

Autographs of Rasmus Rask newly found in Saint Petersburg archives

Original research article

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Abstract

The article discusses recently discovered autographs by the Danish linguist Rasmus Rask in Saint Petersburg archives. It provides new insights into Rask's connections with two young scholars, Ivan Nikolaevič Lobjko and Peter (Petr Ivanovič) Köppen, who were part of Count Nikolaj Petrovič Rumjancev's circle in Saint Petersburg. It also sheds light on Rask's relationship with the Copenhagen salon of the poet Juliane Marie Jessen. One of the documents contains Rask's pioneering ideas about the Lithuanian language. His letters to friends in Saint Petersburg reveal his mental state and scholarly ambitions following his return from a long journey through South Asia. In one letter, Rask encouraged Lobjko to write a Russian grammar according to the new plan developed by the Danish scholar. In another letter, he explained his decision to work on Spanish grammar when the scholarly public expected a study of Sanskrit and modern languages of South Asia.

Keywords: history of linguistics; archival sources; nineteenth-century letter-writing; Russian grammar; Spanish grammar; Lithuanian-Sanskrit comparison

Introduction

In October 2024, I received a message from Karina Vadimovna Proničeva (Pronitcheva), a research associate at the Saint Petersburg Institute of History of the Russian Academy of Sciences. She was tasked with describing the previously unprocessed papers of Ivan Nikolaevič Lobjko¹⁴³ (1786–1861) in the Institute’s archives and asked me to look into papers written in Danish and German, some of which bore the signature of Rasmus Rask (1787–1832). Upon studying the scans, I identified five documents as Rask’s autograph manuscripts. These were published by the renowned Danish linguist Karl Verner in his first scholarly article, which was released in 1874. The other papers included letters from Rask’s teacher and patron, Rasmus Nyerup; a friend of Rask’s, the architect Andreas Wilhelm Egeroed (Egerod); and prominent members of Count Nikolaj Petrovič Rumjancev’s scholarly circle: Friedrich Adelung, Anders Johan Hipping, and Anders Johan Sjögren.

The five documents written by Rask were his autobiography and a scholarly note on Baltic languages in German, and three letters to Lobjko dated April 27, 1824, September 6, 1824, and January 28, 1826, in Danish. According to Verner, he saw the documents in Saint Petersburg after the librarian of the First Department of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ernst (Arist Aristovič) Kunik, told him about their existence among Lobjko’s papers. Verner’s publication was accompanied by an article by Vilhelm Thomsen, who provided additional information on Rask’s friendship with Lobjko. This information was excerpted from several previously published letters from Rask to his mentors Peter Erasmus Müller and Rasmus Nyerup. In this article, I highlight the intentional and unintentional omissions in Verner’s transcription of the documents and discuss the significance of the newly discovered Rask materials for his biography and the history of linguistic ideas. In the appendix, I include an edition of a letter from Rask to another Saint Petersburg friend, Peter Köppen, which has never been published before and which I found in the archives of the Academy of Sciences.

Rask befriended Lobjko while the Danish scholar stayed in Saint Petersburg from March 27, 1818, to June 13, 1819. During this time, Rask was preparing for a long journey that would take him through the Russian Empire and South Asia. The two exchanged language lessons (Danish and Russian). Lobjko wrote in his memoir that he “wept tears of utter bliss” after listening to Rask explain new philological ideas (Lobjko 2013:53; Rask 2018:145). Rask encouraged his Russian friend to undertake various scholarly and translation projects, only a few of which came to fruition. However, the title of “a disciple of the peerless Rask” (Rask 2018:13, 159) may have helped Lobjko

¹⁴³ I render his Russian name Лобойко as Lobjko in accordance with this journal’s stylesheet. Judging by the limited evidence I have (dating from 1822 and 1827), his preferred spelling was Lobjko; he may have adopted it after moving to Vilna. In Rask’s diary and letters he appeared as Laboikow, Labojko, Labojkof, Laboyko, Loboiko, Loboikow, Lobjko, and Lobjkov; Adelung addressed him Loboiko, Egeroed Laboika, and in Sjögren’s diary he was both Loboiko and Lobjko.

attain a professorship of Russian literature at the Imperial University of Vilna in January 1822.

A search for Rask's manuscripts, initiated by Louis Hjelmslev in connection with the publication of Rask's selected works (1932–1937)¹⁴⁴ and letters (Rask 1941), and subsequently pursued by Marie Bjerrum (Rask 1968), produced no information regarding the documents' location. In his collection of Rask's letters, Hjelmslev reprinted Verner's transcription of the three letters to Lobjko. Meanwhile, the documents were housed in the Department of Manuscripts at the Library of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. In 1950, the papers were transferred to the Institute of History, where they remained unbeknownst to researchers until they were assigned to Pronitcheva for processing. I contributed brief descriptions of some of the materials which are now available to researchers who visit the Institute's archives. The finding aid (*opis'*) has been approved by the management of the Saint Petersburg Institute of History (Pronitcheva 2025).

Rask's autograph manuscripts from 1818–1819: Autobiography and Note on the Baltic Languages (№ 3)

After being processed by Pronitcheva, Lobjko's archive (*fond* 330) now include 30 numbered items or files. In the finding aid, the autobiography and the scholarly note are designated as number 3. The autobiography is signed at the end with the name Rask, but not in his handwriting (although the document starts with the word *Untergezeichneter*, "undersigned"). Verner's edition includes minor typos and corrections: he transcribed *Unterzeichneter* instead of *Untergezeichneter*, *geboren* instead of *gebohren*, *Studiren* instead of *Studieren*, *Kopenhagen* instead of *Koppenhagen* (twice), *und mit* instead of *und es mit*, *Kopenh.* instead of *Koppenh.* (four times), *Lexicons* instead of *Lexicon*, *Schottland* instead of *Schotland*, *wider* instead of *wieder*, *eingegeborne* instead of *eingegebahrne*, *geborner* instead of *gebohrner*, *Otheri* instead of *Ohteri*, *Wulfstani* instead of *Vulfstani*, *sogenannten* instead of *sogenanten*, *verwechseln* instead of *verwechselnden*, *eines Freundes* instead of *seines Freundes*, *Hon. Magister* instead of *Hrn. Mag.*; *des Kön. Geheimeraths* instead of *des Hrn. Gemeimeraths*, *die [Jahresschrift]* instead of *das*, *Skálda* instead of *Scalda*, *nach alten Codd.* instead of *nach alten Cod.*, *zum ersten Male* instead of *zum erstenmale*, *beyden* instead of *beiden*, *widrigenfalls* instead of *wiedrigenfalls*, *Gebiete* instead of *Gebiethe*, and *studiren* instead of *studieren*. Lobjko translated this document into Russian and included it in the first version of his memoirs (Lobjko 2013:55–58; Rask 2018:147–150). At the end

