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Ottoman and Ottoman-Polish Manuscript Sources in Swedish Public Collections

Abstract

Sweden possesses a number of collections of diplomatic records from the Ottoman and Crimean Tatar rulers; the great part of them is kept in the National Swedish Archives and Swedish Military Archives. Numerous Ottoman and Tatar official diplomatic letters are related to Poland and Muscovy. During the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries, Sweden, Poland and Ottoman Empire were keenly interested in constructing alliances against their enemies, especially against the new powerful state, Muscovy. There exists also a number of documents and transcripts of documents which found their way to Sweden as booty. These collections are called *Extranea Collections*. Among them there are records from the chancelleries of the Polish kings, concerning the Polish diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate. There are also other categories of archival documents, the remarkable letters written by private persons and highly interesting manuscript maps, which could be included within the field of both Oriental and Polish studies.

The entrance to the archives is also a gateway to history. The aim of this article is to open the door to the Swedish National Archives and present the samples of diplomatic correspondence from the collections called *Tatarica* and *Turcica* and the documents related to the Turks and Tatars from the collections *Extranea Poland, Letters, Letter-books for foreign affairs (Registratur)* and *Foreign Maps*.¹ The intention is to show that both

¹ For a description of the Swedish National Archive's (RA's) collections of original letters, treaties, *Turcica*, *Extranea*, and the other records, see *Riksarkivets beståndsoversikt* (BÖ); Tomm os 1980; Ludwigs 1981; Zetterstéen's catalogue *Türkische, tatarische und persische Urkunden*[...] 1945. For description of the other catalogues, see bibliography in Święcicka 2005.

within these collections and between letters written by private individuals are hidden documents throwing additional light on the events in Polish history that are weaved into European history of past ages. Unlike archives in other countries, especially Poland, the Swedish archives, both official and private, are almost undamaged with the exception of the loss of valuable material destroyed by the great fire in the Royal Palace in 1697. A considerable part of the documents was never published and for that reason remains unknown to the scholars.² The Kingdom of Poland, the Kingdom of Sweden, and the Ottoman Empire with its vassal state, the Tatar Khanate in the Crimea, were superpowers of the 16th and 17th centuries. Geographically they were situated far apart from each other, but all of them had their own frontier with Russia, at that time, by diplomatic sources, called Muscovy.

The focus of this article will be on the period when these still powerful states conducted wars, negotiated peace treaties and kept each other up-to-date with regard to significant news such as ascensions to the throne, marriages, births and deaths. The presence of Vasa kings on the Polish throne and their war of succession to the Swedish throne inserted an extra tragic aspect of historical relations. Poland was one of the main participants in the big game of these times and a considerable part of the diplomatic records deals with Polish matters. As far back as at the end of the eighteenth century, the eminent Swedish bard, Carl Mikael Bellman in one of his ballads ironically asked: "What do you care of matters Polish, damn you?"³

Official letters

Tatarica

As early as during Gustav Vasa's reign, the Crimean Tatars' kinsmen, the Tatars from Kazan met face to face the Muscovite danger and sent an envoy who came to Sweden in 1556 with a proposal for an alliance against Ivan IV the Terrible.⁴ For some reason the negotiations misfired, and in the same year the Kazan (and Astrachan) Khanate became definitely subjugated by the Russians. However this new political situation made Gustav Vasa think about a possible new ally and considered sending at least an envoy to return such an exotic visit. Gustav Vasa also asked Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł

² The published documents of oriental provenience are few: Björkman, W., "Ein türkischer Schenkungsbrief vom Jahre 1587", in: *Orientalia Suecana* III, 1955; Kurat, A.N. & Zetterstéen, *Türkische Urkunden herausgegeben und übersetzt*, Uppsala 1938 (thirteen letters). The four letters which concern Polish matters have been commented on by Abrahamowicz in his article for *Folia Orientalia*, in: 1961, cf. Supra n. 22; A part of the collection of the diplomatic letters in Ottoman-Tatar language, written by the Crimean Khans' mothers and wives, was published by Ianbay in *Manuscripta Orientalia* 2002 and Świącicka in *Rocznik Orientalistyczny* 2002.

