

## *Introduction to the Catalogue of the Smolensk Archives (1609–1611)*<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Background**

The digital catalogue of what are referred to as the Smolensk Archives contains descriptions of almost 850 archival units, the great majority of which originate from Smolensk during the Polish siege of 1609 to 1611. More than 600 of these units are held at the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm, the remainder in the archives of the St Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IISpBRAN).

Until the 1830s, the whole of the collection was kept at Skokloster Castle in Sweden, to which it had been taken as spoils of war in the middle of the 17th century. In 1611 Smolensk fell to the Poles, and the documents from the city's Chancellery were taken by the Lithuanian chancellor Lew Sapieha to Poland-Lithuania, where they ended up on the Sapieha family estate at Biaroza (in present-day Belarus).<sup>2</sup> On the way there, they were mixed together with documents from the camp of the Polish king Sigismund III outside Smolensk. Lew Sapieha also took the field archives of his deceased relative Jan Piotr Sapieha to his family estate. In the mid 17th century, the documents there were seized by the troops of the Swedish king Charles X (Karl X Gustav) and carried off to Sweden.

In the 1830s, the Russian collection at Skokloster was discovered by Sergej Vasil'evič Solov'ev, a professor of Russian literature at Helsinki University who had been sent by the Archaeographical Commission in St Petersburg in search of interesting Russian manuscripts in Swedish libraries and archives. He returned with a large number of documents from the castle and handed them over to the Commission. The remainder of the collection at Skokloster was transferred in 1893 to the Swedish National Archives, along with other manuscripts.

This catalogue of the Smolensk Archives is the result of a three-year project funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (The Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences). In that it presents both the documents kept at the National Archives in Stockholm and those now at IISpBRAN in St Petersburg, it recreates in digital form the original collection of documents from Smolensk at Skokloster Castle.

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction is based in part on the article "The Stockholm Smolensk Archives", by Per Ambrosiani and Elisabeth Löfstrand, published in 2017 in *Peterburgskij istoričeskij žurnal*, ISSN 2311-603X, no. 3, pp. 162–173. The editor of that journal has kindly given permission for parts of the text to be reused here. The article is available online at <https://yadi.sk/i/XY7uhUDD3NMsXD>.

<sup>2</sup> Selin 2015, p. 20.

Many of the documents from Smolensk have been published. As early as 1841, a large proportion of the material from Skokloster Castle brought back from Sweden by Sergej Solov'ev was published in St Petersburg in *Akty istoričeskie*. Some 70 years later, in 1912, the Russian historian Jurij Got'e issued a text edition of documents from the Swedish National Archives' collection from Smolensk (Got'e 1912).<sup>3</sup> However, almost 400 documents from the original Smolensk collection have not previously been published. These are now being made available through the digital catalogue.

Scanned copies of the documents at the National Archives are available, together with the digital catalogue, via the National Archives' Digital Research Room. They can be freely accessed from any computer.<sup>4</sup> There are no scanned copies of the documents kept in St Petersburg, but as a rule their texts are transcribed in their entirety in the database records.

## **2. Contents**

The digital catalogue contains descriptions of documents with the following origins: the archives of the Smolensk Chancellery, the Polish camp outside the city's walls, Jan Piotr Sapieha's field archives and, finally, a small number of documents from the archives of Prince Semen Bel'skij, which are kept together with the other documents in the Swedish National Archives' collection "Handlingar från Smolensk" ("Documents from Smolensk").

### *2.1 Documents from the Chancellery archives of the city of Smolensk*

The documents from the archives of the Smolensk Chancellery cover the period both before and during the siege. From the autumn of 1608 to the beginning of the siege in September 1609, the material relates almost exclusively to events in the countryside around Smolensk, above all in Poreckaja volost' and Ščučejskaja volost'. Only a few documents tell of events inside the city. One describes how three cowhides were stolen from a townsman. Others contain lists of individuals: people who have been released from prison on bail, and townsmen who are to defend the city, with details of the kinds of arms they bear. Further, there are instructions from the governors of Smolensk,

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<sup>3</sup> Got'e had discovered the Smolensk collection on a visit to the Swedish National Archives in 1897. In 1898 he published a brief catalogue, *Smolenskije akty iz semejnago archiva gr. Brache* (Got'e 1898).

<sup>4</sup> <https://bit.ly/2C5Ay6X>

Michail Šein and Petr Gorčakov, concerning guard duty in the towers, as well as orders to the population to take various steps to reduce the risk of fires in the city.

The commonest type of document from before the siege consists of complaints from peasants in the villages about attacks and looting by the Polish-Lithuanian troops, accompanied by petitions for tax relief. They want the governors to send *strel'cy* units to defend them. There is great unrest in the countryside. In the late spring of 1609 it is reported that many peasants have sworn an oath of allegiance to the Polish king, while others are standing by their oath to Tsar Vasilij Šujskij. This is causing internal strife within the peasant community. "Traitors" are attacking those loyal to the Tsar. Loyalist peasants in Poreckaja volost' complain that Ivan Lesunov and his family from Ščučejskaja volost' are conducting raids against them, and they want him taken to court. There are also orders and reports relating to the building of roadblocks, with officials complaining of difficulties getting peasants to stand guard at them. Lists of noblemen who have failed to report for military duty, furthermore, show that the armed forces are not functioning effectively. Some scholars have drawn the conclusion that, in the complex political situation that has arisen, the nobility are putting their own interests first (Aleksandrov 2011: 150). People who have been in Polish captivity and can provide important information are questioned, for example about troop movements and estimates of numbers of soldiers. In late August 1609, the commander Ivan Židovin reports that the forces of the brothers Aleksander and Szymon Gosiewski have taken the whole of Ščučejskaja volost', and that Poreckaja volost' is threatened with the same fate (Aleksandrov 2011: 154).

Documents of this kind are, by and large, no longer found after September 1609, when the city is besieged. During the siege, the Chancellery seems to have continued to operate broadly as before, though with certain limitations, as the city was now cut off from the surrounding countryside.<sup>5</sup>

Common types of material from 1610 are reports and investigations of disputes between townspeople (e.g. relating to theft, bodily injury and insults, and questions of inheritance). The Chancellery also received many reports from townspeople who had heard neighbours or acquaintances complaining about the siege, witnessed someone shirking their duties on the walls and in the towers, or heard someone agitating for the city to capitulate.

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<sup>5</sup> This is probably why the documents preserved in the Smolensk Archives consist almost exclusively of rolls and fragments, and why, unexpectedly, so very few books have been preserved.

During the siege, the Chancellery served as the headquarters for the defence of the city. The documents tell of how the defenders are armed, of the manning of towers and walls, of efforts to conserve various food supplies (especially grain and salt), and of punishments meted out to individuals who have evaded military service or tried to escape from the city by lowering themselves on ropes from the walls. Severe penalties are imposed on those who fail. The number of attempted escapes increases as time goes by. There are many surety bonds – guarantees by a large number of named individuals that a certain person will not try to flee, but stay in the city and do his duty as a defender. Another type of document records the questioning of people who have managed to get into the city or who have been brought there in connection with break-outs from the fortress. Such people could be in possession of useful information about the besieging forces.

There are a great many lists of townspeople who have been allocated grain. Inside the city there were also many refugees from nearby towns and from the surrounding countryside. Their plight was particularly difficult, as they had generally not had time to bring any food with them from their homes. The authorities carefully record what stores of grain there are on the different properties in the city (Selin 2016a: 209). These long lists of names contain a great deal of information about the size and composition of households. And also about the women of the city – in general, women do not figure at all prominently in Russian archives from this period (see Selin 2016b). Several extensive lists relate to priests, monks and church servants and their households.

A rarer kind of document records orders from the governors concerning measures to reduce the risk of fires. “Every day, in the morning, at noon, in the evening and at night”, special watchmen are to ride around in the city and warn its inhabitants not to be careless with fire. Hoarding and speculating in food and brewing beer without permission are also strictly forbidden. These documents bring the difficult conditions in the city into sharp focus.

The collection in St Petersburg, unlike the part of the collection that remained in Sweden, also includes several draft diplomatic notes from the governors, Michail Šein and Prince Petr Gorčakov, as well as letters addressed to them from various highly placed individuals. There are also reports here from the governors to Tsar Vasilij Šujskij.

## *2.2 Documents from the Polish camp outside the walls of Smolensk*

A number of documents in the Smolensk Archives originate from Sigismund III's camp outside Smolensk. Polish troops controlled the whole of the countryside around the city, and most of these documents consist of petitions applying for pay in the form of land or, more rarely, money. There are also some twenty letters, most of them written inside the besieged city. These were subsequently intercepted by the Poles and thus prevented from reaching their addressees.

Documents from the Polish camp are unevenly distributed between the collections in St Petersburg and Stockholm: at IISpBRAN there are almost 70 such documents, compared with around 25 at the National Archives in Stockholm.

