

“POLISH DOCUMENTS” IN THE A. S. FIRKOVICH COLLECTION IN ST. PETERSBURG

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In 1862 the Imperial Public Library reported the acquisition of the A. S. Firkovich Collection, namely “delivery of 250 various deeds and charters, historical letters and articles; about three hundred documents related to the Karaites in Russia”.¹ These included both Hebrew-language documents constituting the *Evr. I Dok.* section; official deeds and charters, both original and copied, mainly issued to Karaites in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; and some business and commercial papers. The documents were written in West Russian (the Duchy’s official language between the 14th and 17th centuries), Latin and Polish. Materials in Polish or Latin (originals, copies or 19th-century Russian translations), as well as copies and translations of some West Russian charters, constitute the *Polish Documents* section (F. 946. Op 9, hereafter PD), altogether 324 items of storage.² The section was designated conventionally, by the language of the documents. Original West-Russian material is currently included in the *West Russian Deeds* file (f. 293, further ZRA). Total 120 items: Nos. 8, 16, 18, 23, 24, 26–29, 31–32, 36–38, 40, 42, 51, 113, 118, 122–128, 130, 132, 137, 140, 141(?)–143, 148, 154–155, 170, 173, 179, 190–192, 196–205, 207–211, 213, 218–219, 222, 224, 227–229, 248, 262, 266–267, 269–270, 277–278, 281, 283, 285–289, 293–298, 301–304, 306, 308, 312–313, 316, 318–322, 325–328, 337, 339, 343, 346, 348, 355–357, 361, 364, 372–373, 391, 421, 437, 443–444, 446.³ PD-section and ZRA-file materials constitute an integral set, both in content and origin, to be described in this paper.

¹ IPL, p. 14.

² Materials in the PD section had never been described before 1997, when A. A. Romanova completed the scientific and technical description, including inventory and review.

³ The precise number of documents from the Firkovich Collection in the ZRA file cannot be defined. Only 32 items in the inventory of West Russian deeds bear signs of originating from the Firkovich Collection, all related to the town of Troki (now Trakai, Republic of

In September 1853 A. S. Firkovich and his son-in-law G. S. Firkovich travelled in the western provinces “for archeological purposes” until 1856, “right to the end of the Crimean War starting after our departure from the Crimea and preventing our leaving before that date”.⁴

In 1853, before the Firkovich team arrived, a petition of restoring the previous rights of the Troki Karaites was presented to Emperor Nicholas I by Morel Leabbarovich Kaplanovski and Iosif Ananievich Kobetski acting on behalf of the Senior Hazzan.⁵ The petition was supplemented by the privileges, charters and decisions of authorities in the Grand Duchy previously issued to the Troki Karaites. These were collected by the above-mentioned agents who were empowered in 1852, and the matter was discussed in correspondence with Arkadi Osipovich Rosset, Civil Governor in Wilno (1811–1881).⁶ As a preliminary, the documents were copied and translated into Russian from their original languages: West Russian (noted: *translated from Slavonic*), Polish or Latin. The inventory was compiled at the same time: No. 306 in the PD section representing a copy written by Kaplanovski and certified by himself and Kobetski. This contains records for 30 documents listed in chronological order. The PD section contains translations of all the documents in the inventory, and some copied by Kaplanovski: PD Nos. 295, 93, 94 (copied), 3, 286, 11, 12, 13 (copied), 15, 14 (copied), 16, 20, 21, 22 (copied), 24, 25 (copied), 27, 28 (copied), 29, 49, 48 (copied), 65, 58, 61, 66, 65 (copied), 99, 120, 129, 140, 149, 167, 179, 181, 182, 191, 194, 196 (listed here as inventoried). Other materials seem to have been delivered at a later time, as some copies bear notes such as “*Original on parchment delivered ... in 1855 to the Civil Governor in Wilno*” (PD Nos. 30, 40).