³ "Hvad fan angår dej Pålens affärer?", ballad (epistel) no 45.

⁴ Konung Gustaf den förstes registratur XXVI, 527 [*Letter-books for foreign affairs*].

from Wilno (Vilnius) to find for him a suitable interpreter among the Tatar prisoners.⁵ The very fact of the existence of diplomatic relations between potential allies was always significant and could to some degree keep one's enemies in check.

The Crimean Khans, who were observing Muscovy's increasing power, shared the same opinion and for this reason sent to Sweden at least five embassies. The message from the Tatar khans was always the same: to start together a preventive war against Muscovy. In diplomatic letters they used to quote an old rule: *one has to be a friend of one's friend and enemy of one's enemies*. In every Tatar embassy several envoys participated. Every member of the embassy was provided with his own credential letter written by the members of khan's family. The khan's mother, his most beloved wife and sometimes the khan's sister or his brother's wife, were the persons who used to send such diplomatic letters (*yarlik*), according to the etiquette at the Tatar court, 'supporting' the main letter written by the khan.⁶

The documents sent from Crimea and Ottoman Porte are often very beautiful, with the decorative writing and colourful covers.⁷ To the story of these records belongs also the memory of difficulties in reading and translating them. They were written in the Arabic alphabet in the Turkish language used at Sublime Porte, though the Tatar diplomatic letters show a number of Tatar linguistic peculiarities.⁸ Sometimes the khans' chancellery enclosed translation of the main letter in Polish, Latin or another language.⁹

In one of these letters¹⁰, the Khan Mehmed Keräy' s/Gerej' s¹¹ informed the Swedish Queen Kristina about his ascendance to the throne in Baghchiseray. Apparently well-informed about Swedish-Polish rivalry for the Swedish throne, he had uttered his conviction that the mutual Swedish-Polish-Tatar friendship is more important than ever in the face of Russian danger. It seems that there must appear some language problems at the audience and the Chancellor Oxenstierna asked the envoys if anyone of them could speak Polish. One can wonder if he was thinking about Hieronim Radziejowski as a potential interpreter, for Radziejowski was at that time staying at Queen Kristina's court in Stockholm, working on the Swedish – Cossack alliance.

The absence of a Tatar translator and the complicated political situation caused a delay in sending the answer. Queen Kristina abdicated and her successor, Carolus X Gustavus, dispatched to the Crimea a long letter written in Latin, in which he rejected the idea of

⁵ Ibidem, 835.

⁶ Matuz 1976; Ivanics 1975; Święcicka 2003, 2004; Abrahamowicz 1954; Ianbay 2002. See also Webb-page information of the RA (Statens Arkiv→Riksarkivet→Månadens Dokument [Document of the Month], April 2004), *Brev från tatarerna till Drottning Kristina* [Letter from the Tatars to the Queen Kristina].

⁷ Geijer & Lamm 1945.

⁸ Matuz 1976; Ivanics 1975; Święcicka 2003.

⁹ Zettersteen 1945.

¹⁰ Ibidem, letter no 156 of 1654.

¹¹ The explanation of that Mongolian family name (Kereit, Kerey) in Németh 1965; Jankowski 1997, p. 66. This unvoiced variant appeared by the side of the version in Arabic script on the Polish-Ottoman maps possessed by Swedish Military Archives, Święcicka 2003.

the proposed friendship, accusing the Polish Vasa king John Casimir of laying claims both to the Swedish territories and to the Swedish throne. The diplomatic mission of the Polish envoy Morsztyn, who came to Sweden without power of attorney, irritated the Swedes and when the Muscovite force invaded Polish territory, they also marched out against Poland.

Turcica

John III Vasa, husband of Katarzyna Jagiellonka after many dramatic moments ascended the Swedish throne in 1569. In 1587 he initiated the diplomatic contacts with the Ottoman Empire, asking Murad III to support his son Sigismund as a candidate to the Polish throne. This letter is missing and the name of John III's envoy is unknown.¹² The diplomatic letters between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Ottoman Empire, which concern 'Polish matters' are not so numerous as the Tatar letters. But a considerable amount of information could be excerpted from diplomatic reports, diaries and descriptions of journeys.

