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Innovations in Landlord Economy in the 1830–50s: Based on Materials from the Baryshnikovs
Fond in the State Archive of the Smolensk Region

Abstract

The study of innovations in the landlord economy of pre-reform Russia is of particular relevance under the modern conditions while modernizing national production and searching for a breakthroughs in science and business. This study is of interdisciplinary nature, since, on the one hand, it touches upon historical issues related to the development of landlord economy in the 1830–50s; on the other hand, upon economic issues of production activities. The author uses documents of the richest personal provenance fond of the Baryshnikovs from the State

Archive of the Smolensk Region, which includes over 15,000 items and covers almost two centuries in the history of this noble family. Along with documents originating from government agencies, Empress Catherine II, and the Senate, the fond contains records of service, descriptions and plans of the Baryshnikovs' estates, land-surveying books, account books, bills of sale, landlords instructions to stewards, reports from bureaus of estates, information on crops and harvests, livestock and its productivity. Having analyzed archival documents, the author identifies innovations in the landowner economy of the Baryshnikovs, follows their implementation, and draws a number of conclusions: (1) in the last decades of the pre-reform era, the landlords tried to increase profitability of their estates by introducing more productive varieties of grain, grass sowing, new agricultural machinery, breeding livestock and its good maintenance, acquiring new equipment; (2) in introducing innovations, landowners relied more on luck than on calculations, risk identification and reduction; (3) the innovations had a significant impact on the development of landlord economy, but required significant financial investments, careful planning, and skilled workers. The study reveals one of the more important aspects of the daily economic life of the Russian provincial nobility on the eve of the Great Reforms of Alexander II.

Keywords

Archival sources, historical sources, Smolensk gubernia, Aleksino, Baryshnikovs, novations, foreign specialists.

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