

Textual Scholarship Researches of Grigol Orbeliani's Epistolary Heritage

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Abstract: One of the main principles of scholarly edition is a chronological order that provides us with an opportunity to imagine the author's creative growth. Therefore, it is obvious that the dating of each text is of utmost importance in terms of historical-philological and literary studies. In the first and second volumes published in 1936-1937, up to sixty letters of the famous Georgian writer and public figure of the 19th century Grigol Orbeliani (1804-1883) were omitted because the time of their writing could not be determined. However, by means of digital technologies, corpus study and various contemporary methods, the dating of the aforementioned letters became possible in the new edition. The information obtained from the documentary writings of the author cannot be complete without identifying the persons mentioned therein. Therefore, it is important to find out who is implied by means of a name, surname, nickname, public name or pronoun mentioned in this or that letter. By means of various methods and technologies we were able to summarize the information scattered in different narratives and identify most of them. Identification of these individuals helps us to understand the content better. Information obtained as a result of our investigations enabled us to make some corrections in the biographies of the individuals. Dating the text and identifying the persons mentioned therein are the major tasks for textual scholars. The significance of the letters increases drastically when their texts are scientifically verified and dated, as well as the people mentioned there identified and all complicated passages of the text are commented. Such researches are fundamental and, in addition to their inherent value, represent the basis for further historical and cultural studies.

Keywords: textual scholarship, Georgian literature, archival studies, Grigol Orbeliani

Introduction

Personal letters represent a kind of documentary sources that depict the inner world of the author, his attitude towards relatives, acquaintances and colleagues, as well as different topics, historical persons and events in the most versatile way. These sources provide us with the most reliable information to create a psychological portrait of the author, to create biography and bio-bibliography and to study the author's life and creativity. On the other hand, the letters represent not only the image of the author but also the epoch. Therefore, not only investigators of particular writer's works but also historians are interested in them.

One of the main principles of scholarly edition is a chronological order that provides us with an opportunity to imagine the author's creative growth. Therefore, it is obvious that the dating of each text is of utmost importance in terms of historical-philological and literary studies.

In the first and second volumes published in 1936-1937, up to sixty (60) letters of certain period from the epistolary heritage of the famous Georgian writer and public figure of the 19th century Grigol Orbeliani (1804-1883) were omitted because the time of their writing could not be determined [1]. However, by means of digital technologies, corpus study and various contemporary methods, the dating of the aforementioned letters became possible in the new edition "Epistolary Heritage of the Georgian Writers of XIX-XX centuries" (2010-2018), 7 volumes of which have already contained Grigol Orbeliani's personal letters and the edition still continues. Search engines can also help find a word, a name or a number in the texts of large volume. This allows us to conduct a comparative analysis of the letters and establish the time of creation of undated texts. An important merit of using this technology is that in recent years it has been possible to date many undated letters of other Georgian classical authors. Of course, the research method and nature of these cases have remained mainly the same, but modern technical tools and programmes have helped us to make the technological process easier, more accurate and efficient.

When dating texts with the digital corpus, we frequently need information related to the civic or church calendar. For example, if the personal letter indicates the exact date and day of the week but does not include a year, or the letter has only a year and it mentions Easter, Kvelieri (Shrovetide), Plough Monday or any other day related to religious events, all of this may help in dating. That is why we need to have designated electronic pages that have reliable civic and church calendars. Experience has proved that the old church style in most online sources is not properly calculated and does not match the 19th century calendars. It is therefore advisable to verify the validity of such sources.

We applied to different methods of research, including exclusion, deduction, corpus study and others to date Grigol Orbeliani's letters. We also used the following information: paper type, watermark, ink colour, as well as comparison of the contents of data; historical or cultural-public facts from the letters; days of birth and death, name days, dates of marriage and other events in the families of the aforementioned people; years of taking up or leaving posts of certain people; location of an addressee or a sender; determination of the year by means of exact dates and weekdays given in the letters. External sources also assist in dating, including records, letters of other people, memoirs, bibliographies and other documents.

Let us provide several examples of letters that have been dated with the help of various methods.

Method of Exclusion

The method of exclusion is frequently used in the textual scholarship. We refer to it when reading an illegible text, when we imagine different graphemes in our minds to identify the handwritten letters and we only stop at those that are graphically close to the pattern to be read out. We frequently use the exclusion method while dating, when we know that we have to choose one date from several assumed ones in the text. We check each date and do our best to find the one that cannot be ruled out by any argument [2].

