УДК 94(47)+94(571.6)

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2019-4-995-1006

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Attempted Worker Colonization of the Eastern Outskirts of the Empire in the Early 20th Century:
Documents from the Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East

Abstract

The article shows that the most active stage of the Far East development in the Russian Empire fell at the early 20th century. The Russo-Japanese war had put migration on hold, however from 1906 on it renewed. The author points out that worker colonization of Russia eastern outskirts have been studied less deeply than agricultural colonization of the whole region. Thus, materials from the Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East are of great interest for historians. They offer new information and opportunities to estimate labour requirements for the needs of the region's colonization, while providing a different perspective: not that capital officials but that of Far East administrators. Russian government along with high-ranking local officials endeavored to increase the number of Russian workers in the Far East. They were offered preferential travel by railway, wide opportunities for various handcrafts. At the same time, as the author proves, the authorities' attempts to use solely Russian workers to work on government orders encountered difficulties. A catastrophic shortage of Russian workers in the Far East is vividly demonstrated by a series of telegrams sent by the Amur Governor General to the Council of Ministers in 1911. In some cases, it was impossible to avoid recruiting foreign workers (mostly, Chinese and Koreans), especially as their labor was cheaper. According to the author, new archival materials allow to highlight a wide range of problems related directly to the worker colonization of the Far East. One of the most important issues was that framing and adopting management decisions to reflect the economic policy set for imperial outskirts in the center.

Keywords

Russian resettlement policy of the early 20th century, Far East, worker colonization, economic policy, N. L. Gondatti, archival materials.

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Grant information

This research was supported by the Russian Science Foundation. Project no. 18-18-00142 “The center and the regions: State economic policy on the outskirts of the Russian Empire (1894–1917).”

Submitted 9.04.2019, published (for citation):

KHODJAKOV, M. V. Popytki rabochei kolonizatsii vostochnykh okrain imperii v nachale XX veka. Po dokumentam Rossiiskogo gosudarstvennogo istoricheskogo arkhiva Dal'nego Vostoka [Attempted Worker Colonization of the Eastern Outskirts of the Empire in the Early 20th Century: Documents from the Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2019, no. 4, pp. 995-1006. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2019-4-995-1006

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Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .