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## BALTIC ARCHIVAL MATERIALS ON SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY TRADE

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This paper endeavors to survey the main holdings of Baltic archives pertaining to the evolution of international trade in the region during the seventeenth century. The materials have been utilized by the author to study the evolution of Russian transit trade in the Baltic region. The numbers in brackets refer to individual collections at the archives under review.

The Baltic archives contain a wealth of materials on early modern trade relations, much of it of general interest to European economic historians of the period. Not only is there a broad range of diplomatic and commercial correspondence, as well as customs records, pertaining to the activities of northern and west European merchants in the Baltic region, but many of the sources are, moreover, particularly valuable to Russian historians. Over the centuries, the customs records for Russia's port and border cities have been reduced to a small number of individual volumes. No complete seventeenth-century customs books survive for the port of Arkhangelsk which was Russia's only major port at a time and the books—including fragments—for the northwestern centers of Novgorod and Pskov can be counted with the fingers of one hand. In contrast, the often continuous series of customs data for the Baltic cities can provide us with a clear picture of the evolution of Russia's dealings with foreign merchants in the region which consistently accounted for a significant proportion of Russia's foreign trade and, at times, eclipsed Arkhangelsk altogether, with important repercussions for Russian foreign and military policy.

The focus of this study is on the holdings of the main archival collections in the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The institutions in question are the Lithuanian State Historical Archive (*Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas*), as well as the manuscript collections of the Vilnius University Library and the library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in Vilnius; the Latvian State Historical Archive (*Latvijas valsts vēstures arhīvs*) and the manuscripts collections of the Academic Library in Riga; the Estonian History Archive (*Eesti Ajalooarhiiv*) in Tartu, and the Tallinn City Archive (*Tallinna Linnaarhiiv*) in the Estonian capital. In addition, the relevant collections of the Swedish

National Archive (*Riksarkivet*) in Stockholm will be discussed in some detail, and some references will be made also to the Danish National Archive (*Rigsarkivet*) in Copenhagen as well as the Finnish National Archive (*Kansallisarkisto -- Riksarkivet*) in Helsinki. As a legacy of Sweden's great power days, which left Stockholm in control of Estonia and Livonia (roughly today's Latvian landscape of Vidzeme), the Stockholm collections have large quantities of documents pertaining to Riga, Reval (Est. Tallinn), and Narva, as well as the Swedish-established port of Nyen in the Neva estuary, the predecessor of St Petersburg.

The rich holdings of the Baltic and Scandinavian archives have generated a certain amount of descriptive secondary works, of which only the most important ones can be discussed below. The three Baltic state historical archives each have published more or less detailed catalogues of their holding with brief description of the main collections. The most up-to-date and detailed of these is by D. Butėnas for the Lithuanian archive.<sup>1</sup> The collections of the Swedish National Archive are listed on CD-ROM and a series of books is being published, the most relevant volume here being on the *Kammararkivet*.<sup>2</sup> The relevant holdings of the Tallinn City Archive were catalogued, in places somewhat inaccurately, by G. von Hansen and O. Greiffenhagen in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup>

The collections of the Vilnius archives, while voluminous and extremely important in establishing a clear picture of the trade relations in the Polish-Lithuanian area, are the most fragmentary for the Baltic area. Centuries of war and fires have eliminated a once-impressive collection of customs records for the Lithuanian and Belarusan commercial centers and reduced it to a handful of individual volumes, all of them dating from the beginning of the seventeenth century. A brief description of the volumes, which are now kept in the Manuscript Division of the Vilnius University Library (f. 4 Inventorių), is available from a brief survey article by V.I. Meleshko.<sup>4</sup> The most valuable of the volumes to a Russian historian are two complete volumes for Grodno and one for Brest Litovsk (Pol. Brześć), since they are among the few concrete quantitative sources we possess on the character of the much discussed but little studied land route between Russia and Central Europe. The Belarusan merchants of, above all, Mogilev (Pol. Mohylew, Bel. Mohiliaŭ), but also Minsk and Slutsk (Pol. Sluck), were the key intermediaries of this exchange, which mainly involved Russian furs and pelts. Mogilev merchants acquired these goods either in Smolensk (or Viazma during the years when Smolensk was in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) or from Muscovite merchants who visited the eastern Belarusan commercial centers. The three volumes record the annual trips of the Belarusan merchants to the great Polish fairs of Toruń, Lublin, and Gniezno. However, a more comprehensive