The letter to the cousin, Barbare Orbeliani-Saginashvili, as of June 16, states that June 15th was Sunday. It is clear from the letter that Grigol Orbeliani was already in Georgia (he came back in 1858). We assumed Grigol's return to Georgia as the initial date and the death of Barbare Orbeliani (1870) as the final date. June 15th between these two dates coincides with Sunday in 1858 and 1869. On June 15th 1858, Grigol Orbeliani wrote to Dimitri Jorjadze from Tabakhmela; since Grigol was in Tbilisi according to the letter, it was dated June 16th 1869.

There are occasions when a letter has a date but a certain digit is illegible. The letter to sister-in-law Ketevan Aleks-Meskishvili-Orbeliani clearly states July 23, however, the third digit of the year 18?6 is illegible. We applied the method of exclusion and found out that it could not be written in 1856 since the content of the letter reveals that Grigol Orbeliani had already returned to Georgia, and that happened in 1858. The year cannot be 1876 as well, since Grigol Orbeliani's cousin Barbare Orbeliani-Saginashvili died in 1870 and the letter states: "The Saginashvilis are happily relaxing in Koda." Accordingly, the method of exclusion proved that the letter was written on July 23 1866.

Grigol Orbeliani's letter to Alexander Saginashvili is dated August 28. However, the year is not specified. The letter sent in October 1867 to the sister-in-law – Barbare Bagrationi-Orbeliani, reveals that Alexander's wife, Barbare was diagnosed with cancer. It seems that Grigol did not speak openly about it with the couple. On August 23 1868, he wrote in the letter to Alexander Saginashvili: "I hope that Barbare will soon get better and will join us in Koda" [2]. The previous undated letter mentions the disease as well. It is also clear that Grigol was in Koda, while Barbare was still in Tbilisi at the end of August. Barbare did not arrive until August 28 1870. The letter could not have been written on 28 August 1869 since it is apparent from the letter sent to Barbare on September 17th of the same year that Grigol had been already in Tbilisi, while the addressee – in Koda. Nobody would take an ill person to Koda at the end of August since it would have been cold there by the time. Accordingly, the letter should have been written on August 28 1868 [2].

Graphology Analysis

Personal letters are rarely published during the author's lifetime. Therefore, their primary source of information is autographs, the decipherment of which is subject to various complications, such as specific orthography, damage of artefact, rough crossing out and correcting, etc. Grigol Orbeliani had pretty good calligraphy, but the letters were written under different circumstances, for example, sometimes the hand can falter or the graphemes do not have final form or the manuscript is too corrected. In such cases, we often have to return to difficult passage in order to read it out again through various methods. Sometimes, the specificity of the writer's calligraphy or the inaccuracies made by him might further complicate the efforts. Until the chronological inconsistencies of the events made us reach an impasse, we did not realize that almost all the textual scholars working on the autographs of Grigol Orbeliani's letters were taking number 7 as 4, due to the author's peculiar spelling. But when we realized this feature, we checked all the texts that might have had mistakes due to this misunderstanding.

There was similar misunderstanding regarding one of the letters sent by Grigol Orbeliani to Kaplan Orbeliani. According to the autograph, it looked like it was dated 1841. This date could also be found in the letter of the first publication in the first volume of works in Zugdidi Museum. One paragraph of the text caused doubts. There was written that the sister-in law Varinka returned to Tbilisi from Moscow at the beginning of July and Grigol was preparing the apartment for her in Tsavkisi. Varinka was the name of Grigol's relative of the sixth generation – Dimitry Orbeliani's wife, the granddaughter of King Giorgi XII Barbare (same Varvara,

Varenka) Bagrationi (1804-1879) and we could assume this in the letter. However, it was not clear why Grigol would take care about her accommodation in Tsavkisi since she had relatives much closer than Grigol.

Due to autographic dating, we could not relate the aforementioned phrase to Grigol's brother Ilia Orbeliani's wife Barbare since she and Ilia got married in 1852 (before that Grigol could not refer to her as the sister-in law) and in 1841, if the letter was written at that time, she would have been only 10 years old. If not the author's date, the context completely corresponded to that person. She lost her husband early and Grigol took care of his sister-in-law in every way. The fact that there was a contradiction between the person mentioned in the letter and dating forced us to re-check everything.

