

Value of Foreign Written Sources in Research of the Russian-horde Political and Legal Communications in the XIII-XV Centuries

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Abstract

There are five main positions in assessment of consequences of the middle-aged Russian-Horde communications. Objective research of the Russian-Horde relations has to include the analysis of all set of communications and a right choice of system of sources. The authors consider significance of foreign sources for researches of the Russian-Horde communication, their objectiveness and informative value. These are four types of sources: chronicles; literary works of medieval authors; stories of travellers; historical maps. These types include European, Persian, Arab, Mongolian and Chinese sources. Having analysed the content of many certain sources in relation to the Russian-Horde communications, the authors assess them as sources for research of the Russian-Horde communications.

Keywords: Medieval Russia, Golden Horde, historical sources, chronicles, epos, reports of medieval travellers, medieval maps

1. Introduction

The political history of Russia in the XIII-XV centuries was defined by the relations between Russia and the Horde. Assessment of these relationship and their consequences for Russia is one of the most debatable subjects. Different authors assess them in plenty of works differently, sometimes opposite. They are assessed as equal allied interstate communications (Gumilev, 1989); as equal allied intrastate communications when Russian lands were a part of the Horde (Vernadsky, 1966; Trubetskoi, 1991; Hara-Davan, 2003); as subordinated for Russia and very pernicious for its population and historical development (Nasonov, 1940; Kargalov, 1967; Grekov, 1950); as subordinated and pernicious for Russia in its sense, but in historical prospect they helped Russia to mobilize, strengthen a power of vertical and to become stronger (Karamzin, 1993; Kostomarov, 1863); as not having any significant impact on historical destiny of Russia (Klyuchevsky, 1987; Solovyov, 1988; Fennell & Illingworth, 1983). In addition to the above, the Russian-Horde relations assessment matters not only for historical science but also modern policy. Professor of Harvard University Richard Pipes writes: "If Mongols have not affected Russia or if this influence has not concerned the political sphere, Russian commitment to the autocratic power in the most extreme, patrimonial form should be recognized as something congenital and eternal. In that case it is rooted in Russian souls, religion or any other source that cannot be changed. But if Russia, on the contrary, has borrowed the political system from overseas aggressors, there is the chance of internal changes because the Mongolian influence can be substituted with the Western one" (Pipes, 1952); and "...perception of Russia as a direct successor of the empire of Mongols or even as the country which has endured their strong influence, allows to prove legitimacy of the Russian power in the huge territory from Baltic and the Black Sea to the Pacific Ocean and over many people occupying it" (Pipes, 1952).

Nevertheless, authors, making inconsistent assessments, often use the same sources, selecting events and facts according to their position. For example, defending the theory of the union of Russia and the Horde they dissemble numerous campaigns of the Horde armies to Russia. Besides, mistakes can arise in sources. Sources have to be mutually supplemented and checked by independent parties, better by foreign ones.

In this article the authors consider significance of foreign sources for researches of the Russian-Horde communication, their comparative objectiveness and informative value.

2. Material and Research Methodology

Foreign sources are divided into four types according to their origin: chronicles; literary works of medieval authors; stories of travellers; historical maps. They are analysed separately. These types include European, Persian, Arab, Mongolian and Chinese sources and in every type their analysis is separated. The article has the analysis of the information volume in considered sources in the context of their comparative usefulness for research and assessment of the Russian-Horde relations.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Foreign Chronicles

The source of information, narrating relatively detailed, consistently and chronologically about diverse events in historical dynamics, is necessary tool for research of political connections. Such source is chronicles. Nevertheless, chronicles have their own shortcomings. The Persian author of chronicles Rashid-ad-Din writes about these shortcomings: "...the author hopes firmly for comprehensive favour of those great people who will read this book and in all those places where there will be mistakes, defects, cases of errors and delusions, they will take my apologies" (Hrapachevsky, 2009, p. 51). Having said so, he explains the reasons of mistakes. A chronicler gets already distorted data. It is explained by medieval imperfection of fixation and accounting of information, based on people's memory. (Hrapachevsky, 2009, p. 49); secondly, there is an intended lie from the chronicler (Hrapachevsky, 2009, p. 49). Thirdly, censorship of governors can be the reason (Hrapachevsky, 2009, p. 46).

Moreover, chronicles pay not enough attention to other countries; they cover the news only in the context of their country.

Foreign chronicles mostly leave the Russian-Horde relations unattended due to huge distances to the Horde and Russia and lack of technical capabilities to transfer the information. Messages from remote countries were late for months and years. Chinese author of "The official chronicle of the Yuan dynasty" writes: "...to go from the capital for ten thousands li. An express courier on horses reaches the capital in more than 200 days, and for this reason it is impossible to receive exact details of all customs of the cities and areas" (Hrapachevsky, 2003, p. 221).

However there is useful information about the Russian-Horde communications in foreign chronicles.