assessment of the land route has to incorporate the holdings of the Russian Archive of Old Documents (*Rossiiskii Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov*) in Moscow, which has several customs books for Viazma and Smolensk in the second half of the century. Description of these are available in studies by K.G. Mitiaev<sup>5</sup> and A.V. Dyomkin.<sup>6</sup> Concrete examples of these documents are included in a 1972 collection.<sup>7</sup>

The collection of the Vilnius University Library also includes individual volumes on the customs at Vilnius (Pol. Wilno), Kaunas (Pol. Kowno), and Jurbarkas, which shed light on the interaction between the port of Königsberg and its Belarusan and even Muscovite hinterland. Additional information on this can be gleaned from the Memel (Lith. Klaipėda) and Königsberg records in the Prussian State Archive in Berlin (*Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz*) which have been used by K. Forstreuter in his study of trade in the Memel (Lith. Nemunas) River basin.<sup>8</sup> A volume for Polotsk (Pol. Połock) illuminates the relationship between Belarus and Riga, mainly in Lithuanian-Belarusan goods that were hauled on the important river route of the Düna (Latv. Daugava). An unfortunate gap in the collection is the almost complete lack of data on the trade of Vilnius which was, after Mogilev, the most important commercial center in the Lithuanian lands with old established ties with Russia.

The manuscript collections of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences include a variety of descriptions of Belarusan and Lithuanian cities in the seventeenth centuries, as well as various kinds of correspondence, and were catalogued in a relatively systematic and detailed fashion during the tsarist period (f. 16-18, Rankraščių kolekcijos B2-B4). The library also possesses a valuable *Borussica* (f. 15) collection of manuscripts that were evacuated from the Königsberg University library at the close of World War II. The collection consists of a wide array of various kinds of manuscripts that deal mainly with Eastern Prussia, some of them with the economic conditions there, as well as with the eastern trade of the region.

The Lithuanian State Historical Archive has a large collection of economic data from the seventeenth century, as well as microfilms of related collections elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. The documents do not tend to deal directly with trade but many of them make important references to commercial issues. The two most important collections of interest are the so called Old Documents (*Senieji aktai*), which contain essentially uninterrupted series of court records for all the main Lithuanian cities in the seventeenth century, and the so called *Lietuvos Metrika* (f. 1519), which is only available on microfilm, the originals still being kept in Moscow. *LM* contains a large quantity of official government decrees and documents and gives a very good idea of the way the Lithuanian lands were administered in the seventeenth century. Finally, the archive contains

a large volume of all manner of data on the economic and other activities of notable Lithuanian families, such as the Radziwiłłs (f.1280) and the Sapiehas (f. 1292). Some of the documents mentioned here were reprinted in the 19th and early 20th centuries in large collections called *Arkheograficheskii sbornik dokumentov, otnosiashchikhsia k istorii severo-zapadnoi Rusi* and *Akty, izdavaemye Vilenskoiu Arkheograficheskoiu Kommissieiu*, both published in Vilnius.

The collections of the Latvian State Historical Archive are described in some detail by the former director of the institution, Georgs Jenšs<sup>9</sup> who also wrote three seminal studies on the trade of Riga in the seventeenth century,<sup>10</sup> mainly on the basis of the Riga collections. More up-to-date descriptions of the holdings of the Riga archives are contained in the opening chapter of V.V. Doroshenko's history of Riga's trade.<sup>11</sup> In spite of unfortunate instances of documents missing or being destroyed over the centuries, the Riga archive still possesses a remarkably large collection of extremely valuable documents on the city's trade with Muscovy. These are currently divided, at times somewhat illogically, between the main archive in Pārdaugava and the old historical City Archive in the Old City, now a branch of the state archive, some of whose holdings have been moved across the river.