Observation of Grigol Orbeliani's calligraphy has convinced us that the figure 7 written by him is very similar to the figure 4. This is apparently the reason why the researcher Solomon Tsaishvili, who published this letter together with 23 other letters in the first volume of works in the Museum of Zugdidi in 1947 [3], read the year 1871 as 1841. We thoroughly checked the autograph and confirmed our opinion that the letter was dated 1871 and not 1841. Accordingly, the person mentioned there was Grigol's diseased brother Ilia's wife, Barbara Bagrationi-Orbeliani, and any internal contradictions have disappeared from the scientific apparatus of the text.

The graphology analysis also helped us to date another letter. Grigol Orbeliani sends a letter to Nikolai Astafiev on Sunday, May 30 and invites him for dinner. Nikolai Astafiev was appointed as an officer of the Caucasus Military District in 1871; in March of the same year, he married the granddaughter of Alexandre Chavchavadze, Elene Chavchavadze and settled in Georgia. Accordingly, the letter should have been written in the period from this year until the death of Grigol Orbeliani. May 23 in the aforementioned period coincides with the years 1871, 1876 and 1882. Based on the comparison with other letters, according to the type of paper, ink colour and handwriting, we assume that the letter was written in 1882 [4].

Historical-Comparative Method

An in-depth analysis of the text and an outline of episodes that allow comparative study with other historical events are crucial for the establishment of the date of the text. This made it possible to date many old and new artistic and documentary texts. The undated letter to the relatives - Manana Eristavi-Orbeliani and her daughter Anastasia Orbeliani mentioned the death of Mikhail Sharvashidze as a recent fact. Since Mikhail Sharvashidze died on April 16 1866, the letter should have been written after this date. But the content of the letter allows for further clarification of the upper limit of time. The letter sent to Mikhail Koliubakin on May 17 1866 reveals that the viceroy of the King Mikhail Romanov was going to leave for Borjomi on May 19. According to this letter, they had been already gone. According to the issue 69 of the newspaper "Kavkas" (The Caucasus) 1866, after the burial of Mikheil Sharvashidze, where all people dissatisfied with the abolition of the Samtavro (Principality) gathered, the revolt against the Russian Rule in Abkhazia began on July 17. Thus, the letter should have been written in the period from May 19 to July 17 1866. [2].

When we date a letter, we actually specify not only the time when it was written, but also the facts stated there. The dating of this letter helped us to date another one. The letter to Manana and Anastasia Orbeliani tells the details of Grigol's business visit to the Shah of Iran. The undated letter to Nikolai Girs informs about the meeting that had taken place the year before, during which Grigol Orbeliani handed over the list of the servicemen to be awarded. While in 1863-1867 Girs was the Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Russia to Iran and served there, nothing is known about Grigol's another visit to Iran. The letter should mention the fact that took place in 1866 and it was written the following year since the text states that Grigol had an honour to appear before the Shah in Farih Abad and he passed the list of people approved by the Viceroy of Caucasus to Girs [2].

The historical facts and cultural and social events mentioned in the letter represent one of the most reliable bases to date it. In the letter sent to Niko Chavchavadze, the 50th anniversary of the Gymnasium indicates that it should have been written half a century after the founding of the Tbilisi Classical Gymnasium (1830), that is, in 1880. However, according to the 201st issue of the newspaper 'Droeba' (The Time) in 1881, the half-century anniversary of the gymnasium was not celebrated exactly in 50 years, but in September 1881. Accordingly, the letter could have only been written after September 1881. In addition, the letter reveals that the governor had already resigned and the arrival of the new governor was delayed greatly. On November 22 1881, the post of the viceroy of the Caucasus was abolished and the Caucasian administration, headed by the governor, was established. After this, Alexander Dondukov-Korsakov was the first governor, who was appointed to the post on January 1st 1882 and held office until January 3rd 1890. Among the candidates, Grigol Orbeliani named him for the post of the governor in the first place. Accordingly, the letter should have been written at the end of 1881 before the appointment of the governor [5].

