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Sources on Problematics of Land Conflict in the Black Earth Village: 1917–20

Abstract

The article analyses historical sources on land conflict in the Black Earth village of the early Soviet period. Since the dynamics of land conflicts, their diversity, and ratios characterize the dominants of behavioral pattern acceptable in the agricultural environment, land conflict is considered an indicator of peasant identity; its study actualizes the need to identify sources that most fully reveal the features of social behavior through the analysis of causality, content, and consequences of land conflict. The research methodology has determined a comprehensive analysis of sources, including materials of the All-Russian Agricultural Census of 1917 (settlement and communal forms); documents of volost, uezd, and gubernia land and conflict commissions that were to eliminate contradictions between peasant societies in the process of land redistribution; statistical materials on land conflicts in the RSFSR in the early 1920s. Integrated approach to sources has resulted in microhistorical analysis of specific land conflicts within individual volosts and uezds of the Black Earth gubernias and in formation of concept and classification of land conflicts. The problem of narrowness of the source base, containing quantitative data on land conflicts, has determined the use of alternative sources and methodological ways to overcome it. Thus, retro-expert method of studying sources has permitted to identify and analyze production (land shortage, configuration, location of a land plot, labor costs) and non-production (justice, administrative resource) markers of land conflicts. The sources analysis suggests that functional significance of the peasant identity in the Black Earth region in 1917–20 consisted in the fact that, having retained in its algorithm for survival while minimizing needs, the Black Earth peasantry was able to survive as an independent social stratum physically, economically, and spiritually. This, in turn, determined the subsequent contradictions in the agrarian and political development of the country.

Keywords

Archival documents, sources, All-Russian Agricultural Census of 1917, Black Earth village, peasantry, land conflicts, peasant identity.

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