

**Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education
«RUSSIAN PRESIDENTIAL ACADEMY OF NATIONAL ECONOMY AND
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION»**

MID-RUSSIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT – BRANCH

Published as a manuscript



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**THE CREATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE BANKING SYSTEM
OF ORYOL GOVERNORATE IN THE MID-19th – EARLY 20th
CENTURIES**

Abstract of the dissertation
for the degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences
Specialty 5.6.1. – Russian History

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The relevance of the research topic is determined by several key factors that reflect both the contemporary challenges of Russia's economic development and gaps in the historiographical tradition. In the context of the ongoing transformation of the Russian economy, oriented toward regional development and the strengthening of financial stability, the study of the historical experience of the formation and functioning of banking institutions at the level of individual provinces acquires particular significance. Oryol Province, as one of the key agrarian regions of Central Russia in the 19th – early 20th centuries, represented a typical example of a regional economic model in which the banking system played the role of a catalyst for trade, agriculture, and industrial growth. Despite the extensive historiography on the general history of banking in Russia (for example, works on the evolution of the State Bank or commercial credit institutions), the regional aspect remains insufficiently studied. Most research focuses on the capital centers, ignoring the specifics of provincial governorates, where banking infrastructure developed under the influence of local factors: the agrarian orientation of the economy, transport networks, and administrative reforms. For Oryol Province, with its rich archival heritage (including materials on branches of the State Bank, zemstvo treasuries, and private credit societies), this problematic is especially relevant, since existing works on the history of the region address the banking system only in the context of individual banking institutions, without providing a comprehensive analysis of its role in socio-economic processes. The study of the present topic will supplement information on banking in regional historiography, contributing to a fuller understanding of the evolution of the Russian credit system as a multi-level structure in which the periphery played a role no less important than the center.

Degree of development of the scientific problem. The entire available historiography on the topic can be divided into three periods: the pre-revolutionary period, which represents the era of the emergence of the banking system as an independent sphere that almost immediately became the subject of historians' research; the Soviet period – a time of rethinking the history of banking from the perspective of class struggle; and the post-Soviet period – characterized by a diversity of research approaches and greater open access to previously classified archival materials. A separate place in the dissertation research is occupied by works devoted to the development of the banking system in the Oryol region. Thus, particular research interest is presented by the works of S.A. Salomatina – Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor of the Department of Historical Informatics at the Faculty of History of Lomonosov Moscow State University, who has made a significant contribution to the study of the history of banking activities in Oryol Province. The priority of research for the above-mentioned author is the activities of the Oryol Commercial Bank, as well as the study of the regional banking elite¹. At the same time, the studies of the above-mentioned author have a more

¹ Salomatina S. A., Parfiryev D. S. Regional Banking Elite of the Russian Empire: The Polyakovs and the Oryol Commercial Bank, 1872–1908 // Bulletin of Moscow University. Series 8: History. 2020. No. 1. Pp. 78–81.

economic orientation and do not consider the banking system of Oryol Province as a single complex of the regional financial system.

Separate attention is deserved by the article by V.E. Chugunov², former head of the Main Directorate of the Bank of Russia for Oryol Region. The above-mentioned scholarly article is devoted to the evolution of the banking sector in Oryol Province from the 18th century to the beginning of the Soviet period. The work is based on the analysis of historical documents, decrees, manifestos, and archival materials (including bank reports, newspaper publications, and resolutions). For example, the author refers to sources including the Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire³, the archives of the Oryol Branch of the State Bank⁴, and publications in the newspaper Oryol News⁵. It should be noted that the article was written in the context of comprehending historical experience for understanding contemporary processes in the banking sector of the Oryol region.

The author emphasizes that the development of the banking system of Oryol Province reflects all-Russian trends: from usury and state institutions to state monopoly, with an emphasis on the role of the state in lending to estates and the economy. The author sees lessons for the present in history, emphasizing the logic of processes and the need to comprehend experience for assessing current trends. V.E. Chugunov notes that the banking sector originated on the basis of usurious relations in the 13th century, with fixation in pledge papers and bills of exchange. In the 18th century, the first large offices appeared: the Oryol Office of the Assignat Bank (1781). The purpose of the Assignat Banks (from 1769) was to facilitate circulation by replacing copper coin with paper money, with exchange without delay. As the author notes, in 1865 the Oryol Branch of the State Bank began operations, organized on the basis of the Oryol Public Charity Office. Moreover, the author indicates that the banking system of Oryol Province was also supplemented by Mutual Credit Societies (from 1869) and Credit Partnerships (from 1905).

