

THE ARCHIVES OF THE TWO SAPIEHAS
AND THE TWO LETTERS
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Abstract: The article deals with the history of Russian documents in the archives of Jan Piotr Sapieha and his cousin Lieŭ Sapieha. Two letters of the Russian Princess-Nun Xenia (Olga) Godunova held in two different archives were written immediately at the day of catch by Jan Piotr Sapieha's soldiers.

Keywords: Sapieha, Xenia Godunova, Smolensk, Time of Troubles.

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In 1609-1611, Smolensk was sieged by the troops of the Polish-Lithuanian King Sigismund III. After the fortress fall in June 1611, documents from the City Chancellery became a trophy of Poles and Lithuanians. The reason for keeping the documents was the possible use of them after conquering Smolensk region, and probably all the Muscovy by Sigismund.

Today, *Smolensk Archives* is a name of a small collection of the seventeenth-century acts placed in Svenska Riksarkiv, Stockholm. It appeared in Sweden as a private military trophy held by Swedes during the so called *Potop* in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 1650s. General Wrangel, the winner over Polish troops, grabbed the documents in Bereza (Bereza Kartuska, Belarus), the estate of Sapieha family, and brought them to his Skokloster Castle. In the 1830s, Professor Sergey V. Solovjev – while searching for documents in Russian in Swedish archives – found acts from Smolensk in Skokloster Castle. When in Sweden, Solovjev stole a significant number of acts in Russian including some Smolensk acts from Skokloster. Then, in St. Petersburg he sold those stolen acts to the Emperor’s Archaeographic Commission. The acts were of great interest to the Commission members and they started to publish them immediately. About half of the acts were published in the 1840s (*Akty Istoricheskie*, 1841). Today these acts are held in two collections in the Archive of St. Petersburg Institute for History: Collection 124 (“Solovjev’s Collection”) and Collection 174 (“Acts before 1613”). Thanks to that Solovjev’s theft, numerous acts were published even in the 1840s and became an important source for studying the Russian Time of Troubles.

Other “Smolensk” documents from Skokloster Castle were transferred to Svenska Riksarkiv in 1893 by counts Brahe, the owners of the Castle. In 1897, Jury Gautier got acquainted with the “Smolensk collection;” a brief overview of the collection was published (Gautier, 1897). Then, in 1910, all the documents of the “Smolensk Collection” were temporally transferred to Moscow Roumyantsev Library. In 1912, Jury Gautier prepared a huge volume of documents named “Monuments of Smolensk Defense” (Gautier, 1912), all of them from Stockholm part of the collection. In 1913, the collection was returned to Sweden.

Igor Tjumentsev who studied the field archives of Jan Piotr Sapieha noted that some acts published by Gautier in 1912 had also originated from Sapieha’s field archives (Tjumentsev, 2005: 35). Tjumentsev also mentioned a special group of acts: the letters intercepted by Sapieha’s soldiers during the siege of St. Trinity monastery in 1609-1610.

Among the documents stolen and brought to Russia by Sergey Solovjev there was a letter by the Princess-Nun Xenia (Olga) to her aunt Princess Domna Nogotkova, and a letter of Xenia’s servant Solomonida Rzhvskaja to her mother Theophania Rzhvskaja. These letters were published in 1841