On arrival in Wilno and Troki, A. S. Firkovich and G. S. Firkovich were involved in collecting material on the Karaites in Lithuania. They made several trips to the western provinces of Russia and the Kingdom of Poland. A Polish poet, Władysław Syrokomla (pen-name of Ludwik Kondratowich), in his book “Promenades in Lithuania”, wrote of his encounter with Firkovich in Troki in

Lithuania). The remaining items also relate to the Troki Jews or Karaites, with some copies deposited in the PD section (e.g. ZRA No. 8, PD No. 291, or ZRA No. 372, PD No. 68). This suggests a provenance from the Firkovich Collection for at least the majority. They appear to have been removed from the collection in the early 20th century. There are detailed records for most West Russian deeds, probably made in the library by an unidentified person. In the 1910s and 1920s, the old records were used to compile the ZRA inventory (ZRA No. 478), among others by V. G. Geiman. Records designated as from the Firkovich Collection are added on the back of inventory pages in letters; other items related to the Troki Karaites community are included in the main list.

⁴ Firkovich 1863: 11.

⁵ Firkovich 1863: 12.

⁶ Cf. F. 946, Op. 1, Personal Archive of A. S. Firkovich, National Library of Russia, No. 1053, l. 1.

1855.⁷ In a section on the Karaites in Lithuania, Syrokomla provides information on their history, describing their arrival in Lithuania, their life there and their relations with the Lithuanian and Polish government authorities. The information was derived both from Polish historians, namely Tadeusz Czacki, and A. S. Firkovich's research. Firkovich showed Syrokomla "extremely well-preserved early original privileges granted to Troki Karaites".⁸ Syrokomla dedicated a whole section to the documents, giving many details and long extracts from about a dozen.⁹ The available records suggest that the items are now kept by the NLR in the Firkovich Collection.

One may also suggest that some Troki community archives existed by the early 19th century, according to earlier lists of documents written in Polish between the 17th and 19th centuries (PD Nos. 278, 281 282 305). Some are numbered, others have short notes in Polish, Hebrew or Karaim.

Additional evidence of documents existing in the Troki Karaite community can be found in other sections of the Firkovich collection. Labelled *Evr. II A 1802* is a memorandum in Hebrew listing eleven documents and containing two post-scripts on the back: 1) *List of confirmations borrowed by members of the Wilno town holy community from the Troki holy community*, and 2) *List of our [i.e. the Troki community's] confirmations of relations between the householders of Wilno and the Troki holy community*:

- 1) Charter of Wilno *voyevod* [Albrecht Martinovich] Gastolt to the householders of Wilno concerning our unhampered trade and residence in Wilno, in the year [15]26.
- 2) Charter of Troki *voyevod* Constantine [Ivanovich Ostrozhsy] to the householders of Wilno on the same subject, of the same date.
- 3) Royal [probably meaning Sigismund I] Charter to the Bishop of Wilno and both *voyevods*, of judgement on the subject, in the year [15]29.

⁷ W. Syrokomla described his visit to Troki and his meeting with Firkovich: "... On leaving the hill and the St. Dominic monastery, we are in a street leading to the so-called Iron Bridge. The street is named Karaimszczizna because it accommodates the meeting house and the squalid shacks of the descendants of Israel. Two lakes enclose the street, with ruined pinewood huts on both sides. The roadway has been rather breaking carriages than protecting them from dirt, which is abundant here since very early (probably pagan, who knows?) days.

One such small and rickety cabin on the right-hand side of the lake was, at the time of our promenade in the Karaimszczizna, inhabited by the respected Karaite elder Abraham Firkovich, well known in the scholarly community as an archaeologist and member of learned societies, and also our colleague in the Wilno Archaeological Commission, who, as a junior hazzan of the Eupatorian Synagogue, visited Troki for research purposes." (Syrokomla 1857: 56–57).

⁸ Syrokomla 1857: 72, note 1.

⁹ Syrokomla 1857: 70–77. See also Bershads kij 1883: 178–183.

- 4) Royal Charter to the householders of Wilno by His grace on the same subject, in the year [15]46.
- 5) Extract made by a Wilno official concerning their not having received the Royal Charter to the householders of Wilno, the year [15]46.
- 6) Royal Charter, namely the "mandate" to the householders of Wilno on the same subject, in the year [15]47.
- 7) The second "mandate" in a foreign language, in the year [15]47.
- 8) The third "mandate", in the year [15]47.
- 9) Sealed privilege. Postscript: "by King Witold" [i.e. Witowt, Grand Duke of Lithuania].
- 10) Sealed copy of confirmation.
- 11) Two unsealed copies.