The object of the research of the present work is the banking system of the Russian Empire, its evolution, structure, and characteristic features.

The subject of the research is the processes of formation, functioning, and transformation of credit institutions in Oryol Province, their role in the economic development of the region, and their interaction with the all-Russian financial system.

The chronological framework of the research covers the period from the emergence of the banking system in Oryol Province in 1864 up to the nationalization of the banking sector in 1917. It should be noted that the choice of the lower boundary of the research is determined by the date of the

² Chugunov V. E. A Historical Sketch of the Development of the Banking System of Oryol Region // Central Russian Bulletin of Social Sciences. 2008. No. 2(7). Pp. 41–48.

³ Complete Collection of Laws of the Russian Empire (PSZRI). Collection 2. Vol. XXXVIII. Art. 40411.

⁴ State Archive of Oryol Region. F. 495. Op. 1. D. 2. L. 25. (Hereafter: GAOO).

⁵ Oryol News. 1918. June 16. No. 93.

opening of the first banking organization on the territory of Oryol Province – the Oryol Public Bank in 1864. In turn, the upper chronological boundary of the dissertation research is determined by the events of the 1917 revolution and the mass nationalization of the banking sector.

The territorial framework of the research includes the borders of Oryol Province, which encompassed the territory of the modern Oryol Region, the western part of Lipetsk Region, the central and eastern parts of Bryansk Region, and the northern part of Kursk Region. The administrative and economic center of the entire province was the city of Oryol.

The information base of the research consists of both published and unpublished sources, which can be classified into the following categories:

1. Official normative-legal acts regulating the procedure and organization of the activities of the banking system of the Russian Empire.
2. Published and unpublished clerical sources.
3. Sources of personal origin.
4. Materials of the periodical press.

Clerical sources occupy a central place in the framework of the present dissertation: materials from the State Archive of Oryol Region concerning the activities of the Public⁶ and State⁷ banks, as well as the features of the organization and functioning of small-scale lending in the province (mutual credit societies, credit partnerships). Moreover, in the study of the banking sector of Oryol Province, information from other regional archives that were previously part of its administrative-territorial boundaries was used. Thus, thanks to materials from the State Archive of Bryansk Region (GABO), it was possible to study the branch network of the public bank using the example of the Bryansk City Public Bank (1865–1914)⁸, as well as to familiarize oneself with the financial activities of the local mutual credit society⁹. Archival sources from Lipetsk Region (GALO) substantially supplemented the present dissertation, which preserved information on the financial activities of the Yelets District Branch of the State Bank (1903–1914)¹⁰. The study of the normative base for the activities and organization of the banking system of the Russian Empire was carried out on the basis of materials from the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA)¹¹. It should be noted that a number of archival documents concerning court cases on the bankruptcy of the Oryol Public Bank, as well as materials from audits of the balance sheet of the above-mentioned financial institution, are being introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time¹².

⁶ GAOO. F. 591. Op. 1. D. 1–8; GAOO. F. 714. Op. 1. D. 362; GAOO. F. 587. Op. 52. D. 1073.

⁷ GAOO. F. 495. Op. 1–2.

⁸ State Archive of Bryansk Region (GABO). F. 28. Op. 1. D. 1–105.

⁹ GABO. F. R-456. Op. 1. D. 1–23.

¹⁰ State Archive of Lipetsk Region (GALO). F. 166. Op. 1. D. 1–2.

¹¹ Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA). F. 1329. Op. 1; RGIA. F. 587. Op. 37.

¹² GAOO. F. 714. Op. 1. D. 362–368; GAOO. F. 580. D. 304; GAOO. F. 591. Op. 1. D. 1–8.

