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Distortions of Pedigrees by Descendants of Bishops' Servants when Approving Nobility by Birth

## Abstract

Falsifications of noble pedigrees have repeatedly been subject of historical studies, but researchers have not yet turned to the study of similar falsifications made by bishops' servants and their descendants. Due to uncertainty of their social status, representatives of bishops' boyar scions and ministry clerks made every effort to establish their nobility by birth. However, not many could apply for integration into gentlefolk. At the same time, their descendants, having gained the right to receive hereditary titles through military service, nevertheless, were at pains to achieve affiliation to "ancient" nobility to have the right to include their names in the part 6 of the gubernia genealogical books. This article describes two cases: distortion and outright

falsification of private pedigrees made in the late 18th century by descendants of the Tver bishop's house servants when approving their nobility. In the first case, the great-grandson of the bishop's dyak, collegiate assessor Peter Posnikov only maintained his ancestors' "ancient" nobility. In the second case, the descendant of the bishop's boyar scions, collegiate assessor Nikita Voronov directly falsified his pedigree by "reading" it from homonymous nobles of Vologda. Posnikov failed to achieve his affiliation to the "ancient" nobility. Voronov's fabricated evidence was judged convincing, and he and his family were mentioned in the part 6 of the genealogy book of the Tver gubernia and later recognized as "ancient" nobility by the Senate. In order to investigate Posnikov and Voronov's claims to nobility, the author has studied the materials of the Tver Gubernia Noble Assembly of Deputies. To establish their original pedigree, the materials of scribe and census descriptions, as well as office documentation of the Tver bishop's house, have been used. Both cases are illustrative of how the descendants of the bishops' servants pursued their desire to achieve affiliation to "ancient" nobility.

### Keywords

Sources, nobility, bishops' servants, falsification of pedigrees, 18th century, Tver Bishop's house.

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