

The kinship terms and the establishment of early medieval dynasties

In my Ph. D. thesis I consider the indirect usage of kinship terms in Hypatian Codex from the view of every historical situation around which these terms are concentrating. This approach avoids the broad generalization of previous theories that are not without its contradictions.

The dialogs between members of Rurik dynasty in the text of Hypatian Codex are attributed to the most ancient form of language style¹. Therefore the indirect usage of kinship terms that contained in this text is the object of special attention. These terms have drawn scholar's attention from the beginning of XIX century. Sergey M. Solovyov has based on this phenomenon his kinship theory² that was subjected to criticism by J.A. Goljashkin in his fundamental investigation of indirect usage kinship terms³. He has suggested another explanation, based on the political alliances and personal authority, which entail the usage of kinship terms. Today there is another wave of scholar interest to the term-analysis as a tool to investigate the Old Russian society⁴. A reassessment of kinship terms suggest that there is no way to look for any system regularity, and the reexamination of the separate groups of cases, which are united by one historical situation or person is more appropriate.

In the Old Russian Chronicles there are four kinship terms that are using with regularity: "son", "brother", "elder brother" and "father". As all Russian princes were the members of one dynasty, the terms "brother" and "elder brother" are more natural and have used very common. The terms "father" and "son" were less common and have used in more specific situations. There are some peculiarities of indirect kinship terms usage in Old Russian Chronicles:

- The indirect usage of terms of kinship is the feature of the dialogs and messages between princes. In the "author's speech" the terms of the real kin ties take their place.
- The first and second cousins could name each other as "brother" without any special reason.
- The indirect kinship terms don't reconstruct real family ties: the real son of the one prince, who is "elder like father" can be the "son" to the same person.⁵ Prince that address to another "father" may be called "brother" in the answer⁶. This last case has complicated the theory that explains kinship terms as a marker of social rank.

¹ Зализняк А.А. Древнерусские энклитики. Языки славянских культур. М. 2008.

² С.М. Соловьев. История отношений между князьями Рюрикова дома. М. 2003.

³ Голяшкин А.Я. Очерк личных отношений между князьями Киевской Руси в половине XII в. Рефераты, читанные в 1896 и 1897 гг. М., 1898. Т. 2.

⁴ Лукин П.В. Древнерусские «вои». IX – начало XII в. // Средневековая Русь. М., 2004. Вып. 5. С 5-58; Стефанович П.С. Понятие верности в отношениях князя и дружины на Руси в XII – XIII в. // Древняя Русь: вопросы медиевистики. 2008. №1(31)б с72-82.

⁵ This scheme could be seen in the addresses between Iziaslav Mstislavich and Vsevolod Olgovich: « старъи мене ѿко ѿ » (PSRL, Vol. II, St. 323) and Iziaslav Mstislavich and the son of Vsevolod, Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich: « ѿнь же оу тако... » (PSRL, Vol. II, St. 343).

⁶ As in this correspondence between Iziaslav Mstislavich and Geza II: « ны же брата гадаи ѿ семь » (PSRL, Vol. II, St 444), « король же Володимеру ѿпущае его ѿ ю моему и своему брату Издславу... » (PSRL, Vol. II, St. 407)

- These terms tended to be used together as a kinship emphasis: “brother and son”⁷, “brother, elder brother, brother-in-law, elder like father”⁸ and others.
- Most of kinship terms have been closely associated with one historical case or person. This fact introduced into evidence of personal nature of these terms.
- Kinship vocabulary has had broad distribution in addressing to the relatives by marriage
- In most cases when kinship terms have been used, they are accompanied with a military treaty. The words, that attended these treaties, contained the kinship vocabulary too.

One of the most representative groups of kinship terms surrounds the activity of Iziaslav Mstislavich. In the beginning of the conflict with his uncle Yuri Dolgorukiy he has reorganized his family (its male members) into an accomplished military alliance. His brother Rostislav Mstislavich promptly reacts to any motion of Yuri, his half-brother Vladimir Mstislavich was responsible for the negotiations with the friendly members of Arpads by the reason that his blood sister Euphrosyne has been married to King Géza II of Hungary.

The eldest son of Iziaslav - Mstislav Iziaslavich participates in every battle or military march of his father. Another son – Jaroslav Iziaslavich rules in the one of the most important north cities Veliky Novgorod. The high level of coordination and allocation of responsibilities in this alliance, suggests an idea to use this model to another allies, including them in the system and called them by the kinship terms. Iziaslav and Vladimir Davidovichi became “brothers” to Iziaslav Mstislavich. In the peace agreement between these tree princes we can see the very notable words “to be as one brother”⁹ The young king of Hungary Géza II has named as “brother” too¹⁰. Here we meet one of the most difficult cases because in the answers to Iziaslav Géza II uses the term “father”¹¹. Only in one situation Iziaslav addresses to him with the term “son”¹².

In the invitation to take part in the struggle with Yuri Vladimirovich Iziaslav uses a word “brothers” to another group of foreign rulers: Bolesław IV the Curly, High Duke of Poland and his brothers Mieszko III the Old and Henry of Sandomierz¹³, but their part in the further developments were inessential. Vsevolod Olgovich (he was married to the elder sister of Iziaslav Mstislavich) got the set of terms: “brother and brother-in-law, elder brother, elder like the father”¹⁴. This address has been given after the death of Vsevolod and has had for an object the idea of legitimate succession the title of ruler

⁷ « _____ ты же мои братъ» (PSRL, Vol. II, St. 418).

⁸ «Всеволода есми имѣлъ въ правду **брата старишаго** занеже **ми братъ и зать** _____», PSRL, Vol. II, St.323

⁹ «и бѣти всимъ за **одинъ братъ**» (PSRL, Vol. II, St. 366).