Grigol Orbeliani's letter to Nikoloz Ivanov addressed the property dispute between Grigol Orbeliani's cousins – Ekaterine Orbeliani-Ivanova and Alexander Orbeliani. Ekaterine's husband Nikoloz Ivanov believed that Alexander had appropriated their lands and demanded compensation. This dispute seems to have been

going on for a long time. According to the letter, we can determine at what stage the case was at that time. Alexander Orbeliani was acquitted in the District Court and Senate. The Ivanovs were planning to send the case to the public meeting in Petersburg. The same case was also mentioned in an undated letter sent to Giorgi Mukhransky, which reveals that the Ivanovs had already sent the case to the public meeting for consideration. We dated the letter to Giorgi Mukhranski autumn 1869 according to a number of realities. We believe that this letter should be written at the same time, but chronologically a bit earlier. Based on the same facts, a second letter to the same addressee was dated. [2].

Grigol Orbeliani's letter to Sosiko Orbeliani was dated by means of the period the mentioned person occupied a specific post. Grigol wrote to the addressee to ask Ilia Chavchavadze to intercede with Staroselsky in Baku in order to keep the job for Gasparov who served with him in Dagestan. The letter refers to Ilia Chavchavadze's brother-in-law Dimitry Staroselsky and supposedly, it was written in 1872-1876, when the person was the governor of Baku [6].

Corpus Study

Grigol Orbeliani attached a letter of Princess Gagarina to the letter to his friend – Dimitri Jorjadze. He asked him to write to the ruler instead of Alexander Adlerberg in relation to the circumstances mentioned in the letter, since the previous letter did not bring any results. He informed that the Emperor was going to leave for Crimea in July and Taso should receive the response before that. Anastasia (Taso) Orbeliani, the wife of the governor of Kutaisi - Alexander Gagarin, would not correspond with the Ruler unless she had already become a widow by that time. The chief of Svaneti Konstantine Dadeshkeliani fatally wounded Alexander Gagarin in Kutaisi on October 27 1857. Accordingly, the letter should have been written after that date. In 1855-1881, Alexander II was the Emperor of Russia and the matter discussed in the letter should relate to his visit to Crimea. After 1855, Alexander II arrived in Crimea for the first time in 1859 and we should consider this year as the beginning date. However, since the letter mentions a person close to the Emperor Alexander II and the Minister of the Imperial Court, Alexander Adlerberg, we suppose that this was due to the fact that he was Niko Dadiani's father-in-law and he would often visit Niko's mother, Ekaterine Chachavadze in the village Gorda. Niko Dadiani and Maria Adlerberg got married in 1877. Accordingly, we took this year as a starting date and 1879 as an ending year, when Alexander II was in Crimea for the last time.

Sometimes a complex study of epistolary and artistic texts helps us to date letters. A good example of this is the letter sent by Grigol Orbeliani to Salome Dadiani-Murat. The author published an undated poem "The image of Tamar King in Bethania church" for the first time under the pen-name Ksniskheveli in the issue of the newspaper 'Iveria', April 7 1877. It was hard to read the date (August 12 either 1874 or 1877) on the personal letter that Grigol sent to the daughter of Ekaterine Chavchavadze – Salome Dadiani-Murat from Tsavkisi to Gorda. Grigol informs the addressee that he is the author of the poem they liked and since the censorship cut a few lines, he was sending the original as a keepsake. As it is seen from the letter, Ekaterine and Salome read Grigol's poem without knowing the author's identity and cut by censorship. It is obvious that they read it from 'Iveria' publication and, accordingly, the letter should have been written on August 12 1877. [7].

Identification of the addresses of the letters and mentioned individuals

The information obtained from the documentary writings of the author cannot be complete without identifying the persons mentioned therein. Therefore, it is important to find out who is implied by means of a name, surname, nickname, public name or pronoun mentioned in this or that letter.

The author of the first edition of Grigol Orbeliani's letters – Akaki Gatsereia noted that it was not possible to identify all the persons mentioned in the letters because of the complexity of the issue: "We have not encountered with the correspondence of any other writer in epistolary literature with as many names as in the first and second volumes of Grigol Orbeliani's letters throughout 383 letters" [8].

The aforementioned corpus research method involves the creation and analysis of text corpuses according to specific tasks. We use the full set of the writer's writings to study any of the signs that are characteristic of him, to compare them with another corpus, etc. By means of the corpus research we are able to summarize the information scattered in different narratives [9].

By means of corpus study of Grigol Orbeliani's personal letters, we could identify both dates and identities of several people, who were mentioned by name in one source of letters, while in the other source – by surnames, but it was clear from the context that people were the same. For example, one of Grigol Orbeliani's letters mentions Andronikashvili as a buyer of the land of Jokhadze, while the other letter mentioned Iase. By means of corpus study, we collated these two pieces of information and connected them to Iase Andronikashvili. Our conclusion was confirmed by one more letter, where the name and surname were mentioned together in a similar context.

