

УДК 314.02+908:930.253

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2017-4-23-36

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Problems and Prospects of Studying the Tavrida Gubernia of Late 18th – Early 20th century

Abstract

The article offers a brief description of the first descriptions of the Crimean peninsula, executed both in pursuance of the central authorities decrees (for example, the Cameral Description of the Crimea in 1784), and on the personal initiative of Russian scientists, public figures, amateur enthusiasts. Quantitative data of these and many similar studies, circumstances of their compilation, source-specific features, possibility of usage, representativity, etc. has remained outside the sphere of researchers' interest. The article attempts to systematize the available sources of statistical descriptions of the Taurida gubernia of late 19th - early 20th century and outline the prospects of their study. The significance of the scientific conceptualization of

historical experience of regions description is associated with crucial role of quantitative information in public administration. By late 19th century Russia had become a powerful state with imperial status, which naturally required a progressive development of its statistical descriptions: numerical data were among key factors of national security, economic welfare, tax revenues, social stability, state of culture, etc. Repeated attempts to reform the statistical agencies did not result in any qualitative changes in state statistics of the Russian Empire, whence it follows that regional authorities, local self-government, non-governmental institutions (societies), ministries and departments, and public had to be involved in the statistical surveys. Results of these numerous descriptions, quite different in their aims and tasks, methodology of their conducting, and practice of using them today are a most valuable source of information on population, economic and cultural development of the regions of pre-revolutionary Russia. The practical importance of researching the materials of these descriptions is obvious: when comparing the data of national statistical activities and the regional surveys, it is possible to resolve questions about the degree of completeness and reliability of the results obtained. Numerical results allow to identify and to assess changes occurred since the previous survey, and the knowledge of these dynamics becomes a basis for short- and long-term social forecasts. The surviving archival materials bear testimony to numerous statistical descriptions of population, land, property, etc., carried out by the local self-government bodies 'for local needs.' Most informative are fonds of religious institutions of the multi-confessional Crimea, which made their own descriptions of parishioners, priests, etc.

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Keywords

Historical and statistical sources, population process, Russian Empire, Tavrida gubernia of the 19th century, statistical descriptions

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Grant information

The research has been supported by the Development Program of the Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education 'V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University' for 2015—2024 in the framework of the implementation of academic mobility under the project of Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education 'V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University' 'Support of academic mobility of the University employees on demand.'

Submitted 4.06.2017, published:

BORSHCHIK, N. D. Problemy i perspektivy izucheniya opisaniy Tavricheskoi gubernii kontsa XVIII — nachala XX v. [Problems and prospects of studying the Tavrida gubernia of late 18th – early 20th century. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista – Herald of an Archivist, 2017, no. 4, pp. 23-36.

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