¹⁴⁴ In two editions, with Danish (1932–1935) and German (1932–1937) commentaries.

of his translation, Lobjko added Rask's name, place, and date (*Ėrazm Christian*¹⁴⁵ *Rask. SPburg, June 1818*).

The autobiography concluded with Rask's plans for continuing his journey. The wording closely resembles that used in his letter to P.E. Müller on June 11, 1818 (Rask 1941-I:317; Rask 2018:44), confirming the date "June 1818" added by Lobjko in his translation. This document is likely related to the election of *Ėrazm Christianovič*¹⁴⁶ *Rask* as a corresponding member of the Free Society of Lovers of Russian Literature on July 9, 1818 (Bazanov 1964:445).

The scholarly note relates to a German translation of *O początkach narodu i języka litewskiego* ("On the Origins of the Lithuanian Nation and Language", 1808), a work by Franciszek Ksawery Michał Bohusz. The note begins with the following statement: "My dear friend, the translator of this book, asked me to provide a brief opinion on the origins and earliest conditions of the Baltic peoples¹⁴⁷". In a footnote to Verner's edition, Vilhelm Thomsen suggested that the unnamed translator was Lobjko. It is likely that it was one of Lobjko's many unfinished projects and that he intended to advance his scholarly career by translating this work into German, a language in which he was fluent. In the scholarly note, Rask stated that he had no prior knowledge of Bohusz's book or Vater's excerpt from it when he concluded that Baltic languages were similar to Ancient Greek in terms of vocabulary and morphology. Rask based his conclusions on the inner structure of the Lithuanian language. In contrast, Vater found correspondences between Lithuanian and Greek in only 24 words and explained them as direct or indirect borrowings from Greek into Lithuanian (see Vater 1816:72–73). Studies of Sanskrit (on which Rask focused in Saint Petersburg) led him to further suggest that the Baltic languages are the closest to Sanskrit in words and morphemes among all European languages, and he illustrated his point with a table of correspondences between Sanskrit, Greek/Latin, Lithuanian, and "other languages", that is, Danish, Icelandic, German, and Russian (*fig. 1*). The note bears Rask's signature, *R. Rask*. I see only seven minor discrepancies between the original and Verner's edition. Verner made substitutions, using *keinesweges* [*durch Vermischung*] instead of *keineswegen*, *einigermassen* instead of *einigermassen*, *erleuchten* instead of *erleuchtern*, *кашлять* instead of *кашлеть*, *wünschen* instead of *pflügen*, *beruhet* instead of *beruht*, and *ereignet hat* instead of *ereignet*.

Surprisingly, this work by Rask was not included in the register of his published works (Rask 1932–1937-III:361–409; Rask 1968:512–513). Furthermore, Hjelmslev

¹⁴⁵ Rask still often used his middle name in 1818. In Danish, he had changed its spelling to Kristian, signing his publications and many of his letters *R.K. Rask*. In Latin and Swedish, he was *Erasmus Christian[us] Rask*. He finally dropped his middle name during his subsequent journey, as he had planned to do since at least 1812.

¹⁴⁶ In Russian, Rask's middle name was altered into a patronymic. Technically, his Russian patronymic should have been Nikolaevič, as the first name of his father was Niels. At baptism, Rask's official name was Rasmus Christian Nielsen Rasch.

¹⁴⁷ *Lettischen völker*. Rask used the term for the entire group that we now call Baltic, which includes the Prussians, Livonians, and *de egentlige Letter*, or the proper Latvians. See Rask [1818]:161–162.

failed to mention it when discussing Rask's contributions to Baltic linguistics and acknowledging that Rask was the first to consider the Baltic languages a distinct branch of the Indo-European family (ibid.:125). The note merits the attention of historians of Baltic linguistics and Lithuanian national ideology because here he compared the Lithuanian language to Sanskrit for the first time. The similarity of Lithuanian forms to Sanskrit (as well as to Latin and Greek) has played a role in the linguistic awareness of Lithuanians since August Schleicher's grammar (1856–1857) (Otrębski 1958:57), although Antoine Meillet is the most often cited authority on the ancient features of the Lithuanian language.¹⁴⁸

Rask made the same observation in passing in his *Remarks on the Zend Language and the Zend-Avesta*. The work was originally written in English in 1821. It was first published in Danish in 1826, followed by a German translation in the same year. Then, it was published posthumously in English in 1834: "The Greek, the Latin, and perhaps even more than any European tongue, the Lithuanian, approach very nearly to Sanskrit".¹⁴⁹ However, Rask did not provide any examples this time, and there is no indication that his work impacted Lithuanian linguistics. Had Lobjko not buried Rask's note among his own unfinished projects, the idea of the Lithuanian language's great pedigree could have gained currency much earlier.

Rask's autograph manuscripts from 1824–1826: Letters to Lobjko (№ 20)

After returning from South Asia, Rask wrote the three letters comprising file number 20. He reestablished the level of intimacy that had characterized his relationship with Lobjko in Saint Petersburg. At the same time, he reclaimed his position as Lobjko's mentor. His letters are an excellent example of what Margaretta Jolly calls a "tantalising form of writing's engagement with life, where public and private, professional and personal are so happily confused" (Jolly & Stanley 2005: 91).

