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Customs Declarations Processing in 1655-67: Materials of the Tikhvin Assumption Monastery Archive

Abstract

The article is devoted to studying customs declarations processing in 1655-67 (prior to adoption of the New Trade Charter in 1667). To date, the practice of drawing up these documents has not been studied. The extracts were issued when buying goods with the money and testified to payment of first portion of the duty (5 deneg per ruble), while the rest was collected at the place of goods sale. According to the Customs Charter of 1653, such extracts had to be certified by seals and hand-written records of customs heads. This study analyzes a complex of 302 extracts deposited in the archives of the Assumption Tikhvin Monastery, which had the right to collect customs duties from trade operations in Tikhvin Posad. Presence of extracts in the monastery archive indicates that the described goods were sold in Tikhvin. Although the documents collection at our disposal is not complete, it reflects main trends in execution of this type of customs documentation in the studied period. It has been established that the surviving extracts were issued in 47 settlements, mainly in the North-West of Russia. Most documents were drawn up on behalf of the customs heads, some on behalf of their subordinates, or representatives, for instance, if there was no customs in the settlement. Comparative analysis of the documents texts shows that a single form of declarations had not yet appeared. There were two approaches to presentation of information: in the first case, the main emphasis was on appearance of money, in the second case, on receipt of duty. It has also been established that there were several ways to authenticate declarations. In addition to the method postulated in the Trade Charter of 1653, customs issued declarations for purchased goods with just the seal or only with official's handwritten record; there were also handwritten declarations extracts without seal. Declarations issued in accordance with the requirements of the Trade Charter account for only 25% of the studied selection. 118 extracts out of 302 (39%) have no seals. Some extracts (27) show personal seals of officials, not customs ones. Also, from 1655, there appear seals with indication of month, first mentioned in known monuments of customs legislation only in 1681. Analysis of the available material shows that at the first stage of trade reform, a unified approach to declarations processing and their authentication had not yet been formed.

Keywords

Historical sources, source studies, history of customs in Russia, customs records management of the 17th century, customs statements, customs seals.

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