

## **Agricultural Equipment as a Component of Daily Traditional and Household Culture of the People in the Middle Volga Region of the XIX-the First Half of the XX Centuries**

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the regional features of means of agricultural equipment within daily traditional and household culture of the people of the Middle Volga region of the XIX-the first half of the XX centuries. The territory of the Middle Volga region is the multinational region, with prevalence of the Russian population which structure was formed at the expense of immigrants of other regions from the European part of Russia. Cultural integration of the peoples of the Middle Volga most intensely held in everyday life. This was reflected in borrowing each other's of household elements of culture-tools, utensils, agricultural tools and equipment etc. During long existence in the conditions of a certain natural, ecological and cultural environment was formed regional features of various forms of agricultural equipment in the territory of the Middle Volga region. Experience of traditional household culture of the Middle Volga region is of considerable interest by the studying the general laws of interaction of cultures.

**Key words:** Everyday culture • Traditional culture • The Middle Volga region • Instruments of labor • Thing • Utensils • Means of agricultural equipment • Wooden plow • Saban

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the last time we can see a growing interest in history of daily traditional culture of edges and areas, while actively rethinking the past and realize the value of daily life. Experience of everyday life-it is the main and basic experience of the each people and it is always done in combination with the experience of other nations. For our research is the household experience concentrated in traditional daily national culture especially important.

History of Agriculture Russian Empire and Soviet Russia is the subject of many studies [1-10]. However, agricultural machinery in the context of everyday traditional culture of the Middle Volga late XIX - early XX centuries been insufficiently studied.

The main concept of daily culture is the concept of the house environment. It is expressed in traditional forms used in practice, in home, in work. Tools, which are used in everyday life, are part of traditional forms. Meeting the diverse needs of people the things were the mechanism of inheritance of experience in the socialization process, the bearer of cultural symbols and values.

“Semantic-communicative function was common to all the other things that people have created...-during the labor process... but becomes, so to speak, in passing and some means of communication involved in these processes people [11; 89].” And “status tools for manual work are almost unchanged for centuries [12; 54-55].”

**The Main Part:** Formation of settled population of the Middle Volga region occurred throughout the XVI–XIX centuries. Among immigrants in the Middle Volga region dominated Russian population. It was presented by three ethnographic groups: North, Central and South Russian. Representatives of these areas tried to keep “... types of an exterior, character and a life of inhabitants of those provinces, wherefrom came their ancestors [13; 81].” The Middle Volga region was at this time also the area of migrations and other ethnic groups-Mordovians, Tatars, Chuvashs, Poles and Germans.

Thing in the traditional culture is often associated with a specific ethnic owner. This is even more evident in this multi-ethnic region like the Middle Volga. Immigrants, as a rule, brought to regions of an exit not only housekeeping receptions, but also agricultural stock,

house utensils. It contributed to mutual influence of cultures of the Russian people and ethnic groups who lived in ancient times in the Middle Volga region. Thus, the thing was one of the most effective forms of communication between people.

Tools and farming began the more detail to be considered with introduction in researches of a comparative and typological method in more detail [14]. Heretofore the bigger preference was given to things with traditional dressing. Little attention in the creation of collections of Russian museums was given household items. Because they often were not are decorated with [15; 50]. Regional museums of the Middle Volga were no exception. An example is the account book of Samara city museum for 1917–1918 and 1921–1922 [16; 4].

Tools and farming are addition to a complex of a food and a housing and settlement complex-the most important components of culture of life support [17; 55]. From the functional point of view things are divided into two big complexes-house and road. In a house complex there is a number of subcomplexes. These subcomplexes are connected with certain functions of things in a household. The subject of our research is one of them-agricultural equipment of the Middle Volga region, including such subcomplexes as: tools of tillage (the plows, the harrows and field rollers); tools of sowing and harvesting; the tools for a winnowing and sorting [18; 5], for storage and processing of grain (foot and manual “stupa” (tool for beat the grains), millstones).

And also wooden and straw utensils-a sieves (Figure 1), hollowed, cooperage and wattled of bast, of an osier and of bark, a capacitance for storage, for measurement and for taking the flour (wooden ladles and measures scoops “merki”) [19], which practically everywhere were produced by the handicraft way (Figure 2). Occasionally were used potter's vessels for this purpose.

High level of specialization, functionality of agricultural instruments of labor of the people occupying the Middle Volga region, allows to consider them as the independent phenomenon and to classify on such signs as a form and a manufacturing techniques (from a tree, a metal, a bark and so on). Also tools were more than other categories of subjects, were distributed on female and male.