The Arab and Persian sources consider the Horde as enemy of Ulus Hulagu, and, as ally of Egypt in wars against Ulus Hulagu. They write about the Horde in a context of wars. These chronicles are interesting by messages of Rashid-ad-Din about participation of the Russian soldiers in the war of khan Tokai and Nogai (Tizengauzen, 1941), about participation of the Russian soldiers in Tokhtamysh's campaigns against Tamerlan (The Secret History of the Mongols, 1941). Sharaf ad-Din Ali Yazdi has the information about Tamerlan's campaign to Moscow and a devastation of all its area (The Secret History of the Mongols, 1941), which testifies: this author and his readers perceived Russia as a part of the Horde which had been ruined by Tamerlan.

The Mongolian and Chinese sources narrate about Genghis Khan's life, formation of the Mongolian empire, about its first khans, their military campaigns, about the state and military organization of the empire. It is reported briefly about the Horde in a context of the main subject of chapters. The data about power and management organization in Mongolia, about ceremonies and symbols of status in the structure of operating elite or officials, allow transferring these data similarly to the state created by Mongols - the Golden Horde.

There are little Mongolian sources. Mongols were mostly the illiterate nomads heroizing nomadic life. Even khans of the Mongolian states lived in yourts. In "The Secret History of the Mongols" (Edigu, 2006), Genghis Khan's house is called "yourt-palace". Only few Mongols that were integrated into the Chinese culture were literate.

The main Mongolian source - "The Secret History of the Mongols" was written in 1240 and is the valuable text on formation of the Mongolian empire and its early history. But it gives not enough information on the Golden Horde that appeared in December, 1241. The legend includes interesting information on the militarized organization of the Mongolian state.

It is also curious to know about the forms of exploitation of conquered forest people by Mongols. In the Russian science there is an opinion that Russian forests were not interesting for Mongols, and they only collected a tribute in Russia, without interfering with management. In "The Secret History of the Mongols" it is reported about the precedent of a direct control of forest areas in the Mongolian state: "The forest people should not have the right of free movement. Do not even dare to think about unauthorized transitions!" (Edigu, 2006).

The public power of khans over Russian lands can be seen in the text "Altan Tobchi" by Lubsan Danzan dated by the middle of the XVII century. There is the following phrase there: "The descendant of Chegataya was the Russian white tsar" (Hrapachevsky, 2003) (it is evident that the author confused Chegataya with Dzhuchi).

The Chinese chronicle "History of Yuan" was written in 1370. It is the set of accurately structured data about the Mongolian empire and its uluses (Hrapachevsky, 2003). The most remarkable for research of the Russian-Horde communications is frequently repeated information about golden paizas with the head of a tiger which were carried on a belt by tsysyatskies, and also about silver paizas which were carried by sotniks. This information is useful for definition of the formal sovereignty of khans over Russian lands, whose princes regularly received same paizas from the khan.

The information from "History of Yuan" about the register of taxable population in Russia and the Caucasus in 1253 is applicable in research of the taxation of Russian lands by the Mongolian state. In the section "Treatises", in the chapter "Army" it is said about the Russian regiment in the guard of Yuan emperors. Probably, it testifies state communications of the Mongolian empire and the conquered Russian lands - unity of system of defence and foreign policy.

3.2 Epic and Literary Works

This type of sources has its own shortcomings. First, its information is fragmentary. It reports about the events that were awarded with writers' attention: about large battles, about bright episodes of life of political and religious figures. But it does not give any information on a set of events at large, does not allow to make generalizations. Secondly, this type of sources does not correspond to the principle of objectivity. It is a subjective statement of events with literary exaggerations, embellishments.

Value of such sources for scientific researches is the following: they contain judgments, representations of people in concrete time and an event; brightly transfer the emotional atmosphere.

The epos "Edigu" from non-Russian works is rather significant for the analysis of the Russian-Horde communications. It is presented in national culture of a number of the Turkic people. The work is a little useful as the historical source. In writing the main character kills a giant Kara-Tiina Alypa; the chopped-off heads talk twice in the epos; Edigu, having taken the enemy for feet, kills ten thousand soldiers by the enemy, etc. The only interesting information in it is reasoning of heroes on value of blood for the governor. (Carpine, 1838). Edigu, who was not a descendant of Genghis Khan, could not be the legitimate governor of the Horde and a contender for ruling it. The sense of the literary work "Edigu" is in it and in the author's belief that the Horde destroyed itself with civil strives. After all even Tamerlan could not win against it without the aid of the Horde soldier Edigu. Not the facts, but this judgment of events is the message of the epos' author.

For historical research this reasoning, supplementing data of the main historical sources, serve as confirmation of legitimacy of ruling the Horde only by representatives of a family of Genghis Khan. From the Russian chronicles we know that Russia refused to recognize the power of khans usurping the power in the Horde, military leaders of not an imperial sort, but recognized khans Dzhuchidi. Respectively, Russia identified itself as possession of legitimate khans of the Horde.

3.3 Travellers' Reports

These sources are insufficiently informative for serious researches and can be applied only as additions to a material of the Russian chronicles. Firstly, these sources are fragmentary. Secondly, authors of these sources often distorted reality.

