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**Historical Demographic Databases: Russian Experience and Research Perspectives**

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New computer technologies are rapidly changing the information base of historical research. The most significant progress is observed in historical demography. International projects aimed at creating the Big Data Base (IPUMS-USA, NAPP, Mosaic, Viennese Database on European Family History Church books, Demographic Database Umeå, and others) help establish a new research paradigm that eliminates the national boundaries of research practices and allows conduct of cross-national analysis of family history, birth and mortality rates, nuptiality, and migrations. Accessibility of the Big Data Base, its flexible interface, different modes of search, sampling, and data processing enable researchers to model their own resource with regard to the aims and targets of a specific research project. As a result, not only the information environment of Russian science changes dramatically, but also its methodology and research technologies.

The first experience of creating databases containing mass historical data goes back to the early 1980s. The process was enhanced by the establishment of Association ‘History and Computer’, founded in 1992. The most interesting results were achieved in the sphere of historical demography. In the 1990s–2000s the following large-scale projects were realized: in St. Petersburg State University, a group of historians supervised by Prof. S. G. Kashenko built up a database drawing on the register books of Olonets *guberniya* of the 18th to early 20th centuries. Somewhat later, the same source was used by historians led by Prof. V. V. Kanishev, from Tambov State Technical University. Census records (*revizskie skazky*) and census records of homesteads (*podvornye opisi*) became the object for modelling databases for several *uezds* of Penza *guberniya* in the 18th and 19th centuries (Research of Historical Demography of the Russian Empire, 2013). Another centre for creating historical demographic databases was Altai State University. This is where the remaining records of the first general Russian population census of 1897 were found. They were used as a foundation for a database that was further expanded by adding the data of parish records.

Therefore, several regional centres gave rise to a new trend in historical demography that can be called ‘Digital Historical Demography’. The peculiar feature of this trend is that digital resources are based on primary historical sources. All projects were focused on specific locations—that is, they researched specific settlements, *uezds* of Russia in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since the databases were developed for specific research projects, they were not made widely accessible to historians, except for the information and reference system created under the supervision of Prof. V. N. Vladimirov. It was called Historical Occupation Studies and included the database Population of Barnaul in the 19th to Early 20th Centuries, based on register books, consolidated records of the first general Russian population census of 1897, and other large-scale resources. Among the most interesting recent projects is Database of Demographic Indices in the Regions of Russia and Other Countries, which has been developed by the National Research University Higher School of Economics since 2011.

In 2014 the research laboratory International Centre of Demographic Studies of Ural Federal University started developing its network resource, Ural Historical Digital Archive. The project’s main target is to create a multipurpose digital resource, based on archival materials. The resource is to take the form of a database and full-text selection of digitized library and archival documents, maps, photographs, and image documents (e-archive) on regional history. The first stage (2014–2015) includes building up the following databases: (1) based on register books of several parishes in Ekaterinburg Diocese of 1800–1918; (2) based on All-Russia Census of Members of the Russian Communist Party of 1922–1924; (3) database All-Soviet Census of 1959, Sverdlovsk Region; (4) database Population of Cities and Rural Settlements of the Middle Urals in the 19th to 21s Centuries; and (5) database Subpolar Census of 1926/27. At the next stage (2016–2017) it is planned to extend the archive by digitizing and providing archeographic description of *revizskie skazky* of Perm *guberniya*—census records of homesteads and books.

The project developers have chosen to abide to the following principles:

1. Orientation towards primary large-scale historical sources (population census records, register books, and others), containing personal information.

2. All-inclusive coverage of all existing documents and records.

3. Application of the data format that provides storage, import, and integration of diverse resources and their collective use

4. Openness and accessibility of the resource for the international academic community.

Taking into account the fact that the documents stored in Russian archives—for example, original census report forms—can be incomplete and fragmentary, it is necessary to formalize and digitize all the preserved diverse document complexes on the Ural history of the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries.

As practice shows, it is possible to overcome scientific isolation of researchers spread across the world. Historian-demographers from a number of countries have been successfully realizing the European Historical Population Samples Network (EHPS-Net) project, aimed at developing general-format Intermediate Data Structure (IDS) for over 20 demographic databases. If the Ural Historical Digital Archive gets included into the EHPS-Net environment, it will become possible to compare the Russian demographic processes with European and world ones, and determine their peculiarities and future prospects. Integration with the IDS will enable Russian researchers to study the natural population change as well as distinctive features of ethno-confessional communities.

**Reference**

**Research of Historical Demography of the Russian Empire at the Department of Source Studies of Russian History, St. Petersburg State University.** (2013). Newsletter of Association ‘History and Computer’, no. 41 (December): 137–41.