¹⁰ PSRL, Vol. II, St 444.

¹¹ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 407.

¹² PSRL, Vol. II, St. 448.

¹³ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 385.

¹⁴ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 323.

of Kiev. For the son of Vsevolod Sviatoslav has been used the term “son”¹⁵. Position of Sviatoslav is the hardest one, because in both sides he has closest male relatives – his uncles.

The most important figure among the allies of Iziaslav Mstislavich was his uncle Viacheslav Vladimirovich. Iziaslav offer him to be his “father” in the initial period of the conflict, but Viacheslav prefer to keep himself with Yuri. When his nephew began to take the leading stand, Viacheslav concluded this agreement. The chronicle gives a detailed account of this ceremony.¹⁶ After some time position of Iziaslav and Viacheslav become more stable and they invite Rostislav Mstislavich to Kiev. There they repeated the agreement, but now between Rostislav and Viacheslav. Further these three princes acted together. Obviously, these magnificent ceremonies were necessary for the securing the Kiev under the rule of main members of Iziaslav alliance (the roles of “sons” give Iziaslav and Rostislav more rights to stay in Kiev, because Viacheslav was the elder member of Monomachovichi).

When Yuri begins to lose his positions, former enemies Vladimirko of Galicia and Sviatoslav Olgovich also became the “brothers” of Iziaslav¹⁷. Earlier, after the quarrel with his father, Rostislav Yuryevich was named by Iziaslav “brother and son”¹⁸, another one son of Yuri, Gleb says significant phrase “you are my father as Yuri is my father”¹⁹.

Another group of kinship terms surrounds the description of political activity of Rurik Rostislavich, Roman Mstislavich, Vsevolod Yuryevich and Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich. As Iziaslav Mstislavich has successfully used the dynastic marriages of his sisters, so Rurik Rostislavich has used the marriage ties of his daughters. One of them, Predslava, gets married to Roman Mstislavich that was the reason for Rurik to use the term “son” to Roman several times.

Another Rurik’s daughter gets married to Gleb Svyatoslavich, son of the elder prince of Rurikovichi. Rurik and Svyatoslav have made a set of marches against Polovtsians and address to each other “brother and father of the son (daughter)-in-law”²⁰ very frequently.

Brother of Gleb, Mstislav Svyatoslavich gets married to sister-in-law of Vsevolod Yuryevich, so father of Gleb, Sviatoslav Vsevolodovich has named him “son and brother”²¹ in spite of the military might of Vsevolod. Another daughter of Vsevolod, Verhuslava gets married to Rostislav Rurikovich, son of Rurik Rostislavich so Rurik calls Vsevolod “brother”²². Thus we can see an ordered scheme: three politically strongest princes of ruling dynasty have tied with relationships by marriage (of their daughters, sons and sister-in-law). Another very ambitious prince, Roman Rostislavich is the son-in-law and named “son” to the one of them, Rurik Rostislavich. This system really works to support the

¹⁵ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 448.

¹⁶ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 399-400

¹⁷ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 376, 462.

¹⁸ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 366-367.

¹⁹ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 395.

²⁰ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 653.

²¹ PSRL, Vol. II, St. 619.

²² PSRL, Vol. II, St. 685.

consent in resolving inner problems and maintaining the unity against Polovtsians. The interests of members of ruling dynasty were joined with the unity of dynastic matrimonies and were strengthened by using kinship terms on the etiquette tradition of addressing. Rurik Rostislavich has received two politically strongest “brothers” – one of them, Sviatoslav was the elder in members of the kin and another one Vsevolod hold the real military might, but hadn’t wishes to rule in Kiev. Owing to this Rurik was able to organize the union and remained among the top of ruling princes, spend prolonged time as a ruler of Kiev.

That is not the only groups that are filled with kinship terms. Another gathering of them surrounded the activity of Galician princes Vladimir Vasilkovich and his cousin Mstislav Davidovich (Their dialogs preserved in Galician-Volhynian chronicle that also is a part of Hypatian Codex). Similar group can be founded in Laurentian Codex in the dialogs between sons of Vsevolod Yuryevich.

The single cases of using kinship vocabulary can be also very significant. In the beginning of the Primary chronicle we can find an invitation from Vladimir the Great to his brother’s (there was a military conflict between them) voivode Blud. Vladimir offers him to leave his patron Jaropolk and “be as a father for him”²³. This episode is a cause for a short scholar’s bewilderment. But this case can be clearly explained by the analogy with Scandinavian sagas. In Heimskringla, two leaders of the opponents of Olaf Haraldson – Einar Thambarskelfir and Kalf Arnason went over to Magnus, son of Olaf after the death of his father in the battle of Stiklestad. They make a journey to Rus’ and offer him their support. As the guarantee of their faithfulness they become his “fathers”²⁴. In both situations it was not mentioned the real parent care, but rather loyalty to the former foe. In some sense their position was similar to hostages. This isn’t the only situation that has a close resemblance to the Scandinavian occurrences and further investigations can give more results.

This reassessment of the indirect usage of kinship terms in Old Russian Chronicles brings up important issues. Although the proposed model isn’t without its shortages, there is a set of essential peculiarities that it explains more clearly than traditional model of social hierarchy. The personal character of kinship terms usage shows how a very ancient conceptions of kinship commitments can work in the political and military events up to the XIII century. As we have seen the real mechanism of its action the charges of the real kinsmen become more understandable too.

Sources

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²³ PSRL, Vol. I, St. 76.

²⁴ Heimskringla, Saga Ólafs hins helga, chapter 251, Sagan af Magnúsi góða, chapter 23.

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