

Review

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Testaments and Other Family Legal Acts from the Sergiev Posad Town Hall of Late 18th –
Mid-19th Century: Modern Edition Experience

Abstract

The article reviews a large collection of documents of the Sergiev Posad Town Hall from the Central State Archive of Moscow Cityъ prepared by N. A. Chetyrina, a well-known specialist in the history of population, administration, and everyday life of Russian small town in the era of “enlightened absolutism,” the reign of Nicholas, and during the Great Reforms preparation. The scientific community knew about her research in the archive from articles and monographs. The thematic selection of published materials is due to significance of studying models and roles of family in the history of Russian society. The provincial material of publication complements and clarifies N. V. Kozlova’s and A. Yu. Prokofieva’s works containing similar materials of the capital townspeople and nobles. The collection includes private legal acts covering a wide range of intra-family relations; it is a successful example of modern edition practice. Among documents published in full accordance with the rules of archeography, the majority are wills; they make up the first section of the book. The second section presents other types of intra-family agreements and certificates: various conditions, separate acts, deeds of gift, letters of trust, and other types of documents. Their compilers were women, as well as men, married or relatives by blood or marriage. Almost all groups of Russian city population were represented: merchants, burgers, peasants, nobles, military, officials, foreigners, clergy and familiars. Priests were more often witnesses. Many of originals were lost, but verbatim (or close) reproductions of original texts are preserved in books of testaments, separate acts, conditions and contracts. They demonstrate variety of inheritance practices and conditions for obtaining inheritance, reasons for choosing heirs or for disinheritance; they illustrates property and financial relations between relatives, status of widows, young children, married daughters, sons separated from the family. The archival documents published in the collection deal with diverse subjects of everyday life, public and personal relations in the 18th-19th centuries, they help to develop social and gender history, other modern humanities studies.

Keywords

Historical sources, archives, publishing activities, citizens, family.

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