The holdings of the Latvian State Historical Archives range from concrete customs records to enormous collections of official and private correspondence. The customs records are held as a rule at the former City Archive and cover the Swedish period, starting in the 1630s (f. 1744). Unfortunately, the ravages of time have led to a complete disappearance of such data for the pre-1621 period of Polish-Lithuanian rule. The system of bookkeeping changed in the course of the seventeenth century, but we are left with essentially two sets of books on Riga's exports. The first one of these is a set of twenty-five volumes for the 1637-1681 period containing both *Akzis* books and less polished *Memorials*, recording the payment of this key export and import duty, as well as total quantities imported and exported. The books contain detailed descriptions of all goods traded at Riga but, unfortunately, do not specifically identify Muscovite goods, which are very often identical with Lithuanian-Belarusan goods. The second set of *Akzis* books, for the 1684-1701 period, consists of thirty separate volumes on imports and 23 export books. The structure of the books is different from the first set as they list the holdings of each ship, the first set being constructed by the type of goods. However, they do not make the identification of Muscovite goods any easier. Indeed, it appears that strictly Muscovite wares are excluded from these records because of a separate system of bookkeeping for the Muscovite *Oktroi* duty that was paid on Muscovite imports. The *Oktroi* records have all been lost.

However, the large *Akzis* volumes often contain summaries of Riga's imports and exports and can thus be used to trace the evolution of the commercial significance of the city in the course of the seventeenth century, as has been done by E. Dunsdorfs.<sup>12</sup> Many of the Riga customs books exist in the original or as copies at the Swedish National Archives, which also has a large number of summaries of exports for years for which complete customs books have been lost. Some *Akzis* books are held at the Estonian Historical Archives in Tartu (f. 278). The Swedish National Archive also has some important estimates of Muscovite exports coming under the *Oktroi* duty in the second half of the century and offer some of the few precise quantitative estimates of Riga's trade with northwestern Russia, especially the city of Pskov, the traditional center of Riga's Russian hinterland. Some of these have been used by S. Troebst.<sup>13</sup>

The Riga archive has some important data on Riga's trade with Smolensk, which came under Muscovite control in the 1650s and became an important supplier of many key naval stores, especially hemp, potash, and timber, for the Western merchants trading in Riga. This area fell into Riga's hinterland because of its vicinity to the upper reaches of the Dūna, which offered an obvious and cheap transport route and encouraged Russians to invest in the economic development of the region with a view to selling the goods in Riga. The Riga archive has one complete list of river barges reaching the city, which includes boats from Smolensk, but there are also several documents that shed light on the rapid expansion of this trade and the magnitude it had reached before the outbreak of the Great Northern War. This data, however, has to be complemented with three such lists of barges held in Stockholm (*Livonica* II), as well as one in Tartu (f. 278).

The most important sources on Riga's eastern ties in the Polish period are held in a unique and valuable manuscript collection called *Muscovitica-Ruthenica* (f. 673, apr. 3), which consists mainly of official correspondence and extends far beyond the opening decades of the century. This collection includes some of the best descriptions of the mechanics of Riga's eastern trade. Additional information can be found in the archive of the Livonian Governors-General (f. 7349) which, again, tends to focus on official correspondence. Among these letters, however, there are several to and from the Russian administrator and economic thinker Afanasii L. Ordin-Nashchokin who, during the Russian invasion of Livonia in the 1650s, became briefly the *voevoda* of Kokenhausen (Latv. Koknese) and made a key contribution to the development of Russian trade and economic ideology. Some of these documents are today held at the Prussian State Archive in Berlin. Moreover, while the Riga collection is very large and, on the whole, well preserved, many important documents have found their

way into the Swedish National Archive in Stockholm. Most of these are described by E. Dunsdorfs.<sup>14</sup>

Another valuable collection of data in Riga is the Manuscript Division of the Academic Library (*Akadēmiskā Bibliotēka*) whose holdings include Johann Christian Brotze's *Livonica*, a vast (twenty-seven thick volumes) collection of manuscripts which were written in the 18th century but also describe earlier periods. Among other things, Brotze copied customs data that has subsequently been lost. The library also has a complete set of a nineteenth-century newspaper, *Rigaer Stadt-Blätter*, which contained numerous articles on Riga's seventeenth century trade, some of which are also based on subsequently lost documents. V. Pāvulāns in his works makes references to the paper,<sup>15</sup> of which another rare complete set exists in Widener Library at Harvard.