For Europeans, Mongols were a potential aggressor, for the Persian authors - the two-century enemy of their country; for the Arab authors, the Horde was the ally. It engaged texts of travellers. Also, the literary lie of authors took place. In the medieval world with irrational thinking, the lie could be very freakish. For example, in Plano Karpini's text, there is the record that he and his fellow travellers met people with a small mouth disabled to eat food. These people ate only a smell of boiled meat. He tells about the people who had ends of feet as bulls have, and their faces are doggish (Marco Polo, 1888). Marco Polo has a text about people with the dog heads.

Reports of the European travellers writing about the Russian-Horde communications can be used for their research. Marco Polo writes about Russia that it is the country in the North, that orthodox Christians live there, and that they render tribute to the Tatar governor. There is the information about "gold dshchitsas" received from a Mongolian khan by Marco Polo and his companions. They allowed travelling freely across his lands, provided with food, horses, sleeping accommodation, guides from the population. There is a similarity with paizas which were applied to the khan's letters for Russian princes and metropolitans. Marco Polo defines the political status of Russia as the province - "De la province de Rutheni" (Rubruquis, 1888). The majority of the visited states Marko

called "kingdom", "country". Following territories are defined as provinces: Tibet, Khurasan - territories subordinated to Mongols. He calls Bengal the province, right after the story about how it "was subdued by the great Khan". It is possible testification of Marko's perception of Russia as a part of the Mongolian empire. And it is accepted by him from perception of Russia by Horders and Russians with whom he communicated.

Traveling to the Mongolian lands in the XIII century Plano Karpini and William of Rubruck give information about Mongolian lifestyle, customs, food, appearance of Mongols, their religion, their governors, warfare (Hreberstein, 2007). And also about Genghis Khan's and Batu's campaigns; about governors of the states subordinated to Mongols they saw in Mongolia; about custom of clarification - the pass between two fires. There is little information on the Russian-Horde relations. There are short reports about the trip of the prince Yaroslav to Mongolia, that there were khan's officials in the Southern Russia. There is a report that Mongols took from Russian lands a tribute at a rate of the tenth share from everything, and the tribute was collected by deputies from the Horde.

"Notes on Muscovite Affairs" by Sigismund von Herberstein who has visited Moscow at the beginning of the XVI century, has data about humiliating to the Russian princes meeting ceremony during submission to the Horde when they left the city towards the khan's ambassador and met him on their knees (Map of Muscovy, 2014).

The Chinese source of the 20th of the XIII century "Meng-da Baye-lu" describes symbols of Mongolian power and the submission, similar in Genghisids' states, for example the meeting ceremony of the khan's ambassadors is similar to the described by Herberstein (Jenkinson, 1562).

3.4 Medieval Maps

Ancient maps could be an important source for research of political connections of the Horde and Russia. Owing to specifics of maps as a historical source, they can help to reveal one of aspects of the Russian-Horde communications - to confirm, or to disprove the state unity of the Horde and Russia. However, the feature of ancient cartography is that maps represent an absolutely not informative source on a problem of political connections. These are maps of travellers and merchants; they are not political in modern understanding.

The feature of ancient maps is that there are no interstate borders like any contours or colour designations. The states known to originators and simply areas in the states, having the name, are uniformly designated on these maps. Therefore it is impossible to draw a conclusion that the territory having designation was the state on the basis of medieval maps.

For example, territories with special landscape or territories which population differs from the population of adjacent territories according to religious, ethnic characteristics, lifestyle or housekeeping are designated like the countries. Designation for everything are similar - the verbal name of the territory written on the map. For example, MESCHORA, CORELIA, MORDVA, PERMIA, PETIGORSKI, CRIMIA were designated on maps of the XVI century by Sigismund von Herberstein (Sigismund, 1852), (Hreberstein, 2007) and Anthony Jenkinson (Jenkinson, 1988), from which the last was the state only, other are tribes and landscape and geographical designations .

Respectively, designation of Russia under own name - ROSSIA (for example, in "The Catalan atlas" (Cresques' Catalan Atlas 1387, 2014)) or ROSSIA, ROSSIAROSSA (for example, on Fra Mauro's map) (Fra Mauro - world map 1459, 2014) on all maps of the period of the Russian-Horde relations - is not the testification of Russian independency from the Horde.

It is possible to draw a conclusion that any territory belonged to a certain state only if the name of this state written on the map is located in the corresponding territory. There was no inscription of TARTARIA or the Horde on any of the many maps studied by us. Therefore, we do not have any cartographical testification on the belonging of Russian lands to the Horde.

This belonging is not confirmed and not disproved by medieval maps.

4. Conclusion

Foreign sources of all types can be useful in researches of the Russian-Horde relations and any significant events of the Russian history of the XIII-XV centuries, but they can serve no more than as additional sources to texts of the Russian chronicles. It is impossible to do real scientific research, to draw scientific conclusions on their basis exclusively. It is possible to confirm data of the Russian chronicles with their help because reproduced historical events can be considered rather reliable only if their data are confirmed by different sources independent from each other.

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