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Closure of the Arkhangelsk court of conscience in 1847 as a stage in the abolition of courts of conscience in the Russian Empire

Abstract

The article analyzes the closure of the Arkhangelsk Court of Conscience in 1847, as one of the stages in the abolition of courts of conscience, which began in 1828 and ended in 1866 during the implementation of the judicial reform of 1864. The author examines both the mechanism of the court's closure and the transfer of its jurisdiction to the local chamber of the criminal and civil courts, as well as the reasons for its closure. The methodological basis of the study is based on both general and specific methods of scientific research. Drawing on a wide range of unpublished archival sources, legislative acts, statistical and reference publications, and personal sources, the internal state of the court of conscience is analyzed. It is noted that the idea of abolishing the Arkhangelsk Court of Conscience was first expressed in 1843 by Arkhangelsk Vice-Governor M. F. Nozhin. However, real action to close the court was taken after an audit by provincial prosecutor N. V. Lykov in 1846. The closure of the Arkhangelsk Court of Conscience was initiated by military governor A. I. de Traversay, whose arguments were supported by the Ministry of Justice, and later by the Committee of Ministers and the State Council. It was noted that the salaries of the court's employees had not been raised since 1780, and the personnel situation at the court by the 1840s was extremely problematic. Nobles were unwilling to participate in elections as candidates for the position of judge of conscience, and the court's office lacked qualified employees due to low pay, forcing it to hire civilians. The situation with the court's premises was also alarming. The court did not have its own premises, so the city society provided an apartment for the administration of justice under a lease agreement. The court's authority was completely absent. For several years, the Arkhangelsk Court of Conscience's case handling rates were among the lowest in the Russian Empire. The following reasons for the closure of the Arkhangelsk Court of Conscience are identified: a low number of cases submitted to the court for review; and a staffing problem caused by insufficient

state funding. Local authorities viewed the courts of conscience as a burden rather than a support system for them as independent state institutions capable of effectively exercising their powers. It is concluded that the closure of the Arkhangelsk Court of Conscience was the second, following the liquidation of the Astrakhan Court of Conscience in 1828, and a logical step in the abolition of courts of conscience in the Russian Empire in 1866.

Keywords

Court of conscience, Astrakhan court of conscience, Arkhangelsk court of conscience, Arkhangelsk province, pre-reform court, judicial corps, judicial system of the Russian Empire, Age of Enlightenment, criminal and civil court chambers, judicial system, judicial reform of Emperor Alexander II of 1864.

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