bread, miscarriages occur in all cases without exception among local pregnant women. The next year, there was a fever among the adults of the Silins, several times a year, and the little ones died from a smallpox epidemic. The county doctor, specially posted, apparently did not bring any benefit due to the lack of medicines (Table 1 below shows the death rate of the local population in 1865).

Table 1. Indicators of the mortality rate of the population of the Silinsky volost in 1865

The number of deaths among the population of the Orthodox faith	Men	Women
age		
up to 1 year	21	31
1 – 5 years	4	5
5 – 10 years	2	1
10 – 15 years	–	1
20 – 25 years	3	3
25 – 30 years	–	1
30 – 35 years	1	1
35 – 40 years	–	–
35 – 40 years	–	3
40 – 45 years	1	1
45 – 50 years	–	–
50 – 55 years	1	2
55 – 60 years	1	2
60 – 65 years	3	–
65 – 70 years	1	–
70 – 75 years	1	–
75 – 80 years	–	1
over 80 years	–	–
Total:	40	52

Source: Varlamov P. Description of the Silinsky volost (Ending) // Simbirskie gubernskie vedomosti. 1866;7. January 20.

According to P. Varlamov's estimates, the indicators of the general mortality of the population in the Silinsky volost in 1865 of the children under the age of 5 years accounted for 65%. Among all the dead persons in the age group over 80, there were no persons of other confessions, except for Orthodoxy. The volost clerk expressed deep sympathy for pregnant women who experienced unheard-of barbarity during childbirth; more than a third of all

children born died from the inability to handle newborns. The peasants were ready to see a doctor, but there was no one to go to. “Dark”, illiterate men, naturally gifted with good mental abilities, in his opinion, realized the benefits of literacy, they learned the basics of literacy from the clerk of the volost government or from former courtyard people. From such teachers learned to read and write 23 people for 897 men of the male population of the volost’, or 2.5% for every 100 men.

Conclusion

The foregoing allows us to conclude that the ethnocultural identity of the Silins was determined by their way of life, the dominance of agriculture, a combination of communal land use and religiosity. Peasant farms retained a consumer character, had dynamics, but did not go beyond the boundaries of the traditional archaized agrarian subsystem, the economy of the Simbirsk Volga region. They were based on the “peasant farm”, labor-intensive and costly in nature, far from the optimal principles of the organization of production. The spiritual and cultural sphere was dominated by an archaic cult of veneration of ancestors, communicative rituals of communication between the “world of the living” and the “world of the dead”. The results of the work can contribute to further vernacular research on this issue.

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