The first letter is two pages long and dated April 27, 1824. One week prior to that date, Rask had sent a marriage proposal to his "first and no doubt last love", whom he had met aboard the ship on his way back from India.¹⁵⁰ He had not yet received a response and was in high spirits: Rask obviously wanted to see his friend happy, too. In

¹⁴⁸ The alleged quotation from Meillet "anyone wishing to hear how Indo-Europeans spoke should come and listen to a Lithuanian peasant" has become "so deeply rooted and often used when describing the Lithuanian language ... that references to the original source are impossible to be traced and are never given" (Maumevičienė 2012:120). Compare Meillet 1908:46: *Le lituanien est remarquable par son aspect d'antiquité indo-européenne; ils est frappant d'y trouver ... des forms qui recourent exactement des forms védiques ou homériques...*

¹⁴⁹ In the Danish version (and in the German translation by Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen) the phrase "perhaps even more than any European tongue" loses its element of a doubt: *ja mer end noget andet Sprog i Evropa / ja mehr noch als irgend eine andere Europäische Sprache*. See a critical edition of English and Danish versions in Rask 1932–1933:145,146. Von der Hagen's translation in Rask 1826:14.

¹⁵⁰ On his unsuccessful marriage proposal, probably to Pauline Boalth (1800–1856), see Diderichsen 1960:214, fn. 20. The quote is from Petersen 1834:77.

the letter, transcribed and published by Verner with minor discrepancies¹⁵¹, Rask congratulated Lobjko on his new position at the University of Vilna and invited him to visit Copenhagen during the summer vacation. He asked if Lobjko was still single and if he remembered the girl Rask had told him about. Then, he switched to scholarly news, mentioning his newly published Spanish grammar in passing and providing a criticism of Josef Dobrovský's Slavonic grammar: the main deficiency of the latter work was its mixing of word formation with form formation (i.e., derivation with inflection).

Lobjko received the letter on May 6 and replied on May 9 (Old Style),¹⁵² reminiscing about their friendship:

In Saint Petersburg, you met me as a benevolent heavenly being who increased and ennobled my enjoyment of the sciences. Your guiding spirit still hovers before my eyes during every contemplation. Nothing is dearer to me than my memory of you, and I will always be devoted to you. (Lobjkov 1837:223)

He told Rask about his various interests in Slavic and Baltic studies, expressing his favorable opinion of Dobrovský's grammar and asking Rask whether he could suggest a better system. However, he did not offer his opinion on Rask's news about the publication of the Spanish grammar, only noted that he had read about this book in Russian newspapers (*russiske blade*).¹⁵³ Clearly, Lobjko did not consider the news relevant to his interests or position.

Of his personal situation Lobjko told Rask that he was still not married and was living in a big, nice apartment with his mother.

The city has beauties in abundance; but they are not fit for a professor; they are careless, wasteful and flamboyant, they do not understand or love domestic life, they are always seeking amusements and diversions, and to beautify the world by their appearance, without having a taste for domestic happiness. (ibid.:223–224)

This may have been a period of romantic disappointment for Lobjko, though it wouldn't last long. His tendency to fall in love and his courtship style were widely discussed in Vilna before he finally got married in 1829 (Rejtblat 2013:18). However, Lobjko declined the invitation to go to Copenhagen with the excuse that he didn't tolerate the sea well. He proposed that Rask come to see him in Vilna instead.

The letter was written in German, and it reached us in the Danish translation first published by Rask's brother, H.K. Rask, in 1837 and reprinted twice, by Verner (1874:291–295) and Hjelmslev (Rask 1941-II:99–105).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Verner transcribed *ville disse Linier* instead of *vil disse Linier*, *bømiske* instead of *bömiske*, *Formdannelsen* instead of *Formdannelse*, *bedst* instead of *best*, *mig for vanskelig* instead of *mig temmelig vanskelig*, etc. etc. instead of etc., and *formeget* instead of *for meget*.

¹⁵² Verner (1874:291) miscalculated when trying to convert the dates. The correct dates are May 18 and 21 New Style.

¹⁵³ I was unable to identify the Russian newspapers which published such timely reports of the book.

¹⁵⁴ Alderik Blom's assertion that Lobjko's "letters he wrote to Rask in Danish" (Blom 2017/2018:29) are evidence of Lobjko's "gratitude to Rask" is incorrect. This is the only letter from Lobjko to Rask that Blom may have ever seen; it was translated from a lost German original.

On September 6, 1824, Rask responded with a six-page letter, the second in file number 20 in Lobjko's archive. This is the longest of the three letters, and it was copied by Verner (1874:295–300) with more discrepancies: *d. 6te September* should be *d. 6. September*; *Fædrelands* should be *Fædrenelands*; *andre vakre Piger* should be *andre vakre og huslige Piger*; *för om tre År* should be *förend om tre År*; *det er mig ikke muligt* should be *det er mig ikke mulig*; *Frankrig* should be *Frankerig*; *Rusland og Vender* should be *Rusland og Venden*; *blot subskriberede* should be *blot subskriberte*; *en Del Spørgsmål* should be *en Del Spørgsmåle*; *Efterretninger* should be *Efterretning*; *jeg har ikke haft* should be *jeg har dog ikke haft*; *Dobrovsky's* should be *Dobrowsky's*; *aldrig vænte* should be *aldrig med Rette vænte*; *de finske Stammer Jem, Kvener, Kareler o.s.v.* should be *de finske Stammer, og de indvandrede Jem, Kvener, Kareler o.s.v.*; *Vilkina-Saga* should be *Vilkina Saga*; *sögubrot (d.e. Sagafragment)* should be *sögu-brot (d.e. Saga-fragment)*; *Ragnar-Lodbroks Saga står i første Bind* should be *Ragnar Lodbroks Saga står i første Bind*; *at skikke mere* should be *at skrive mere*. These discrepancies were, of course, copied into Hjemslev's edition, with an additional typo.

