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Kazan 1000

Kazan in the Muscovite Ideology and the Foundation of a Russian Empire*

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ÖZET

Kazan'ın işgali ve ilhaki Moskova'nın yayılmasında tekil bir öneme sahiptir. İlk defa Moskova Çarlığı kayda değer bir Müslüman nüfusla meskûn topraklara hâkim olmuştur. Kazan'ın ilhaki Rusya imparatorluğu'nun İslâm sahasında daha da ilerlemesinin ilk adımını da olmuştur. Rusya, sınırları içinde meskûn yoğun Müslüman nüfusla, Avrupa'daki muadillerinden ayrıncı bir niteliğe bürünmüştür. Rusya imparatorluğunda bu meskûn İslâm milletlerinin varlığı, uzun soluklu neticelerle Sovyet ve Sovyet sonrası Rusya için bir dizi karmaşık meydan okumaları temsil etmeye devam edecektir.

ANAHTAR SÖZCÜKLER

Kazan, Moskova hakimiyet ideolojisi, Altın Orda, İslam, Kırım, Nogay

ABSTRACT

The conquest and annexation of Kazan was of singular importance to the expansion of the Muscovite realm. For the first time, the Muscovite monarch acquired the territories with the significant Muslim population. The annexation of Kazan was the first step in the foundation of the Russian empire which continued to expand further into the Islamic domain. The large numbers of Muslims residing within the borders of the Russian empire will remain a unique feature which set the Russian empire apart from its European counterparts. The resilience of the Islamic communities within the Russian empire will continue to present a set of complex

*The essay is largely based on parts of chapter 1 of my book *Russia's Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, 2004).

challenges with the long-term consequences for the Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.

KEY WORDS

Kazan, Muscovite ideology, Golden Horde, Nogay, Islam, Crimean

Until the mid-eighteenth century one would search in vain for any memoranda addressing Moscow's foreign policies or any attempt to reason and articulate its attitudes and policies towards the peoples along the southern frontier. It is hardly surprising that, in highly centralized Muscovy, the opinions of local officials were not solicited and any discussion of such issues was limited to a narrow and secretive circle of the tsar's advisors. Nonetheless, the evolution of Russia's perceptions of and attitudes towards its southern neighbors is clearly visible through the changes in the government's use of royal titlature and the diplomatic procedures.

Ivan III was the first one to appropriate the title of tsar, but it was not recognized outside Muscovy, and his son, Vasilii III, reverted to the less controversial title of the grand prince. The elaborate coronation of Ivan IV in 1547 as tsar of all Russia was only one sign of Moscow's renewed confidence and assertiveness. In Roman Catholic Europe only the Pope could bestow the title of a king, and in the steppe world only those with claims to Chinggisid lineage could become khans. To assume the title of the tsar was an act of tremendous diplomatic and political ambition, for it meant to declare the Muscovite ruler equal to the kings of Europe and the khans of the steppe.

But it was also more than that. In a direct challenge to the emperor and the Pope, Ivan IV confirmed the Muscovite rulers' claim to be heirs to Byzantium and his status as emperor and universal Christian ruler who "upheld the true Christian faith." Ivan's assumption of the title of tsar and his subsequent conquests of Kazan and Astrakhan also challenged the status of the Crimean khan as the sole heir to the Golden Horde. Moscow was to be the center of the universe, as the Muscovites knew it, and its ruler was the tsar, the sovereign of all Christians, and the white tsar. In other words, Moscow was the Third Rome, the New Jerusalem, and the New Saray, all at the same time.¹

As a late-comer to the international scene, Moscow was acutely concerned with

¹The idea of the Muscovite princes as heirs to the Chinggisid rulers of the Golden Horde was first developed by one of the founders of the "Eurasian" school, Prince E. Trubetskoi (*Nasledie Chingiskhana* [Berlin, 1925]). Various aspects of this idea were further discussed by George Vernadsky (1969) and Michael Cherniavsky (1959: 459-76). Moscow clearly displayed its attitude toward Rome during its negotiations with the pope's Jesuit envoy to Moscow, Antonio Possevino in 1582. Possevino strongly objected when the Russians referred to the pope as if he were an ordinary priest. He exhorted them that the emperor and other rulers considered the pope a representative of God and the teacher of all Christians (Possevino 1977: 128-29, 173). On the idea of Moscow as the New Israel see, Rowland (1996: 591-614).

