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Document Complexes of the First General Population Census of the Russian Empire (1897) in Foreign Archives: Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia

Abstract

To identify for the whole complex of primary data of the 1897 Census it is necessary to study archives of foreign countries that were a part of the Russian Empire in late 19th century. The article summarizes the work in searching, characterizing, and estimating information value and representativity of primary data of the 1897 Census stored in the archives of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. Its sources are information systems, finding aids, and documents of the foreign archives, as well as projects using data of the 1897 Census. The main research methods are historiographical and source analysis, as well as archival heuristics methods. Considerable

contribution to the search for primary census data and other population registers has been made by scholars in family history, whose interest in genealogy studies gave birth to specialized archival data-bases, such as “Raduraksti” and “Saaga.” In addition to topical projects, the Baltic States’ archives provide finding aids allowing to search by fond, file, etc. Historical archives in Latvia and Estonia store census data in the fonds of the census commissions, the statistics committee, and in those of town and volost governments. The Latvian historical archive also has a collection of census papers. The information value depends on the type of the 1897 Census primary data. In the Baltic States of most informative value are second copies of census papers and “personal cards” (lichnye kartochki). The volost vedomosti, or third copies of census papers, provide less information, but can also be of interest. Comparison of modern and historical borders of states and gubernias, as well as study of “territorial coverage” (administrative units included in census papers) allow the author to draw a map of the 1897 Census data preservation in the archives of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. The degree of the Census documents preservation differs greatly. The article concludes that the representativity of 1897 Census data depends on administrative units and research goals.

Keywords

Archives of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, census paper, archive, archival document, historical source, Russian Census of 1897.

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