Rask recommended the same girl to Lobjko again, providing more details about her and even giving her last name. Verner decided to hide it behind the initial "W". Rask described her as a Swedish girl who knew how to keep a household, came from a respectable family, and was "as well behaved as anyone", though she probably did not have significant wealth. She lived in the household of the poet Juliane Marie Jessen. Little is known about Rask's friendship with the elderly poet, who was not very talented but jovial and well-connected. Their friendship dates back to before Rask's journey, and he valued her society, as well as that of the young, unmarried women in her household—her "adopted daughters", whom she sheltered and patronized.¹⁵⁵ As there is nothing compromising about the girl in Rask's letter and more than a century and a half has passed since her death, I can reveal her name. She is Maria Elisabeth Wetterberg (1798–1874), who later married gardener Johannes Schebel. Evidently, Rask concluded from Lobjko's letter that his friend could still be interested in getting a foreign bride who did not have much of a dowry. Rask was sad about describing his own official and material position: He had custody of his brother, a schoolboy, and could not marry for lack of funds.

He talked about a new enterprise of publishing ancient Scandinavian sources on Russian and Slavic history, with translations into Latin and Danish. A promising young man, Lieutenant Carl Christian Rafn, who had begun diligently and reliably to translate and publish Icelandic "romantic sagas", was at the head of the enterprise. Rask inquired whether it would be possible to find in Lithuania those willing to subscribe or otherwise sponsor the publication of the texts and the Latin translation.

¹⁵⁵ Fredrik Bajer (1868:24, fn.), commenting on Sille Bayer's recollections of Juliane Marie Jessen's household, goes so far as to call Rask one of the poet's "adopted sons".

In response to Lobjko, Rask refuted the incorrect hypothesis about the kinship of “the Finnish tribes and the immigrant Yem, Kvens, Karelians”, with the Scandinavians, expressed by an unnamed Russian author (here, Verner's transcription distorted the text the most by omitting the words “and the immigrant”). In general, on the topic of Scandinavian and Russian relations in the Middle Ages, Rask advised to rely on sources rather than on Swedish historians, although Jonas Hallenberg had recently made a serious contribution to Old Swedish history. Rask mentioned once again his own Spanish grammar, which he would be sending separately and which he suggested as a possible model for Lobjko's work on Slavonic and Russian grammar.

The letter had enclosures that are no longer available in the same archival collection, including engraved images of the bracteates and a list of questions for Russian experts. Most probably, this refers to the request signed by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen, which is preserved in the Russian State Library.¹⁵⁶

The third, short letter from Rask was dated January 28, 1826 (*fig. 2*). Verner's edition is true to the original except for the format of the date. The letter accompanied Rask's Frisian grammar and informed that Rask had received a response neither to the previous letter (of September 6, 1824) nor to the Spanish grammar that Rask had sent separately. This was the end of the correspondence between the two friends.

This break in once intimate friendship puzzled Verner (1874:285–286) and Thomsen (1874:313). Was it the domestic situation which distracted Lobjko as he married, or the political situation in Vilna? In fact, Lobjko thought about responding to his friend. Among Lobjko's materials in the Russian State Library, there are drafts of friendly letters that were apparently never sent. One is dated August 16, 1827, and the other was written around 1830.¹⁵⁷ They indicate that Lobjko intended to reply to Rask but delayed doing so for a very long time. He indeed got married, but only in 1829, and in the second draft, he extolled the virtues of his young wife and her noble Baltic German family, von Klopman.¹⁵⁸ His domestic bliss was indeed darkened by the political situation in Vilna after the brutal suppression of secret student societies in the academic year of 1823–1824 by the Imperial Government. We can read about his state of mind in his letter to his former colleague Joachim Lelewel from October 27, 1829: “My situation at the university is still difficult. I have to hide and be cautious. I am constantly in anxiety” (Lobjko 2008:200).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Moscow, Российская государственная библиотека. Отдел рукописей. Фонд 205 (Общество истории и древностей российских), № 122, ч. 3, л. 223–225об., see about it Rask 2018:28, 166, notes 118–120.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.*, № 122, ч. 4, л. 249–250об.; 247–248об. I am grateful to Abram Il'ich Rejtlat for pointing out the Scandinavian materials in this collection and to the late Aleksandr Vasil'evič Nazarenko (1948–2022) for helping me understand Lobjko's German handwriting.

¹⁵⁸ In literature about Lobjko, the maiden name of his wife is often misspelled as von Klonman.

¹⁵⁹ Lobjko taught at the University of Vilna until its closure in 1832. He then taught at two academies based on university departments: the Vilna Medical-Surgical Academy and the Vilna Roman Catholic Theological Academy, until 1840.

However, the main reason he failed to respond to Rask's letters may have been that he had no scholarly achievements to brag about. After he moved from Saint Petersburg to Vilna, the work of Lobjko as the promoter of Scandinavian studies in Russia did not bear much fruit (although, in 1825, he was admitted to the Royal Nordic Society of Antiquaries).¹⁶⁰ In his second letter, Rask told Lobjko that it was up to his friend to apply Rask's principles to a Slavonic or Russian grammar. In his autobiographical note, Rask stressed that his famous 1818 "Investigation of the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language" included a section on the genetic relationship between Old Norse and Russian languages. However, he did not do much publishable work on Russian after that,¹⁶¹ and Rask hoped that Lobjko could accomplish the task of writing a Russian grammar according to the "new plan" he used in his various grammars to make them comparable. Instead, Lobjko published an unsuccessful "Grammar" aimed at Polish students. It was written in Russian with a parallel text in Polish by Leon Rogalski (Lobjko & Rogalski 1827).¹⁶²

As late as 1835, Lobjko was planning to write a comparative grammar of Slavic languages, among other things (Rejtlat 2013:16). By that time, Rask had already died. Lobjko never forgot him and carefully preserved everything written by Rask's hand, but he never finished the work he hoped to present to his brilliant Danish teacher of new philological ideas.

Appendix. A letter from Rask to Köppen in the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Peter (Petr Ivanovič) Köppen (1793–1864) was another young scholar whom Rask befriended in Saint Petersburg. His personality was the direct opposite of Lobjko. Köppen was very hard working and productive; he recognized the significance of Rask although was not enchanted by him. Almost simultaneously with Rask's journey in South Asia, Köppen undertook a tour of Central Europe (1821–1824) and wrote to Rask from Leipzig on March 3, 1824 on the way back to Saint Petersburg. After receiving Rask's response, Köppen wrote again from Saint Petersburg, on May 20, 1824. Both letters are preserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen and have been published (Rask 1941-II:85–86, 97–99). Rask's response to which Köppen referred to in his second letter has been considered lost (Rask 1968:211). I found this letter in the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences, dated April 18, 1824 (that is, nine days before his first

¹⁶⁰ On Lobjko's contribution to Scandinavian studies, see Chekin 2011. Lobjko's archive, described by Proničeva, includes a letter from Carl Christian Rafn dated August 31, 1828 (№ 21), informing him about this honor. Lobjko did not receive the diploma that was mailed to him in 1825.