its status and prestige, sparing no effort to convince the neighboring monarchs of Moscow's legitimately equal, if not superior, status. One of the most revealing examples was the instructions given to the Muscovite envoy to the Polish king Sigismund II in 1553. If asked why Ivan called himself tsar, the envoy was to respond that it was because Grand Prince Vladimir had been named a tsar when he and the entire Russian land were baptized by the Greek tsar and patriarch, and because Grand Prince Vladimir Monomakh had been called so too, and finally because he, Ivan, had conquered the khanate of Kazan. (Solov'ev 1959-1966: 515)² Even though Moscow's own credo was never formally stated, the government's instructions to the envoy made abundantly clear that Moscow derived its sense of legitimacy from several sources simultaneously: the traditions of Christian Byzantium, Kievan Rus, and the Golden Horde.

The battle over the title of tsar involved no less than the sovereignty of the Russian ruler and his state with its legitimate and recognized boundaries. The Polish king and the Christian West were not easily convinced by Ivan IV's arguments. In 1582, the pope's envoy and mediator between Poland and Muscovy, Antonio Possevino, declined to refer to Ivan as tsar without the pope's consent. In the end, a compromise was reached, whereby Ivan was conceded the title only in the Russian version of the Polish-Muscovite treaty. (Possevino 1977: 135-136)

Convincing its Muslim neighbors, the Crimeans and Ottomans, that Moscow was a sovereign state equal to its western counterparts was also an uphill battle. In 1474, Ivan III dispatched his envoy to the Crimea to negotiate and sign a peace treaty ("yarlyk dokonchatel'nyi"). The envoy was instructed to request that the Crimean khan show him his treaty with Poland-Lithuania and then insist that the Russian monarch's name be referred to in the same fashion as that of the Polish king, i.e.: "I, Mengli Giray, am in peace and friendship with my brother, the king." (SIRIO vol. 41/1: 1,2)³

The Muscovite sovereign's appropriate titulature was to be safeguarded at all costs. In 1515, the Muscovite envoy to the Ottoman Porte was to watch carefully that the title of the Muscovite sovereign was not belittled and that the sultan refer to the grand prince of Moscow as "brother," on the grounds that the grand prince was the brother of the Roman emperor, Maximilian, and other glorious rulers. To check whether the title was rendered correctly, the envoy had to request a Russian translation of the Ottoman text, and take it to the Russian embassy's residence, where

² Jaroslaw Pelenski argued convincingly that Moscow's claims to the Kievan Rus were largely motivated by the necessity to assert and legitimize its right over the Kievan lands vis-a-vis Poland-Lithuania (Pelenski 1977).

³ In general, the envoy was told to agree to Mengli Giray's conditions only after he had bargained on every issue and exhausted every excuse.

he could check it against Moscow's version. (SIRIO vol. 95/7: 113)

Diplomatic protocol also had to reflect the new conquests of the Muscovite rulers. This was not easily accomplished. Thus, in 1655, the Crimeans refused to recognize the tsar's title, which mentioned him as a grand sovereign of Lithuania, Little and White Rus', Volyn' and Podol'e. In response to the Muscovite envoy's protestations, the Crimean official stated that even if it were true in the past, the title was now obsolete ("zadavnelo") and improper. In addition to demanding the appropriate titlature for the Russian ruler, Moscow instructed its envoys to communicate directly with the Crimean khan or sultan and to refuse to kneel in their presence. More than one Muscovite ambassador was thrown out of the courts of various Muslim rulers and Chinese emperors for arrogant and disrespectful behavior. (*Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk. Arkhiv*, F. 1714, op. 1, *Novosel'skii*, A. A. no. 66, *Russko-krymskie otnosheniia v 17 v.*, l. 21; SIRIO, vol. 41/50: 231-36, SIRIO vol.41/58: 264)

