

Scientific article

DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-3-674-692

For citation

Kondakov, Yu. E. (2026). The activities of the Avignon Society in Russia, based on the documents from the investigation file of Count T. Leszczyc–Grabianka 1807–1826, Herald of an Archivist, no. 3, pp. 674-692. DOI 10.28995/2073-0101-2026-3-674-692

Kondakov, Yu. E., Russian State Pedagogical University in the name of A. I. Herzen, St. Petersburg, Russia

The activities of the Avignon Society in Russia, based on the documents from the investigation

file of Count T. Leszczyc-Grabianka 1807–1826

Abstract

The paper examines the investigative case of Tadeusz Leszczyc-Grabianka (1807), which became one of the largest political trials in Russia in the first quarter of the 19th century. T. Grabianka was a Polish count, one of the founders of the Avignon Society (1778), who held the position of a "king" in the society. The society practiced alchemy and theurgy and had a complicated ritual and hierarchical system. Members of the society awaited the second coming of Jesus Christ in 1835. At various times, prominent European Freemasons joined the society. In the early 19th century, the leaders of Avignon Society began to move from Avignon to St. Petersburg. In 1805–1806 more than sixty Russian followers joined the society. The authorities took notice of the new religious organization, which was led by emigrants from France. In 1807 the society's leader T. Grabianka was placed under arrest and interrogated. His servants, the Frenchmen Lyman and Simonin, were brought in to assist in the investigation. The investigation was closed after T. Grabianka's death in October 1807. Despite the incomplete nature of the investigation, the case contains rich material for characterizing religious processes in Russian society in the early 19th century the Avignon Society attracted the attention of European historians, and its activities were also studied by leading Russian scholars of Freemasonry. However, the materials of T. Grabianka's investigation file has received virtually no analysis in the scientific literature. It is housed in the Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA). The investigative materials are divided into three parts. Two parts contain interrogations, testimonies, and the investigators' conclusions. The third part contains the society's documents in French. Analysis of the materials reveals that some documents and investigative materials disappeared from the case during the investigation stage. The objective of the study is to describe the documents of the "T. Leszczyc-Grabianka's File", determine their completeness and state of preservation, review the investigation, and evaluate the results. The article employs a chronological-problem approach, historical-comparative, and historical-genetic methods. The investigation concluded that the Avignon Society was a destructive sect, dangerous to the Russian state. In Russia, members of the society included individuals from Alexander I's inner circle. The infighting among court factions led to an investigation into T. Grabianka's activities. However, the emperor was unwilling to disclose the names of the society's Russian members. The investigation was terminated, the investigators' findings were ignored by Alexander I, and the documents were archived. Society members R. A. Koshelev and A. N. Golitsyn emerged

victorious, while the initiator of the investigation N. N. Novosiltsev lost and was forced to leave the political arena.

Keywords

The Avignon Society, French ?migr?s of the late 18th – early 19th centuries, historical sources, politics, investigation, documents, sect, religious society, Freemasonry, Committee for the Preservation of General Security.

Download the article: [kondakov_doi](#)

References

Serkov, A. I. (Ed.) (2022). "Blagodetel" Pierra Bezukhova, Iosif Alekseevich Pozdeev and his Correspondence, in 2 vols., vol. 1, Moscow, Ganga publ., 758 p.

Brachev, V. K. (2003). Mason is Magnificent, Moscow, Algorithm publ., Eksmo publ., 460 p.

Vernadsky, G. V. (1999). Russian Freemasonry during the Reign of Catherine II, St. Petersburg, N. I. Novikov publ., 569 p.

Karpachev, K. P. (2013). Freemasonry and Masonic Russia, vols. XVIII–XXI, Features of Russian Royal Art, Saarbrücken, Palmarium publ., 323 p.

Kuzmishin, E. L. (2016). Freemasonry, Moscow, Ganga publ., 496 p.

Lavrov, P. P. (1861). Brotherhood of avionics. IN: Encyclopedic language, Russian language by scientific writers, St. Petersburg, I. I. Glazunov and Tech publ., vol. I, p. 244.

Longinov, M. N. (1860). One of the magicians, Russian Bulletin, vol. 28, p. 580–584.

Smolyanitsky, K. B. (Ed.) (1991). Freemasonry, Moscow, SP IKPA publ., vol. 2, 272 p.

Pypin, A. N. (1997). Masonry in Russia, Moscow, Vek publ., 496 p.

Serkov, A. I. (2000) History of Russian Freemasonry in the 19th century, St. Petersburg, N. I. Novikova publ., 390 p.

Gorodnitsky, R. A., Serkov, A. I. (Eds.) (2021). Systems and Rites of the Russian Massif of the 18th–19th Centuries, Amended Scottish Rite, in 2 vols., vol. 1, Personal Events, Moscow, Ganga publ., 450 p.

Sokolovskaya, T. O. (1991). The Birth of a Mason before Alexander I. in 2 bks., bk. 2, reprinted version of 1914–1915, Moscow, IPKA publ., pp. 172–173.

Bricaud, J. (1928). Les illuminés d'Avignon Dom Pernety et son groupe, Paris, Emile Nourry publ., 116 p.

Caillet, S. (2007). La Tentation du secret, Groupes et sociétés initiatiques entre ésotérisme et politique du XVIIIe au XXe siècle, Politica Hermetica, no. 21, pp. 35–40.

Collis, R., Bayer, N. (2020). Initiating the Millennium, the Avignon Society and Illuminism in Europe, Oxford, Oxford University publ., 255 p.

Meillassoux, M. (1992). Dom Pernety et les Illuminés d'Avignon, Milan, Arche Edizioni publ., 450 p.

Ujejski, J. (2014). Król Nowego Izraela, Karta z dziejów mistyki wieku oświeconego, Warszawa, Armoryka publ., 175 p.

About authors

Kondakov Yuri Evgenievich, Doctor of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, Herzen State Pedagogical University, Institute of History and Social Sciences, Department of History,

Professor, Russian Christian Academy for Humanities named after Fyodor Dostoevsky, project manager St. Petersburg, Russia, +7-911-167-03-97, urakon@rambler.ru

ORCID 0000-0002-9284-3632

Grant information

The study was supported by grant from the Russian Science Foundation No. 25-28-01029, <https://rscf.ru/project/25-28-01029/>, Russian Christian Academy for Humanities named after Fyodor Dostoevsky

The article was received in the editorial office on 24.02.2025, recommended for publication on 20.06.2026

You can read completely article in the russian historic-archival magazine “The Herald of an Archivist”. Read more about terms of subscription [here](#) .

Полностью материал публикуется в российском историко-архивоведческом

журнале ВЕСТНИК АРХИВИСТА. Ознакомьтесь с условиями подписки [здесь](#) .