### *2.3 Documents of other origins than Smolensk*

In addition to the documents mentioned above, the Smolensk collection at the Swedish National Archives includes a total of 42 items from two separate archives not directly linked to Smolensk, which for some unknown reason have ended up among the material from that city.

#### *2.3.1 Thirty-three documents from the field archives of Jan Piotr Sapieha*

The Smolensk collection at the National Archives in Stockholm includes 33 documents from the field archives of Hetman Jan Piotr Sapieha. They presumably ended up here by mistake, and in fact belong in Volume E 8610, no. 344, Ryska brev (Russian letters), which includes a large number of papers from Sapieha's field archives. The "Ryska brev" documents were studied in the 1990s by Professor I. O. Tiumencev, who also published them (Tiumencev 2005, 2012). He did not find the documents in the "Handlingar från Smolensk" collection, however, and they therefore remained unknown. Consequently, the 33 field archive documents in that collection are included in the digital catalogue (with text editions), even though they have no direct connection with Smolensk.<sup>6</sup>

Only six of these documents are dated (from 27 November 1608 to 29 March 1609). Twenty-five of the documents are petitions, addressed either to Jan Piotr Sapieha or to Tsar Dmitrij Ivanovič, known as the second False Dmitrij. The petitioners are often peasants, complaining of the ravaging and looting of soldiers, or of the

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<sup>6</sup> Solov'ev took 137 documents from Jan Piotr Sapieha's field archives to St Petersburg. These, too, have been published by I. O. Tiumencev (Tiumencev 2012) and are therefore not included in the digital catalogue.

overwhelming levies imposed on them. Monasteries and churches have also been destroyed. The geographical area concerned is the region to the north-east of Moscow.

The documents from Sapieha's field archives also include a number of letters. The most spectacular of these has Ksenija Godunova – the daughter of Tsar Boris Godunov – as its sender. Jan Piotr Sapieha's forces besieged the Trinity–St Sergius Monastery, north-east of Moscow, from September 1608 until January 1610, and among those confined within its walls was the Tsar's daughter, the nun Ksenija (Olga). On 1 April 1609 three *strel'cy* who were heading for Moscow were captured by Sapieha's forces. They were carrying some 500 letters (Tiumencev 1995: 26), including two from Ksenija Godunova to her relatives in Moscow. One of these letters is preserved in the Solov'ev collection in St Petersburg, and is addressed to Domna Bogdanovna Nogotkova, who is referred to as the writer's "aunt". The letter in the Swedish National Archives, on the other hand, is addressed to her "grandmother", Stefanida Andreevna. Ksenija Godunova's two letters were written on the same date (29 March) and in the same hand. They are very similar in content, and include many similar wordings.<sup>7</sup>

Ksenija Godunova's letter in the Solov'ev collection is well known to scholars. It was published as early as 1841 in *Akty istoričeskie* (see AI 1841: 213, no. 182a),<sup>8</sup> together with another intercepted letter, sent by Ksenija's servant Solomonida Rževskaja, but written on a different occasion. The letter in the Swedish National Archives collection was previously unknown.<sup>9</sup> Photographic reproductions of both letters can be found in Selin 2016a: 74–75.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Swedish National Archives (RA), Skoklostersamlingen, Handlingar från Smolensk, volume 4, PEA 34. A third letter, from the monastery servant Grigorij Rjazanov to his son-in-law, Petr Tugrinov, is reproduced by Tiumencev (1995: 38, 2012: 229 – the original is kept in RA, Skoklostersamlingen, E 8610, no. 344, Ryska brev). This letter, too, is dated 29 March 1609, and is strikingly similar in wording to the two from Ksenija Godunova. In some places the three letters match word for word, for example when it comes to specific information about life in the besieged monastery. As all three are also in the same hand, they were probably written at the same time.

<sup>8</sup> Extracts from Ksenija Godunova's letter to Domna Bogdanovna Nogotkova have now also been published on Russian Wikipedia; see [https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Годунова,\\_Ксения\\_Борисовна](https://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/Годунова,_Ксения_Борисовна) (accessed 3 January 2016).

<sup>9</sup> We find no comment from Got'e about a letter from Ksenija Godunova being held at the Swedish National Archives. Admittedly, he was only interested in the documents from Smolensk, but in some context he ought to have noted the discovery of an unknown letter from the daughter of a Tsar. This suggests that the 33 documents from Jan Piotr Sapieha's field archives ended up among the Smolensk papers after Got'e had worked on the latter.