The stubbornness of the Muscovite government officials and its envoys abroad was, of course, more than bureaucratic rigidity. It concerned honor, prestige, and dignity, all of which Moscow was eager to acquire. Honor, however, was as much a product of the political culture as anything else, and Moscow's expectations often differed from those of its neighbors. One symbolic and recurring issue was the Muscovite Christian custom of taking off one's hat as a sign of respect. Muslim custom demanded the opposite, to have the head covered. A number of confrontations over this issue testify to a remarkable and persistent Muscovite intransigence. Thus, in 1536, the Nogay chief, Sheidiak, bitterly complained that the grand prince ordered the Nogay envoy in Moscow to remove his hat. To diffuse the tension, Sheidiak suggested that his envoys be allowed to keep their hats on, and the Russian envoys did not need to remove theirs (PDRV vol. 7: 309). In 1604, two Nogay rival chiefs were invited to Astrakhan to iron out their differences. During dinner, when the cup was passed in honor of the Muscovite grand sovereign, one of the Nogay chiefs, Ishterek, who was favored by Moscow, took off his hat and knelt to drink the cup. The other, Jan Araslan, refused to remove his hat, explaining that it was Muslim custom, and that even during prayers Muslims did not remove their hats. The Russians remained unconvinced, and he was forced to follow Ishterek's example. (ChOISR vol. 264, pt. 1: 119-20).

Taking off one's hat in honor of the Russian monarch became first and foremost a symbol of submission and was demanded from Muslims and non-Muslims alike. A comic compromise on the issue was reached between the Russian envoy to the Kalmyks, *diak* I. S. Gorokhov, and the Kalmyk *tayishi*, Daichin in 1661. During the reception Gorokhov suggested that Daichin should stand up and take off his hat when the name of the tsar was mentioned. When Daichin replied that the Kalmyks did not have such a custom, Gorokhov reproached him, saying that monarchs of all states did so, and for Daichin to remain seated with his hat on was to show dishonor.

An embarrassed Daichin explained that he meant no offense. As a compromise, he ordered his interpreter to stand up and continue to translate with his hat off. On this Daichin and Gorokhov agreed (Khodarkovsky 1992 : 69).

The fact that removing one's hat had been seen in Moscow as an important sign of an inferior political status was not lost on some native observers. One of them, the Kabardinian prince, Sunchalei Cherkasskii, who spent several decades in Moscow's service residing in the Muscovite frontier fort of Tersk (Terk) and was well familiar with Muscovite political vocabulary. In 1618, trying to dissuade Moscow from forcing the utsmii of Kaitag, Rustem khan to declare himself the tsar's subject, Sunchalei described the utsmii as an independent ruler who pays no yasak and submits no hostages. And to make sure that Russians make no mistake about Rustem khan's status vis-a-vis other local rulers, he added that Rustem khan did not take off his hat in the presence of shamkhal. (*Russko-dagestanskii otnosheniia* 1958: 64-65)

Honor was commensurate with status and status with presents which were of particular importance in steppe societies. Cycles of mutual dishonor sometimes appeared to be endless. Russian envoys at the courts of the Nogay chiefs were abused when they refused to submit the required presents and payments, and in return the Nogay envoys were thrown out of Moscow. (PDRV vol.10: 210-211; RGADA Nogaiskie dela no.9: 24). That these issues were of utmost sensitivity is clear from an exchange between Ivan IV and the Nogay beg, Urus. In September 1580, Urus informed Ivan that the Nogays were at war with Moscow because Ivan had sent him an envoy at the rank of a service Tatar, whose low social status meant few presents and payments for Urus. Moscow's reply was that it did so because the Nogays had detained the Russian envoys. (RGADA Nogaiskie dela, no. 9: 151, 152.) Again Urus tried to explain his frustration: "Is it not a dishonor when you are sending *deti boyarskie* (a rank of the Muscovite servitors) with payments to my brothers and nephews and [you send] to me a service Tatar? If an envoy is sent from a foreign land to your son and not to you, would you not be offended? And because of this I was angry and detained your envoy for a year, and also because your envoy came to me and addressed me without dismounting from his horse, saying that such was the sovereign's order." Ivan, confident of the Nogays' dependence on Moscow and resolute in insisting on the appropriate treatment of his envoys, remained unmoved by Urus' passionate appeal. He explained that the Russian envoy did not dismount because Urus and his people were also on horses and reminded Urus of the humiliating treatment of the Russian envoy, who had been forcibly taken off his horse and then, like a prisoner, dragged to Urus on foot. (RGADA Nogaiskie dela, no. 10: 3-6, 24-25).