¹⁶¹ Rask wrote a treatise on a new Russian orthography based on Greek letters, but he never published it at the suggestion of Johann Philipp (Filipp Ivanovič) Krug (see Petersen 1834:78, Rask 2018:209). The manuscript, titled *Wie man Russisch mit griechischen Buchstaben schreiben kann, nebst einem Versuche über die Pasigraphie*, is preserved in Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, NKS 149 c kvart. Æske 13, b. 42.

¹⁶² The book does not have the names of the authors. For their identification, see Rejtlat 2013:14, who also quotes a negative review in *Moskovskij Telegraf*.

letter to Lobjko) and received, according to Köppen's note on the letter, on April 27, 1824 (probably Old Style, that is, on May 9 New Style).¹⁶³

Before presenting the text and translation of the letter, I would first like to highlight what I consider to be its most interesting part: where Rask mentions his new Spanish grammar.¹⁶⁴ To do so will require a brief discussion of the expectations of Rask's friends and colleagues, which are exemplified by another unpublished letter from the Lobjko archive (No. 13), dated September 16, 1822. This letter was addressed to Lobjko and was written by Anders Johan Hipping, who was Count Rumjancev's librarian from 1820 to 1823 and Rask's authorized representative in Saint Petersburg.

Von unsern Freunde Prof. Rask habe ich in lange Zeit nichts erfahren. Wahrscheinlich ist er jetzt auf die Rückreise und wird uns wohl unverhofft mit einem Briefe aus Kopenhagen überraschen. Wie ich gehört habe so soll er viel unter den Indianischen Völkerstämme umgewandert seyn und sich besonders mit der Sanscritschen abgegeben haben, worin er schon bey seiner Abreise von hier schöne Kenntnisse besass. Ein Deutscher Journal meldete für eine Zeit zurück dass er hätte eine Sanskritsche Grammatik in Petersburg herausgegeben, dass dieses aber nicht wahr ist, wissen sie am besten. Ohne Zweifel wird die litterarische Welt sehr viel gewinnen wenn er einmahl zurückkömt, und Zeit gewinnt seine Entdeckungen aus Licht zu bringen (Saint Petersburg. Санкт–Петербургский институт истории РАН. Архив. Русская секция. Фонд № 330, оп. 1, № 13, л. 1об.).

I have not heard anything from our friend Prof. Rask for a long time. He is probably on his way back now and will likely surprise us with a letter from Copenhagen. I have heard that he traveled extensively among the Indian tribes and devoted himself particularly to Sanskrit, in which he already had a solid knowledge when he left here. A German journal reported some time ago that he had published a Sanskrit grammar in Petersburg, but you know best that this is not true. Without doubt, the literary world will gain a great deal when he returns and has time to bring his discoveries to light.

The scholarly public eagerly awaited a study of Sanskrit and other languages of South Asia, but instead Rask published a grammar of Spanish language. P.E. Müller (1833:22) reminisced that there was a wealthy merchant's son who wanted Rask to teach him Spanish, and Otto Jespersen suggested that it could have been the reason for the book: if he had to deal with that language to make extra money, why not to write a whole grammar (1918:49). In fact, he had already worked on his French, Italian, and Spanish verb systems on board the ship, having finished a draft on Spanish conjugation by February 15, 1823.¹⁶⁵ It is also worth noting that the published book was dedicated to the poet Juliane Marie Jessen, who, according to the dedication, had introduced Rask to "one of the most beautiful languages of the South" (Rask 1824:3). We know from correspondence with Lobjko, that Rask had a close relationship with Jessen at that time. Perhaps stronger than any material or social considerations was his "aversion to all things Asiatic" which he could confess only to a close friend and patron Johan von

¹⁶³ Saint Petersburg. Санкт–Петербургский филиал Архива РАН. Фонд 30, оп. 3, д. 228. I am grateful to Viktor Ivanovič Gochnadel' (Hochnadel) and Natal'ia Sergeevna Prochorenko, who made it possible for me to study this document while the facility was closed to the public in April 2019.

¹⁶⁴ On the significance of this work see Sletsjøe 1957, Kuhlmann Madsen 1994, and Dorta 2001.

¹⁶⁵ According to an entry to his unpublished diary, *Jeg sluttede mit Udkast til den spanske Gjærningsordlære, som jeg havde bragt i temmelig god Orden, og udfyldte dette* (Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, NKS 389 ek oktav. Dagbøger 1 [1816–5. maj 1823], [217]).

Bülow (see Rask 1941-II:75). It was one symptom of the “decisive change in his spiritual habitus” Rask experienced during his journey (Diderichsen 1960:145).¹⁶⁶

In his letter to Köppen, Rask tried to justify his choice of topic, but he did not succeed. Köppen’s spontaneous and naïve response touched a sore spot with Rask: “I would have been almost mad at you, when after coming back from Asia you were writing a Spanish grammar. By contrast, Prof. Bopp in Berlin has just informed me about the first sheet of his Sanskrit Grammar”.¹⁶⁷

The unfavorable comparison of Rask to Franz Bopp was not the only blunder in this response by the younger scholar, who unwisely chose to be on back-slapping terms with Rask. He also took the liberty of offering unsolicited advice regarding Rask’s linguistic patriotism: “I would hope that in your edition of the Zend-Avesta, you will not accompany the text in the original language with only a Danish translation. Please ensure that foreigners do not have to rack their brains over it” (Rask 1941-II:98). No further correspondence has survived. Probably this exchange of letters resulted in termination of their friendship.¹⁶⁸

Sr. Hochwohlgebor[en]em Hrn. Hofrath *P. v. Köppen*, Ritter und Mitglied mehrerer gelehrten Gesellschaften.
Hrn. Mag. *Wiborg*, Buchhändler in *Stockholm* schönstens empfohlen.
In *St. Petersburg* abzugeben bey der Ober Postdirection.¹⁶⁹

Kopenhagen d. 18 April 1824.

