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Methods of registration and authentication of inscriptions in the 1590s–1660s, Based on materials from the archives of the Assumption Tikhvin Monastery

Abstract

The paper examines the procedures for issuing and certifying otpiskas, a type of document widely used in office practice in the 16th and 17th centuries. Their functional purpose corresponds to modern receipts and vouchers. They serve as a source for studying socioeconomic history. Otpiskas were issued by secular and ecclesiastical authorities upon payment of taxes and fees, and were also issued in the course of business transactions between corporate owners—monasteries and private individuals. The study of otpiskas is based on materials from the archives of the Tikhvin Dormition Monastery for the period 1590–1660. A comparative analysis of 162 documents examines the text structures, authentication methods, and information content. It is concluded that the design and certification of otpiskas issued by officials depended on the status of the payment recipient. The first group includes receipts issued by clerks at the Novgorod Palace Prikaz for the receipt of yamskoy (postal fees), polonyanichny (captives), datochny (tax payments), military personnel's salaries, and fishing dues. Using the receipts for the payment of fishing dues by the Dormition Tikhvin Monastery, issued by clerks, it is shown that the receipts from 1590–1602 systematically referenced specific charters granting the land to the monastery and also included the names of previous quitrent payers. After the Time of Troubles, the previous form was used only once, and the amount of data provided was reduced. Such receipts were certified by a clerk's signature and a sub-clerk's certificate. The procedure for issuing and authenticating receipts issued for the same payments by local officials acting under the mandate of the Novgorod authorities was also analyzed. The right to collect was granted to clerks and service people. Otpiskas in this group generally follow the structure of the text of otpiskas issued by the Novgorod Palace Prikaz, but the methods of their authentication varied – handwritten inscriptions by clerks, annotations and handwritten notes by service people, and, in rare cases, applied seals. Corporate owners and individuals

were free to choose the form of otpiska. They could follow both the official templates and the forms of private law acts, beginning with the phrases «se az» and «memory of me». The authentication methods for this group of otpiskas also varied. The study shows that in the 17th century, there was no understanding of the need for uniformity in the preparation of payment documents, which is important to consider when determining their authenticity.

Keywords

Russia after the Time of Troubles, the Assumption Tikhvin Monastery, the Novgorod Palace Prikaz, 17th century office work, letters of intent, letters of intent clauses, taxes, quitrent, clergy, metropolitan and monastery servants, service people, nobles, boyar children, labial elders.

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