The report of Paul Strassburk after his diplomatic mission to Sublime Porte, brings us an insight into the war politics conducted by the Swedish king, Gustavus II Adolphus, father of Queen Kristina. Gustavus II Adolphus was a very pragmatic person and had nothing against using Muslims against Christians. He sent to Sublime Porte his envoy, Paul Strassburk with a question whether the Sultan Murad IV could support him against the Polish Kingdom or could start a war against the Habsburgs. The Sultan rejected both his proposals.

Carolus X Gustavus, who acceded to the throne after Queen Kristina, did not draw the right conclusions from this former diplomatic fiasco and in 1656/1657 he sent two different embassies to the Ottomans: one with Claes Rålamb and another one with Gotthard Wellingk, to be sure that at least one of them would reach Istanbul. They were sent to ask the Turks about support against Muscovy as well as against Poland. Their missions were unsuccessful and resulted in a harsh diplomatic protest from the Grand Vizier to the Swedish King, stating that a war with the Ottoman state's friend Poland was out of the question and would only strengthen their common enemy, Muscovy.¹³

Both journeys became very well documented. Rålamb's journey was documented in the form of a comprehensive diary.¹⁴ Wellingk's mission was described by an

¹² Zetterstéen 1952b, 212.

¹³ Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 79–128; RA, Turcica, Svenska beskickningars till Turkiet brev och arkiv, vol. 3; Callmer 1963: 27.

¹⁴ *Diarium under resa till Konstantinopel 1657–1658*. An abbreviated edition in English was published in 1732, "A Relation of a Journey to Constantinople", in: *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*, vol. 5, London, and also in 1963 in Stockholm by Callmer.

accompanying priest, C.J. Hildebrand.¹⁵ These records are also kept in the Swedish National Archives.

Private Letters

Yet another category of letters is the private correspondence between different individuals, royals and private persons. The person who was supposed to keep Rålamb company during his journey to Ottoman Empire was a certain Zachariasz Gamocki (1620–1679), a Polish nobleman of Armenian extraction from Podole.¹⁶ He came to Sweden during the reign of Queen Kristina and made his career in Sweden as lieutenant-colonel, master of the stables and a *dragoman*, interpreter. As many Armenians living on the border, he had knowledge of several languages, among them Turkish. Because of his military and linguistic abilities, Carolus X Gustavus sent Gamocki as an emissary to Chmielnicki in 1655, at the beginning of the Swedish-Polish war. His activities in Sweden must have been known by Polish troops. Gamocki neither met envoy Rålamb nor reached Istanbul. When he travelled through Polish territory, he was arrested and put into prison. After about four years of 'brutal treatment' he returned to his wife, Eva de la Chapelle and lived in poverty, begging in his letters for back pay as did most of the Swedish military men.

It seems that opinion about his linguistic ability was bigger than Gamocki's real skills. Two or three times he was asked to act as Turkish *dragoman* on the occasion of two Crimean missions to Sweden. According to the letter of the envoy, Aslan Aga, and other records belonging to Royal Chancery, Gamocki's acting as a translator could come off badly and cost the envoy his head.¹⁷

Zachariasz Gamocki's life and achievements, as are seen from his and his wife's seven letters which are kept in the Swedish National Archives, allow one to reconstruct his dramatic life in more detail compared to only the glimpses into his life published by Polish-Armenian historians.¹⁸ He was also involved in the translation into Turkish of the fragments of Lutheran Catechism, designed for baptising two members of the Crimean embassy, 1671–1672, who applied for political asylum in Sweden. A person responsible for their correct conversion was Professor, Reverend Jan Herbinus (1627 or 1633–1679) a distinguished Silesian-Polish-Swedish intellectual. His books and the

¹⁵ Hildebrand-Babinger 1937.

¹⁶ The reconstruction of his life, Święcicka 2007 and 2000a; see also Nordin 2006.

¹⁷ Aslan Aga's letter to Chansellor de la Gardie, 1671, Turcica, vol. 95.

