

MAIN TRENDS IN THE FORMATION OF RURAL SETTLEMENTS IN THE TERRITORY OF TARA (THE IRTYSH AREA) BETWEEN 1920 AND 1980

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Abstract

This article is concerned with studying the main trends connected with the changes of the borders of the Tara Irtysh area in the Soviet era. A wide range of sources, including some unconventional sources untypical of historical surveys (oral historical materials), was used as the basis of the research. The cumulative analysis of the above-mentioned sources enabled us to study the problem comprehensively, i.e. from the position of an inhabitant of the Irtysh area – the direct creator of history. The features of the used sources, the research object and its objective determined the basic tools that combined principles and methods generally accepted in historical science with peculiarities of new local history and rural history that were actively developing. In the course of the study, we have paid much attention to the factors determining the transformation of the rural settlement network under consideration throughout the designated period. We believe that the main factor was the state policy in the agrarian sphere. Among the reasons for the reduction in the number of villages were the policy of consolidation of the farms and the outflow of their population to cities, regional centers, and larger villages where the state planned to build central estates with a well-developed infrastructure.

Key words: rural settlements, Tara, Irtysh area, migration, urbanization

INTRODUCTION

In modern historical sciences, studying of a particular territory is in high demand, which can be explained by a number of reasons. Firstly, there is an increasing interest in "new local history" and "rural history" as its component. Secondly, the introduction of new data sources (for example, materials of oral history) into the scientific paradigm makes it possible to analyze the processes and phenomena that seemed to be fully studied from a different perspective, i.e. to see the history of Tara (the Irtysh area) "from within", to step into the shoes of its creator – the chosen person.

The notion of "Tarskoe Priirtyshye" includes the north of the Omsk region: Muromtsevsky, Bolsherechensky, Kolosovsky, Znamensky, Tevriszky, Sedelnikovsy and Ust-Ishimsky.

A number of factors explain the increased interest in rural history. The main reason is the lack of special literature concerned with

problems of a particular territory. Modern historiography on the stated problem is based on scientific works of scholars studying the history of Siberia devoted to the formation of a settlement network at the state level or in a separate region (Western Siberia). The crucial role is given to the publications of the following authors: Karpunina and Melentieva [16, 17, 31], Mazur [29, 30], Nikitaeva [34, 35, 36], Khisamutdinova [18, 19], Usoltseva [61], Chirkov [8, 9], Shlykova [48], Andreenkov [1, 2], Orlov [2, 39], Andreeva [3], Borisenko [6], Tomilin [59], Kolesnikova [24], Vasiliev [62], Okladnikov [38], Gorban [13], Sokolova [52, 53] and some other scholars.

Much attention to the region under study was paid by the Omsk scientist Kolesnikov [22, 23] who conducted research into the rural settlements in the Irtysh area and factors contributing to the formation of new villages), Sigutov [49, 50] (the author determined possible dates when rural settlements in the

Irtysk area were established), Golubetskii [12] (the author studied the settlement of separate regions in the territory under consideration), Moroz [32, 33] (the author analyzed the cultivation peculiarities and factors determining the above-mentioned peculiarities), Ilinykh [14, 15], Mazur [29, 30], Perevalov [40] and Rynkov [44].

The most factual material on the history of disappeared villages is contained in the works of local historians. We should emphasize the scientific research conducted by Fomina [11], Tsarev [60], Novikov [37], Kobutev [20, 21], Anoshin [4] and Kostina [26]. Unfortunately, there are no earlier historical works describing the territory under study at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. However, "these works provide valuable information and are spiritual resources that helped to preserve the identity of the regional culture" [45].

While new data are being introduced into the scientific usage that require comprehensive analysis and generalization, there is still no generalizing work on the rural history of Tara (the Irtysk area).

The chosen research object requires a comprehensive analysis of different sources. This article is based on a combination of written sources, cartographic materials and materials of oral history that have not been fully introduced into historical sciences yet. The latter are especially valuable since they directly relate to the fate of the history keeper and its creator.

The use of various written sources is primarily connected to their prevalence and accessibility. In addition, there is a traditional method of working with this source type. The written sources under consideration include legislative acts, documents of management and record keeping, statistical materials and periodicals. The analysis of legislative documents allows tracing the main directions of the state policy in all social spheres and stages of implementing the above-mentioned policy at the local level. The Decree of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of May 30, 1950 "On the Enlargement of Small Collective Farms and Tasks of Party Organizations in this Enlargement" is of a

particular interest [42]. This document reveals the state position in relation to separate villages. It defined the fate of the villages throughout the country.

