

Scientific article

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Pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the Russian Province at the Turn of the 20th Century: The  
Source Studies Potential of the Penza Diocesan Gazette

## Abstract

Using the example of diocesan periodicals and historical tradition of creating monuments of travel literature, the article examines the phenomenon of the Russian cultural Renaissance in its regional dimension. The burst of public interest to the value-based foundations of the Russian culture of the turn of the 20th century is explained by the processes of emancipation and growing social instability. In these conditions, the democratization of pilgrimage practices as reference forms of spiritual perfection becomes an organizing idea of socio-cultural uplift. The purpose of the article is to identify and analyze materials of the journal "Penza Diocesan Gazette," devoted to the problems of organizing pilgrimage trips to holy places. The source base of the research has been formed using thematic index of articles developed at the Theological Seminary and the Church Historical Committee of the Penza diocese. After summarizing the data, it has been determined that pilgrimage sections were present in the diocesan periodicals from the moment of its appearance (in the 1860s). However, the Palestinian themes became regular with the activities of local departments of the Imperial Orthodox Palestinian Society (in the 1890s). At that time, the diocesan gazette became a media embodiment of the IOPS and an active means of religious and ethical education of the population. In this context, the materials are reviewed, covering the process of the Penza branch of the IOPS organizing and holding annual readings on the Holy Land, as well as perception of this information by the participants. Despite high frequency of "Palestinian" publications, pilgrim epistolaries were isolated occurrences on the pages of the Penza Diocesan Gazette. Thus, the work of the priest Peter Arkhangelsky "On the pilgrimage of the clergy to the holy places of the East," published in the Penza Diocesan Gazette in 1898, acquires special significance. The reader is presented with a unique experience of reconstructing everyday practices of the Orthodox travelers to Palestine from the Penza gubernia at the turn of the 20th century. Genre features and event-related content reveal mechanisms of introducing national organizing idea to back-countrymen, their involvement in the process of returning to historical and cultural origins of Orthodox Christianity. Among main hindrances to the development of pilgrimage activities of the local clergy, Arkhangelsky names scarcity of material support and intensity of service, which did not permit long absences.

## Keywords

Historical sources, pilgrimage to the Holy Land, Penza diocese, Penza branch of the Imperial

Orthodox Palestine Society (IOPS), Penza Diocesan Gazette

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