

Bulat Rakhimzianov. *Kasimovskoe khanstvo (1445–1552 gg.). Ocherki istorii.* Kazan': Tatar. kn. izd-vo, 2009. 207 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Cloth.

This study is timely—a first on its subject, after almost one and a half centuries since Vladimir Vel'iaminov-Zernov's monumental examination of the Kasimov khanate. Bulat Rakhimzianov uses whole categories of Russian sources that were not accessible to his predecessor, in particular materials on economic and social life as well as diplomatic sources little studied before with regard to Kasimov. He builds on general investigations of the Tatars within Russia and discusses studies in Western languages.

Despite the subject's lengthy dormant state, the Kasimov khanate is a very rewarding object of scrutiny, for it provides an important case study of the pre-history of the Muscovite multi-ethnic empire. Rakhimzianov offers a new interpretation of these early stages. Earlier investigators highlighted the functionality of the Kasimov khanate, which allowed Moscow to influence the internal politics of khanates in Kazan', Astrakhan', and Sibir' and finally to absorb them, citing the tranquil life and unimpeded religious practice of Tatars within Russia, particularly in Kasimov, to counter claims by Muslim co-religionists. Vel'iaminov-Zernov and his many followers took it for granted that Moscow founded such an asset all by itself, to attract Tatar émigrés and shield the settled area around Moscow. However, Rakhimzianov's investigation of Kasimov's origins demonstrates that there could be no voluntary action on the part of Moscow, as Vasilii II "the Blind" was the prisoner of Ulug-Mukhammed, the father of the first sultan, Kasim. Vasilii was subsequently released, for a huge ransom which raised the stakes in the following internal Muscovite war. In the 1920s, M. G. Khudiakov connected this ransom to the foundation of Kasimov, but his grasp of the sources was superficial, assuming that the khan of Kazan' and Vasilii II signed a peace treaty. This notion lacks any foundation and contradicts Vasilii's oath of allegiance to the former Khan of the Golden or Great Horde, Ulug Mukhammed, who by the time of the battle of Suzdal' and the "peace treaty" of 1445 had been toppled and exiled, but regrouped in Kazan' in order to regain his former throne. Therefore, there could be no formal written peace treaty since it would have required two independent sides. It is Rakhimzianov's conviction that beyond the well-documented ransom in money, an oral agreement between the khan and his prisoner was the basis for the foundation of Kasimov. This claim is based on circumstantial evidence the strength of which determines its status.

Rakhimzianov's findings embed the story of the foundation of Kasimov much more concisely than earlier interpretations did. Unlike later conditions, in 1445 a weak Muscovy torn by civil war and a blinded great prince who had been appointed by the khan and as his prisoner reconfirmed allegiance were unlikely to formulate plans for a distant future with reversed tables. Kasim arrived in Muscovy in the Tatar suite accompanying Vasilii upon his release. Despite misgivings in local chronicles employed by Vasilii's opponent Shemiaka, he remained on Vasilii's side throughout the war. Vasilii was Kasim's guarantor for the Kasimov khanate, not an abstract Muscovite policy. Later treaties between the Great Prince and local Rus' appanage princes demonstrate a high level of suspicion towards the Tatar princes who nominally served Muscovy. The tribute payable for over a century after 1445 was also due to Kasimov. As opposed to later relations when Muscovite governors took over, at foundation the Kasimov khanate was internally fully independent and limited only in external relations. The internal structure and institutions of this state within Muscovy were a full replica of other post-Mongol khanates, including the names of its leading clans whose members came and departed for other khanates at will. Just the

dependency of the title of its ruler upon his earlier rule in a “full” khanate marked the difference.

Short biographies of the Kasimov khans demonstrate their influence as Muscovite servitors with a Chingissid pedigree in Eurasian politics. Shakh Ali, an important figure in the final conquest of Kazan', is widely discussed and the conquest's pre-history re-evaluated. Rakhimzianov legitimately accepts the *Kazanskaia Istoriiia* [History of Kazan'] as a contemporary source despite ongoing debates about its origins and compilation, although a detailed discussion might have added important insights. However, the point of view of the Kasimov Tatars widens the perspective on the Kazan' events. The Kazanians are allowed their attempts to remain their own masters when confronting two unwelcome and incompatible overlords in Muscovy and the Crimea, while Moscow faced a similarly agonizing choice as the new power in the region, whereas its ruler was illegitimate in the post-Mongol world of norms. Claiming a Chingissid throne by right of the sword offered a way to formal acceptance for Ivan IV as a ruler with full rights.

This thoughtful, well-documented and cogently analyzed study forces one to reconsider the early stages of what became Moscow's hugely successful policies for the integration of ethnic groups. It is a major contribution to the fields of Tatar and imperial history.

Christoph Witzenrath, *University of Aberdeen*

Spencer E. Roberts, ed. and trans. *Russian Memoirs. Writers Through the Eyes of Their Contemporaries in the Nineteenth Century*. 2 vols. Bloomington: Xlibris, 2009. xii, 945 pp. Index. US\$34.99, cloth (per volume); US\$23.99, paper (per volume).

Imagine you were invited (after being transported, say, a hundred years into the past) to a series of weekly dinner parties over a two-month period. At each of them the guests would comprise the friends and relatives of one of seven “giants” of Russian classical literature, and you were offered the opportunity to listen to each one in turn tell about the most intimate moments of his or her friendship or shared experiences with the writer in question. Would you not grasp at such a golden opportunity and consider it a treasure worth remembering for years to come?

This pretty much describes the literary time-travel adventure offered by Spencer Roberts's 945-page *Russian Memoirs* (the pages are numbered consecutively across two thick volumes). The “guest-lists” in Volume I comprise acquaintances of Aleksandr Pushkin (seven memoirs), Mikhail Lermontov (eleven), Nikolai Gogol' (two), and Ivan Turgenev (six), while the reminiscences in Volume II focus on Fedor Dostoevskii (eight), Lev Tolstoi (sixteen), and Anton Chekhov (six). All the memoirs have been translated into a clear and readable English by Roberts. In each section he provides a brief introduction to his “guests,” and then he gives the floor to them in turn.

The sheer amount of space devoted to these seven literary giants makes this reviewer feel as though he has been asked to write seven book reviews rather than one (unfortunately, this feeling has been reflected in his delay in completing the review for publication!). The number of pages allotted to each writer varies from the shortest—Gogol' (74)—through Lermontov (88), Pushkin (95), Chekhov (121), Dostoevskii (152), and Turgenev (182) to the longest (perhaps fittingly so)—Tolstoi (202).

Most of the sets of memoirs are prefaced with a (not entirely complimentary) description of the writer's early-to-young-manhood years. Pushkin's lyceum classmate Ivan Pushchin tells of the future poet's carefree and temperamental attitude to life along with his