Sehr Hochgeschätzter Hr. von Köppen, theurer Freund!

Welch ein grosses Vergnügen haben Sie mir nicht mit Ihren freundschaftlichen Schreiben aus Leipzig gemacht und mit der sehr willkommenen Geschenken, die damit folgten. Ich bin zwar keinesweges in den griechischen Alterthümern eingeweiht, aber doch interessirt mich ausserordentlich alles was griechisch ist, und besonders das olbische Psefisma hat vielen von meinen Freunden schon grosses Vergnügen gemacht. Ich möchte Ihnen recht gern ein gleiches thun, aber leider habe ich jetzt gerade keine Gelegenheit; auch habe ich nichts herausgegeben als — eine spanische Grammatik, die Sie schwerlich würde interessiren können. Meine Absicht ist damit gewesen das Sprachgebäude der südlichen Sprachen in eine mehr philosophische Form zu giessen, und dazu habe ich die spanische gewählt, weil sie mir am wenigsten bearbeitet und am meisten philosophisch schien. Vor kurzer Zeit habe ich dem Grafen Roumänzow ein Exemplar geschickt, konnte aber damahls nicht mit diesem fertig werden.

Keinen Brief habe ich von Ihnen noch sonst jemand in Russland nach Indien bekommen wiewohl ich mehrere besonders an Hrn. Labojko, Hipping &c. geschrieben habe, auch kann ich nicht recht wissen wer der Capt. oder Seeräuber, wovon Sie sprechen seyn kann: in Bassra bin ich nicht gewesen, und in Bushehr wo ich war ist kein

¹⁶⁶ I am discussing this change in more detail in an article in a forthcoming volume in the *Studia Fennica Folkloristica* Series, Leila Virtanen, Jyrki Pöysä & Tiina Seppä (eds.) *Confessions and Confidences: Revisiting Academic and Cultural History Through Letters and Other Documents of Life*. Helsinki: SKS.

¹⁶⁷ *Bald hätte ich mich über Sie geärgert, dass Sie nach einer Rückkehr aus Asien eine spanische Grammatik Schreiben. Dagegen hat mir Prof. Bopp in Berlin den ersten Bogen seiner Sanscrit-Grammatik mitgetheilt.* (Rask 1941-II:97–98; this edition misreads *mir* as *nun*, see: Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Additamenta 198 folio. Fasc. 9, brev 147).

¹⁶⁸ There is a reference to *Freund Rask* in Köppen 1822:287 (“Friend Rask, who after having lived in Iceland for almost three years, is now traveling in India”) while a later Russian translation of the same work refers to *Господинъ Раскъ* (“Mister Rask”, Köppen 1828:49).

¹⁶⁹ The letter was folded into an envelope. The instructions for delivering the letter and the addresses to Köppen and Anders Wiborg (1776–1836) who ran a bookshop and publishing company in Stockholm and helped Rask to forward this letter are written in Rask’s hand. There are also other handwritten notes in Russian by the postal authorities, as well as a stamp bearing the name of the port of Gislehamn, which was located on the postal route from Stockholm to Åbo and on to Saint Petersburg.

engl. Consul, doch ist daselbst wirklich eine Faktorey, wo ich auch logirte. Auch erinnere ich daselbst wirklich einen Griechen aus den ionischen Inseln gesehen zu haben, vielleicht mag er es gewesen seyn; aber mit solchen Leuten kann man nie etwas schicken; ich habe mit Armeniern da mehrmals Briefe geschickt, aber niemals, soviel ich nur habe erfahren können ist das geringste davon abgeliefert worden.

Ich bin in dieser Zeit, wie gewöhnlich, fast ganz in Sprachen vergraben. Es ist möglich dass ich eine Ausgabe der Zend-avesta im Originaltexte in Stand bringen werde; auch denke ich an ein Dänisches Etymologicum &c. &c. Doch wozu Ihnen von Plänen zu schwätzen, die noch ganz ungewiss sind ob sie in Stand kommen werden oder nicht, geschweige *wie* sie ausgeführt werden mögen.

Aber recht herzlichen Dank für Ihre freundschaftliche Erinnerung eines fremden Reisenden nach so langer Zeit und ein ehrerbietiger Gruss an alle gemeinschaftliche Freunde und Gönner in St. Petersburg. Wir sind hier fast ganz von literarischer Communication mit St. Petersburg abgeschnitten — z.B. was kann es seyn was Krug über die Nordalbingi geschrieben hat? Ich habe nie etwas davon erfahren können; wahrscheinlich hören Sie auch nicht viel von unserm wissenschaftlichen Leben dort. Es ist hier kürzlich ein Theil (der 12te) der grossen Dänischen Geschichte von Suhm aus seinen Mscr. herausgegeben. Im Jahr 1821. ist eine schöne Ausgabe eines der ältesten Provincialgesetzen Dänemarks im alten Originaltexte mit Uebersetz. &c. erschienen. Ich weiss aber nicht ob solches Sie interessiren kann? Verzeihen Sie daher meine Weitläufigkeit und meine Sprachfehler, deren hier gewiss viele sind, und erlauben Sie mir die Ehre beständig zu verharren, Hochgeschützter Herr!

Ihr ganz ergebenster Diener und Freund

R. Rask

To Most Honorable Mr. Court Councillor *P. v. Köppen*, knight and member of several learned societies.

To Mr. Master *Wiborg*, bookseller in *Stockholm*, with warmest regards.

To be delivered in *Saint Petersburg* to the Post Office Headquarters.

Copenhagen, April 18, 1824.

Dearly esteemed Mr. von Köppen, dear friend!

