

Document publication

УДК 94:82-94+94(47)+929+94(470.56)

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2022-3-810-823

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The History of the Tselina through the Eyes of an Immediate Participant: Everyday Narratives from A. F. Plokhotnichenko's Manuscript

Abstract

The article presents previously unpublished memoirs of an ordinary participant in the development of virgin and fallow lands in the Orenburg region, Alexander Ferapontovich Plokhotnichenko (1918–2001). They can be referred to as “memoirs-autobiography,” as, along

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with the author's reflections on his own life, they contain information on previous family generations and an express message to future ones. The article is to expand the source base and to introduce unique memoirs into scientific use. They reflect most important episodes of mass development of the virgin lands (tselina). The author provides information on various aspects of the daily life of migrants. The analytical part of the study gives a brief historiographical overview of studying memoirs as a historical source and assesses studying tselina era memoirs. The value of these memoirs springs from the fact that they cover an impressive chronological period, almost a whole decade. When working with memoirs, both conventional and specific methods of source analysis have been used. On the basis of generally accepted methods of study, the place and time of the manuscript creation have been established; an attempt have been made to identify socio-political views of the author and their influence on his text. Specific methods have determined consideration of the memoirs in the light of historical, cultural, and typological approaches. Typological approach has found its expression in studying the memoirs as a unique source on the history of the tselina development in a single economy, the Komsomolsky sovkhoz of the Adamovsky district of the Orenburg region. Thus, the memoirs of the tselina developer are important for filling numerous historical gaps at micro-historical level. Historical and cultural approach has made it possible to evaluate the manuscript as a source of studying the grandiose tselina era as a whole. In this regard, the account of A. F. Plokhotnichenko can become the key to understanding this momentous development campaign at macro-historical level. The memoirs may be of interest not only to specialists studying the history of the large-scale tselina campaign and national agrarian history, but also to researchers of everyday problems, local historians, and others.



Keywords

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Historical source, development of virgin lands, tselina campaign, daily life of tselina workers, memoirs of a tselina worker.

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Submitted 7.10.2021, published (for citation):

PAKHOMOVA, E. V. Istoriya tseliny glazami neposredstvennogo uchastnika: povsednevnye syuzhety iz rukopisi A. F. Plokhotnichenko [The History of the Tselina through the Eyes of an Immediate Participant: Everyday Narratives from A. F. Plokhotnichenko’s Manuscript. In Russ.]. IN: Vestnik arhivista / Herald of an Archivist, 2022, no. 3, pp. 810-823. doi 10.28995/2073-0101-2022-3-810-823

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