Charters 1 to 8 bear two-digit dates in Hebrew characters. The first two charters were issued respectively by Wilno *voyevod* Gastolt and Troki *voyevod* Constantine on the same date in "the year 26". While conversion from the Hebraic calendar (from the date of Creation or the age of conventions) provides no suitable names of *voyevods*, it was in the 1620s that Albrecht Martinovich Gastolt and Constantine Ivanovich Ostrozhsy held their respective offices in Wilno and Troki.¹⁰ This means that the list followed the Christian chronology of the original charters.

In addition to this document, the *Evr. II A* section contains some mid-17th-century letters from Wilno Jews to members of the Troki Karaite community, and messages from the Lithuanian *Vaad*¹¹ to the Wilno community, requesting the borrowed documents.¹²

The ZRA and PD sections contain documents of a legal nature relating to the period between the late 14th and 19th centuries, both originals and 17th to 19th-century copies. Some are represented as extracts from deed books. Public and private legal instruments in the Polish/Lithuanian state were generally entered in deed books: town ("kgrodski"), district, etc. deposited in the appropriate archives. The "extracts" from deed books were written copies officially certified and sealed. Some documents were only listed together with brief notes in so-called "registers" (*regesta*).¹³ The practice of copies certified by public notaries was not formalized until the second half of the 16th century. Since many archives were

¹⁰ Wolff 1885: 58, 73.

¹¹ The Lithuanian *vaad* or the *vaad* of the major Jewish communities in Lithuania was established as the central body of Jewish autonomy in Lithuania in 1623, a little later than the Vaad of the Four Lands in Poland (in the "Crown", also the Crown *vaad*), and existed until 1764 (see Vishnitzer).

¹² Cf. *Evr. II A* No. 1807.

¹³ One example is a mid-17th-century list of 20 documents (PD No. 305).

lost and many deed books damaged, some documents only survived as "extracts", which adds to their value. Besides, the notes made when entering a document in the book or issuing a copy can shed new light on the history of the documents.

As mentioned before, documents in Firkovich collection were written in West Russian, Latin or Polish. While 106 West Russian documents in the ZRA file date from the 16th century, there are only about 50 such in the PD section, mainly later copies from West Russian. Some such 17th to 19th-century copies were Latin transcriptions (i.e. PD Nos. 1, 8). Items in Latin generally represent documents issued by Church authorities. Also there are some charters in Latin, issued by King Stephen Bathori, and one document from the Polish town of Torun (PD No. 19). Interestingly, the mid-17th-century list of confirmations mentioned before (*Evr. II A 1802*) identified the language as "foreign", probably meaning Latin. Thus most 16th-century deeds were written in West Russian. In the 17th century, along with West Russian, many documents were written in Polish. The PD section contains 17th-century "extracts" with the main text written in Polish and notes on entry in deed books or a copy issued in West Russian (cf. PD No. 80 described below). All 18th-century documents are in Polish only.¹⁴

The overwhelming majority of the documents were written on paper but three charters are on parchment: PD Nos. 57, 106, and ZRA No. 207.

The documents can be primarily categorized as follows:

- 1) charters of Polish Kings, including confirmations of rights and franchises granted to the Troki Karaite community in the past by princes of Lithuania or Poland,
- 2) charters of *voyevods*,
- 3) charters of Roman Catholic authorities, related to the Troki Karaite community,
- 4) receipts of duties paid and other fiscal instruments,
- 5) court decisions,
- 6) private deeds.

There is a general predominance of documents mentioning the rights and franchises of the Troki Karaites.

¹⁴ In the late 17th century the Sejm decision made the Polish language mandatory in record-keeping. This corresponds to the fact that the latest document concerning the Troki community (ZRA No. 446) in West Russian is dated 12 May 1694.

1. Charters of Polish Kings

The first category listed above includes both copies and originals in the ZRA file and PD section. The earliest original document in the Firkovich collection is the charter of 23 July 1493, granted by Alexander, Grand Duke of Lithuania, which directs the *wójt*, burgomasters, councillors and householders of Kovno not to prevent the householders of Troki from trading in Kovno “by arshin and pound” (ZRA No. 8).¹⁵ Listed below are some other charters of Polish Kings or Lithuanian Grand Dukes:

By Alexander:

- of 28 May 1505, concerning collection of the *srebschizna* (ZRA No. 16).