The research used **sources of personal origin, such as memoirs and diaries**. They provide a subjective view of the activities of banks in Oryol Province, revealing social connections and everyday practices. Examples include the memoirs of N.S. Rusanov from the book *In the Homeland. 1859–1882*,¹³ which describe childhood impressions of D.S. Rusanov, manager of the Oryol Commercial Bank, his connections with S.S. Polyakov, and elite gatherings with Governor N.V. Levashov. Another source is the memoirs of Prince V.A. Obolensky *My Life. My Contemporaries*¹⁴, which illuminate the sessions of the Oryol Zemstvo Assembly with the participation of V.E. Romer, director of the Commercial Bank.

Thanks to the analysis of **periodical press materials** from the period under consideration, it was possible to establish the chronology and certain features of the bankruptcy procedure of the above-mentioned institution. For example, according to the newspaper *Oryol Herald* No. 75 of October 3, 1884,¹⁵ the competitive production process began on October 14, 1884, for the purpose of electing curators and establishing competitive management within the framework of legal proceedings. Also, in the newspaper *Oryol Herald* of August 25, 1884 (issue No. 226)¹⁶, the inventory of the bank's property is mentioned for the first time; this is a voluminous document containing a preliminary gross account of the property and debts of the Oryol Public Bank, certified by the signatures of the sworn trustees Y.A. Lebedinsky and N.P. Afonsky. In the course of preparing the work, materials from the newspaper *Oryol Speech* were also used – conservative in content, published from 1906 to 1917. This publication was of a news nature and focused on local news of Oryol Province. As a thematic publication for the present research, materials from the journal *Bulletin of Finance, Industry and Trade* were used – an all-Russian publication that appeared from 1885 to 1917 on a weekly basis.

The purpose of the dissertation research is a comprehensive analysis of the structure, evolution, and role of the banking system of Oryol Province.

To achieve the above-stated purpose, **the following tasks must be performed:**

1. To carry out an analysis of the foundations of the organization of banking in Oryol Province and the prerequisites for the formation of the regional network.
2. To examine the activities of the key credit institutions of the province.
3. To investigate the features of the organization and functioning of small-scale lending in Oryol Province.
4. To carry out an analysis of the reporting documentation of credit institutions.
5. To identify and compare the order of organization and functioning of banking in Oryol Province

¹³ Rusanov N. S. *In the Homeland. 1859–1882*. Moscow, 1931. Pp. 42–44.

¹⁴ Obolensky V. A. *My Life. My Contemporaries*. Paris, 1988. Pp. 221–223.

¹⁵ GAOO. F. 714. Op. 1. D. 362. L. 220.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* L. 64.

with neighboring regions.

Theoretical and methodological basis of the research. The theoretical basis for studying the process of creation and development of the banking system of Oryol Province in the mid-19th – early 20th centuries is a set of approaches related to the history of institutional and regional economics. A special place is occupied by the concept of the evolution of financial institutions as a key mechanism for the modernization of an agrarian-industrial society in the transition from feudal-serf relations to capitalist ones. Within the framework of the present research, the concept of the banking system is considered as a set of interconnected credit and financial institutions performing the functions of accumulating savings, distributing capital, regulating monetary circulation, and promoting economic growth. In the context of the Russian Empire, the above definition implied close interaction between state, public, and private institutions, where the state played a leading role in the formation of credit infrastructure, especially in the initial stages. The regional aspect of the research relies on the concept of the heterogeneity of regional economic development and peripheral interactions. Oryol Province, as a typical black-earth province of Central Russia, represented a peripheral segment of the all-Russian banking system, where the formation of the local banking network reflected both empire-wide trends and local factors.

The methodological foundations of the research of the present work rely both on general scientific methods of understanding objective reality and on special methods of historical science. The general scientific methods used in the present dissertation research represent a universal toolkit employed in various fields of knowledge to ensure logical rigor, systematicity, and reliability of conclusions. Their use is conditioned by the need for a comprehensive analysis of historical processes, where the banking system is viewed as a multidimensional phenomenon combining economic, social, and administrative aspects.

The application of general scientific methods is integrated with the principles of objectivity and historicism, relying on the source base (archives, statistics). These tools ensure methodological pluralism, allowing not only to describe but also to explain the role of the banking system in regional development. As a result, the above-mentioned methods contribute to achieving the purpose of the research – a comprehensive reconstruction of the historical experience of building the banking system in Oryol Province.

