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**RUSSIAN CHRONICLES
ON THE MOSCOW-KAZAN RELATIONS:
EXPERIENCE OF THE HERMENEUTIC RESEARCH***

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This paper analyzes the problem of interpretation of the chronicle reports about the Moscow-Kazan relations and identifies the semantics of these reports by using the hermeneutic analysis of texts. The author cites the examples of the sources' misunderstanding. Researchers treated literally reports about the Kazan khanate foundation, which in fact were based on the reminiscences from biblical books and needed an allegorical interpretation. Scholars made similar mistakes in their interpretation of some of the reports about the Kazan campaign in 1467, 1487, 1506, and 1552. In turn, the use of hermeneutic methods allows us to significantly supplement and even revise the picture of the Moscow-Kazan relations presented in the historians' works. This paper demonstrates some features of the evolution of Russian chronicle writing that affected the nature of the representation of interstate relations. Period of the last third of the 15th century is described both by official and independent (provincial) chronicle vaults. In this, these sources describe the events in different ways. Official chronicles represented the Moscow-Kazan war of 1467–1469 as a religious confrontation ended with Russian victory, while independent sources described this war without religious connotations and pointed to the defeat of Moscow forces. The author also revealed significant differences in the description of the events in 1478 and 1487. In such a way, independent sources refute a number of official reports about the Moscow-Kazan relations in the last third of the 15th century. In turn, period of the first half of the 16th century is well documented only in the official chronicles since independent chronicles fell into decline during the strengthening of the united Russian State. Thus, the picture of the Moscow-Kazan relations of this period is unilateral since it is based on information of official chronicles, which, in many cases, can not be verified by alternative sources.

Keywords: Moscow State, Kazan khanate, interstate relations, chronicles, hermeneutics, historiography.

Russian chronicles contain serious contradictions in their description of the Moscow-Kazan relations. The content of chronicle reports depended both on the awareness of their authors and on their political affiliation

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and intellectual baggage. At the same time, Russian medieval authors conceptualized historical reality through the lens of Christian cosmology ideas in their effort to show the true picture of the Moscow-Kazan relations. This circumstance resulted in allegorical narrative of the chronicle, which often was not taken into account by modern researchers [8; 9]. Therefore, for an adequate understanding of these reports, we need to critically reconsider the literal interpretation of sources by resorting to hermeneutic analysis of texts [3; 5, p. 9–11].

Here are some examples of effective application of this methodology. The “Kazan History” contains a unique report about how Ulugh Muhammad founded the Kazan khanate and died at the hands of his son. V.V. Velyaminov-Zernov and N.P. Zagoskin took for granted the assertion that Mahmud killed his father, Ulugh Muhammad [14, p. 11; 16, p. 36–37], whereas M.G. Khudyakov considered it as “ridiculous fiction” [29, p. 34]. Based on this information, L.N. Gumilev concluded that Kasim took “the burden of revenge for the murder of his father”. According to him, the struggle between Kasim and Mahmud affected further developments: in 1467 Kasim marched against the young Kazan khan Ibrahim, son of Mahmud, with the support of Ivan III [15, p. 183]. A.G. Bakhtin argued as follows: since many Tatar khans of that time “were killed in the struggle for power, the forcible removal of Ulugh Muhammad from the political scene seems to be quite traditional for the Golden Horde” [13, p. 135].

At the same time, most likely the author of “Kazan History” used allegorical interpretation of events by resorting to the popular story of regicide. We can clarify the semantics of this information by analyzing the content of the Old Testament story, in which a cruel Assyrian King Sennacherib was killed by his sons because he persecuted the righteous people and tried to conquer Jerusalem [4 Kings 19: 37; Tob. 1: 2; Is. 37: 38]. Consequently, the medieval experts of Holy Scripture perceived such death as a punishment for unjust reign and oppression of the God-fearing people [11, p. 141].

At the same time the author of “Kazan History” used both direct and indirect quotes from other written monuments emphasizing the idea of his work. Throughout the entire narrative, he repeated on several occasions the idea that “Kazan was founded with the sword and the blood and it died by the sword and shedding of blood” [17, p. 203]. Probably the scribe borrowed the regicide image from the most authoritative writings of his time as it is well blended into his concept of bloody birth and bloody perdition of the “Kazan Tsardom”.