¹⁸ Barącz 1856; A. Zajączkowski's note in *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 1948a is based on information from the Polish-Armenian historians; see also A. Zajączkowski's article about *Katechizacja turecka*, 1948b.

content of his letters have relevance to present-day history of religion, art history and the history of the Lutheran Church in Poland.¹⁹

Extranea Collections

Extranea Collections contain the records concerning matters of state of other foreign powers, which were collected by Swedes as loot. In the Swedish National Archives there is such a collection containing letters, records and copies of documents coming from the chancelleries of the Polish kings: Zygmunt II August, Stefan Batory, Zygmunt III, Władysław IV, Jan II Kazimierz and August II, entitled *extranea Polen*.²⁰ The collection is composed of volumes numbered 75–149 and contains manuscripts written in Polish, Latin, Swedish, German and French. Seven of the volumes: nos. 79, 88, 120, 122, 123, 124 and 140 include texts concerning Polish diplomatic relations with Turks and Tatars.²¹

Among the records belonging to the Polish Royal Registry 1570–1640, in volume no 79 there is a letter from vizier *Hali Pasze* to His Royal Highness and a report which could have been written by an envoy, entitled *Jaki beł Status Monarchiey Tureckiey* [‘The situation in the Ottoman Empire’] in the volume with records which are linked to Sigismund III Vasa. We will find the same report in two other, somewhat deficient, copies in volumes 123 and 124. In other volumes, there are copies of correspondence between the kings and the sultans, the khans and the pashas, a letter written by Chmielnicki, and a proposal for a Turkish-Polish treaty. The Collection *Turcica* is provided with an appendix ‘Polen’, containing the information about the four letters which are not mentioned at the Collection *Extranea Polen*.²²

Maps

In Swedish Military Archives, amongst about one million maps there is a manuscript map, drawn and coloured by hand, entitled *Ryssland – Russia*.²³ The midpoint of the

¹⁹ Herbinus letters are kept in Uppsala University Library Carolina Rediviva; see also Herbinus Johannes 1633–1676, *Religiosae Kijovenss cryptae, Seventeenth-century writings on the Kievan caves monastery*, Harvard Library of Early Ukrainian Literature, 1987, Cambridge Mass: distr. by Harvard Univ. Press; more biographical details in Świącicka 2007.

²⁰ Swedish National Archives, *Extranea. Polen*. Volumes /Files 79, 88, 120, 122, 123, 140.

²¹ I am very grateful to Jadwiga Wronicz, the author of article on “*Extranea Polen*” (2007), for pointing out for me the texts within *Extranea Polen*, which have connection to Ottoman/Tatar/Polish/Kosack relations, and also for the detailed description of the content of the volumes.

²² *Turkiet, handlingar och brev* [Turkey, records and letters], RA, *Turcica Bihang* [Appendix]; *Polen*. In Zetterstéen’s catalogue No 2, 54, 55 and 112. *Muhammed IV to Johan Kasimir, Storvisiren Murad to Johan Kasimir, Storvisiren Murad to polske kanslern Stephanus, Turkiske ämbetsmannen Abdur-rahman to Johan Kasimir*. Cf. Abrahamowicz 1961.

²³ Swedish Military Archives, *Utländska kartor* [Foreign maps] *Ryssland* 32.

map is the 'Kingdom of Muscovy with the borders marked with a red line'.²⁴ The map measures 110x84 cm. The depicted territory is large, from the White Sea in the North to the Azov Sea in the South, the city of Kazan in the East and along with many other places, the cities of Kiev, Smolensk and St. Petersburg in the West. The author was aware of place-names, the map is very detailed, both regarding configuration of localities and the multitude of towns and villages. All the topographical names are written in Arabic letters. The map is equipped with the cartouche, written in Ottoman Turkish, which begins with words:

Anno Domini 1653 Mehmed Kerây son of the khan Sälâmet Kerây, by means of the road(s) shown on this map, reached to the foundation of the Moscow throne, burned down (it) with fire. The tsar concealed himself in one of the Moscow's (...) And the Moscow tsar had no choice. When he asked for safety of life and limb, a peace agreement has been concluded on the condition to give to the local khans a hundred rubel, each rubel being equivalent of two hundred akçe. The Moscow tsars have surrendered, the tsar Petro also did it, but later on – they did not (surrender any more). [...]

