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Reception Ceremony at the Royal Court of the Khiva Khanate

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Abstract. *The paper considers preliminaries, particularly organization details of Reception Ceremony and main etiquette of Diplomacy in Khiva in early modern period. Through the negotiation procedures there are illuminated main direction and characters of the Khiva Khanate's foreign relation as well. The main idea of the paper is to illustrate the worthy place of Khorezm in the system of international relations in the region..*

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INTRODUCTION

Reception Ceremony or Diplomatic Performance as it usually employs in historiography can be in a great use for comprehensive analyses of significant details of diplomacy or inter-state relations' mechanism.

William Roosen, who dealt with the question of diplomatic ceremonial in early modern Europe, estimating the issue, argues that:

“Early modern diplomatic ceremonial? What a dull subject! This is a widespread reaction among people who have given the matter any thought. Some early modern diplomats themselves expressed the idea that ceremonies were useless, time-wasting affairs”.

Referring to French diplomat, the author notes that Pierre Villars was embarrassed in 1676 while the rest of Europe was involved in a great war his “great affair” in Savoy was debating whether his wife would be given a straight-backed chair or a chair with arms [8: P.452]. Analyzing the problem, he concludes that “nevertheless, despite the confusion of attitudes about its role, early modern diplomatic ceremonial is indeed worth taking seriously. If approached properly, its study will give us insights into diplomacy and early modern politics in general” [8:P. 454].

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Supporting his conclusion, I would like to remark that every movement, mimicry, gesticulation and even a look or glance is a certain code or a cipher in the diplomatic conversation. In this regard *Safāratnāmas* (diaries) of ambassadors can be very useful database and might be considered as the logic combination to release the internal matters of any Royal court.

Travelogues or diaries can be valuable resource for almost all aspects of the history: Climate and nature, Caravan roads or other transport, politics, economy, social and cultural issues. Accounting, in majority cases their detailed and colorful descriptions, they could be in a great use for cross-referencing (comparative) analyses with other sorts of primary sources.

Gathering and collecting detailed data about visited country was an official, sometimes non-official, but precondition instruction of sending government. Yet, for ambassadors themselves, first personal interest was to prove their mission, and their concern was to offer a proof of their successful activity as a negotiator. As well as, every diplomatic mission was provided by the grant from the Royal treasury, their notes were a financial statement too. This kind of justifications had a great impact to diplomats' further carrier.

We should not forget that such sort of "database" is the result of diplomats' skill and communicability who in many cases acted in absolute strange, difficult and dangerous situations.

Available sources inform us that due to the general political situation in 19th century, data gathering conditions became even more difficult. For instance, when N. Muravyov (Murav'ev) visited Khiva in 1819-1820, he noted that "at the instance of dozens I published all witnessed and known, expounded what was possible to know among suspicious people" [6: P. 55]. G. Danilevsky (1842) also noted that "distrustful character of Khivan officials and population in general, as well as a condition that we were reluctant to work, many times put us into difficulties" [12: P.72]. Russian envoy F. Benevini in his time (18th c.) wrote his notices by cryptography (the art of writing or solving codes) which were solved in Russian Empire's Foreign Affairs board [5: C. 25]. A. Vambery (1863) remarked that "readers and critics may find many errors, and the light that I may throw upon particular points may be accounted too small a compensation for the hardships I actually encountered, but I entreat them not to forget that I have returned from a country where to hear is regarded as *impudence*, to ask a *crime*; and to take notes a *deadly sin*" [P. X].

On the other hand, suspicion and circumspection was a well-grounded obstacle. Analyzing of chronological differences, we can note that travelogues of 16th - 18th centuries consist of mostly economic and social-cultural data. They tell us that main concern of that period's Diplomacy was collecting of commercial-reconnaissance data. From the end of 18th and beginning of 19th century ambassadors' description assumed a shade of detailed notes for the political-strategic purpose. Even personnel staff of Russian embassies that included specialists such as a geodesist/land surveyor, cartographer, topographer, mechanical engineer provoked reasonable fear.

THE PRELIMINARIES OF DIPLOMATIC CEREMONIAL

Reception Ceremony of foreign ambassadors in Khanate of Khiva, in particular the "diplomatic service" was directly linked to several rituals including a meeting of foreign embassies in the border area and accompanying them back to the starting destination. In this regard the issue can be distinguished into two major steps: Preliminaries – organizing features and main procedures of Diplomatic Performance. *Preliminaries of the Reception Ceremony* includes the following steps: 1) Meeting foreign ambassadors 2) Accommodating 3) Issuance of daily consumption 4)

Appointment of service staff 5) Agreement on the Reception ceremony and discussion about diplomatic 6) Escort of ambassadors to the Reception Hall.