Annetta Mirskaya is mentioned in one of the letters to Barbare Bagrationi-Orbeliani (March 22 1870). We assumed that the person mentioned there should be the wife of the third brother of Dmitry and Nikolai Sviatopolk-Mirsky – Vladimir. According to various sources, she was of German origin and lived at court of Elena Wurttemberg-Romanova, the wife of the brother of Emperors Alexander I and Nikoloz I – Mikhail Romanov. Our assumption was confirmed by another letter sent to the same addressee, which mentioned Annetta as ex-Mirskaya and then Siemens. Vladimir’s widow Annetta Sviatopolk-Mirsky married a prominent businessman Otto Siemens in 1870. Based on the corpus study, we found out the name of Annetta’s father as well. As for the surname, it was not mentioned anywhere. From the information about Siemens, we managed to find out about the German origin of Annetta. Given that she arrived in Georgia for the first time after marriage to Mirsky, it is not surprising that even Orbeliani did not know her maiden name, since married women were generally referred to by surnames of their spouses [10].

The identification of individuals is also important for commenting on texts in scholarly editions. We should keep in mind that if the comment contradicts the date of the text or any other comment, then we should look for an explanation of the inconsistency. We have encountered a similar case in three letters sent by Grigol Orbeliani to his brother Zakaria after their mother’s death, where the writer sends his greetings to mother. Since these letters are dated and are all written after the death of Khoreshan Andronikashvili-Orbeliani, it is inconceivable that the letters mention the writer’s mother. As a result of the corpus study, it was established that Grigol Orbeliani mentioned ‘mother’ after sending greetings to relatives but before servants. Since the Georgian nobility strictly adhered to the ranking courtesy in the 19th century, we concluded that the poet talked about his nanny in the letters.

Without identifying the recipients of letters, the content of both fiction and documentary text is vague. Identification of these individuals helps us to understand the content completely. Accordingly, when preparing scholarly editions, it is of utmost importance to identify the addressee of each text. One of the letters of Grigol Orbeliani, dated September 14 1866, begins the following: “My dear uncle, my beloved Niko” [2]. The letter reveals that the addressee must be in Dagestan at that time. Since the close associate of Grigol Orbeliani and the addressee of many of his letters – Niko Chavchavadze served as a military governor of West Dagestan in 1866-1876, we have come to the conclusion that the letter was sent to him.

A letter sent from Tbilisi to Petersburg on October 25 1865 stated that it was intended for prince Orbeliani and began with the words: “My friend Alexander” [2]. However, there were several people with the name Alexander Orbeliani in the circle of friends of Grigol Orbeliani and it became necessary to conduct a historical-comparative analysis of the information in the letter to find out who was the letter intended for. The letter had a phrase that Alexander’s whole family was in good health and that Princess Manana went to Koda village to build a house. Manana Eristavi-Orbeliani was the mother of Alexander Orbeliani. It is also noteworthy that her son served in Russia at that time. This fact was also mentioned in the letter. Grigol wrote to the addressee that he had long wanted to write to him to keep him up with the current processes and news in Georgia. Consequently, the letter should have really meant him.

Sometimes there are nicknames to identify persons bearing the same surname in the letters so that to make it easier to identify individuals. For example, Grigol Orbeliani refers to Alexander Orbeliani, his cousin, as Baklana Alexander, and the son of his cousin Konstantin Orbeliani – as Pazharni Vano, a very joyful person who was fond of feasts, due to which he was nicknamed – “Vanka Pazharny”.

Grigol Orbeliani often calls the young people uncles and aunts in his letters. When we publish a text scientifically, we definitely attach the comments so that the reader would not go in the wrong direction and think of another person. For instance, Grigol Orbeliani called his brother’s child – Giorgi Orbeliani - “uncle” in a joking way, while the sister of his sister-in-law Barbare – Olga Bagrationi-Gruzinskaya and the young wife of Zakaria Chavchavadze – Mariam Chavchavadze – as “aunty”.

Letters often contain spelling and historical errors. Such mistakes make research complicated and require examination of numerous materials and bringing in additional information to prove that we are dealing with a mistake. We will not comment until we are convinced that it is indeed the person we have assumed.

