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Smuggling and Fighting It in the Russian Far East in the End of the 19th and in the First Quarter
of the 20th Century: Prospects of Forming a Source Base

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problems of forming a sources base for studying the history of fighting smuggling in the Russian Far East, a subject which is becoming a line of historical research. In many respects, this is due to activation of scientific activity in the Far Eastern departmental universities. Transfer of the Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East from Tomsk to Vladivostok has played its role in studying smuggling as a historical phenomenon in the Far East. Although they appreciate the work done for introducing into scientific use Soviet period documents from state and departmental archives, the authors can't help noting fragmentary use of documents of the RGIA DV. This is what prevents reconstruction of a complete and objective picture of fighting smuggling in the periphery. The authors study new possibilities of forming a source base for studying the history of combating smuggling in the first decades of the 20th century. They note that opening all fonds the RGIA DV for researchers in 2013 created favorable conditions for comprehensive study of customs records, this peculiar source on the history of smuggling. A complex of these documents is preserved in the fonds of the customs agencies that operated in the Amur and Trans-Baikal area in the pre-revolutionary period: regional offices of customs administration, custom offices, custom posts. They had to shoulder the bulk of counter-smuggling work in the absence of border guard. Study of some archival cases demonstrates information potential of customs record keeping. The authors contend the need to improve the methods of identification and introduction into scientific use of sources on the history of fighting smuggling. Further prospects for development of this line of historical research are associated with use of the entire complex of customs agencies documents which is supposed to expand the subject-matter and to force researchers to address it not just as a crime, but also as a social and cultural phenomenon.



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Keywords

Source base, archival fonds, fighting contraband, historical research, customs agencies, customs record keeping.

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You can read completely article in the russian historic-archival magazine “The Herald of an Archivist”. Read more about terms of subscription [here](#) .

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