What great pleasure you have given me with your friendly letter from Leipzig and the very welcome gifts that accompanied them. Although I am by no means an expert in Greek antiquities, I am extremely interested in everything Greek, and the Olbian Psephisma¹⁷⁰ in particular has already given many of my friends great pleasure. I would very much like to do the same for you, but unfortunately I do not have the opportunity at present; nor have I published anything other than — a Spanish grammar, which is unlikely to be of interest to you. My intention was to cast the linguistic structure of the southern languages into a more philosophical form, and I chose Spanish because it seemed to me to be the least worked on and the most philosophical. I recently sent a copy to Count Rumjancev,¹⁷¹ but was unable to finish this¹⁷² at the time.

I have not received any letters from you or anyone else in Russia to India, although I have written several, especially to Mr. Labojko, Hipping, etc., nor can I really know who the captain or pirate you mention might be: I have not been to Basra,¹⁷³ and there is no English consul in Bushehr, where I was, but there is indeed a trading post there, where I also stayed.¹⁷⁴ I also remember seeing a Greek from the Ionian Islands there, perhaps it may have been him;¹⁷⁵ but you can never send anything with such people; I have sent letters with Armenians there several times, but as far as I have been able to ascertain, not even the smallest of them has ever been delivered.

¹⁷⁰ Reference to Köppen 1823.

¹⁷¹ Rumjancev thanked Rask for his letter of April 10 and for his Spanish grammar and other gifts in a response dated April 19 (Rask 1941-II:91).

¹⁷² The missing word is probably “letter”.

¹⁷³ Rask planned to go there (see Rask 2018:82–83,87).

¹⁷⁴ Köppen wrote that he had sent a letter to Rask to Calcutta with a *Schiffscapitän (oder Seeräuber?) welcher Sie in Bassora bey dem englischen Consul kennen lernte* (Rask 1941-II:86). According to his unpublished diary, Rask arrived in Bushehr in July 1820 and was there until August 27 when he sailed to Bombay (Copenhagen, Det Kongelige Bibliotek, NKS 389 ek oktav. Dagbøger 1 [1816–5. maj 1823], [126]).

¹⁷⁵ In his diary Rask mentioned *den Græske Kaptain en artig og dannet Mand*, “The Greek captain, a polite and cultured man” (ibid.).

At this time, as usual, I am almost completely immersed in languages. It is possible that I will publish an edition of the Zend-avesta in the original text; I am also thinking of a Danish Etymologicum, etc., etc., etc.¹⁷⁶ But why should I prattle about plans that are still completely uncertain as to whether they will come to fruition or not, let alone *how* they might be carried out?

But thank you very much for your friendly remembrance of a foreign traveler after such a long time, and respectful greetings to all our mutual friends and patrons in Saint Petersburg. We are almost completely cut off from literary communication with Saint Petersburg here — for example, what could Krug have written about the Nordalbingi?¹⁷⁷ I have never been able to find out anything about it; you probably don't hear much about our scientific life there either. Part (the 12th) of Suhm's great Danish history has recently been published here from his manuscripts.¹⁷⁸ In 1821, a beautiful edition of one of Denmark's oldest provincial laws appeared in old original texts with translations, etc.¹⁷⁹ However, I do not know whether this might be of interest to you. Please forgive my verbosity and my linguistic errors, of which there are certainly many here, and allow me to remain, Your Most Honored Sir!

Your most devoted servant and friend

R. Rask

¹⁷⁶ Neither project has been completed.

¹⁷⁷ Köppen replied that Krug had not published anything about Nordalbingi as yet (Rask 1941-II:98). On June 12, 1824, Anders Johan Sjögren wrote to Rask that Krug worked on Nordalbingi and was asking for Rask's opinion about that name's etymology (ibid.:340). Marie Bjerrum identified this work as *Wer sind die Marcomanni und Nordalbingi in Schriften des IX und X Jahrhunderts* (Krug 1848-I:1–81; Rask 1968:211–212,369).

¹⁷⁸ Suhm 1824. This posthumously published volume was edited by Rasmus Nyerup. Rask contributed by correcting the proofs of the historical sources in Old Norwegian included in the publication (ibid.:ii,397).

¹⁷⁹ Kolderup-Rosenvinge, J.L.A. 1821.