Muscovite diplomacy was extremely prescriptive, rigid, and centralized. The embassy was expected to send regular messages back to Moscow as it proceeded

towards its destination. (SIRIO, vol. 95/16: 269-70). Discouraged from any personal initiative in negotiations, the envoy carried with him prepared versions ("spiski") of the proposed treaty. He was to submit and insist on the acceptance of the first version. While appearing to negotiate, the envoy, after much bargaining, was merely to replace one fully prepared version of the treaty with another until, finally, one of the versions of the treaty was agreed to by the other side. (SIRIO, vol. 41/1: 5-7; vol. 95/7: 118-123)

The diplomatic terminology used by Moscow in relations with its neighbors in the south often overlapped. Some terms were of Russian origin (e.g. *rota*, used at the time of Kievan Rus', was an oath and pledge of friendship; it was later replaced by *pravda*), some were inherited from the Golden Horde (e.g. *yarlyk*—a Mongol word for any written document), and others were of a distinctly Islamic origin and were borrowed from the Crimean khanate (e.g. *shert*— derived from Arabic "shart" and originally used to designate a treaty between Moscow and the Crimea). The term "shert" became prevalent in the early sixteenth and remained in usage until the mid-eighteenth century, signifying an agreement between the Russian government and all the Muslim and other non-Christian peoples in Russia's southern and eastern frontier regions.

Traditionally, signing the shert required the parties involved to take an oath in accordance with their religious rites. The animists were to call upon their spirits, the Muslims had to swear an oath on Quran, the Buddhist Kalmyks on their book of prayers, and the grand prince was to kiss a cross laid over the agreement. (Bakhrushin 1952-1959, 3, pt. 2: 152; SIRIO vol. 95/36: 666)⁴ Throughout the sixteenth century, however, the meaning of shert evolved from that of a symmetrical diplomatic relationship to a manifestation of subservience to the tsar. In the eyes of Moscow, shert now signified an oath of allegiance of the new and faithful subjects of the tsar. Conscious of its spectacular rise, Moscow viewed the Golden Horde's numerous successors as repugnant in their religion, lacking the essential trappings of sovereign states, and increasingly dependent on Moscow's economy and military might. By the mid-sixteenth century, Christian Muscovy was making increasingly clear its superior status through diplomatic language even before confirming it with military victories.

Both the Christian rulers in the West and the Crimean khans remained unconvinced by Ivan's ambitious pretension. Antonio Possevino advised the Pope Gregory XIII to indulge the Russian prince and refer to him as tsar, despite Ivan's arrogation of the title, because "the hope of winning this Prince and the huge realm he controls to the better cause ever leads to further efforts and does not wear out all our pens." (Possevino 1977: 57) The Crimean khans continued to regard themselves as the

⁴ In the sixteenth century, a copy of the Quran was kept in the Kremlin for the Tatars and other Muslims to be sworn on it (Keenan 1967: 553).

sole and supreme successor to the Golden Horde and always referred to themselves as “the great khan of the Great Horde” (“velikoi ordy velikii tsar”) in letters to the grand prince. The latter neither objected nor attempted to insist on the status of tsar in his correspondence with the Crimea. When not at war with each other, Muscovite grand princes and Crimean khans referred to each other as brothers and friends, while not forgetting the religious divide—“to the sovereign of many Christians, to my brother” wrote the Crimean khan to Ivan IV in 1580. (RGADA Krymskie dela, f. 123, kn. 15, l. 396; kn. 9, ll. 2, 30).