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, however, the illustrations have been confused: the letter shown on p. 74 is in fact the one to Domna Nogotkova, while the one to Stefanida Ondreevna is on p. 75.

### 2.3.2 *Nine documents from the archives of Prince Semen Bel'skij*

The “Handlingar från Smolensk” collection also includes nine documents which in all probability originate from the archives of Prince Semen Bel'skij.<sup>11</sup> They are undated, but can be traced to the first half of the 16th century. As their existence was previously unknown, they too are included in the digital catalogue.<sup>12</sup>

The documents are mainly lists of various kinds, and differ from the other material in the Smolensk Archives in terms of the size of the paper (narrow strips, 8–15 cm wide), the colour of the ink (brownish black to black), and the handwriting (*skoropis'* of a south-west Russian type).

## **3. Shelf marks, locations and physical characteristics of the documents in the digital catalogue**

The digital catalogue gives the shelf mark of each individual archival unit. For the documents at the Swedish National Archives, watermarks and traces of earlier conservation are recorded. Inscriptions (in Polish and Russian) are reproduced, in so far as they can be deciphered. This is true of the documents at both the National Archives and IISpB-RAN.

### 3.1 *The “Smolensk Archives” at the National Archives in Stockholm*

The Smolensk Archives today consist of more than 600 archival units – rolls of varying length comprising a total of some 1,300 sheets, currently stored in 39 boxes.<sup>13</sup> The documents are held at the Swedish National Archives under the shelf mark “Skoklostersamlingen 3, Extranea, Handlingar från Smolensk” (Skokloster Collection

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<sup>11</sup> Prince Semen Bel'skij (d. c. 1544) was a Russian boyar. He was critical of the regency for Ivan IV and in 1534 entered Lithuanian service.

<sup>12</sup> Volume E 8610: 2 includes three bundles of documents from the archives of Prince Semen Bel'skij, relating to the first half of the 16th century. They are known to scholarship, but have not yet been published.

<sup>13</sup> In Russian archives, the pasted joins of rolls are often loosened, but this is not the practice at the National Archives in Stockholm, where rolls are stored in their original state. Very often, though, the joins have come unstuck by themselves.

3, Extranea, Documents from Smolensk).<sup>14</sup> This shelf mark was introduced in 2018, when the collection was scanned and placed in new boxes.<sup>15</sup>

More than 360 archival units consist of a single sheet. The material is in disarray, with numerous fragments of originally longer rolls often to be found in different archive boxes. It is not clear when this disorder arose, but, as we know, already in the 17th century the archives made at least two journeys through war-torn regions. Applying modern Swedish archiving principles, documents are not moved from their original locations, which in this case means that the lack of order has been preserved.

The condition of the paper in the collection varies. The longer rolls are all well preserved, while many of the single sheets have tears and holes in them and are damaged by damp, mould and ink corrosion. Some sheets have previously been conserved, using a variety of methods. Most commonly, thinned sheets have been pasted onto thicker brown paper. This was presumably done before 1910, as there are annotations in Got'e's hand on some of the brown sheets. Later, a number of sheets were reinforced with Japanese paper. This was probably done when Ingvar Kalnins, Ph.Lic., was working on the collection in the 1990s. His work resulted in an article on the Smolensk Archives (Kalnins 2002). Finally, in connection with the current project, all the documents in the archives were carefully conserved prior to scanning. At the same time, they were placed in new boxes. The material was, in addition, divided up in such a way that larger rolls are now kept in boxes containing five or six cradles, one for each roll, while short rolls of up to three or four sheets are stored flat in long boxes. There are a total of 39 boxes, 18 of them containing rolled documents and 21 holding documents stored flat.

The ink is a brownish colour, probably iron gall ink. In places, it is so badly faded that the text is difficult to read.

The watermarks have not been analysed in detail. They are to be found, cut off, at the left edges of sheets. The commonest type is a pot or jug, with one or two handles, different types of cover, and sometimes letters in the centre of the pot.<sup>16</sup> Of the 628

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<sup>14</sup> The digital catalogue also includes descriptions of 16 documents now preserved in another collection at the Swedish National Archives: Skoklostersamlingen, E 8610, no. 344, Ryska brev. Apparently, these documents were separated from the main Smolensk collection by mistake. The same is true of two fragments of "daybooks", or calendars, from the Smolensk Chancellery, which are to be found in volume E 8600.