While systematizing the above-mentioned documents of management and record keeping, we used the classification developed by Sokolova, which included documents of state institutions, namely business correspondence, information and accounting documents, reporting documentation [51]. The growth in the number of such documents significantly increased the amount of the sources for the research. For example, the Tarsk branch of the Historical Archives of Omsk region preserved the minutes of general meetings of collective farmers of 1950 where they addressed farming issues, suggested new names for collective farms and elected their chairpersons [54, 55, 56, 57, 58]. The analysis of annual reports and farm production plans reveals the main directions of economic activity led by collective farms, the achieved indicators and their belonging to a particular populated area.

Periodicals are a kind of a link between the "history from above" and "history from below". In this article, periodicals are mainly represented by "Omskaya Pravda" regional newspaper. Local newspapers have a significant research potential as they capture the history of destinies and give a chance to study historical processes at the microlevel. Periodicals highlight main events in the life of villages and thereby reveal the moods of their inhabitants, the successes and problems caused by the state decisions implemented in life.

Despite a tremendous potential of written sources, they reflect events and processes one-sidedly, expressing the position of the authorities. Thus, the role of nontraditional sources is constantly increasing in historical sciences. In this case, nontraditional sources are the materials of oral history. One can fully agree with Shcheglova that mass actions depersonalize history and this is one of the peculiar features of rural history. It is crucial to avoid objectification by studying the materials of oral history and introduce them into the scientific circulation [45]. Nowadays,

local libraries, local historical museums and family archives contain rich collections of memories, including those belonging to old-timers of villages that have already disappeared. The analysis of the collected materials shows that long-term residents highlighted the way of life in their villages, their appearance, rural holidays and the reasons that made villagers leave.

While studying the materials of oral history, researchers face a number of difficulties. They are connected with too much subjectivity in the analysis of materials and the lack of proven methods for their analysis. Memories reflect the inner world and emotional experience, i.e. they require special care and delicacy in the analysis [10].

Therefore, a comprehensive approach to the research of the sources allows us to fully study the chosen research object and achieve the stated objective.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Rural history has become one of the promising directions in both domestic and foreign historical sciences in the recent decades. Developing as a part of new local history, it has resulted in the specialization of historical knowledge and manifestation of postpostmodern trends [10]. Practices of new local history and rural history enable focusing on suprapersonal structures and considering events not from the point of view of the state but taking into account the interests of a particular person, their inner world, views and attitudes. Scholars from Stavropol working on the "New Local History" project claim that "...the approach of new local history enables compiling a collective biography of local communities from the family to country level. Methods for implementing such projects are "history from below" and the multidisciplinary approach combining demographic, socio-cultural, economic-statistical, legal, political, historical and geographical aspects. In addition, "history from below" studies local communities through the history of individuals and families. It is all about the social role of the individual and behavioral stereotypes in a

particular sociocultural, everyday, natural-geographical and geopolitical inhabitation. Another important aspect of studying new local history is the survey of changing forms, structures and functions of the given local space in the unity of the above-mentioned contexts" [25]. One of the research vectors of rural history is the study of disappeared villages that are regarded not as separate elements of a large country but as local sociocultural areas.

While conducting the study, we used traditional principles of historical sciences, i.e. the systematic approach and historicism. The systematic approach enabled analyzing the research object as a system, the combination of all its aspects and manifestations. The principle of historicism made it possible to study processes and phenomena in dynamics, taking into account the chosen historical conditions. It is crucial for the problem stated in the article since the state policy was among main factors determining the Soviet society.

We have used the general scientific methods of cognition and special methods of historical research for a comprehensive study and analysis of the issues the research deals with, including narrative (narrative-descriptive), comparative-historical and biographical methods. The narrative method comprises the logical presentation of historical facts taking into account the cause-and-effect relationship. The comparative-historical method enables identifying general and particular aspects in the processes under study, comparing changes in the development of the research object throughout the designated chronological period. The biographical method makes it possible to study the life features, activity results and the psychological portrait of a particular person in details. The biographical method is significant in this kind of research since methodological practices of rural history emphasize the fate of a particular person. This circumstance has also caused a special research interest in oral history that exists but "has not a graphic form" [46]. Turning to the materials of oral history, we should highlight that the modern interest in oral sources is associated with the growing interest of historians to a simple person, i.e. the "creator

of history" whose rich life experience has not been recorded in historical literature. This fact is especially relevant for this study since the personal factor is crucial for rural history. The materials of oral history give the opportunity not only to study the daily life of villagers but also to analyze their attitude towards the state policy in the field of villages in general [28]. Thus, a comprehensive study of the issue is possible only if we use a set of methodological practices and tools of both domestic and foreign historical sciences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The period between 1920 and 1980 was special in the Russian history as it was associated with significant changes in all social spheres. The key element determining the formation of the network of rural settlements in the Tara Irtysh area was the state policy.

