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Veneration of Old Icons in the Pustozersk Volost of the Mezensk Uezd: Written Sources of the First Quarter of the 19th Century

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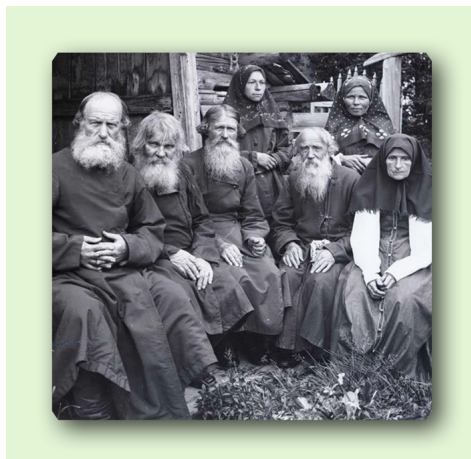
Abstract

The article is to introduce little-known written sources on veneration of old icons by Russian peasants of the Pustozersk volost of the Mezenskuezd in the first quarter of the 19th century into scientific use. The study demonstrates great veneration of old icons by the Pustozersk peasants: they placed them in specially built chapel-"barns" or prayer rooms inside the houses where lettered peasants ministered using black-letter books; created precious covers for icons in special occasions (such as epizootic disease among reindeer); lighted candles and made donations; bought old icons from Orthodox churches. Veneration of old icons, as well as other features of the cult indicate the influence of Bespopovtsy (non-priest Old Believers) who emphasized the importance of veneration of "true" icons that dated from before the schism (and thus were not defiled by the reforms of Patriarch Nikon) or those painted by the Community iconographers in order to achieve Salvation. Adherence of local people to Old Belief is confirmed by written sources on communications of the Pustozersk volost peasants with

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Velikopozhensky monastery, an influential center of the Pomors Community, on the issue of restoration of deteriorated icons.



Keywords

Written sources, Pustozers kvolost, Mezensk uezd, peasants, old icons, Old Believers, Pomor Community, Velikopozhensky monastery

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