Grigol Orbeliani, in his letter to Barbare Bagrationi-Orbelianion March 4 1871, noted that he had seen Persian Alishera, exiled from Persia. The study revealed that the letter referred to the Prime Minister of Iran’s Shah Sultan Ahmed, that is Sultan of Alau-Mirza Muhammad Ali-Khan. Muhammad Ali-Khan was ousted from the governorate of Gilan and was sent to Tbilisi, where he had served in the diplomatic mission of Iran until 1874 [10].

When it is not possible to obtain information about a person due to the lack of documentary material, we try to make assumption with argumentative and detailed explanations. The letter to Anastasia Orbeliani-Oklobzhio, dated February 25 before 1878, mentions an evening with Palibin. A famous Russian botanist – Ivan Palibin was born in Tbilisi in 1872. Since there should not have been many people with the surname Palibin in Tbilisi, we assumed that it was about Ivan’s father – Vladimir Palibin. Vladimir Palibin received the rank of

Major-General in 1876. He seems to have been actively involved in Tbilisi public life until 1877, since one document indicates that he was expelled from one of the Tbilisi clubs that year for questioning the Armenian trade integrity.

Individuals are frequently mentioned in letters by only surnames or first names. In such cases, a thorough knowledge of the material is required. Depending on the context, we assume who was implied, who the addressee had meetings, conversation or correspondence with during that period. In a letter to Barbare Bagrationi-Orbelianion January 10 1871, Grigol Orbeliani expresses gratitude to Poporigopoulos and Baranovsky [10]. We established that the letter was regarding a privy councillor Alexander Poporigopoulos and Nikolai Baranovsky, the director of the Department of Public Affairs of the Main Office of the Viceroy of the Caucasus. Another letter to the same addressee mentions Princess Shakhovskaya and Siemens. Supposedly, the wife of General Alexander Shakhovsky – Anna Vielgorskaya-Shakhovskaya and the wife of Otto Simmens – Ana (Annetta) Simmens are implied.

The letter sent to Tbilisi Civil Governor Konstantin Orlovsky on June 4 1871 mentions Sologub, who introduced changes to the penitentiary system. It is noted that he initiated a congress in London concerning this subject [11]. The study revealed that the point is about a prominent Russian writer and public figure – Vladimir Sologub, who had been a member of the Emergency Commission of Investigation of Prisons since 1869.

Genealogical lists, such as the database “rodovid.ka” in internet, are very helpful in acquiring information related to the identification of individuals. Nevertheless, a few inaccuracies have convinced us that it is necessary to verify this information as well. The date of death of two sisters of Grigol Orbeliani’s sister-in-law, Barbara Bagrationi-Orbeliani, was stated wrong in the internet database. In a letter sent to his sister-in-law on December 10 1864, Grigol mentioned that he often remembered poor Vera [12]. The addressee’s sister, who got married to Major-General Nikolai Sviatopolk-Mirsky in 1862, Vera’s newborn child died and soon she died in 1863. The date of her death in the genealogical list is 1903, which is a mistake. The year of the death of their second sister, Elisabeth Bagrationi-Bashmakova - 1890 - is also wrong. In this case, Grigol Orbeliani’s letter proved to be a much more credible source. According to the letter to Konstantine Tarkhnishvili on January 27 1862, Elisabeth had died recently [2].

We believe it is better to leave a comment than leave the issue open while identifying individuals. Even if this assumption turns out to be false, it will facilitate further research. A letter to Barbare Bagrationi-Orbeliani, dated September 10 1870, states that the plaintiff of the manor property relied on Grigol Orbeliani’s cousin, Ekaterine Orbeliani’s husband – Nikolai Opochinin’s brother, who worked in Senate. Although we could not find this person, we explained that Nikolai’s brother-in-law – Aleksei Opochinin had two brothers: Vladimir and Nikoloz, both of them – Rear Admirals. Historical sources do not mention any brother as a senator, but it is known about Nikoloz that he had elaborated maritime legislation and had participated in various state commissions [13].

Dating the text and identifying the persons mentioned therein are the major tasks for textual scholars. The significance of the letters increases drastically when their texts are scientifically verified and dated, as well as the people mentioned there identified and all complicated passages of the text are commented. Such researches are fundamental and, in addition to their inherent value, represent the basis for further historical and cultural research.

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