**The Agricultural Implements of Labor in the Middle Volga Region:** Instrument of plowing in the Middle Volga in XIX-early XX centuries was plow straight shafts and long “Rassokha” or “paw” [20; 818]. Rassokha-rear plow,



Fig. 1: Large sieve. Syzran Municipal Regional Studies Museum (SMRSM) (Syzran, Samara region). Fixed fund. D37, # 1660



Fig. 2: Cylindrical birch bark container (Tues). Beginning of XX century. Kazan province, Tetyushsky district, village Monastery. Municipal Museum Complex «Heritage» (Tolyatti, Samara region). Fixed fund. 5315.

wooden beams, slightly curved and forked below. Base to which are attached working parts-share and blade. Rassokha was the agriculture tool on the Middle Volga region in XIX-in the beginning of the XX centuries. Rassokha was made from one piece of wood (linden or aspen). The shafts were made of birch.

By the end of the XIX century appeared rassokha consisting of two parallel each other tetrahedral whetstones which were fastened among themselves in an average part by a cross-section level (Figure 3) [21]. Soshniki (or ralniki)-a part of a wooden plow, which were flat and pointed iron tips of an average bend fastening on the ends of rassokha, serving for cutting an top layer land (the sod) too lay in one plane. Such a wooden plow is possible to attribute to «plantar» type.



Fig. 3: Sokha (wooden plough). (SMRSM). Fixed fund. D35 # 1659.

Depending on density and a soil contamination curvature if rassokha, so, a tilt angle to the earth could change. The harder is the soil the greater is the angle of inclination rassokha to the earth. One person by means of a wooden plow cultivated for about half tithe in a day (0, 54625 hectares) [22; 116].

In regions of the Middle Volga region the wooden plow was "... the main arable tool before formation of collective farms. It was wooden plow, with two soshnik and a variable (from one soshnik on another) plank attached to a soshnik-"politisa" (moldboard). Intended for a dump of the cultivate land when plowing [23; 314]. Length of a soshnik-about 25 cm. Length of a "trubnitsa" (the tube at the end of the soshnik; fastens on the leg rassokha)-13 cm, width-10 cm. The feather of a soshnik was the flat ground at an angle which one side is shorter another almost twice" [24; 88].

The variable plank-"politisa" was used in order that at backward motion of a wooden plow the clots of earth can fell all the time in one party. "The wooden plow was made by local masters. Soshnik and politisa were bought or in local forge workshops. Plow harnessed to the horse without the arc but with a horse's collar and the "sediolka". Sediolka-the leather pillow which was a support for a belt passing through the saddle ("cheressedelnik"-rus. vernacular, local) which connected shafts and served for regulation of their height and, respectively, a tilt angle of rassokha for change of depth of plowing [25; 562]. For a plow were made special horse's collars (by the Mordovians they were called-"sokam ashkene"). They were easier than usual collars. The wooden plow with screw rope "stock"- "podvoy" was began to produce at the beginning the First World War. In the beginning the wooden plow was made with rope stock [24; 28, 94]. Podvoy-the ropes, the twisted wood or metal rods fastening a basis of a wooden plow (sokha) to shafts [26; 289].

Wooden plow plowed an "old arable land", a new arable land (a virgin soil, "derba") was plowed (tore up) by a special advanced type of wooden plow-the "kosulia" ("roedeer"). The "kosulia", instead of two soshnik, had one ploughshare, allowing to dig the earth, "... a vershok (obsolete, unit of length equal to 4,4 cm) on one and a half depth" [27; 69] more deeply. One of the most prominent Russian travelers and the scientists investigating the Middle Volga region Ivan I. Lepyokhin described also unusual way of plowing, seen by it in the village Bedenga of the Simbirsk province. First of all straw and the tall weeds were burned on the field. Then: "... sowed on not plowed arable land, having sown, start to plow. Having plowed, harrowing and sowing of the summer crops which are called "sowing under a wooden plow" [27; 69, 308]. The same reception was noted by the known scientist of that time Peter L. Pallas during his travel on Samara Bend [28; 246]. These things speak about that, the soil at those edges was fertile.

Wooden plow was used in some villages of the Middle Volga region up to the end of the 1950-th for planting, hilling and harvesting potatoes [24; 6, 28].