By Sigismund I:

- of 24 April 1514, barring municipal duties for Christian residents of the Jewish part of the town paying duties together with the Jews (ZRA No. 23);
- of 1514, concerning consideration of the complaint made by one Isaac, a subject of Perekop Tsar Mengli-Girey, against the Troki Jew Sadok Khomich (ZRA No. 24);
- of 18 April 1522, concerning the *srebschizna* (ZRA No. 31);
- of 1528, barring the royal tax for Christians residing in the Jewish street (ZRA No. 32);
- of 4 September 1528, requesting the Troki Jews immediately to submit their Jewish privilege to the King who required it to pass judgement on a number of Jewish cases, seal traced, written in Wilno (ZRA No. 36);
- of 10 April 1529, barring tax for Christians residing close by the Jewish street (ZRA No. 40);
- of 23 August 1567, concerning the complaint made against the Governor of Troki by the *wójts* of Troki: Christian and Jewish (ZRA No. 207).

By Henry Valois:

- of 18 January 1575, summons to the *zemsy* (elected district) court on the case of non-payment of debt (ZRA No. 270).¹⁶

By Stephen Bathori:

- of 15 August 1576, charter to the Troki Jews concerning poll-tax due to be paid to a nobleman dispatched by the King (ZRA No. 278);
- of 10 June 1579, concerning privileges restored to the householders and Karaites of Troki, as granted by His predecessors (PD No. 26);
- of 27 July 1581, concerning delayed consideration of the complaint made by Troki commoners (PD No. 34);
- of 30 November 1582, charter to the residents of the city of Kovno, concerning their appearance in court together with the Jews of the Troki community on a complaint by the latter, and permission to continue their trade in the city of Kovno in the meantime (ZRA No. 296);
- of 1582, confirmation of privileges for residents of Troki (PD No. 37);

¹⁵ Published from the Public Library’s manuscript in: Rusaniv’ski 1965: 50–52, N 22. The PD section contains a 19th-century Russian translation of the charter (“translated from Slavonic”, No. 291); the text, however, indicates no relation to Troki Israelites proper (whether Jewish or Karaite).

¹⁶ The charter was issued from the office after Henry left for France.

- of 9 (?) December 1582, of the same content (PD No. 38); - of 1583(?), on taxes (PD No. 42);
- of 1593 (PD No. 43);
- of 4 April 1584, concerning the need for the clergy, nobility and gentry residing in Troki to contribute to the repair of the bridge over the lake, together with the householders and Jews of Troki (ZRA No. 297);
- of 14 April 1584, of the same content (ZRA No. 298).

By Sigismund III:

- of 20 May 1589, concerning provisional exemption from common annual tax (ZRA No. 308);
- of 1 August 1591, requesting statement to the King's deputies concerning the reasons for unpaid tax imposed on the Troki Jews by the Warsaw Sejm (ZRA No. 312);
- of 7 November 1611, privilege for the householders and Jews of Troki, the original charter, with the tie intact and remains of red wax seal (PD No. 57).

By Wladislaw IV:

- of (?) June 1633, *universal* to chief army officers on observance of the rights of the householders and Karaites of Troki (PD No. 69);
- of 20 November 1644 (PD No. 91);
- of 25 November 1644 (PD No. 59).

By Jan Kasimir:

- of 10 July 1665, confirmative charter of the Polish King, Jan Kasimir, for the rights and franchises granted by His predecessors to the residents of Troki, including Karaites (PD No. 106).

Among documents in this category, special mention should be made of the "extract from *kgrodski* books" representing confirmation by the Polish King, Sigismund I, in 1507 of the privileges of the Troki Jews granted by the Lithuanian Prince Witowt I on 24 June 1388 (*w Lucku w dzien narodzenia Jana Swiętego Chrzciela*) (PD No. 80). This privilege was the basic document for the subsequent legal status of both Rabbanite Jews and Karaites in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The original has not survived.