Here is another example of allegory. The Moscow-Kazan war of 1467–1469 was the first major collision that came to the attention of the majority of scribes. The Moscow chronicler reports the following about the reason for the campaign against Kazan: “and tsars of Kazan, Avdul-Mamon and others, called the prince (Kasim – A.A.) on the throne with

flattery” [23, p. 279]. With understanding the words of the chronicler literally, scholars or wrote that Kasim was deceived, or spoke about the secession of Kazan aristocracy into factions of supporters and opponents of the Moscow influence [4, p. 4].

However, in this case, it should be noted that the Moscow scribe drew an analogy with one of the Old Testament stories. Prophet Daniel predicted that a “vile” person “will obtain the kingdom with flattery”. This king “will enter into compliance with apostates” and his troops “will desecrate the sanctuary”. And, what is closest to the text of the Moscow vault: “with flattery he (the king – A.A.) will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him” [Dan. 11: 21, 31, 32].

The biblical prophecy predicting that “he will corrupt with flattery” come true in the work of Russian medieval scribe: Kasim “was summoned ... with flattery”. That is, we have a logical, for medieval rationality, justification for the war against the eastern neighbor: the Kazanians are presented as “defilers of sanctuaries” and “violators of Testament”. Therefore, the Orthodox, while undertaking a campaign against the Tatars, had done what they allegedly were ordered by the Bible. At the same time, the report about the Kasim invitation to the Kazan throne presented in the context of the Old Testament prophecy points to negative qualities of the Kazanians but not to secession among the Tatar aristocratic circles, as it was previously considered by historians.

We also need an allegorical interpretation while analyzing the description of events in 1487. Authors of several chronicle vaults of the 16th century explain the reasons of the Moscow-Kazan war in 1487 using the story about how the Kazan khan invited to a feast disagreeable princes and tried to massacre them [24, p. 318; 19, col. 322–323; 22, p. 352–353]. In this case, the scribes addressed the reader to the “Tale of the Ryazan Princes’ Crime”, according to which the princes Gleb and Constantine killed their brothers at the feast in 1217 wanting to take over all the power in defiance of the “God’s will” and preparing themselves everlasting torments [18, p. 36]. As a result, before us does not appear a true historical fact of the Moscow-Kazan relations but allegorical manifestation of medieval literature. In such a way, the creators of the vaults confirm their own reasoning by reference to more ancient source and point out that Kazan khan acted against the God’s will, earning thereby the punishment [1].

Chroniclers often resorted to established figures of speech whose meaning we can identify only in the context of the Old Russian word usage. In such cases, we must resort to hermeneutic analysis, which helps to explain the meaning of the text on the basis of philosophical foundations of its creator. We can understand the meaning of a figure of speech by means both of considering the various options for its use in the literature of that period and identification of the closest semantic variants.

For example, the author of “Voskresenskaya chronicle” recorded in the account on the campaign against Kazan in 1506 that Russian troops fled, although “no one did pursue them and they lost many of our people as a punishment for their sins” [20, p. 246]. Researchers usually avoided interpretation of this annalistic account and confined themselves to stating that the campaign was unsuccessful. In fact, it is difficult to find an explanation for how numerous Russian troops under the command of three dozen well-known commanders fled and incur heavy losses, “though no one did pursue them”. Contemporary rationality can not explain this [2].

However, the medieval scribe had quite a clear view of those who could flee from the battlefield without being chased by enemy. The Book of Leviticus describes people who disobey God and do not obey his commandments, as follows: “they will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them” [Lev. 26: 36]. The expression “even though no one is pursuing them” is found in the literary monuments of ancient Russia as well. For example, “The Story of the Invasion of Khan Tokhtamysh” contains the following instructions of the Most High: “If you want to be obedient to me – you get the benefit of the earth and I strike fear into your enemies. If you disobey me, you will run, even though no one will pursue you. I shall strike fear and terror into you and a hundred of you will flee before five enemies and a myriad will run before one hundred” [25, p. 148]. Consequently, this literary formula was understandable for the medieval intellectual and explained the reasons for the military defeat. The expression “not being pursued by anyone” explained to the reader that the main reason for the defeat of the Moscow troops was the fall into sin [2].