In addition to the wooden plow tillage tool served plow. It differed from a wooden plow stronger case and massiveness of parts. In spite of the fact that at the end of the XIX century the Middle Volga region treated economically more developed regions of Russia and was attempts to improve arable tools, the quantity of iron plows in farms was insufficient.

The available agricultural equipment of local production did not always meet requirements shown. Therefore it was preferred so-called "hohenheim" plows or their copies (Figure 4), executed by local handymen. "Hohenheim plows"-Brabant and Flanders type plows. Appeared in Flanders around 1770 have subsequently been improved Vekkerlin and Hinze from Hohenheim

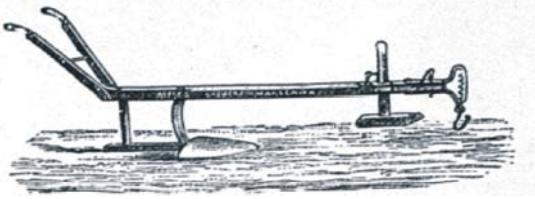


Fig. 4: "Hohenheim" plow

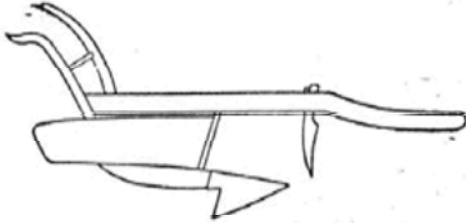


Fig. 5: Saban. Simbirsk province. Beginning of the XIX century.

[29; 528]. These plows were simple devices. To write out novelties of agricultural machinery from Moscow was expensive because of the range of distances [30; 267].

Therefore, for example, in Samara in the 1890-th years, there were on 400 thousand farms of iron plows only some tens of thousands. More or less actively in the territory of the Middle Volga region iron plows started to be used during the First World War [24; 8].

Iron plows received the widest application in 1927-28, in days of collectivization [24; 62]. It had iron plows imported, foreign (overseas) production, which were not always suitable for processing of the local soil of the Middle Volga. Therefore local smiths brought in them the improvements which are considered for this district as the most suitable. The main changes concerned a moldboard: it cut off sideways, extended from below and reduced a bend up, making plows in two and three plowshares [31; 25].

The greatest distribution on the Middle Volga region in Simbirsk province (since 1780), Saratov province and partially in Kazan province [32; 73] and also in the Orenburg province [33; 26] the plow was called Saban (from the Turkic word "plow") (Figure 5).

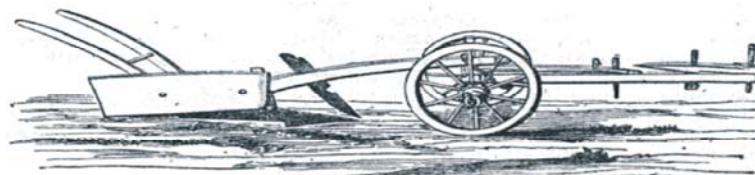
It is the reduced version of a Ukraine plow, with strongly curved edge of a cutter which had in a cut a rectangular triangle and straight lines, abruptly put, more often wooden, a moldboard [18; 21].

At the end of the XVIII century Ivan I. Lepyokhin, describing Saban, noted his similarity to a plow. Saban consisted of two parts—"Pripryag" and most "Saban" (Figure 6). The "pripryag" was the axis with two wheels. Saban consisted of "arrow"—a long log which fastened one end to the "pripryag" and another to a ploughshare. For the end of a ploughshare "palm"—an iron triangle was put on. In parallel to a "palm" the long slanting edge cutter fastened. On the right side of the "arrow" was mounted wooden plank (moldboard "politca" or "otval"), which cast aside the land undercutting of blade of Saban. For plowing Saban four horses were needed [27; 134-135].

After a plowed land the soil was harrowed. On the Middle Volga region was used generally by harrows of the most widespread, frame type and practically differed nothing from North Russian and South Russian types of harrows [34]. They represented a frame from mutual being crossed wooden bars into which drove in wooden or iron teeth (them was 35-30).

Harrows were made by local handicraftsmen. Approximately from the Pokrov (a holiday of the Blessed Virgin Mary-on October 1 on old style [23; 309]) masters looked for, where is cheaper, a material, brought it home. In the autumn and in the winter there was a preparation of a material and its drying. To the Shrovetide it was started to force down harrows and to bring them on a market as in the early spring and in the Lent there was the best trade. During spring field works manufacturing of harrows stopped. Because handicraftsmen were occupied in the field, though worked in rainy days. Work on manufacturing of harrows renewed after the completion of summer sowing before harvesting. After cleaning, a threshing and crops winter masters took to produce harrows [35; 30, 31].