The holdings of the Estonian Historical Archives in Tartu have not recently been systematically catalogued beyond a listing of the collections,<sup>16</sup> although some older descriptions of individual divisions do exist.<sup>17</sup> The archive has numerous large collections that are crucial for a detailed study of early modern trade relations in the Baltic. Specifically, since the transfer of the surviving holdings of the Narva City Archive to Tartu during World War II, the Historical Archive possesses a wealth of data on the history of this important Estonian port. Among other things, the archive has a large collections of protocols of the City Council, as well as local court records, many of which deal directly with the activities of Russian merchants.<sup>18</sup>

The collection of the Narva Magistrate (f. 1646) also contains a number of complete customs records from the seventeenth century. In addition to the volumes from the 1610s, which have been studied in detail by H. Piirimäe,<sup>19</sup> there are a number of volumes from the 2nd half of the century, many of which have similarly been the subject of Piirimäe's studies.<sup>20</sup> However, the chaotic state of the Narva collection until recently caused several additional volumes to be rediscovered only a couple of years ago.<sup>21</sup> Judging by the prewar work of the former archivist of the Narva City Archive, Arnold Soom, all the Narva customs books held at the archive have now been relocated, although the last volume from 1699 is incomplete.

The Tartu materials can be complemented by an equally sizeable array of Narva customs data held at the Swedish National Archive (Östersjöprovinsernas tull- och licenträkenskaper). The Stockholm collections contain a large number of volumes from the first half of the century, as well as some summaries of Narva's exports in the second half of the century. There is additionally a duplicate of the Tartu volume of the 1679 customs book. The Stockholm collections are of crucial importance

in gaining a more complete understanding of Narva's evolution in the early modern period, especially at the opening of the seventeenth century, in as much as Piirimäe's work, relying entirely on data from the 1610s, has left us with a seriously incomplete picture of the importance of this eastern Estonian port.

A more complete series of customs data for Narva can be assembled from two additional collections, viz. the archive of the *Novgorodfahrer* at the Lübeck City Archive (*Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck*) and the records of the Sound customs chamber held at the National Archives in Copenhagen. Given the great importance of the Lübeckers—who had bases in Novgorod and Pskov—in Narva's trade, as well as the growing significance of long-distance trade between Narva, on the one hand, and Amsterdam and London, as well as other English and Dutch cities, on the other, the combination of the two well-preserved sources, gives us a very good idea of the evolution of Narva's trade in years not covered by the surviving Narva customs records. The only missing element is trade by Swedish (including Estonian and Finnish) boatmen and traders within the confines of Sweden. However, while this element increases in importance towards the end of the century, it consistently accounts for a relatively small and rather consistent (there are no significant fluctuations beyond the gradual secular increase) proportion of Narva's overall trade and an even smaller share of the trade in Muscovite goods. Swedish boats were the ones mainly responsible for transporting goods produced in the Swedish-controlled part of Ingermanland and Estonia, and the only Muscovite goods that played a significant role in the internal trade of the Kingdom were, as a rule, small handicrafts—gloves, boots, lashes, etc.—as well as rather significant quantities of low-quality linen cloth which was not competitive on the southern Baltic and West European markets but found a steady demand among the poorer population of Sweden and Finland. Although the role of the local boatmen increased toward the end of the century and the small merchants of Björkö (Finn. Koivisto) off the coast of Viborg (Finn. Viipuri) assumed an especially key intermediary role in the transit trade between the Eastern Gulf of Finland and Stockholm, they did not make much of a dent in Dutch, Lübeck, and English-driven trade in Muscovite naval stores and luxury goods.

