Social and Demographic Portrait of Peasant Representative in Zemstvo in 1890s: Materials from the State Archive of the Kirov Region

Abstract

The article studies composition and activities of peasant representatives in the Vyatka gubernia Zemstvo. It provides a detailed social and demographic portrait of peasant representatives. Most authors focus on representatives from the nobility, as information concerning this strata is better represented in published sources. The research methodology is based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of archival documents. The study draws on materials of the Zemstvo elections in 1894 from the fond of the Governor of the Vyatka gubernia in the State Archive of the Kirov Region. From these archival documents the author turns up data on age, education,
profession, and confession of the peasant representatives. The study helps to create a
generalized socio-demographic portrait of peasant representatives in the Zemstvo. Their
majority were Russian men of Orthodox denomination, active, educated, with a background in
rural, volost, or zemstvo administration, respected and of high account with their constituents,
as well as uezd and gubernia administration. This portrayal significantly changes the traditional
characterization of peasant representatives in the Zemstvo. In 1890s the peasant
representatives had sufficient knowledge and experience to influence Zemstvo decisions and
their implementation in the constituent rural societies. Having compared the data on rural
elections, reports of uezd ispravniks, and lists of peasant representatives approved by the
Governor, the author concludes that administration and peasants saw eye to eye concerning
the desired characteristics of a Zemstvo assembly candidate. The study contends the value of
documents on the Zemstvo elections for studying the history of the Zemstvo self-government in
Russia, and understanding its role in the community life. The author hopes that further search
for such documents in the national archives will provide a basis for creating a comprehensive
and holistic view on the Zemstvo and its representatives.

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Keywords

Archival documents, Zemstvo, peasants, Russian history, State Archive of the Kirov Region.

References


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