The harrow fastened behind the horse which was harnessed to the traces, but no arc with thill and pommel (saddle-bow). In some villages wooden harrows with traces weren't harness, but harnessed harrow with an arc (shaft-bow) and bent rod was harnessed [36].



Фиг. 3. Сабань-плугъ.

Fig. 6: Saban with "Pripryag".



Fig. 7: Scythe, the Mordovian village, 1940s.

The most widespread way threshing grains on the Middle Volga region up to the second half of the XIX century there was a threshing flails. A South Russian type flails was often met. A working part flail “bilo” was made from an oak and was in the length 70 cm. “Bilo” was incorporated by a belt the in length of 18 cm with a handle the length of 165-170 cm made of a fir-tree. Threshed grain is the men together with women (in 7-8 people) [24; 41, 101].

Vintage was cleaned by sickles. Men and women reap grain. Spring crops and bad winter crops mowed with a scythe with the rake attached to it-“grabky” (equivalent of the English word-grab), having from 3 to 5 teeth. “Grabky” was made in 6 teeth if rye high. In order that the rye was laid down ranks, to “grabky” was adhered a rod. After the organization of the Machine and tractor stations (MTS) in 1929 the scythes with “grabky” wasn't used everywhere. But some rural dwellers used it up to the 1960-th years [24; 9, 29]. On materials of the ethnographic expeditions which have been carried out in the 1950-th years, it was fixed that in the southern regions of the European part of the country “grabky” represented the teeth fastening to a block. And on the Middle Volga region, in particular in the Mordovian villages were widespread “grabky” in the form of a pitchfork (Figure 7) [37].

By stacking hay was used a wooden pitchfork and a rake. A pitchfork for stacking was with 3 and 4 horns teeth. Such pitchfork almost went out of use to the 1960th years, but in separate places them used for a stacking and

a covering of roofs. It was made from a birch. The length of the handle was 4 cm, the length of teeth was 67 cm; 71 cm; 74 cm [24; 5, 42, 47, 69].

Rake was on the average with 7 teeth. The length of the handle rake fluctuated from 135 to 160 cm, at width of a block-3 cm and length-50-65 cm. Length of each tooth-13 cm, distance between teeth-6 cm [24; 21]. A similar rake is stored in the Municipal Museum Complex “Heritage” in Tolyatti, the Samara region [38]. A similar rake was fixed in 1954 by Orel and Kursk groups of ethnographic expedition of Institute of ethnography and anthropology [39]. This fact is the certificate of that among immigrants to the Middle Volga region there were natives of this area.

## CONCLUSION

The territory of the Middle Volga is the multinational region that is it is a zone by intensive course of cultural and ethnic processes. Cultural interaction of the people of the Middle Volga region took place in an everyday life by taking from each other by household elements of culture.

Long existence in the conditions of a certain natural and ecological and cultural environment was created by regional features of various forms of agricultural equipment within traditional daily culture of the Middle Volga region of the end of XIX-the first half of the XX centuries.

Using of Russian ethnographer Olga Fishman's terminology, means of agricultural equipment of the Middle Volga region this period can be considered as: 1)



an auxiliary element for studying of interethnic contacts; 2) a uniform component of traditional and household culture of the people living in similar climatic conditions; 3) the means by which it is possible to establish the specific model and the traditional features. And comparing them with the generality regional, local and ethnics traditions [40; 137].

Historical and art experience of traditional culture of the Middle Volga region represents considerable interest when studying the general regularities of interaction of cultures. Disclosure of interrelation of history, the life the peoples of the Volga region, gives the chance to put and solve the most important problems of modern culture of the region:

- Creation of conditions for adaptation, changes of modern technologies on the basis of traditional national culture;
- Historical understanding of features of traditional everyday daily culture. Comparison of our experience in the past and experience of other eras and different people;
- Creation of an image of culture of daily occurrence as a result of generalization of features of an ordinary aspect of life and traditional culture.

Finally, we present the words Jean Baudrillard: “Old tools—a complex gestures and energy, symbols and functions to decorated and stylized human energy; we admire these scythes, baskets, jugs and plows, which corresponded to the material from which made, the forms of the human body and its efforts” [12; 55].

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