By the beginning of the last century, the territory of Tara (the Irtysh area) had been densely populated. Different kinds of relationships were established among separate settlements. The joint management of economy began to develop. The number of settlements, their size and population were steadily growing due to several reasons. Firstly, the state weakened its control; secondly, there was a sufficient amount of land that provided relatively stable food security for peasant families; thirdly, it was the absence of landlord arbitrariness and tax oppression. In addition, by the beginning of the 20th century, the agriculture in Siberia and its separate regions was dynamically developing, and the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway also increased the scale of peasant resettlement and arranged the export of agricultural products from the region [15, p. 467]. These reasons contributed to the growth of rural settlements on the territory of Western Siberia in general, and in the Irtysh area near Omsk in particular. This development was partly supported by Stolypin's reforms [27]. During this period, the territory of Tara (the Irtysh area) and the whole country used agriculture as the basis of economy and the main resource. By the early

1920s, large estates had disappeared, and peasant households with small allotments began to prevail [41, p. 109].

Since 1924, the state had started to implement territorial reforms to consolidate volosts and divide the Omsk Governorate into districts. By April 1, 1924, the consolidation of volosts and formation of new districts in the Omsk Governorate had been completed. On September 24, 1924, Sibrevkom (the Siberian Revolutionary Committee) approved a new territorial division. 178 volosts were consolidated into 31 districts. On May 25, the Siberian Region was formed in accordance with the Decree of the Siberian Revolutionary Committee of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee. On October 1, 1925, counties and provinces were eliminated and replaced with 16 districts of the Siberian Region. The Omsk Governorate was divided into three independent districts, including Omsky, Tarsky and Slavgorodsky.

Agriculture remained the main occupation of the locals, including the breeding of cattle, pigs, horses, sheep, chickens, and the cultivation of grain crops like oat or wheat.

In the 1900-1950s, settlements of Tara (the Irtysh area) were developing in different ways due to many factors, including their location, the quality of pasture and arable land, personal factors, accumulated farming experience and their population.

The period between 1920 and 1930 was special in the life of Siberian villages. At that time, partnerships for the joint processing of land (TOZs) and communes started to form. Since that moment, the life of the Siberian hinterland changed many times. The policy of complete collectivization and elimination of kulaks (rich peasants) as a class also had its toll on villages. In the early 1900s, the absolute majority of rural residents had been individual farmers. Significant changes in peasant farming started in the late 1920s. Back then, a large part of peasant farms were eliminated and thousands of well-off families fled from their villages after selling or destroying the property.

In December 1927, the 15th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) proclaimed the collectivization of peasant

farms. The state puts many efforts to cooperate poor and middle-class peasants and limit the positions of "kulaks". At the end of 1926, there were 31.9% of poor peasants, 23.9% middle-class peasants and 29.5% wealthy peasants in the Siberian agricultural cooperatives. At the beginning of July 1928, the number of poor and middle-class peasants increased to 53.2% and 31.1%, respectively, and the well-off decreased to 20.4%. Collective farms were formed in all areas of Tara (the Irtysh area). As a rule, one collective farm united several nearby settlements. For instance, in 1922 a rural council was established in Godenovo Village, the Kolosovsky District, which also embraced Chiany and Teis Villages. Until 1922, Godenovo had been a part of the Teis Rural Council. In 1925, there were 43 houses in Godenovo Village, 47 houses in Chiany and 78 houses in Teis. There were 5 industrial enterprises in the rural council, including three butter factories, one oil mill and one windmill. The above-mentioned rural council had 489 acres of pastures, 109 ploughs, 24 mowers, 12 threshing machines and 59 winnowers [57]. The collective farm in the village was called "Krestyanka" ("Peasant Girl"), and after the war, it was renamed into "Pobeda" ("Victory"). Ivan Semenovitch Stroenkov was elected as its first chairperson. Former inhabitants of Godenovo Village told that: "The collective farm was initially called "Krestyanka", and after the war, it was renamed into "Pobeda". The first chairperson was Ivan Semenovitch Stroenkov and the second chairperson was Grigorii Grigorievich Belena. From 1953 to 1963 years, the chairperson had been Nikolai Arkhipovich Vydrin. Later the villages were consolidated into the collective farm "Strana Sovetov" ("The Land of Soviets"). The life was very difficult before the war and in the postwar years as everywhere else... We lived in poor conditions. Before Vydrin's arrival, we did not know about felt boots and sweatshirts" [47]. According to Vydrina, when she worked as a salesperson in Godenovo she was the first to bring two wicker boxes of felt boots and sweatshirts into the village. According to old-timers from Godenovo Village, the new

