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Acquisition of the Green Vault Treasure Collection of Augustus the Strong and His Son Augustus III by Soviet State Repository for Precious Metals and Its Transfer to the German Democratic Republic (1945–58)

Abstract

The article reviews the exportation history of the Green Vault treasure, a jewels collection of the Saxon rulers, from Germany to the USSR in 1945, and that of their receipt in the State

Repository (Gokhran) of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR. The article discusses features of accounting, studies operations with valuables in the Gokhran. The process of the Green Vault treasure transfer to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1958 is described in detail. Scientific research on the history of the Dresden treasure focuses mostly on the collection's formation in the 16th – 18th centuries, while its stay in the USSR is addressed fragmentarily, as the sources were declassified only in 2014. The article is to study the period in the history of the Green Vault treasure associated with its admission to and storage in the Gokhran in 1945–58. The author has studied documents from the Russian State Archive of Economics (fond 7733 Ministry of Finance of the USSR): inventories of the Dresden treasure, certificates, correspondence, acts, reports on the commissions' work, balance books, etc. The documents highlight issues of the valuables receipt in the USSR, their description, classification, restoration by Soviet experts, and transfer to Germany. The methodological basis is comparative-historical, systematic, descriptive, and archival heuristics methods. The comprehensive study of archival documents enables to trace the fate of the Green Vault treasure in the Gokhran. All received valuables were credited to a special balance account. Soviet experts described 1,848 Green Vault items of high material value and great museum significance. The Green Vault treasure was returned to the GDR in November 1958; the statement of release and acceptance provides the exact number of Green Vault items in the Gokhran: 2,092 inventory numbers; 3,152 pieces and precious stones. Involvement of a large range of archival documents previously unknown in the scholarship highlights the history of the valuables' receipt in the Gokhran, composition of the collection, degree of its preservation, and features of accounting in the Gokhran. A commission of art experts worked on the valuables' attribution, as they were delivered without accompanying documents. The restoration preserved the treasure for future generations.

Keywords

Sources, archival documents, Saxon rulers, Dresden, Konigstein Fortress, L. N. Rabinovich, Ministry of Finance of the USSR, special state reserve, restoration, German Democratic Republic.

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