

**Kasimovskoe khanstvo (1445–1552): Ocherki istorii.** By BULAT RAKHIMZIANOV. Pp. 207. Kazan: Tatarskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo. 2009. ISBN: 978 5 298 01721 3

Nearly a century and a half has passed since Vel'iaminov-Zernov wrote his magisterial four-volume work on the Kasimov Khanate. Bulat Rakhimzianov has now written a worthy (and much shorter) successor, updating the work of Vel'iaminov-Zernov in the light of his own views and much modern scholarship. The book is an adaptation of Rakhimzianov's dissertation, something clear from the introduction and the first of the three chapters, which is a literature review of virtually everything written about the Kasimov Khanate from the mid-nineteenth to the early twenty-first century. Although this is not the most fascinating of reads, it grounds the reader interested in following Rakhimzianov's research remarkably well, detailing the relevant sources, and showing the influences of not only his education in Kazan, but also his time at Harvard University's Davis Center.

It is in chapters two and three that Rakhimzianov develops the main topic of his work — the place of the Kasimov Khanate in post-Golden Horde politics in Eastern Europe, from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-sixteenth century. Although the conclusion deals with what Rakhimzianov terms the second phase of Kasimov (post-1552), this is clearly secondary in his estimation of the political situation, at least to his own interests. The text is organized into discreet sections within these two chapters, each of which builds on one another to tell the story of Kasimov, its formation, its main political players, and its foreign relationships. Rakhimzianov's main idea is that the Kasimov Khanate played an important role both in familiarizing Muscovy with the administration of Muslim vassal states (the Roman designation *foederatus* seems to fit Kasimov quite accurately in this description), and in acting as a stalking horse for Muscovy in its relationships with the various post-Golden Horde states, particularly Kazan and Crimea.

The chapters proceed largely chronologically, but are not simply a narrative history of the actions of Kasimov, though they partly fulfil that function as well. Rakhimzianov weaves in both subtle and outright challenges to existing interpretations (e.g. over the question of the founding date of Kasimov, pp. 47–65), argued ably from the primary sources. This excellent use of archival material is true for his contentions more generally, which are invariably supported with a recitation of the various pieces of evidence, from chronicles to treaty documents. This care with the evidentiary base extends to what Rakhimzianov acknowledges he cannot know, such as the involvement of some foreign powers (or Muscovy) in the role of Kasimov's succession (p. 132). In addition, Rakhimzianov discusses the internal workings of Kasimov in depth, including land ownership and service (*votchina* vs. *pomest'e*), ethnic composition, religion, and even diet (fish playing a surprisingly large part in it; pp. 88–89). One of the most interesting aspects that he brings to life — for the non-Kasimov specialist, in particular — is the portrayal of the intra-Russian conflict during the reign of Vasiliï II. The Kasimov point of view on this conflict brings new and fascinating issues to light and helps situate Russian history in the larger history of Eastern Europe, in contrast to the triumphalist account of the ascent of Moscow to greatness that one so often reads. This also advances the author's argument about the important role of Kasimov among other polities in Eastern Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The feeling one gets from all this material is that Rakhimzianov knows the Kasimov Khanate inside-out and passes that on ably in a very concise 170 pages of text, which are followed by a helpful timeline of major events, a list of terms, and genealogical tables. The book's utility to the larger world of Russian historians and others could have been increased, however, with a full index which would have allowed readers to dip into the material without engaging the entirety of it. Setting aside such a small flaw, this work is a valuable contribution to the historiography of the post-Golden Horde world of Eastern Europe.

*Wittenberg University*

CHRISTIAN RAFFENSPERGER