<sup>15</sup> An earlier shelf mark, introduced in 1979, was E 8610, volumes 3–25. Before that, the old boxes were numbered I–VIII.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Dianova 1989.



records for documents at the Swedish National Archives, 300 include a reference to a pot watermark. The second commonest type, noted in a total of 41 records, is a bunch of grapes. (Sometimes this may be a pot surmounted by grapes.) Other types, far less common, are a shield, a fleur-de-lis or a crown. In just one case, an eagle is found. 228 records state that no watermark is present.

### *3.2 The documents at the St Petersburg Institute of History*

The documents taken by Solov'ev to Russia in the 1830s are now in the archives of the St Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences (IISPbRAN), where they are held in two collections, koll. 124 and koll. 174. Brief descriptions of the contents can be found in three archival inventories: koll. 124, op. 1, and koll. 174, op. 1 and op. 2.

The collection at IISPbRAN includes considerably more complete documents than the one at the Swedish National Archives, which consists largely of fragments (84 per cent of the total number of archival units in St Petersburg are complete documents, compared with just 35 per cent in Stockholm). Furthermore, the St Petersburg papers are nearly always dated or indirectly datable. The number of undated documents in Stockholm is much greater.

The watermarks and other external characteristics of the original documents at IISPbRAN have not been studied at all in connection with the present project. The Polish inscriptions have been deciphered, however.<sup>17</sup>

### *3.3 Inscriptions on the documents in both Stockholm and St Petersburg*

Following the capture of Smolensk in 1612, the documents seized were arranged by Polish archivists, as the many inscriptions in Polish make clear. These are written in brown ink on the versos of the sheets. In many cases, they do not tally with the contents of the document concerned. Tiumentsev's view is that the archivists had a poor command of Russian, giving rise to misunderstandings.<sup>18</sup> Another explanation could be that documents have been divided up and sheets previously kept together are now to be found in different boxes.

A good many documents also bear traces of Solov'ev's preliminary sorting of the archives in the 1830s. His inscriptions, many of them difficult to read, are in black

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<sup>17</sup> In 1911 Got'e examined the handwriting, paper and watermarks of a number of original documents from Smolensk in St Petersburg, concluding that they were of the same type as in the collection kept at the National Archives in Stockholm (Got'e 1912, p. VIII).

ink on the verso. Sometimes, documents have been given a number. Of course, we cannot be sure that these are Solov'ev's annotations, but that seems the likeliest explanation. Got'e, too, assumes that they are his inscriptions.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Jurij Got'e also made notes on the verso, all of them in pencil. Got'e writes that, when Solov'ev arranged the archives, he separated complete documents from fragments.<sup>20</sup> Got'e's aim, by contrast, was to group fragments into larger units. He provided each sheet, or the first in a series of sheets pasted together, with a number and a letter (= RASm ID in the database records). Got'e follows Solov'ev's numbering, where such numbering exists. Other annotations in Got'e's hand are rare, but do occur, e.g. "Need not be transcribed" ("Не надо списывать").

The 16 documents in the box E 8610, no. 344, Ryska brev (Russian letters), have been numbered by an unknown hand.

In 2018, when the documents were restored, the PEA number was added on the verso.

The digital catalogue reproduces the Polish inscriptions and Solov'ev's annotations on the documents in both Stockholm and St Petersburg – in the case of the latter, however, only for documents published in *Akty istoričeskie*, which records such information.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The original collection at Skokloster Castle in Sweden is today preserved in archival institutions in both Russia and Sweden. Some of the documents were published as early as the mid 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, but until now no overall survey was available of all the material preserved. It is our hope that the digital catalogue will fill that gap in a satisfactory manner.

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<sup>18</sup> Personal letter from Tiumentsev to E. Löfstrand, July 2018. Cf. also Tiumentsev 2012, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Got'e 1912, p. VII.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. VII.

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*Abbreviations in the digital catalogue*

Акты	see Bibliography
cf.	compare

Got'e 1912	<i>see</i> Bibliography
Got'e 1898	<i>see</i> Bibliography
no.	number
r.	recto (obverse of a sheet)
RA	Riksarkivet
SPBII RAN	Sankt Peterburgskij institut istorii Rossijskoj Akademii Nauk
v.	verso (reverse of a sheet)

АИ	Акты исторические ( <i>смотрите</i> Библиографию)
г.	год
№	номер
ср.	сравните
КОЛЛ.	КОЛЛЕКЦИЯ

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The majority of the English texts in the catalogue have been either edited or translated from Swedish by *Martin Naylor*, MA (Cantab.), Uppsala, Sweden. With his careful attention to detail, he has been as much a contributor as a translator.