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Personal Provenance Sources on the History of Provincial Daily Life of Soviet Women in the
1950–1960s

Abstract

Introduction of women's ego-documents (diaries) into scientific use as is an urgent task of
gender anthropology and history of everyday life. 179 diaries of the surgeon Zinaida

Sedelnikova, found in the State Archive of the Volgograd Region, are a comprehensive documentary source for studying women's everyday life in one of the cities of the Middle Volga region. It allows us to reveal features of the daily life of a non-capital city through the prism of female perception. The authors set themselves the task of analyzing in detail a document that reflected the everyday life of a city dweller in a non-capital city in the Middle Volga region that was reviving after the war. In the course of the work, historical-comparative, biographical (biography as case analysis), aggregative methods have been used. The author of diaries lived for 60 years in Volgograd, studied and worked there as a doctor. Her way of thinking, value system, everyday practices have interested the participants of a collective project for studying the characteristics of Russian female social memory. The records dating from 1951 to 1969 (notebooks no. 35–85) depict professional, home, family, everyday, and festive life of the Soviet provincial city in its repeatability and rhythm. The diaries contain detailed descriptions of foraging (food and non-food products) in the provincial Soviet city, housing conditions, household life (cleaning methods, simple recipes preserved in oral tradition or borrowed from newspapers and magazines are listed), impressions of leisure activities, relationships with relatives and friends. An emotional, sometimes poetic description of events (the author rhymed and wrote down poems in her diary) is revealed through the prism of female perception. This allows us recreate the provincial female life; photographs, newspaper clippings, calendars, telegrams, letters, theater booklets, event tickets, shreds of fabrics, herbarium present the details of everyday life and help to analyze the identity of a women from amongst the intellectual elite of the Soviet city of the 1950–1960s.

Keywords

Ego-documents, diaries, women's history, women's social memory, gender anthropology of everyday life, life of the Soviet province in the 1950–1960s, State Archive of the Volgograd Region, heuristic potential of a source.

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