

## **The Collective Farm Peasantry and Religious Holidays in the Volga Region in the Postwar Decade**

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**Abstract:** On the basis of a wide range of published sources used for the first time reconstructs the life of a religious holiday postwar in Volga village. Festival as a special socio-cultural action plays a crucial role in the life of every individual and in the social education. Celebratory action serves as a link between the past and the future and defines this social dominance. Festive culture, serving the opposition daily routine practice, the importance attached to the social experience of the individual and the collective, ensures the stability of cultural transmission of collective memory, develops mechanisms of group and social identity. A special feature of Russian culture holiday was the fact that it is largely shaped by and at the initiative of the authorities, sought through the festive calendar is not only to develop mechanisms of civil identity design but also give legitimacy to the existing political system. The establishment of the Soviet system in October, 1917 led to a change in the paradigm of national culture holiday. The study is based on the approach and methodology microhistorical “Oral History” that allowed the researcher to expand the source base. As sources were not only archival materials and oral histories of villagers. The researcher conducted a historiographical analysis of the issue on which he rightly notes that the post-war religious life of the peasantry did not attract the attention of researchers to the right degree. On the basis of micro-historical approach the researcher shows the importance of the religious holiday action among the peasants. According to him, mass participation of Soviet peasants in the religious celebrations were due to a number of reasons. In particular, farmers sought to preserve their cultural identity which breaks down under the influence of Soviet agricultural policy.

**Key words:** Soviet peasantry, post-war, religion, celebration, culture holiday, agricultural policy

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Festival as a special socio-cultural action plays a crucial role in the life of every individual and in the social education. Celebratory action serves as a link between the past and the future and defines this social dominance. Festive culture, serving the opposition daily routine practice, the importance attached to the social experience of the individual and the collective, ensures the stability of cultural transmission of collective memory, develops mechanisms of group and social identity. It is no coincidence, Bakhtin (1965) calls the holiday the primary form of human culture. During large-scale social transformations when society is experiencing a “Cultural Trauma” of change and aims to develop a strategy of cultural adaptation, it was a holiday as a tried and established tradition (Nekrylova, 2004) contributes to the consolidation of society, the development of new ritualized actions, reflecting the ongoing social, political, cultural and economic changes.

In today’s Russia when the social factors and political elite are searching for cultural reasons

contributing to the consolidation of society, it is an appeal to the traditional experience of previous generations and the national holiday narrative can contribute to achieving this goal. Using spectacular, sacral-mythological component of the festival can contribute to the revival of public interest in the history of its statehood and restoration of traditional moral values of the Russian people.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The main sources for this study were the documents stored in the central and regional archives of the Russian Federation as well as the work of Foreign and Russian scientists, devoted to the analysis of peasant culture, transformation of Russian society in the Soviet era.

The study is based on the approach and methodology microhistorical “Oral History” that allowed the researcher to expand the source base. As sources were not only archival materials and oral histories of villagers. Use of system analysis and special historical methods (retrospective, historical and comparative,

ideographic) enabled to reconstruct the life of a religious holiday Postwar in Volga village. Most of the documents used for writing, entered into scientific circulation for the first time. Critical analysis of archival documents, a comparison of data from field research demonstrated their high reliability.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Domestic cultural studies by Bakhtin (1965) the peculiarities of medieval culture of laughter, says a fundamental feature of the festival: a special concept of time—the cosmic, biological and historical. For him, the holiday is always linked to the crisis “in the life of nature, society and man”. Birth and death, change and renewal in his understanding this is the main feeling of the holiday. J. Huizinga stresses the ambivalent nature of the festival, brings him to a game that displays individual frames of everyday life, immerse it in “a state of excitement and illusions, the sacred and the seriousness of” tomfoolery “of faith and unbelief, etc.” (Urazmanova, 2003).

In the framework of Russian religious philosophy in the researchers of such thinkers as the N.F. Fedorov, V.V. Rozanov, P.A. Florensky and others. Emphasizes the inextricable relationship of the holiday with the “reflections on the attitude of Russia and the West, the Church, the true and inauthentic existence, freedom and artistic creativity” (Mikhailovsky, 2005). For works of this area is characterized by a statement of the loss of the beginning of the festive Russian society in the early 20th century. Crisis festive culture in their opinion, has been associated with the departure of most of the population from the deep religiosity, secularization of consciousness. This, in turn, led to a change in values and ideals and thereby also to the transformation of the paradigm of the holiday start.

For modern researchers festive culture is characterized by an understanding of the holiday in two space-time dimensions. In particular notes that the cultural aspects of the festival has always manifested more clearly and vividly than his social nature, remaining disavowed. Understand celebration not only as a memory of the people but also as a special instrument of symbolic politics, a certain marker of social change (Efremova, 2014). Russian researcher festive culture notes that there are three dimensions of Russian holidays the house, the church and society. According to her in the traditional Russian society feast served family cohesion, kinship of faith and unity of the society (Nekrylova, 2004).

One of the first Soviet human cognition drew attention to the traditional agricultural festivals of the Russian people and the ritual practices of the peasantry

folklorist and ethnographer (Propp, 1963). In his study, he shows a logical relationship of Church, Christian holiday with Pagan rituals and indicates their dual nature. Examining the variety of living space pre-revolutionary peasants (Goromyko, 1991) notes the decisive role of festive activities in the cultural and business practices of the peasantry. In her understanding, celebration a special kind of folk culture which absorbed the various elements of art and social consciousness. And most importantly, the festival was aimed at updating and proactive activity of the individual while maintaining the traditional start (Gromyko, 1991). Holiday among the peasants was a kind of ritual, said (Berdinskikh, 2012) and demanded a thorough and comprehensive training: festive clothes, putting things in order in the house and treats blank foods. According to Urazmanova, holiday decorations for the most important moments of the life of the peasant community and has always been associated with the collective work, relax and socialize (Baudron *et al.*, 2015). Bezgin (2008) the critical role of Orthodoxy in the everyday life of the Russian peasantry and Orthodox holidays in his opinion, “is a guide to which peasants correlated all the most important events of his life”.

The phenomenon of Soviet mass celebration was analyzed by the German historian Rolf. In his understandings, the meaning of the new “Red” festive calendar is “a demonstration of the new order of things” and the festival became an important channel of communication in Soviet society. According to Rolf (2009) just after the war by the Soviet holidays managed to oust the mass consciousness of traditional folk and religious component which is the basis of culture festive pre-revolutionary Russia.

The liberation from the domination of the domestic science of Marxist ideology and the formation of pluralism in the public consciousness led to increased research interest in the problems of everyday practices of different groups of Soviet society. Festive practices of the Soviet peasantry in the works of the period covered in fragments as an illustration of the ongoing social transformations of everyday life. In particular noted the particular extent ritual drunkenness in the Soviet countryside in the years of “war communism” and the NEP. According to Lebina (1990) antireligious campaign of the Bolshevik leadership in the first post-revolutionary years was caused by the desire to reduce the consumption of alcoholic beverages population, especially in the days of religious holy days.

In traditional rural culture, religion play a special role and it is for a long time been a major element in the formation of rural identity. According to many researchers, the peasants paid much attention to external,

ceremonial side of the cult and therefore the role of religious holidays in the countryside has been a weighty and religious traditions demonstrated their resilience even in the years of active anti-religious struggle of the first Soviet 5 years plans. In its first official report on the analysis of the religious activity of the population Kuibyshev Region, authorized by the council for religious Affairs noted that in rural areas in the region long before the registration in the government in 1945 were 6 Muslim religious societies which are "historically developed strong organizational and organizations". It is important to note that in rural areas in mass religious celebrations attended by not only the rural intelligentsia, ordinary farmers and individual farmers but also representatives of the rural power structure: farm chairmen of executive committees and village councils, members of the CPSU, i.e., persons who by their actions have been both contribute to the spread of marxist ideology and atheistic worldview in the renewed Soviet countryside.

An essential attribute of a religious festival in the village were visiting relatives and the temple, "going to the people" participation in the mass festivities. In the post-war decade despite continued active anti-religious propaganda rural society demonstrates the preservation of the cultural marker. Chairman of the "Red Box" Plato village council Kuibyshev Region in an interview with the competent "said that in almost all the major holidays of the girl a lot of guys go to Church".

Soviet peasant's religious holidays sought to visit the Church and participate in the services, even if the holiday falls on the active cycle of spring-field and harvest works which in turn caused extreme dissatisfaction of the Soviet party organs. In the Summer of 1945 one of the main Muslim holidays Eid-al-Fitr coincided with a period of harvest. Despite a number of spent Kamyshlinsky District Committee of the CPSU the Kuibyshev Region meetings of Communists, Komsomol and rural asset to the fact "that on the first day all went to work on the harvest, still to this day in the Tatar fields collective farms there was not a single person".