In a study of privileges granted to the Jews by Witowt in 1388, S. Lazutka and E. Gudavichius reported eight different revised copies in West Russian, Latin and Polish. In seven cases the text was incorporated into a charter of confirmation issued by Sigismund I in 1507. The revisions differ in particular by their "addressees": the Sigismund I confirmation was granted on the request of Jews in Brest, Troki, Grodno, Lutsk, Vladimir and other communities in the Grand Duchy, while the actual Witowt privilege either related to the Jews of Brest or Troki, or to no particular community, in words such as "all the Jews mentioned above". One Polish-language revision is only known as published by the historian M. Baliński in 1836.¹⁷ This revision is of particular interest because it addresses the "Troki" Jews; it is also dated the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (24 June

¹⁷ Baliński 1836: 225-233; Lazutka & Gudavichius 1993.

1388), i.e. a week earlier than all other revisions (“on the eighth day of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist” – 1 July 1388). S. A. Bershadskij suggested that the text published by M. Baliński was an independent document specially issued for the Troki Karaites. In 1855 A. S. Firkovich showed W. Syrokomla the Witowt privilege “w ekstrakcie”, i.e. as an extract. The fragments quoted suggest that the Polish-language text was the revision published by M. Baliński. This is the document currently in the NLR. We emphasize that Firkovich gave special consideration to the fact that Witowt granted his privilege to the Troki Karaites a week earlier than to the Jewish community of Brest.¹⁸ As indicated before, until the present time this revision has been known only from the 1836 publication from an unidentified source, so that a closer examination of the manuscript from the Firkovich collection would seem appropriate.

The document represents a book of four sheets of paper, with two narrow strips of parchment strengthening the sewing outside and inside. The size is 33 x 21 cm. The water-mark: “Jester head with five bells”.¹⁹ Room is left for the seal but the seal itself is missing. Notes of the privileged entered in the town registers of the Troki district and of the “extract” issued for the Troki Karaite *wójt* Niskan Eskovich are written in 17th-century cursive West Russian; the privilege proper and Sigismund I confirmation are in Polish. Spelling particulars in the Polish text (the use of capital or small letters, *ij* for *y*) correspond to the published version;²⁰ in addition, the words *proszac abysmy* (‘request that we’) italicized in Baliński’s version are almost totally illegible in the NLR item, which suggests that M.

¹⁸ Syrokomla 1857: 68–69. On the revised privilege published by M. Baliński see Bershadskij 1883: 178–183; Lazutka & Gudavichius 1993: 24–26. Gessen (1910: 569) maintains that, by means of forgery, an attempt was made to prove that Witowt first granted his privilege to the Troki Karaites. The opinion that Witowt did not grant privileges to the Troki Karaites in 1388 is supported by the fact that Troki was not under his rule at that time; moreover, Karaites settled there at a later date. Of course, the Karaite privilege could have been granted by Witowt later. The NLR has a postscript copied by Firkovich in Troki from an old manuscript (on the other hand, the authenticity of this document is questionable). It says: “Two years after the migration of our forefathers from the Eastern lands from the town of Solhat to Troki in 5160/1400 R. Samuel, friend of my father Simha Murza, son of R. Moshe, was born; he grew to be an important person and in 5216/1456 he held the rank of captain at the court of our King Kasimir Yagellon. He also remembered his people and obtained the King’s confirmation for the privileges granted them by the pious prince Witowt.” (Documents in the 1st Firkovich collection. Section II, documents from Poland, No. 58.)

The earliest Latin copy of the privilege available in the Crown Register (Kasimir reigned some time between the 1450s and 1470s) was addressed to the Brest community, the date of issue indicated as the Nativity of St. John the Baptist. In 1441 Kasimir granted the Troki Karaites the privilege of Magdeburg Law; he could have confirmed the Witowt privilege in the same year or later. According to Mann (1935: 1178–1181), the date 1456/5216 could mean 1441/5201; see also Neubauer 1866: 70–71, 141.

¹⁹ The water-mark is similar to that in the picture book, Djanova 1997: N 69 (1648–49).

²⁰ On this see Lazutka & Gudavichius 1993: 26.