Turkish cartography is a relatively unknown subject.²⁵ Putting aside the language of cartouche and the alphabet used to depict the place-names, does this map have a Turkish provenience?

Among the cities located on this map there is St. Petersburg, founded in 1703. Analyzing the text within the cartouche, we can more or less precisely guess when the map was drawn. That is to say between the year of foundation of St. Petersburg 1703 and the time when the Ottomans ruled over the Azov fortress, 1712–1737, but before the Swedish defeat in 1721 and presumably before Tsar Peter's death in 1725.

Who the author of this map, classified as map of Russia, was, remains a mystery. The cartographers used to borrow from each other the contours of maps and later add the text and place-names. As a base the author could have used Bernard Wapowski's map stating Tatar and Ottoman territorial conquests from the beginning of the 16th century, or Antoni Wieda's map of Muscovian Duchy from 1535, with detailed placement of the Tatar Orda's and Kozaks' dwelling-places. Subsequently our anonymous cartographer could have used the military maps drawn by cartographer Vilhelm le Vasseur de Beauplan, among them the map noting down routes of Tatar campaigns from the time before Chmielnicki's insurrection, 1631–1645. It is not unlikely that this map was published after de Beauplan's contours but presumably not by Ibrahim Mütefferika²⁶

²⁴ Quotation from the cartouche map's. Translation of the cartouche (for the time being incomplete), by ES.

²⁵ See bibliography in Ehrensward & Abrahamowicz 1990; Aleksandrowicz 1977.

²⁶ Ibidem, in that case via the Duch cartography; KFÅ 1999: 118; Carleson 1979.

though the map resembles other examples of Turkish terrestrial cartography which used to mirror the tradition of miniature painting.

Most probably the map was drawn by a Turkish or a Tatar cartographer, very likely in the Russian service or in the position of dependence on Peter I. The text of cartouche corroborates this interpretation (*This map was prepared from maps in use and accepted*).

When Tsar Peter began to esteem a proper value of cartography, he made to copy, among many other maps, a map of Ingermanland which was a part of historical Finland, and ordered to transliterate place-names to the Cyrillic alphabet.²⁷

It seems that a similar procedure has been used for the map of the territory, which the Tsar controlled or planned to control. All the place-names on this particular map are transliterated to Arabic letters, remaining phonetically true. The Tsar presumably ordered the creation of this map because he held an opinion that 'a ruler, who was in possession of accurate maps, could keep the conquered land'.²⁸ He possibly also wanted to show his power and let the Tatars know their place.²⁹

These are just a few samples from the rich Swedish collections. The Polish-Turkish-Tatar-Swedish-Russian records are available according to the Swedish principle of public access to official documents and they are waiting to be discovered and examined.

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C. Rålamb berättelse om sin beskickning till Turkiet 1657 (febr= –1658) våren, RA, Turcica, Svenska beskickningars till Turkiet brev och arkiv, vol. 3.

Plenipotentiarien Arslan Agas berättelse 1669, RA, Turcica, Svenska beskickningars till Turkiet brev och arkiv, vol. 4.

Tatarica

Svenska sändebuds brev och depescher 1592–1713

Tatarkhaners brev till K. M:t etc. se Zett. 1592–1742

Muscovitica-Turcica Fredskongresser 21, Diplomata, Tatarica, vol. 1 Öientalia dokument

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Storvisiren Murad till Johan Kasimir av Polen, not dated (1657–1658) RA, Z: 54

Storvisiren Murad till polske kanslern Stephanes, not dated (1657–1658), RA, Z: 55

Turkiske ämbetsmannen Abdur-rahman till Johan Kasimir av Polen, not dated, RA, Z: 112

²⁷ Ehrensvärd 2004, the mentioned map was drawn by Beling-Nordencrutz.

²⁸ Ibidem

²⁹ The full translation of this map will be presented in the next publication.