Meeting and accommodating of foreign ambassadors. The importance of this procedure was that, precisely in this moment the first impression of both sides on each other was formulated. It was exerted every effort in order to meet visitors with all pompous and glory. Accommodation for them, also should be with proper conditions.

Other important stage after accommodating was the *issuance of daily consumption to ambassadors and appointment of service staff*. According to determined rules, the funds to the embassies were allocated from both departing and receiving sides. From Muravyov's report we can know that his mission was organized by commander of Russian army in Caucasus A.P. Ermolov. His Turkmen acquaintances for some money (pecuniary) remuneration delivered N. Muravyov to Khiva. He informs that was provided with gifts for Turkmen tribe leaders, Khivan ruler and officials. 2650 *chervon*¹ was paid by the Russian government for six monthly visit of the embassy under P. Nikiforov [11: P.57]. According to the contemporary of that time N. Zalesov, for preparation and seven monthly stay in Khiva of G. Danilevsky's embassy was allocated 5 000 *chervon*; 50 *chervon* per month from that sum for ambassador's provision and 700 *chervon* for gifts, as well as 989 *chervon* for any money contingencies.[12: P. 44] Another author I. Zacharjin this 989 *chervon* remarks as a "bribe for Khivan officials" [10]. In P. Nikiforov's case 150 *chervon* were described as "for extraordinary expenditures" [11: P. 57].

At the same time, ambassadors were "equipped" with different gifts/presents and they were significant attributes of Diplomatic Ceremony, a symbolic meaning of that had a certain effect to the results of negotiations. From Iranian *Safarātnāmas* we can learn that a part of monetary funds allocated from the royal treasury was intended for rewards of Khivan embassy service staff. Even money for charity was foreseen. Rizā Quli-Khān notes that when they got under way to Khiva several beggars and poor people wished to bless, were gathered and the ambassador gave them some money from the special fund separated for such expenditures, which contained considerable sum: 2000 *ashrafi*, *shāhi* and 1000 coins called *dinar* [7: S.62].

Consumption From The Government Of The Khiva Khanate. Available data illustrates that for the embassy under N. Muravyov from the Khan's treasure was provided 2 golden coin equal to 32 Russian ruble per day and total sum for G. Danilevsky's mission was 12 300 ruble [12:C.52]. Iranian ambassador Muhammad Ali-Khān Ghāfur reported that for their daily consumption the Khivan side allocated 40 *tanga* equal to Iranian 2 *tuman*[2: B.22]. According to Rizā Quli-Khān, from the Khivan Khan in returning to home, they got money for travel expenses too. In this regard he writes:

"Money brought from the Khan was equal to our 500 *tuman* ... and these *tanga* (coins) were minted by Muhammad Rahim-khān I; they did not circulate in other neighborhood and we used them here [in Khiva], bought camel, horse, necessary things for mission stuff and travel provisions"[7:B.151].

This question was one of a delicate issue of "Diplomatic service." Because, the amount of given money was discussed very seriously, especially, Russian ambassadors in this case were more critical. According to Iranian envoys', before returning back, they received from Khivan Khan the travelling expenses too.

¹ Chervon - Chervonets is a former currency of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Originally a term for coins of purer alloy (the name derives from *chervonnoye zoloto* meaning *pure gold*), the name was later applied to various sums in Russian rubles.

Through presenting arguments we can learn about service staff or in modern term *personnel of diplomatic corps*, their competences and assignments. Particularly, in the dairies of ambassadors were remarked *nāzir*², *qāpuchi*³, *mehmāndār*⁴, *chākar*⁵, *farrāsh*⁶, *mehmānkhānachi*⁷. Even there was a person responsible to organize different entertainments for ambassadors not to be bored. In this regard, N. Muravyov gives an interesting information about 40 years old Sayid who was appointed as his entertainer. He remarks that Sayid could speak in Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages, as well as knew very well history of the East. The Russian ambassador characterizing this man as a smart person, remarks his artful, good-humored characteristics that inherent in Europeans, and makes a compliment for his talent in playing chess [6: S.129].

Mehtar – the Prime Minister of the khanate was on the top of the “Embassy service.” Although every country has own diplomatic rituals, the requirement of another side was accounted too. The agreement included some requirements from receiving side as well. Entering without weapons was the general and the most important request at the Khivan Royal court. Escort of ambassadors to the Reception Hall also had its own relevance and certain rituals. It illustrated respectfulness of host country and significance of visitors. Some political purpose/objectives also pursued here. Because when the escort accompanied ambassadors to the Reception Hall, they specially demonstrated beautiful places or storage for guns and weapons.