Baliński may have used our document. In a very similar or even the same hand is written the Polish-language list or register of documents dating from the 17th century (PD No. 305). Since the notes in West Russian have never been published to date, the full version is provided below:²¹

Быпис с книг кгородских
воеводства троцкого

Лета от нарожения Сына Божого тисеча шестсот
трыдцать девятого мца апрыля семого дня

Ха враде кгородском троцком передо мною Енохом Колендою подвоеводой троцким постаховивъше се очевисто войт жыдов збору троцкого пан Юзеф Зубицкий тую копию подавшы просиль абы до книг кгородских троцких вписана была которую вписуючи в книги слово от слова так се в собе мает [followed by Sigismund I confirmation and Witowt privilege in Polish] / Которая копия за покладанем и акътыкованем верхъ мененой особы ест до книг кгородских троцких уписана с которых и сей выпис под моею върадовую печатью войту збору троцкого Нисану Есковичу ест выдан Писано у Троках²²

Extract from the municipal register
of the Voivode's Office of Troki

In the year 1639 after the birth of the Son of God, April 7th

In the municipal office of Troki, having presented this certificate before me, Henoch Kolenda, the Sub-Voivode (Lieutenant Governor) of Troki, Pan Yuzef Zubitski, the voit of the assembly of the Jews of Troki, having given this copy, asked it to be written into the municipal records of Troki, which was written word by word as well as in itself [] A copy of which, after the above-mentioned person had been introduced and registered into the municipal register of Troki, from which also this extract was taken, underneath provided with my official stamp, was given to Nissan Yeskovich, the voit of the assembly of Troki. Written at Troki.²³

The ZRA file also includes another "extract" containing almost the whole of Witowt's privilege in West Russian (ZRA No. 372, copied by Kaplanovsky, PD No. 68). The document describes how on 20 August 1629 a Jew of Wilno named Michel Faltelevich, on behalf of himself and all the other Jews of Wilno, recorded in the register of the town of Troki privileges for the Jews of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from Polish Kings and Lithuanian Grand Dukes, namely: 1) Sigismund I, granted in Melnik in 1507, confirming the privilege of Lithuanian Jews issued by Grand Duke Witowt; 2) Sigismund I, granted in Wilno this 2nd March 7022 (1514), confirming the privilege of Lithuanian Jews issued by Grand Duke Alexander, exempting the Jews from military service and guarantee in court; 3)

²¹ Original spelling and punctuation, and upper-case letters, preserved wherever possible.

²² The content of this note is described in Baliulis, Mikulionis & Miškinis 1991: 45.

²³ Thanks to Harry Halén for the translation.

extract from the Brest court registers of 16 May 1616, an authentic charter of King Sigismund III granted in Krakow this 1st February 1587, confirming all the privileges of Lithuanian Jews granted by the Kings and Grand Dukes: Kasimir the Great, Ludovic of Hungary, Jagello, Witowt, Sigismund, Wladislaw III, Kasimir, Jan Albrecht, Alexander, Sigismund II August, Henry Valois and Stephen Bathori. The extract has no seal, only the signature of the clerk, Enoch Kolenda (who subsequently, as Troki sub-*voyevod*, entered in the deed books the Witowt privilege described above, PD No. 80).

Among the deeds from Polish Kings is an 18th-century copy of a letter patent from Sigismund I, dated 5 March 1507, to the Troki Karaites.²⁴ The latter were granted the right of independent jurisdiction in all legal cases related to Karaites alone. These were to be judged by their elected *wójt*, the governor never interfering. In addition, the charter granted Karaites exemption from certain taxes, billeting, customs duties, and the right of independent building in Troki (e.g. a wax-mill). The charter issued by Sigismund I in August 1518 explained in addition that the Governor of Troki would intervene in litigation between Karaites only in cases involving a Christian (PD No. 3). The charter of privilege issued by Sigismund I was confirmed by subsequent Polish Kings. Some documents indicate repeated infringements of rights established for the Karaites, leading to trials (cf. PD No. 12 (June 1560): of barred billeting for Troki Karaites).

Multiple copies of charters of privilege granted to the Karaites by Polish Kings indicate, in our opinion, that they often had to defend their rights and franchises against local authorities in court. Characteristically, after the Lithuanian lands of the former Rzecz Pospolita were annexed by Russia, the Troki Karaites appealed to the Russian Emperor, requesting rehabilitation of the privileges granted by the Polish Kings (the PD section includes one such appeal to Alexander I of 4 November 1818, No. 279).