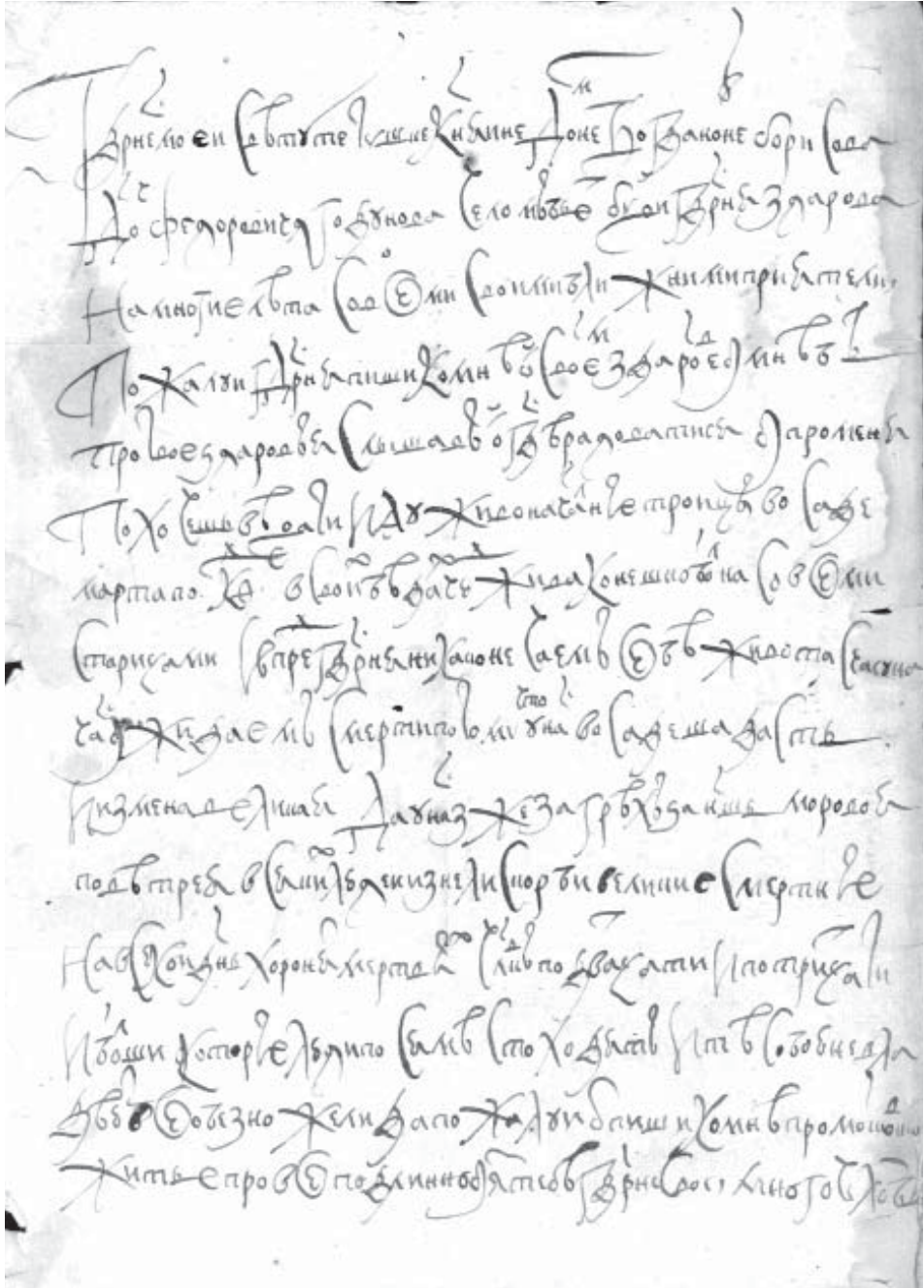
(Akty Istoricheskie, 1841: 212-213); in 1997 they were reproduced in the book “Chronicles of the Time of Troubles” (Hroniki, 1997: 448-449). Then the letter by Princess-Nun Xenia appeared in Russian Wikipedia (https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Годунова,_Ксения_Борисовна) and became well known. In 2012, it was once again reproduced in Tjumentsev’s publication (Tjumentsev, 2012: 228-229).

In 2014, the project “Digital Catalogue of the Stockholm Smolensk Archives” started, with the support of Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. The project includes both the description of acts from Stockholm (and mostly published in 1912 by Gautier), and the documents from the archives in Russia. In October 2014, Elisabeth Löfstrand found another letter by Xenia Godunova in “Smolensk Archives,” Stockholm. The letter was addressed to Xenia’s “grandmother” Stephanida Andreevna who lived in Moscow at her son’s, Prince Ivan Kourakin’s court. She was a daughter of Prince Andrey Strigin-Obolenskij; in 1609 she lived in Moscow together with her son’s wife Elena. The relationship of Stephanida and the Godunovs could be followed through the line of Grigorij Bel’skij (demonic Maljuta Skuratov) or through some kinship of Fedor Godunov (grandfather of Princess Xenia) and Princes Obolenskijs. The other explanation is that Princess Domna Nogotkova was a daughter of boyar Bogdan Jur’evitch Saburov (mentioned in the description of Ivan IV’s marriage with Maria Sobakina in 1571) (Razryadnaya kniga, 1982: 287). The close kinship between the Godunovs and the Saburovs probably allowed Princess Xenia to name Princess Domna Nogotkova an aunt. It is much more difficult to state the relationship between the Godunovs and Princes Strigin-Obolenskijs; there are no sources that mention such a kinship. But the lines of the Nogotkovs and the Strigins had diverged some 3-4 generations before the early seventeenth century.

In any case, both letters by Princess-Nun Xenia were written in St. Trinity monastery on the same day, by the same scribe (pic. 1 and 2). These letters were surely acts of despair; of course the nun had to count on some man connected with the “aunt” and the “grandmother.” In the case of the letter to Stephanida Andreevna, that man was surely the boyar Prince Ivan Kourakin.