collective farm produced wheat, oats, rye, flax plants and peas [47].

In the 1930s, the life in Siberian villages changed dramatically. The December Joint Plenum (1930) of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) proclaimed the resumption of mass collectivization. In 1931, it was necessary to involve at least 50% of Siberian peasant farms into collective farms. Since March of this year, the collectivization in Siberia had escalated. This situation was explained by the following factors: since the beginning of the year psychological, political and administrative pressure on individual farmers had resumed; throughout the disengagement with collective farms, they were assigned more remote and low-quality land plots; tax and payload on individual farms were significantly increased, while collective farms and collective farmers received tax breaks [15, p. 486]. The property of newly-made collective farmers was almost completely surrendered to communes or artels.

According to the charter of agricultural artels also adopted by most collective farms, peasants were allowed to have a strictly defined number of pigs, large and small cattle. The inhabitant of the Kolosovsky District K.P. Borodina recalled collectivization in the following way: "In 1929, collectivization started all over the country. Peasants were forced to join collective farms. Then these collective farms began to take horses, cows, calves, sheep, pigs and other livestock, as well as all mechanisms and equipment, including shovels, manure forks and rakes. This expropriation was not compensated by money or food... My mother was not invited to a collective farm since our whole family was already labeled as kulak. They were deprived of all rights, and their house and all other buildings were confiscated" [7, pp. 66-67].

In the 1920-1950s, the main characteristics of developing rural settlements in Tara (the Irtysh area) were their rapid quantitative growth and change in the ways of life of the Siberian hinterland. These factors contributed to the growing number of settlements; however, their total number in the Irtysh area

reduced. The main reason behind these changes was territorial and administrative transformations.

In the period from the end of the 1950s to the end of the 1980s, the policy of agricultural nationalization played a key role in the life of Siberian villages. A typical feature of the period under review was the consolidation of small rural settlements into larger ones that was followed by the intensive resettlement of the villagers to larger and more comfortable settlements. The process resulted in the reduction in the number of small villages. During the historical period under study, West Siberian villages lost more than 2 million inhabitants. As a rule, able-bodied skilled workers and young people aged 16-19 left the countryside. The whole period was characterized by fertility reduction and mortality increase with some changes in certain years. These processes led to a decrease in natural population growth which declined from 23.0% to 4.5%. This ultimately led to a decrease in the number of people living in rural areas by 26% over the last 30 years (from 1959 to 1989), while the working-age population was reduced by 25.4% [43]. The number of collective farmers also decreased: people aspired to move to regional centers and cities.

The Great Patriotic War had a negative impact on the development of rural settlements and the number of their population. It affected the fate of small villages even to a greater extent. Small population of these settlements lost most males during the war. The proportion of adult working-age population rapidly decreased. The situation did not change when the war was over. The total share of male losses was about 65% of those called up and those who returned were often disabled.

In the postwar years, rural settlements were transformed influenced by the enlargement of collective farms in 1950-1952. Villages in eliminated collective farms had lost their economic independence, began to lose their population and gradually disappear.

The policy of enlarging collective farms originated in 1950 when the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) adopted the Decree "On the

Enlargement of Small Collective Farms and Tasks of Party Organizations in this Enlargement" [42]. The document noted that "... a significant obstacle in the further development of agriculture and enlargement of collective farms is a significant number of small collective farms that according to the size of their lands cannot sufficiently develop the public economy in their regions, territories and republics. It is not possible to use tractors, harvesters, threshers and other complex agricultural machines with high productivity in small collective farms. It is also difficult to create large-scale high-quality social production, build self-sufficient villages within collective farms, have agricultural specialists, develop public collective farm production and ensure a rapid growth of public incomes and raise the material and cultural level of collective farmers" [42, p. 614].

We should note that collective farms united peasants from one village since their formation. Thus, the scale of production depended on the settlement size.