Historians also misinterpreted the official report on the actions of Ivan IV during the final assault of Kazan. According to the chronicles, the explosion during the liturgy was the signal for a general offensive. The tsar was twice asked to go to the army at the height of the battle but he refused to interrupt the divine service and prayed with tears in his eyes. Ivan IV went to his regiment only after the end of the liturgy and after had received a blessing from the Archpriest Andrei [21, p. 217; 22, p. 528–529].

Some researchers have concluded about personal qualities of Ivan IV based on a literal interpretation of this account. According to R.G. Skrynnikov, “the tsar did not display great talents during military operations and his delay was the reason for the unfavorable rumors in regiments” [28, p. 47]. S.Kh. Alishev wrote about the manifestation of tsars’ cowardice in the last hours of the assault [12, p. 140].

However, this report has a number of semantic parallels with accounts on the military exploits of the tsars’ forefathers allowing us to actualize other meanings. Ivan IV’s actions closely resemble the behavior both of Dmitry Donskoy on the eve of the battle of Kulikovo and Ivan III before heading to the Ugra. Also the tsars’ ancestors delayed departure and prayed for a long time with tears in their eyes [10, p. 7].

The key to understanding of this delay is hidden in the text of “The Tale of Mamay’s Defeat”. When the Grand Duke Dmitri Ivanovich came to the Trinity Monastery for a blessing, he was told, “that the pagan Polovtsians were already approaching”. The Grand Duke began to hurry up and asked St. Sergius let him go, on that the old man replied: “This delay of yours will result in double benefit for you. For it is not now, my lord, you have to wear the crown of death but after several years. Whereas for many other the martyr’s crowns are weaved already now” [27, p. 150].

In other words, according to Sergius, the delay helped in military practice and he indicated that Dmitry Ivanovich would come back alive after he had won the battle. Already in a heat of the Battle of Kulikovo, when the initiative began to pass to the enemy, Prince Vladimir Andreevich was trying to come up with the ambush regiment to help the main forces. But the voivode Dmitry of Bobrok-Volyn halted the prince with words developing the idea of Sergius of Radonezh: “The danger, the Prince, is great but our hour has not yet come: prematurely beginner will harm to himself”. V.N. Rudakov analyzed various copies of the “Tale” and concluded that Dmitry of Bobrok-Volyn waited for a certain hour, when it came the “southern flair” marked “a descent of power of the Holy Spirit to the aid of Russians” [26, p. 159].

Thus, referring to the tsar’s procrastination during the storming of Kazan, the chroniclers did not try to show his cowardice but sought to explain to the reader that the tsar displayed wisdom: he acted both according to the advice of St. Sergius and example of his great forefathers and waited for an hour of God’s indulgence obtaining victory over the enemy. At the same time, this is another element that links the events of different ages. This comparison made it clear that Ivan IV completed the work begun by the Russian princes in 1380: the Battle of Kulikovo, standing on the Ugra, and the capture of Kazan are represented as battles of the same war for the Orthodox faith and the acquisition of the Tsardom.

Thus, the results of textual and hermeneutic analysis of sources have demonstrated the limitations or failure of certain research representations and theories. So, we can not make definitive conclusions about the first major clashes between Moscow and Kazan.

Grand canvas of the conflict of 1467–1469 unfolds in the pages of the official chronicles. In appealing to the texts of Scripture and patristic monuments, the Old Russian scribes evaluated the “first” Moscow-Kazan war as “the deed of protection of the Russian lands” giving it a victorious and religious character: the unified Orthodox Russia was opposed to the “accursed Tatars” [4, p. 5–6].

A fundamentally different view of these events was formed in the late 15th century by “Ermolinskaya chronicle”, which does not idealize the war of 1467–1469 neither gives it the all-Russian character. The chronicle regards this war as a clash between the Kazanians and Muscovites as a result of hostile action of the latter. The Novgorod and Ustiug scribes

characterized relations between the two countries approximately in a similar tone. They showed unsuccessful actions of the Moscow voivodes and, on the whole, agreed with the “Ermolinskaya” interpretation of the “first Kazan war” [4, p. 7; 5, p. 18].

Consequently, the circumstances of the war remain unclear as well: one group of sources speaks about successful voivodes’ operations but the other points to the Russian defeat. Similar discrepancies can be identified in the description of events of 1478 and 1487 [7; 1]. In these cases, we can trace “two histories of Rus”, as it wrote Ya.S. Lurie. In other words, the survived conflicting information about the past gave rise to numerous academic debates.