The special scientific methods used in the present dissertation research represent a specialized toolkit adapted to the features of historical science as a discipline that studies the past through the prism of sources, chronology, and context. Their use is conditioned by the need to take into account temporal dynamics, regional specifics, and the multifactorial nature of the banking system as an element of the economic history of the Russian Empire in the 19th – early 20th centuries.

The validity and reliability of the research results lie in the comprehensive and systemic

approach to the study of the regional aspect of the banking system of the Russian Empire in the 19th – early 20th centuries. Unlike other existing studies that focus primarily on capital centers (St. Petersburg, Moscow) or all-Russian trends, as well as on individual banking institutions, this work considers Oryol Province as an independent object of analysis, revealing the features of the regional banking model in the agrarian-industrial context of Central Russia. Thus, the present research makes it possible to supplement the historiography of banking in Oryol Province and contribute to the understanding of the organization, structure, and features of the regional banking system.

The scientific novelty, as well as the validity and reliability of the results of this research, are substantiated by the analysis of archival materials previously not introduced into scholarly circulation, as well as by the application of interdisciplinary methods combining historical and economic approaches. On the basis of unpublished materials from the funds of the State Archive of Oryol Region (GAOO), the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), and the State Archive of Bryansk Region (GABO), the operations of key credit institutions have been reconstructed for the first time, such as the Oryol Commercial Bank (founded in 1872 by the Polyakov family), the Oryol Public Bank (founded in 1864), and the branch of the State Bank (founded in 1865). The novelty of the present research also lies in the content analysis of the periodical press and memoirs of local figures, which reveals public perception of banks as an instrument of social mobility. This work also reconstructs the operational activities of financial institutions in Oryol Province, relying on their reporting and local acts.

Theoretical and practical significance of the research. The theoretical significance of the research is manifested in deepening the understanding of the evolution of the banking system as a key element of socio-economic transformations in the Russian Empire in the 19th – early 20th centuries. The present work develops the theoretical foundations of regional history, demonstrating how provincial banking institutions (branches of the State Bank, zemstvo treasuries, private credit societies) functioned in the conditions of an agrarian-dominated economy. The analysis of operational activities shows how the banking system of Oryol Province contributed to the modernization of the agrarian sector, which enriches the theory of economic modernization. Moreover, in works devoted to the organization and functioning of the banking system of Oryol Province, only certain aspects of the functioning of specific institutions and establishments are revealed. In turn, the present research considers not only the genesis of the banking sector or its individual institutions but also comprehensively and systematically analyzes the order of formation, structure, and features of the operational activities of the key credit institutions of the above-mentioned region.

The practical significance of the research is associated with the possibility of applying its results in the modern educational sphere: the materials of the dissertation research can be used for the further development of courses on the economic history of Russia in universities, as well as for school programs on local history. Recommendations on the analysis of archival sources contribute to the

methodological training of history students, improving the quality of regional studies.

Provisions Submitted for Defense Possessing Scientific Novelty:

1. It has been established that the formation of the regional banking network in Oryol Province during the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries resulted from a combination of several key factors: the region's profound agrarian specialization, the rapid expansion of commodity-money relations following the abolition of serfdom, and the influence of empire-wide financial reforms of the 1860s–1870s. As one of the leading grain-producing regions of the Central Black Earth Zone, Oryol Province was distinguished by a high degree of market orientation in agricultural production and active participation in both interregional and international trade in grain, flour, and sugar beet. These characteristics generated a stable and sustained demand for short-term and commodity-based credit. The financial reforms — particularly the establishment of the State Bank in 1860 and its Oryol branch in 1865, together with the adoption of the model charter for joint-stock commercial banks in 1872 — created the necessary legal and organizational framework for the development of private credit institutions in the province. Consequently, a stable and coherent regional banking network emerged in Oryol Province. This network functioned not merely as a peripheral extension of the all-Russian banking system, but as a specific adaptive mechanism that enabled the agrarian provincial economy to integrate effectively into the broader processes of capitalist development and the national market. (Clause 21 “History of the Economic Development of Russia and Its Regions” of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 “Russian History”).
2. It has been demonstrated that the Oryol Branch of the State Bank, the Oryol Commercial Bank, and the Oryol City Public Bank formed the core of the regional banking system of Oryol Province in the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries. The activities of these credit institutions were characterized by a pronounced and stable specialization in the financing of agricultural production and the trade associated with it. The principal directions of their operations included the discounting of bills of exchange, the issuance of loans secured by agricultural commodities, the financing of export transactions, and investment in the development of agrarian production. This specialized focus enabled the credit institutions of Oryol Province to serve as an effective instrument for the implementation of state banking policy at the provincial level and to provide crucial financial support for the export-oriented agriculture of the region. (Clause 21 “History of the Economic Development of Russia and Its Regions” of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 “Russian History”).
3. The study has examined the distinctive features of the organization and functioning of small-scale credit in Oryol Province. These features were expressed primarily in the dominance of cooperative and mutual credit societies directed toward small producers and peasants. Particular

