

Review

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"To Unite Telescope and Microscope": Concerning An Attempt to Solve Methodological and Source Studies Problems of Studying the History of the Russian Peasant Family of the Yepifan Uezd in the 16th – 20th Centuries

Abstract

The article assesses source and archival studies aspects of the V. P. Kozlov's book "Remove to

history ...": The Peasant Family and Settlement of the Tula Region in the 16th – 20th Centuries. It is the first volume of the study, covering the period up to 1917. The work is devoted to the history and culture of the Yepifan uezd. This uezd is considered in two ways: as a territory, including the villages where the author's ancestors lived, and as a part of its surroundings. The state of the territory is described for several periods. Via stepwise immersion accompanied by detailing of material, the author advances the restoration of the history of villages and their inhabitants. In the Russian scientific literature, an experience of large-scale and consistent implementation of this approach is a unique case. The author analyzes it theoretically, bringing it into correlation with trends of modern historical science and demonstrating its effectiveness. To study the history of the Yepifan uezd, a significant amount of documents, both published and stored in the archives, has been involved for the first time. V.P. Kozlov divides sources into three classes. In line with his approach used in his works on archeography, he characterizes eight types of sources. Among sources of personal provenance, he underscores oral history documents — records of his relatives' memoirs collected over the years. He points to the cognitive heterogeneity of these sources: he emphasizes the need to take into account the "author's angles," notes high reliability of correspondence, especially between relatives. Isolation by V. P. Kozlov of a special class of sacred documentary sources is new. The author refers to these documents as reflecting "relations with the sacred ... beliefs, convictions and symbols" and capturing "the sacrament of human communication with... extrahuman authority." As an example, he cites his grandmother's nightly prayers and recordings of miracles of St. Matrona of Moscow. V. P. Kozlov notes an abundance of such sources in the Russian archives. Identifying gaps in sources, he explains the reasons for different preservation of documentary complexes. He dwells on research methods that can partially compensate for the insufficiency of sources. He took some risk in choosing the inhabitants of a small village as main characters of his research. The analysis of source study and archival aspects of his research proves that such work can be successfully carried out even with insufficient sources.

Keywords

Family history, peasant genealogies, microhistory, sources of regional history, Russia, Yepifan district, preservation of documentary complexes.

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