DIPLOMATIC ETIQUETTE AND THE NEGOTIATION PROCEDURE

Depending on the season and whether the Khan received envoys in the palace or one of his restful gardens. In particular, Iranian ambassador Muhammad Ali-Khān Ghāfur informs that he had an audience before the Khivan Rahimquli-Khān in the nomad’s [black] tent built at the stepped eminence inside of the Royal court’s yard [2: B. 24]. A. Vambery also describes that Khwārazmian king (pādishāh) Sayid Muhammad-Khān received him on a sort of elevation, or dais (a ladder-shaped eminence) [9: S.128]. From the dairy of Rizā Quli-Khān we can learn that he was received by Muhammad Amin-Khān in his garden Angarik. This part begins from greetings and describes many trivial details of the Ceremony including *the greetings and transmission of official documents and gift giving process*. On the other hand, all of the requirements actually demonstrated an attitude of both side towards to each other, so these details could not be considered as a “trivial.”

Greetings and Transmission of official documents. The author of *Shāhidu-l-iqbāl* through historical data of 1284/1867, describing Reception Ceremony of Khivan envoy Muhammad Niyāz at the palace of Bukharan ruler amir Muzaffar (1860-1885), mentions about *Musāfaha* (handshaking) and *Muānaqa* (hugging one another) [3:B.207].

A. Vambery also mentions about custom of *Musāfaha* – the greeting prescribed by the [Holy] Koran, accompanied by the reciprocal extension of the open hands when he describes the process of greetings in the audience of Khivan ruler Sayid Muhammad-Khān [9:S.129]. In *Firdaws ul-iqbāl* we can see some other terms for greetings and salutations [4: B. 133]. Particularly, description of the Reception Ceremony of Muhammad Amin ināq (first representative of Kongrat dynasty in Khiva) in

² person responsible for meal and other needs of visited embassy stuff.

³ qāpu - door, qāpuchi doorman, close-intimate person to the Khan’s family (*махрам*).

⁴ person determined to accompany mission members to border line.

⁵ responsible for security of foreign ambassadors and served them as a host.

⁶ cleaner, janitor.

⁷ host, responsible for hospitality.

Bukhara contains several etiquettes like *tamhid*,⁸ *porsish* and *tafaqqud*.⁹

During the reception ceremony, ambassadors observed every detail of the process. The general view of the Royal court and the personality of the ruler were at the center of their attention. Especially, the Russian envoys described the Khan in more detail including his appearance/habitus, his dresses, his voice and sound, his talking style, his movement, etc. These descriptions can draw the Khan's portrait, through what we can learn about authority and policy of the ruler, as well as general situation not only in the country but also in the region.

By A. Vambéry's descriptions, we can observe some new information about Ceremonial attributes which is absent in other available sources. In particular, when he appeared before the Khivan Khan latter was sitting with his left arm supported upon a round silk velvet pillow, and his right hand holding a short golden scepter - symbol of sovereignty [9: S. 128]. Ambassadors paid special attention to every movement of the Khan, how he reacted when the name and titles of a sending ruler were pronounced, how the letter was received. Russian envoy Mikhail Tikhanov (1614) in his report remarked that Khivan ruler Arab Muhammad-Khān demonstrating his disrespect, even did not stay when the name and title of Russian Tsar was read.

At the same time, the attitude of foreign envoys that described in their diaries, illustrates their awareness of the procedure including when to start the conversation and how to stay, what to say – these all can help to imagine about given instruction during the preliminary stage. Nikolay Muravyov, describing the greetings of the Khivan Khan, gives indispensable information about the way of behaving before the Central Asian supreme ruler. His story shows that he was neatly instructed about every detail. Through the intonation of Khivan Khan the Russian envoy could understand clearly the difference of the same word's meaning, particularly “*khush kelibsan*” at the beginning and in the end of conversation.

The Gift giving process was one of the influential procedures of the reception ceremony, which played no small role in the inter-state relations, in many cases, directly affected to the course of events and negotiation results. Amount and symbolical sense of Royal gifts also had a certain importance. In Khwārazm and Iran a number 9 had a certain symbolic value, and Russian gifts were presented in mostly in 40 pieces. The list of the Royal gifts was attached to the official letter and every present described in detail. For instance, some Russian archive documents describe every patch, color, age and breed/race of horses, sent from Khwārazm. The same checking procedure was held in the Khiva Khanate as well. Certainly, such caution should prevent substitution of the *Royal gifts*.