2. Charters of *voyevods*

The earliest original charter in the PD section, issued by the Troki *voyevod*, is the Stephen Koributovich "act" of 23 October 1581 written in Polish (No. 36). Among the *universalia* from the Troki *voyevods* there are some documents confirming the *wójts* elected by the Troki Karaites; the earliest of them is the "act" from the Troki *voyevod* Prince Nicholas Radziwiłł, confirming the appointment of

²⁴ This charter (PD No. 1), like the two others (PD Nos. 2 and 24), was published on the basis of the originals on parchment in *Sobranie drevnih gramot i aktov gorodov Wilno, Kovno i Trok* 1843, V. 2, Nos. 68, 69, 75.

Abraham Danilovich as Troki Karaite *wójt* (PD No. 1, August 1553, copy). As can be seen from documents in this section, governors of Troki were also involved in cases where Karaites were dissatisfied with their *wójts*. One example is the charter from the Troki *voyevod* Stephen Andreevich Zbarazhski to Lukash Sologub, the governor of Troki, of 3 June 1568, re-establishing the authority of Troki Karaite *wójt* (PD No. 14).

3. Charters of Roman Catholic authorities

Documents from Roman Catholic authorities are few in number. These are two charters from Johan Bishop of Wilno "Ex Ducibus Lithuaniae", natural son of King Sigismund I²⁵, of 15 October 1524 (PD No. 5) and 25 October 1524 (PD No. 6) – the earliest original documents in the PD section; charter from the Dean of Wilno, Johan Andrey de Walentinis, forwarded to Troki, of 20 July 1534 (PD No. 323); charter from the Bishop of Wilno, Jerzy Radzwill, of 19 October 1581 (PD No. 35); and two charters from Ignacy, Bishop of Wilno, of 22 October 1765 (PD No. 242) and 29 October 1765 (PD No. 243). All are in Latin (excluding the Polish-language No. 35), sealed and signed.

4. Receipts of duties paid and other fiscal instruments

One example of taxation instruments is the "kwit" issued by the *zemski podskarbi* (district fiscal authority) of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, *pan* Gornostai, to acknowledge the revenue from Troki Jews for 1545. It was issued in Wilno, on 8 July 1546 (ZRA No. 130, cf. similar receipts Nos. 137, 140, 170). An assessment receipt of poll-tax issued in 1712 has parallel texts in Polish and Hebrew (PD No. 322).

5. Court decisions

In the category of "court decisions", there is an extract from Troki town court registers of 12 May 1694 (the latest original document in West Russian): the contestation between Troki Jews and Dominican monks for the land over Jewish tombs in Troki. This had been the property of *pan* Jan Pavlovich Pashtse who sold it to Troki Jew Daniil Moiseevich. The Dominican prior disputed the Jewish title, arguing that Jan Pashtse's widow sold it after his death. The *uryad grodski* (town district) decided in favour of the Jews (ZRA No. 446).

²⁵ See Ochmański 1972: 16.

6. Private deeds

Documents of actual Karaite origin are few in number, representing certificates of contracts between Karaites, mainly of the 18th and 19th centuries. Some have private messages in Hebrew on the reverse.²⁶

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A brief review of chartered privileges granted to the Karaites by the Polish Kings, describing the major rights established by the charters, was compiled by G. S. Firkovich.²⁷ Z. A. Firkovich, son of A. S. Firkovich, published a collection of Lithuanian/Polish charters, Crimean Tatar *yarlyks* (edicts), ukases and decisions of Russian government authorities regarding the Karaites.²⁸ The collection has a long introductory article describing the history of the subject, written by V. D. Smirnov, Professor at St. Petersburg University. The documents are published together with their Russian translations. The Crimean Tatar *yarlyks* are generally taken from collections in the Public Library; as for Polish and Lithuanian documents, while the Firkovich collection contains some copies, the compiler preferred to consult available contemporary publications from other archives.

The NLR's materials of Lithuanian provenance were examined both by Russian and foreign scholars of Jewish and Karaite history. A. Neubauer, in his extensive study describing Karaite history in Poland and Lithuania, quoted long passages from Hebrew documents in the Firkovich collection; he also mentioned Karaite privileges granted by the Lithuanian authorities, even though apparently omitting relevant collections in the Imperial Public Library.²⁹ The same is true with regard to Ju. I. Gessen's study "Troki Karaites opposing the Jews" mentioned above.