The City Archive of Tallinn possesses one of the most remarkable collections of seventeenth-century customs records, not only in the Baltic region, but in Europe more generally. The customs records for seventeenth-century Reval have been preserved with few gaps in a way that allows for a detailed assessment of the role of the city as a center of international trade. The collections in Tallinn contain all the surviving *Portorium* books, starting in 1617, the year of the Stolbovo peace treaty (f.

230, n. 1 A.g.). A fairly comprehensive analysis of the first six volumes, for the years 1617-24, was recently undertaken by W.-R. Rühle,<sup>22</sup> although his work still focusses only on international shipping, thus including the admittedly more modest internal boat traffic. Otherwise, however, the vast and unique collection has not been subjected to systematic study. The Tallinn customs books consist of two parts for each year, one containing the domestic vessels from Reval itself, Finland, and Sweden, the other covering international shipping. The two are sometimes bound together but often exist in two separate volumes. The detailed records point to a tendency by the existing literature to underestimate the role of Reval as a transit point for Muscovite goods, especially in the final decades of the century. They also reveal the growing importance of domestic shipping, boosted by the emergence of a local merchant fleet, a trend not revealed either by the Sound or the Lübeck records. Many of the Tallinn customs books appear to be "first drafts," working documents rather than neatly-written final copies which may, in fact, have been sent off to Stockholm, although they certainly have not survived to this day. Very often, entries have been crossed out or amended and sometimes they are accompanied by rough calculations or added explanations on the margins. However, there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the Tallinn data, and although the handwriting occasionally poses minor difficulties, the books are almost invariably well preserved and amenable even to statistical analysis.

The biggest problems with the Tallinn records pertain to the identification of the provenance of the city's exports. While the seventeenth-century customs officials left several clues by frequently denoting export goods as "Livonian," "Russian," or "Finnish," this was by no means a consistent policy. Muscovite goods that were brought to Reval by non-Russians, often via Narva or Dorpat (Est. Tartu), tended to lose their "Russian" designation. The identification problem is made more difficult by the fact that, already by the seventeenth century, Reval, because of the geographical advantages of Narva and Nyen, had been reduced to a port of secondary importance in Russian trade. Thus many of the exports of Reval were actually produced locally, yet they were often perfect substitutes for Muscovite wares. Nonetheless, the task of identification is made easier by A. Soom's masterful study on Estonian agriculture in the seventeenth century<sup>23</sup> and a study of fluctuations in overall export volumes, aided by a comparison with concurrent trends in Narva and Nyen. While Reval was not the primary destination of exporters of Russian goods, it experienced periods of boom at times when the Baltic ports were particularly successful in diverting Russian trade away from Arkhangelsk. Thus, Reval served as an accurate indicator of the overall state of Russian-Baltic trade and large increases in exports of naval stores, leather, and furs,

were due to a revival in Reval's eastern trade and not explicable by variations in local production.

Reval's remarkable collection of customs data can be further complemented by the holdings of the Swedish National Archive and the Estonian Historical Archive (f. 1, n. 1), both of which have several volumes of so call *Pfundzoll* books from the early part of the century. These collections shed light on a little-studied period of Reval's history and, while E. Blumfeldt<sup>24</sup> analyzed many of the books in the Collection of the Estonian Governors General in Tartu, the Stockholm volumes are unique in revealing the economic flourishing of Reval at the beginning of the century and its changing fortunes in the pre-Stolbovo years.

In addition to its wealth of customs data, the Tallinn archive also possesses a remarkable collection of official and private correspondence. The records of several important Reval merchants have survived to this day, as have thousands of pages of more or less official accounts of Reval's trade and diplomatic relations. In addition, there is a well-preserved series of the proceedings of the City Council.