Equality of reciprocal gifts in their number, price and exoticism played a significant role. Especially, it had a high value of the gifts from rare type of products, which assessed as a “*peculiar*” or “*overseas*” in received countries. In Khwārazmian sources such expensive gifts are noticed as precious rare presents (*tansuqāt-i garānmāya*) [4: B. 387] or marvellous gifts (*ta'jubnamā tuhfalar*) [1:B.79].

It should be not forgotten that although such “*oversea*” gifts very impressed and amazed Asians, as an unusual thing it could also bring some misunderstandings. For example, such situation occurred with carriage or couch and a cuckoo clock brought from Russia. In another example, a carriage – Landau¹⁰ that delivered from Russian Emperor by his envoy G. Danilevsky to Khivan

⁸ Tamhid – praise, eulogize.

⁹ *porsish* and *tafaqqud* – greetings and salutation.

¹⁰ Landau is a coach building term for a type of four-wheeled, convertible carriage. It was a city carriage of luxury type. It was invented in the 18th century; *landau* in this sense is first noted in English in 1743. It was named after the German city of Landau at the Rhine where they were first produced.

ruler Āllā Quli-Khān brought a certain misunderstanding. The Khan considered this carriage, conjugated into two thoroughbred English horses that were curbed with golden and silver bridle-saddle as a lovely gift. At the same time, according to I. Zakhar'in, Russian envoy forgot to give an explanation about using the carriage, because of Āllā Quli-Khān's cold attitude. Sheltered carriage first attracted only Khan's children, moreover it was braked and moved very slowly; even adding about 10 strong horses did not help. Only, after clarifying the "brake issue" and uncovering the carriage the Khivan Khan got on it and solemnly gave a ride on the city. All citizens filled up streets to look such amazing demonstration. Unfortunately, soon Āllā Quli-Khān after this event died and some Khivan superstitious people related his death with unusual, for local people, driving the horse and this "ominous" carriage was immured up [10].

The same impression brought two mechanic clocks that were among other Russian Tsar's presents. When, introduced as a kitchen clock rang then toy cuckoo went out and cried. Although Āllā Quli-Khān was impressed, yet looking at moving mechanic bird called it "evil" (*shaitān*) and ordered to take away this Russian "shady gift" into some secluded corner [10]. On the other hand, the gift-giving process provided to exchange with news and innovations between different cultures and nationals.

From the political point of view, more serious aspects of the main part were the *negotiation procedure and a final audience*. There are two common types of negotiations: dialogue through letters and face to face discussion. The situation in the region and the border area, as well as compound and membership or accompaniment of embassy mission we can remark as the factors effected to the results of negotiations. Iranian diplomat Rizā Quli-Khān himself remarks that in that moment the political priority was at the Khivan side, the victory of Khivan army in Hurāsān, which returned back with great number of loot and captives, strengthened the Khan's position even more. Muhammad Ali-Khān Ghafur had seen his fault in coming not alone, but with British and Russian envoys together. Precisely, the Khan of Khiva noted in final audience that if he would come without accompanied foreign envoys, the situation could be different.

The Final audience was the completing procedure of the diplomatic performance that included preparation of letters of response; dressing the robes of honor; Reciprocal gifts; Assignment of providing escort. Negotiations between ambassadors and Khivan officials continued after formal talks as dialogs, which were maintained in the feasts and banquets specially organized to the honor of ambassadors.

CONCLUSION

From the end of 18th and beginning of 19th century ambassadors' descriptions assumed a shade of detailed notes for the political-strategic purpose. Travelogues of this period can draw a whole picture of Preliminaries that is organizing features and main etiquettes of "diplomatic ceremony" and "embassy service". Therefore, they should be considered as a valuable resource for studying of diplomatic performances.

It should be remarked that Travelogues give a possibility to create a complete picture of Diplomatic Ceremony. The main patterns and etiquette details of the Diplomatic Performance can be observed in *Preliminary stage of the Ceremony* that included meeting of foreign visitors at the border area; identifying the main object of the mission: official interview or hospitality in a friendly environment; submitted official documents and their processing; inspection and accounting royal gifts; accommodation and issuance daily consumption for ambassadors.

The main stage of the Ceremony consists of many significant "trivial": description of the

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ceremony hall's interior, "painting" a royal portrait and other participants of the reception ceremony; greetings and the introduction etiquette of foreign ambassadors to the ruler: titles, ranks and names; transmission and representation ritual of official documents; the gift giving process; negotiations - interview, comments and suggestions: diplomatic failure or agreement.

Cultural and entertaining part that was demonstrated in Royal banquets with entertainment and Royal hunting, picnics where an informal conversation was continued.

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