Examination and description of deeds and charters in the Imperial Public Library's collection was undertaken by S. A. Bershadski. He referred to our collection in "Lithuanian Jews", and in 1882 published "Documents and registers

²⁶ The authors would like to thank the head of the Old Russian Manuscripts group in the Manuscript Division of the National Library of Russia (NLR) V. M. Zagrebin, and S. G. Zhemaitis and P. A. Medvedev, members of the MD staff, for their assistance in documentary research and for providing valuable bibliographical guidance.

²⁷ G. S. Firkovich, "A brief review of charters from Polish Kings and other instruments issued by Polish and Lithuanian government authorities and bodies between the 15th and 18th century, concerning privileges for Karaites" (F. 946. Firkovich archives, No. 833).

²⁸ Firkovich 1890.

²⁹ Neubauer 1866: 68–97.

towards the history of Lithuanian Jews" in two volumes.³⁰ Volume Three of "Russian Jewish Archives", prepared by Bershadskij and published posthumously, contains four charters from the Firkovich collection.³¹ The Jewish Historical and Ethnographical Society intended publication of documents prepared by S. A. Bershadski, including those from the Imperial Public Library's manuscripts, as an extension of "Russian Jewish Archives". A summary of the documents is given in an article on S. A. Bershadskij in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*.³² Regretfully, the work was not completed. Materials of the Jewish Historical and Ethnographical Society are now in Kiev, where the Bershadskij papers probably are.³³ Two documents in the PD section have his detailed description (No. 1, L. 4 and No. 8, L. 3).

The documents are of interest both for the history of the Karaites and Jews in Lithuania, and for the history of relations between the Rzecz Pospolita and Russia. Some documents in the section date back to the Livonian War – for instance, the charter issued by the Polish King Stephen Bathori of 27 July 1581 concerning the suspended consideration (due to the war against the Muscovite prince) of the complaint made by Troki merchants, both Christian and Jewish, about Piotr Grabovski, a tenant of the Poldlyashski *myt* (PD No. 34).³⁴

This brief review of documents in the PD section and the ZRA file demonstrates the rich instrumental content (both copied and original) relating to the Karaite community in the town of Troki during at least three centuries. The materials would be useful in evaluation of relations between civil and church authorities in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Karaites and Jews, in studies of everyday Karaite life, in compiling lists of government authorities (e.g. *wójt*s) in the community, and in genealogical research, in particular when using other mate-

³⁰ Bershadskij 1882.

³¹ Russian Jewish Archives, III (1903), p. 86, No. 58 (ZRA No. 18); pp. 118–120, No. 95 (ZRA No. 23); pp. 190–191, No. 144 (ZRA No. 40); pp. 243–244, No. 171 (ZRA No. 205).

³² Goldstejn, s.a. This article contains classification of documents currently prepared for publication, in general matching the A. S. Firkovich collection and giving an idea of the nature of official and private deeds used among the Jews and Karaites in Lithuania and Poland. For a review of other archives containing materials relating to the Jews and Karaites in the western provinces of the former Russian Empire and Poland see the following articles in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia*: S. Dubnov, "Arhivy" ('Archives'), V. 3, pp. 233–235; and M. Balaban, S. Dubnov & Ju. Gessen, "Akty istoricheskie" ('Historical deeds'), V. 1, pp. 670–688.

³³ Information as to the current location of Jewish Historical and Ethnographical Society materials was kindly provided by V. E. Kelner and V. L. Vikhnovich.

³⁴ No. 34 contains the original Latin text of the charter (18th century copy in Polish, PD No. 33). The *Zbiór dawnych dyplomatów i aktów miast: Wilna, Kowna, Trok, prawosławnych monastyrów, cerkwi i w różnych sprawach*, II (1843), pp. 178–179; No. 79, contains the charter published from the original Latin, with the King giving judgement in favour of Troki householders.

rials in the Firkovich collection, or other Russian or foreign archives. They can also clarify some aspects of the history of the Duchy and its adjacent states.

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