The economic history of the fourth major commercial center on the eastern shore of the Baltic, the city of Nyen, while fascinating and important, is much more difficult to reconstruct with the surviving data. As has been argued by I.P. Shaskolskii, it seems reasonable to assume that the bulk of the Magistrate's archive was in fact destroyed during the Great Northern War.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, a certain amount of both statistical and other types of data remain, scattered around the archives of the Baltic region. Some of this has been analyzed at various times by C. von Bonsdorff<sup>26</sup> and I.P. Shaskolskii.<sup>27</sup>

There is only one complete customs book, for the year 1679, which has survived to this day and is now kept at the Swedish National Archive. Its rarity naturally makes the book an extremely valuable document for the student of Russian and Swedish trade in the seventeenth century. The document provides one with a detailed description of the goods traded at Nyen, as well as information on the background of the merchants. It points to the dramatic increase in Nyen's significance as a transit port in the second half of the seventeenth century. Moreover, it highlights the central role that Russian boatmen, who journeyed through Nyen to Stockholm and back to northwestern Russia and Karelia, played in Swedish-Russian trade.

In addition, the Swedish National Archives have several summaries of Nyen's exports from the middle of the seventeenth century, as well as an occasional extract of Russian imports to Stockholm. The Finnish National Archive in Helsinki has summaries of *Portorium* accounts from the closing decades of the century. These list the names of merchants visiting Nyen and the amount of duty they paid. A great deal more information on the

activities of the Russian merchants in Stockholm can be gleaned from the so called Verification Books of the City of Stockholm, a virtually continuous set of huge volumes that among other things lists the number of Russians present in Stockholm each month, as well as the amount of duty they paid on their bulky (weighed) goods at the Russian merchants' yard (*Ryssgården*). These documents are kept at the Stockholm City Archive (*Stockholms Stadsarkiv*). Additional information on foreign merchants in Nyen exists, among other places, in the Lübeck City Archive, the Sound records of the Danish National Archive, and (on the increasingly important British merchants) in the various Port Books of British ports which are kept at the Public Record Office in London.

The only other Eastern Baltic port worth mentioning in the context of Muscovite trade is Viborg which had a long history of commercial exchange with northwestern Russia and Karelia. However, Viborg's role in this trade declined dramatically in the early seventeenth century, especially after the Stolbovo Treaty, when most of its Russian hinterland was taken over by Sweden. The city was further challenged by the emergence of Nyen(skans) as a much more ideally located rival by the 1630s. The Swedish National Archive has a number of surviving customs books for Viborg from the beginning of the seventeenth century. Most of these have separate sections on Russian merchants.

All in all then, a student of early modern European trade can draw on an unusually wide array of valuable primary sources at Baltic and Scandinavian archives. Much of the material has undergone little systematic study to this day and the lack of awareness of many Western historians of the existence of this data has led many of them to dismiss interesting and important questions as unanswerable. Yet the documents do provide essential information, not only on local Baltic merchants but also, as has been suggested above, on Russians, Germans and West Europeans, and can thus serve to fill many gaps in the economic history of all these countries. Vagaries of history have left the sources on the seventeenth-century history of the Swedish Kingdom scattered across a large number of archives in the area in a way that is often far from logical. Thus the student of virtually any topic has to be prepared to consult the holdings of several archives to gain a complete picture of the available materials.

## Notes

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12. Edgars Dunsdorfs, "Der Außenhandel Rigas im 17. Jahrhundert," in *Pirmā Baltijas vēsturnieku konference* (Riga, 1938).
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15. Vilnis Pāvulāns, *Satiksmes ceļi Latvijā XIII-XVII gs.* (Riga: Zinātne, 1971).
16. Malle Loit and Jüri Hellat, *Eesti Ajalooarhiivi fondide loend* (Tartu, 1992). Somewhat more detailed is N.V. Brozhostovskaia, ed. (1968), *Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Estonskoi SSR: Putevoditel'* (Moscow-Tartu, 1968).

17. Most notably *Eestimaa rootsiaegse kindralkuberneriarhiivi kataloog*, 2 vols. (Tartu, 1935-6).
18. There is a valuable survey of the surviving holdings of the Narva City Archive in Dirk-Gerd Erpenbeck and Roland Seeberg-Elverfeldt, *Narva 1581-1721: Quellen zur Geschichte der Stadt in schwedischer Zeit* (Dortmund: Forschungsstelle Ostmitteleuropa, 1993). The book also offers a survey of Narva-related holdings of the Tallinn City Archive, although not those of non-Estonian archives.
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