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Russian Gold Mining Output in 1901-1917: A Source Studies Aspect

Abstract

This paper explores the problem of gold mining output in the Russian empire in 1901-1917 drawing on published and archival data. The aim of the study is to clarify indicators of gold mining production, since in the leading studies the data vary due to the peculiarities of metal accounting. It draws on published materials and archival documents of the State Institute for Design of Enterprises of Gold and Platinum Industry of the Glavzoloto of the People's Commissariat of Nonferrous Metallurgy (Giprozoloto), prepared in 1944 as a 'Collection of Materials on the Gold Industry: 1493 - 1943' and stored in the State Archive of the Magadan

Region. Materials of the Giprozoloto Institute contain calculations of gold production in Russia and the USSR from 1745 to 1943, as well as technical and economic information on national gold mining industry in the early 20th century. The analysis shows that gold mining indices in scientific literature and sources are given according to data from gold log-books or gold-smelting laboratories. Gold log-books did not reflect the volume of actual mining, they only showed the gold registered in mines; moreover, some gold was withheld, and then came in to laboratories for alloy. Accounting for metal in the gold-smelting laboratories showed higher and more accurate production figures, since it included artisanal mining gold. However, as the source study demonstrates, figures of gold production in 1901-1917 according to the Giprozoloto Institute (805.4 tons) and according to L.B. Kafengauz (814.6 tons) based on data of gold-smelting laboratories and incorporated volumes of uncleaned bullion gold entered in there. The results of the study change the views on the volume of gold mining in Russia in this period that prevail in the historiography. It should be noted, that according to calculations, confirmed indicators of industrial production of chemically pure gold in Russia in 1901-1917 amounted to 682.5 tons. Final figures of gold industry of the period in amount of chemically pure gold obtained in gold-smelting laboratories corresponded to indices of value of gold production used in the analysis industry dynamics, and is considered correct, when compared with the USSR gold-mining indices.

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Keywords

Source, gold, gold mining, gold log-books, gold-smelting laboratories, Russian Empire, Russia.

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