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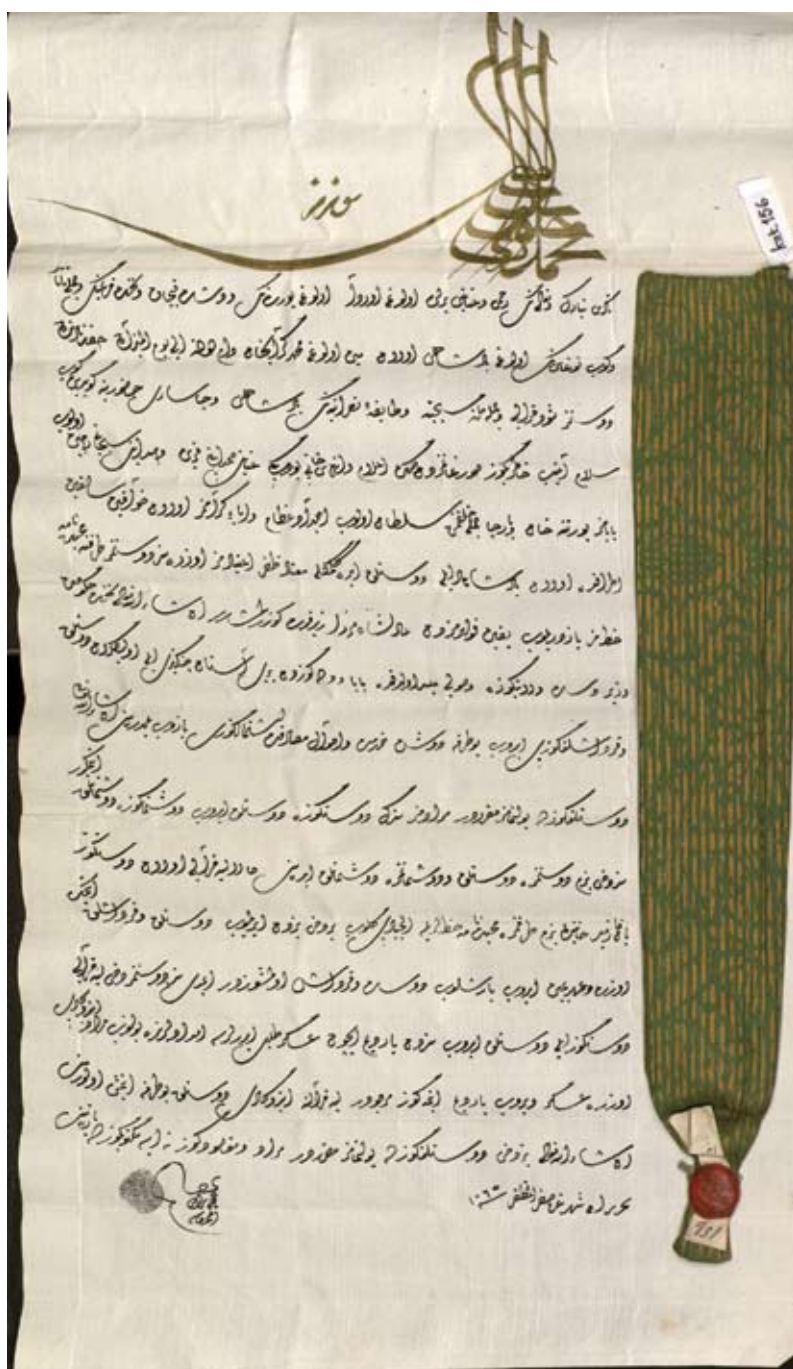


Photo 1. Letter from Khan Mehmed Keräy/Gerej to Sweden 1654 with his request for Sweden to help Poland with fighting their common enemy, Muscovy, Swedish National Archives, No. 156 in Zetterstéen's Catalogue