The Muslim holiday of Eid-al-Adha, 1949 in the Kuibyshev Region was characterized by "high activity of all groups of the Tatar population around the celebration of worship". The situation with the labor discipline during the holidays was similar in the first half of the 1950's. Thus, in Pokhvistnevsky District to celebrate the Eid in 1952, "farmers have thrown all their researcher: harvesting, threshing, stacking and delivery of grain to the state". Most farmers did not work for 2-3 days and some did not open until 5 days. The religious holidays violated labor discipline not only to the Muslim population but also representatives of other religious

teachings. Taxes lake Pestravsky District Kuibyshev Region in days of Easter 1945, "the faithful citizens 2 days did not go to work in the fields".

Many Volga villages in which there was no functioning churches and other places of worship, public holidays and Sunday services conducted unregistered clergy and representatives of the local Soviet authorities carrying out these activities do not interfere but the organizers demanded the payment of taxes on income received for the commission required. For example, in the village. Mochaleevka Podbelskogo area Kuibyshev Region during the Muslim holidays 1948 public prayers were held in the open air with the participation of about 600 people, among whom was "the whole rural youth and women". In 1945, in the days of Orthodox religious holidays such as Palm Sunday, the Annunciation, services were held in private homes to farmers. Gubashevka Chapaevski District with Smyshlyaevka, Alekseyevka and small Malyshevka Kinel area Kuibyshev Region. Chesnokovka Koshkinsky District Easter service was held in the home collective FarKlimashevoy in the presence of 100 faithful, among whom was the chairman of the local collective farm "Victory".

In the postwar decades the number of people visiting the Church was small, except for religious holidays were. Especially in the holidays like Easter, "Nikola" (the day of St. Nicholas, celebrated 9th of May and known as "Nicola Vernal") and Trinity. On Easter service in 1949 in the 3 Churches Ulyanovsk attended about 5,000 faithful and "50% of them from nearby villages". In rural areas, the service in the average was 500-600 parishioners. Molvino Terengulsky District at Christmas and Easter Church attendance rose to 1,000. In the Kuibyshev Region in the postwar years there was a similar picture. Most active believers were manifested in the days and Patronal Feasts days. In ordinary days, the Church in the villages visited Neronovka Glushitsky and not more than 400 parishioners and on holidays the number was at least 800 people. The Church of Light Zaplavnoe Bor District in the Easter service in 1948 was 4,000 faithful, many of whom have been with Easter cakes.

Among the pilgrims were many fools and invalids of the great patriotic war who asked for alms. The motives of their actions are explained in different ways. For example, a disabled group one Petrovichev of Chuvash Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic who returned from the front without legs, arrived in Surskoe with his wife and 2 years child. He sang prayers, makes the sign of the cross and prophesied while begging "for the sake of the unfortunate child". Believers mostly donated food and money. Another pilgrim as a disabled war veteran was in need of funds to repair his house which is due to disrepair

and lack of proper care during the war has worn. The most common Ivanovka pilgrims arrived on foot and placed in “houses, baths and backyards of resident’s and residents themselves including the chairman of the local collective farm in front of their houses, set tables with treats and hot” antique samovars allowing pilgrims to rest with road (Interv’ju S Zhitelem Sela Ivanovka Staro-Majn Oblas’t Ul’janovskoj Oblasti Fedotova N.I., 1929).

Common in the Volga villages during the patronal festivals backyard was bypassing the peasant houses and buildings with the locally icon that was to protect the building from fire and other disasters. Since 1949, local authorities are beginning to prohibit these acts of worship. So, Commissioner of the Council for Russian Orthodox Church of the Ulyanovsk Region, Rastegin strongly recommended to the faithful. Birla Nicholas Cheremshansky area “going from house to house with the icon of the population of the village to do”.

### CONCLUSION

In general, the religious activity of the rural population has been caused not only by the desire not to obey government policies but also the desire to preserve their way of life which is undergoing significant transformation. It is no coincidence, the most active person whose primary socialization took place at the pre-revolutionary period. A social memory whose support they were allowed the peasants of the older generation to the conclusion that the original rural culture under the influence of the Soviet agricultural project is destroyed, lost its basic values, customs and ideals. Thus, for the majority of farmers it is participation in religious holidays becomes a way of preserving the accumulated socio-cultural experience.

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