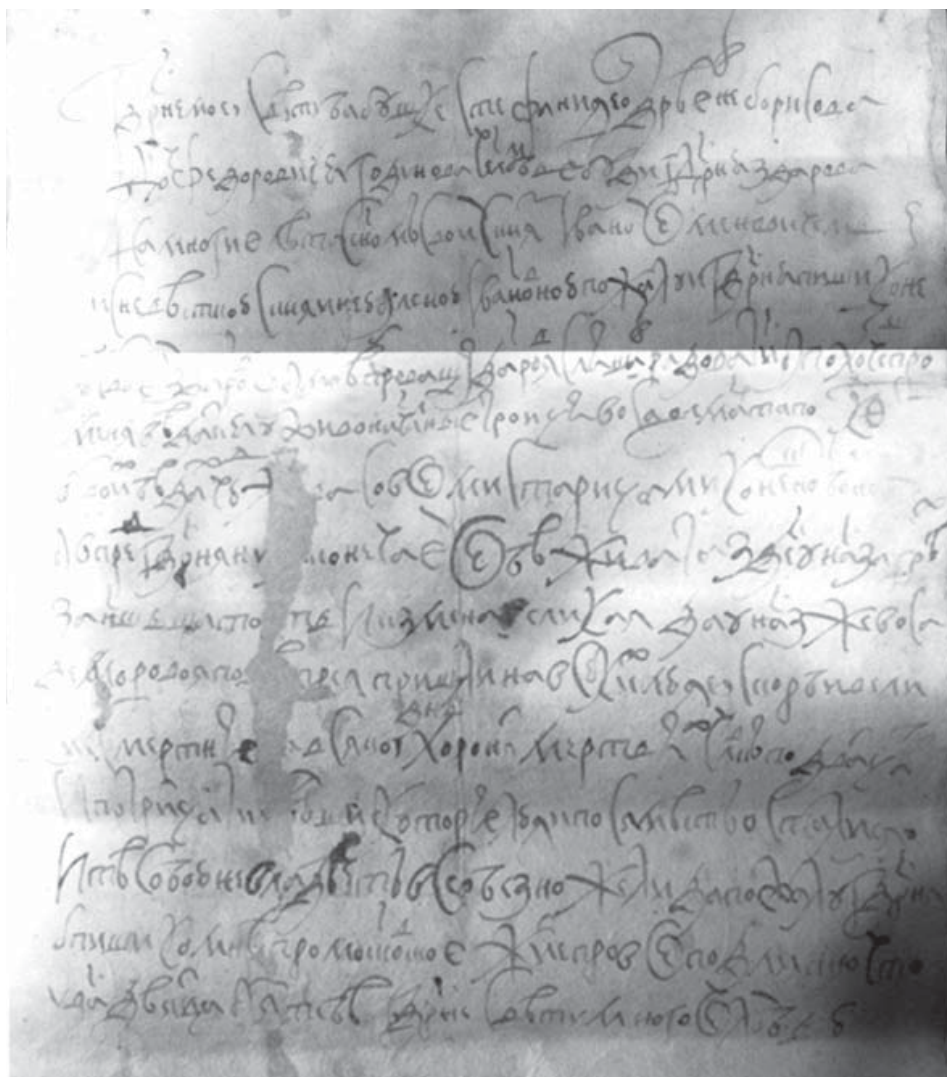
The time of catching the letters was soon after March 29, 1609. But in the 1830s, one letter was stolen by Solovjev and brought to St. Petersburg, while the other stayed in Stockholm. The strange thing is that when in 1910-1912 Gautier prepared the documents of “Smolensk Archives” to publication, he had not noted the Godunova’s second letter. Of course he knew the publication of the first letter in 1841. Probably he noted the letter but did not include it to his volume because it was not truly a part of the Archive of Smolensk Chancellery.

Picture 1. Letter from Xenia (Olga) Godunova to her “grandmother” Stephanida Andreevna. March, 29, 1609. *Svenska Riksarkiv. E 8610: 4b*



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Picture 2. Letter from Xenia (Olga) Godunova to her “aunt” Domna Bogdanovna Nogotkova-Oblenskaja. March, 29, 1609. Research Archives, St. Petersburg Institute for History, Russian Academy of Sciences. Kol. 124 (Solovjev Collection), op. 2, d. 278



The “Smolensk Archives” collection was not a simple military trophy. Probably the initiator of collecting these acts was the Lithuanian Great Chancellor Lieū Sapieha. He also held the acts in Russian that had been accumulated in the king’s camp during the siege in 1609-1611. In the first half of the seventeenth century, a part of Jan Piotr Sapieha’s field archives and Lieū Sapieha’s archives were preserved in one place and some kind of a “diffusion” of the archives may have happened (Tjumentsev, 2005: 31, 34-36). Then the archives were caught in Bereza (Bereza Kartuska) estate by Swedes. These mostly were Lieū Sapieha’s documents, but including some acts from Jan Piotr Sapieha’s archives. The letters from St. Trinity monastery to Moscow were of course a part of the latter. They could have only passed Smolensk on their way to Bereza (Bereza Kartuska) estate but they of course never belonged to the true Smolensk Archives.

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