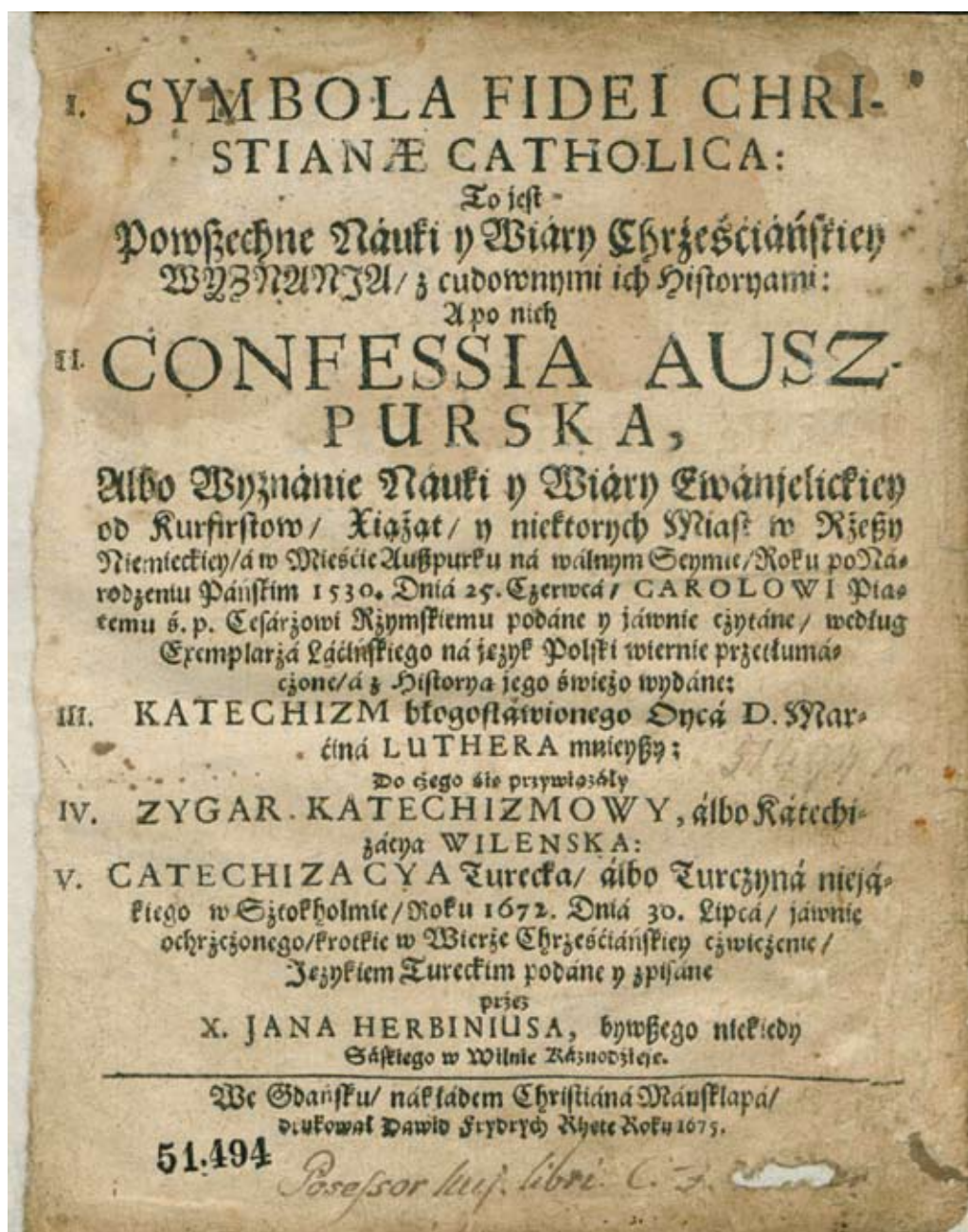


Photo 3. Title page of Jan Herbinius' and Zachariasz Gamocki's
 Lutheran Catechism in Turkish and Polish, 1675,
 The Ossoliński National Institute, Poland



Photo 4. Letter of the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed IV to Jan Kazimierz (Johan Kasimir) of Poland, 1655, No. 2 in Zetterstéens Catalogue, Swedish National Archives



Photo 5. Foreign maps. Russia, vol. 33, No.47, Swedish Military Archives, photo Bertil Olofsson