emphasis was placed on ensuring the accessibility of loans and the minimization of risks. Such an approach reflected the specific nature of the provincial financial market and contributed significantly to social stabilization in the region. (Clause 21 “History of the Economic Development of Russia and Its Regions” of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 “Russian History”).

4. A series of clerical (office) documents pertaining to the activities of the Oryol Public Bank, the Oryol Commercial Bank, and the Oryol Branch of the State Bank have been identified and introduced into scholarly circulation for the first time. This has permitted the determination of the genuine character and essence of their operational activities, as well as a precise assessment of their role within the overall banking system of Oryol Province. (Clause 21 “History of the Economic Development of Russia and Its Regions” of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 “Russian History”).
5. It has been established that during the post-reform period (second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries), a distinctive regional model of credit and financial infrastructure was formed in Oryol Province. This model occupied an intermediate position between the highly commercialized model characteristic of Tula Province and the predominantly state-cooperative model of Kursk Province. The Oryol model demonstrated an optimal combination of dynamism and stability within the conditions of an agrarian-export-oriented economy of the Central Black Earth Zone. The decisive factor in the resilience of the Oryol banking system was the leading position of the Oryol Commercial Bank (1872–1908), which successfully navigated the crisis of the 1880s with only a modest 20% reduction in assets, expanded its branch network to 22 offices across 12 provinces, and ensured the deep integration of the region into both the all-Russian and international grain markets. This was achieved primarily through the Riga-Oryol and Libava-Romny railway corridors, which provided significant competitive advantages in the financing of large-scale grain trade. Comparative analysis has revealed that, in contrast to Tula Province — where economic diversification resulted in heightened vulnerability of the banking network (a reduction in the number of credit institutions from 12 to 4 following the 1880s crisis) — the Oryol banking system exhibited greater financial stability due to its clear specialization in export-oriented grain trade. While sharing certain structural similarities with Tambov Province in addressing issues of capital deficiency and long-term land credit, Oryol Province effectively entrusted these functions to a private commercial bank. This highlights the diversity and variability of agrarian credit mechanisms across Russian regions. In comparison with Kursk Province, where state and cooperative institutions prevailed (evidenced by the growth in the number of credit partnerships from 5 in 1900 to 225 in 1916), the Oryol model was marked by a higher degree of commercialization and dynamism. This orientation secured a greater

potential for economic growth, albeit with a moderately elevated sensitivity to market fluctuations.

Thus, the evolution of credit and financial institutions in Oryol Province reflected the general national trends in the transformation of the monetary and credit system of the Russian Empire after 1861, while at the same time manifesting distinct regional characteristics. These characteristics were shaped by the prominent role of a major commercial bank, a strong orientation toward grain export, and the development of railway infrastructure. Collectively, these factors enabled the region to secure a significant and prominent position within the all-Russian agrarian market. (Clause 21 “History of the Economic Development of Russia and Its Regions” of the passport of scientific specialty 5.6.1 “Russian History”).

The Structure of the Dissertation. The dissertation consists of an introduction, a main part comprising three chapters (each containing three subsections), a conclusion, a list of references and literature used, and two appendices.



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