In contrast, the first half of the 16th century is represented mainly by the official chronicles and, to a lesser extent, by the “Kazan history”. The Ermolinskaya, Typographical, Vladimir, Vologda-Perm, and some other chronicles containing an independent information mostly continue their narrative up to the 1520–30’s and mainly describe military actions. However, the official scribes edited a number of accounts contained in the “Ermolinskaya chronicle” and changed the general semantic field of information. As a consequence, practically we do not have an alternative to the annalistic description of the Moscow-Kazan relations of the first half of the 16th century and we can hardly verify this information.

During the strengthening of the Russian State in this period, official chronicles superseded the independent ones. Therefore, researchers were guided to a greater degree by information of the Kremlin Office when assessing the Moscow-Kazan relations and often did not take into account its dependence on the political and religious ideology justified by various means of allegorical narrative. However, in rare cases of maintenance of an independent information, it reveals the unreliability of official reports. A striking example of this is the annalistic representation of the second Ivan IV’s campaign against Kazan, which is refuted by independent accounts [6].

Since the time of Ivan III, the Moscow chroniclers began to use the verb “granted” in relation to Kazan, which meant the spread of sovereign rights of the Grand Duke over the Kazan khanate. However, analysis of the content of provincial chronicles and ambassadorial documents allows us to clarify that this representation by official scribes did not reflect a real political practice but the purposes of the Moscow government in relation to the eastern neighbor. Moreover, during the reign of Basil III and especially of Ivan IV, the use of the word “granted” became widespread in the characterization of the Moscow-Kazan relations.

In the reign of Ivan IV, the whole history of the Russian-Tatar relations was revised in terms of the Moscow-Kazan confrontation. It was then that an idea of the eternal struggle of the Russian people against the Tartar yoke received special development and subsequently became widespread in Russian historiography. Synchronous chroniclers compared the

Kazan campaign in 1552 with the military victories of the Old Testament prophets over the Gentiles, with the battle of Kulikovo and standing on the Ugra. Chroniclers compared the conquest of Kazan with the most important events in world history: with the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the fall of Constantinople in 1453. Similar subjects are contained in the art monuments dedicated to the conquest of Kazan. Therefore, in the minds of the Russian scribes the capture of Kazan marked relief from the centuries-old Tatar threat, the triumph of the Orthodox faith and acquiring of the Tsardom – the beginning of a new historical stage of Russian statehood [10].

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РУССКИЕ ЛЕТОПИСИ О МОСКОВСКО-КАЗАНСКИХ ОТНОШЕНИЯХ: ОПЫТ ГЕРМЕНЕВТИЧЕСКОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ

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В статье анализируется проблема интерпретации летописных известий о московско-казанских отношениях. С помощью герменевтического анализа текстов выявляется семантика сообщений. Приводятся примеры неверного понимания источников. Историки воспринимали буквально известия об

основании Казанского ханства, которые в действительности были построены на основе реминисценций из библейских книг и нуждались в аллегорическом толковании. Аналогичные ошибки были допущены при интерпретации некоторых сообщений о казанских походах 1467, 1487, 1506 и 1552 годов. Следовательно, применение методов герменевтики позволяет существенно дополнить и пересмотреть картину московско-казанских отношений, представленную в трудах историков. В статье демонстрируются и некоторые особенности эволюции русского летописания, повлиявшие на характер репрезентации межгосударственных отношений. Последняя треть XV века освещается, как официальными, так и независимыми (провинциальными) летописными сводами. Причем эти источники описывают события по-разному. В официальных летописях московско-казанская война 1467–1469 гг. представлена как религиозное противостояние, закончившееся победой русских; тогда как независимые источники не придавали этой войне религиозного характера и указали на поражение московских сил. Существенные расхождения выявлены и при описании событий 1478 и 1487 годов. В результате, многие официальные сведения о московско-казанских отношениях последней трети XV века опровергаются независимыми источниками. А первая половина XVI века хорошо представлена только официальными хрониками, так как, по мере укрепления единого Русского государства, независимое летописание пришло в упадок. Таким образом, картина московско-казанских отношений этого периода практически безальтернативна, а данные официальных летописей, лежащие в ее основе, во многих случаях не поддаются верификации.

Ключевые слова: Московское государство, Казанское ханство, межгосударственные отношения, летописи, герменевтика, историография.

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