As long as the Crimea represented a serious military threat, the Muscovite rulers brought up the issue of their status occasionally and gingerly. The story was quite different when it concerned the Nogays, who by the middle of the sixteenth century had grown increasingly dependent on Moscow. In the late fifteenth century, the Nogay ruler Abak, underlining both the difference and the parity between them, wrote respectfully to Ivan III: “I am the Muslim ruler, and you are the Christian one.” (SIRIO vol. 41/23: 81-82.) But by the mid-sixteenth century, the titulature and the tone of the Nogay letters changed. The Nogay chiefs, instructed by the Muscovite envoys, exalted the grand prince in their letters to Moscow. In 1548, in addition to “the ruler of all Christians,” the Nogays began to address Ivan IV as the “white tsar,” a title which in the world of steppe diplomacy was reserved for the heirs of the Golden Horde. (PDRV vol. 8: 82.)⁵

Of course, only those belonging to the Chinggisid dynasty were considered the Horde’s legitimate heirs. Many pretenders, despite their military and political acumen, were foiled in their ambitions, when they failed to prove Chinggisid origins. It was with the purpose to buttress Ivan’s claims and simultaneously to aggrandize his own status that the Muscovite loyalist among the Nogays, Belek Bulat mirza wrote to Ivan: “in your land you claim to be the legitimate (“priamoi”) heir to Chinggis [khan] and call yourself the legitimate Sovereign and Tsar, and here I am the son of Edige.” He proceeded to lavish on Ivan other sonorous, if seemingly contradictory, titles: “the son of Chinggis, the white prince, and the Christian Orthodox Sovereign.” (PDRV, vol. 8: 316-17). Twenty years later, the Nogay beg, Urus referred to Ivan as “the sovereign of all the Christians, the grand prince and the white tsar” in the same breath (RGADA Nogaiskie dela, no. 10: 87).

Because the great majority of Nogay letters survive only in copies of the Russian translations, reasonable doubt exists as to whether the tsar’s titles were actually written

⁵ In 1537, Ivan IV was addressed as the “white kniaz” and later the “white tsar” (PDRV vol. 8: 32). The meaning of the title “the white tsar” has been a subject of some speculation. I subscribe to a view that it was used to refer to a ruler in charge of the western territories of the former Chinggis empire (“the right wing”), and thus a successor to the khans of the Golden Horde, cf. Iudin (1983); Trepavlov (1993).

by the Nogays or only rendered as such by subservient Muscovite translators and interpreters. Regardless, Moscow's continuous efforts to appropriate various titles were intended to enhance its image and provide further legitimacy for its sovereign. The Russian tsar was to be the non plus ultra: a successor to Byzantine emperors and Chinggisid khans, a Christian ruler of the west and "white tsar" of the east. The importance attributed by Moscow to the Golden Horde's heritage was demonstrated resplendently when upon the conquest of Kazan in 1552, Astrakhan in 1554, and Siberia in 1580, the crowns of the respective khanates were transferred to the royal treasury in Moscow.⁶ It was only in the early seventeenth century that the demise of the Nogays and consolidation of Moscow's supremacy in the Golden Horde's former realm rendered Moscow's claim to the Horde's legitimacy obsolete.

The conquest and annexation of Kazan was of singular importance to the expansion of the Muscovite realm. For the first time, the Muscovite monarch acquired the territories with the significant Muslim population. These Muslims could not be expelled or deported as it happened in the 15th century Spain because of the fear of the Ottoman military retaliation on the one hand, and on the other hand a concern of antagonizing numerous other Muslim peoples yet to be conquered. Neither could Moscow effectively convert to Christianity and acculturate the Kazan Tatars and other Muslims, as it successfully did previously with numerous animist peoples.

Thus, the annexation of Kazan was the first step in the foundation of the Russian empire which continued to expand further into the Islamic domain. The large numbers of Muslims residing within the borders of the Russian empire remained the most important factor setting the Russian empire apart from its European counterparts. The resilience of the Islamic communities within the Russian empire will continue to present a set of complex challenges with the long-term consequences for the Soviet and post-Soviet Russia.

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⁶*Istoricheskoe opisanie drevnego Rossiiskogo muzeia pod nazvaniem masterskoi i Oruzheinoi palaty* (Moscow: Tip. Mosk. Univ., 1807), 18-26.

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