In 1950, the first major consolidation of farms occurred: in July their number decreased by 17.2%, by October of the same year by 44.7%. In total, 199,800 (79.3%) of agricultural artels were united in 1950 and formed 64,300 integrated collective farms. [5, p. 317].

The above-mentioned Decree instructed to organize consolidation as follows:

- Land areas of unified collective farms should be transformed into a single land mass; therefore, collective farms should be consolidated with adjacent land use;
- Unification of small collective farms into larger ones should be carried out on a voluntary basis, providing explanations among collective farmers on the expediency of this activity;
- While deciding a question on the association of collective farms, not less than two-thirds of the total number of members of an agricultural artel should be present at a general meeting. Decisions of general meetings of collective farmers should be taken by each collective farm by a majority vote;

– Decisions of general assemblies of collective farms come into force after consideration by district executive committees [42, p. 615].

In pursuance of this Decree, collective farms in the territory of Tara (the Irtysh area) began to consolidate. After the formation of collective farms, things did not always go smoothly. However, the policy of enlargement continued.

The consolidation of collective farms meant the unification of small villages into a single economic center. Villages embracing a small number of households did not fit into the state scheme of large socialist giants and turned out to be "unpromising". In the light of these events, the term "unpromising" village was introduced into science and practice.

During the period from 1959 to 1970, more than 950 rural settlements (mainly small villages) were removed from the register in the Omsk Region. The number of small villages that had a population of up to 50 people decreased by 85.8% in 1959, while the number of settlements with the population of 51-100 and 101-200 people decreased by 64.5% and 26.6%, respectively [50].

A significant part of eliminated settlements included "unpromising" villages, in which capital construction was seized and the existing material funds completely wore out.

The policy of eliminating "unpromising" villages was meant to consolidate the population in relatively large settlements and eliminate small ones. According to the authorities, such measures could stop the outflow from rural areas and improve living conditions.

In fact, the situation often turned out differently. People learning that their small homeland was "unpromising" quickly left to cities and large regional centers. Thus, the policy of eliminating "unpromising" villages became one of the reasons for the decline in rural population. From 1959 to 1979 in Western Siberia, the number of rural settlements decreased by 52%, while in the whole RSFSR the reduction was by 40%. In the period between 1926 and 1989, more than 3,200 rural settlements were eliminated in the Omsk Region, settlement dispersion

significantly decreased, the average population increased from 213 in 1939 to 440 in 1989 [50].

The policy towards the unpromising villages led to the destruction of the centuries-old traditions and the erosion of the rural way of life. Villages saw a transition to universal secondary education, a gradual process of everyday life urbanization and a rapid spread of television.

In order to preserve the existing village schools, the residents applied to various instances. The need to preserve schools was extremely acute as many villages, especially those that fell into the category of "unpromising", were at a considerable distance from central estates.

Thus, during the end of the 1950s – the end of the 1980s, the situation in the country's agriculture as a whole and in Tara (the Irtysh area), in particular, had been repeatedly changing influenced by the state policy. The policy of farm enlargement and resettlement of "unpromising" villages resulted in the decrease in settlements on the territory under study.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of development and settlement of the territory around Tara was influenced by various factors. Thus, favorable conditions for farming here have made this region attractive for immigrants since the 16th century. This also led to the relatively rapid pace of its settlement.

In the 1920-1980s, the state policy in the development of rural areas played the leading role in the development of the settlement network of the region. Its main direction - the high rates of collectivization and the liquidation of the "unpromising" villages - led to the reduction in rural settlements in Tarski Priirtyshye.

In the 1930s, farmsteads disappeared from the map of the Irtysh area. The policy of collectivization resulted in the abandonment of small villages that often consisted of one large family. Some small settlements, farmsteads and villages were consolidated into larger settlements.

The mass disappearance of villages began in the 1950s. In the 1950s, the state decided to enlarge small farms. The main direction of this policy was to further unify collective farms. As a result, several farms merged into one larger collective farm located in the central estate. This marked the beginning of the mass resettlement.

In the 1960s, the resettlement of "unpromising" villages was launched. The latter included settlements with a small number of inhabitants. There were many sparsely populated territories in the Irtysh area. The enlargement of populated areas mainly aimed to create comfortable conditions for the life and activity of people. In fact, villagers who fell into the category of "unpromising" were forced to leave their small homeland and move to the central estate. This migration was caused by the lack of roads, the closure of schools, medical stations, shops, and electricity outages.

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