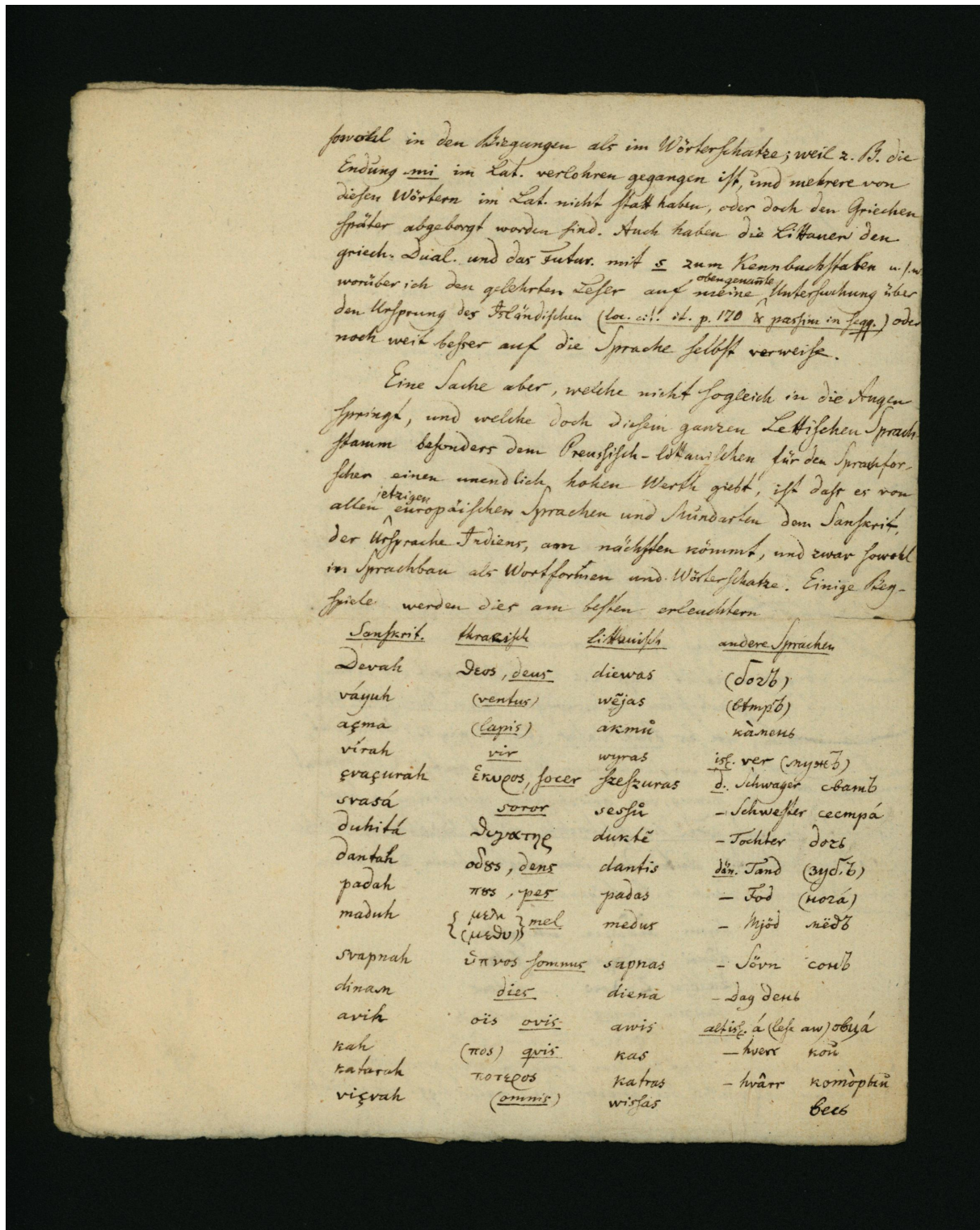


Fig. 1. A page from Note on the Baltic Languages with the beginning of the table of correspondences between Sanskrit, Greek/Latin, Lithuanian, and "other languages". Saint Petersburg. Санкт-Петербургский институт истории РАН. Архив. Русская секция. Фонд № 330, оп. 1, № 3, л. 30б.

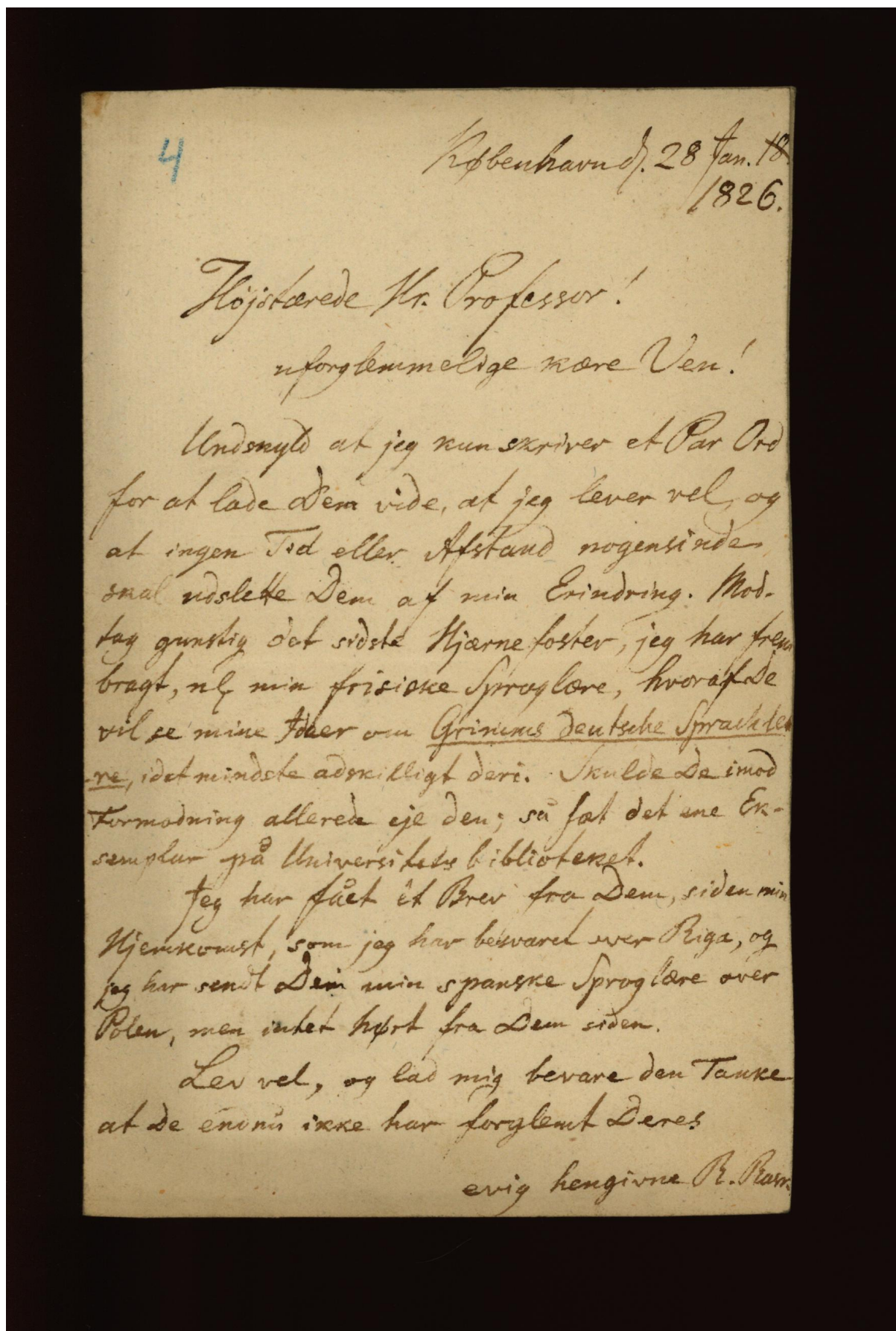


Fig. 2. The last letter from Rask to Lobjko. Saint Petersburg. Санкт-Петербургский институт истории РАН. Архив. Русская секция. Фонд № 330, оп. № 20, л. 6.

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