

The Orthodox Church in the political system of the Russian state

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Abstract

This article examines the evolution of the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and authority in the Russian state in the early modern period via comparative qualitative research methods. As a result, the hierarchs of the Russian church had the moral right to appeal directly to the monarch and, pointing out to him that his actions did not correspond to church canons and dogmas. The authors conclude that it would be premature and unfounded to speak of the Church as internal to and dependent on the political system of the young Russian state in the early modern period.

Keywords: Political, State, Russian, Orthodox Church.

La Iglesia Ortodoxa en el sistema político del estado Ruso

Resumen

Este artículo examina la evolución de la relación entre la Iglesia ortodoxa rusa y la autoridad en el estado ruso en el período moderno

temprano a través de métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Como resultado, los jerarcas de la iglesia rusa tenían el derecho moral de apelar directamente al monarca y, al señalarle que sus acciones no correspondían a los cánones y dogmas de la iglesia. Los autores concluyen que sería prematuro e infundado hablar de la Iglesia como interna y dependiente del sistema político del joven estado ruso en el período moderno temprano.

Palabras clave: Político, Estatal, Ruso, Iglesia Ortodoxa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Long XVIth century, the time frame of which is usually defined as the middle of the XVth - the 40-ies of XVIIth century in historiography represents a very significant period in the history of Europe. This period, also known as the early New Age, became the epoch when the foundations of the modern political system and its corresponding institutions were laid, and above all, the foundation of modern-type states. Naturally, this process was very difficult and ambiguous and in no way linear. This was due to the peculiarities of not only the political, socio-economic, cultural and religious development of European society. The latter, despite significant advances in the socio-economic sphere during the previous decades and centuries, still remained basically agrarian society, fairly conservative, cold, prone to the reproduction of the usual orders fixed by customs and traditions (FUJO & DIDA, 2019; GUIMARAES, CAMPOS, ALMEIDA, DOMÍNGUEZ, PUSSIELDI, & DA SILVA, 2018).

Church and religion played a significant role in this traditional way of life, enshrined in the power of custom. Their important significance for the early modern European society was determined by a number of factors that had been formed in the middle ages. It was the period when the church largely predetermined the vector of society development, contributing a great deal to its design in a stable structure through the so-called *in ecclesiamento* as an integral and perhaps the most important part of the notorious *encellulement*, during which the social, political, economic and cultural fabric of the medieval society was developed at the turn of the early and High Middle Ages. The influence of the church was determined both by its economic influence and its impact on the spiritual sphere - the church shaped the leading trends within this area of society in one degree or another and tried to control and direct it in the right direction. The common expression of that era is that the church is the soul, while the state or society is the body, and this is not too far from the truth.

At that, it is not difficult to notice that the position of the church in society and in the state gradually changes with time. The church retains its importance and its position, but its dominant status is gradually undermined by the secular authorities on the one hand, who are striving to nationalize the church, and by the outlined trend towards secularization of the public consciousness on the other hand. At the same time, which is typical, the attack on the church foundations is carried out not only outside, but also from within. The limited volume of the article does not allow us to dwell in detail on the

characterization of the challenges that the church faced during the early New Time, so we will take only one challenge. This is the challenge from the state - the state of the early New Age, which began to take shape during the long XVIth century and which, ultimately, achieved the subordination of the church and its transformation into the part of the early-modern state organism, putting the church in its service. How did this happen?

2. METHODS

Starting to study the problem of relationships change between the state and the church during the early New Time and the change of its position in the political system of early-modern polities, we proceeded from several basic theoretical positions, set out in the works by historians and lawyers during the last decades. First of all, we proceeded from the fact that early-modern states, differing from their loose, unconsolidated medieval predecessors by greater (at least outwardly) centralization, nevertheless, were still very far from true centralization (if by centralized state we mean the state unified administratively, legally and institutionally). In our opinion, it makes sense to distinguish declarations from real possibilities. In this case, we used M. Mann's concept of two types of power, despotic and infrastructural, somewhat modified and corrected under the general idea of our small research. Describing these types of power, the researcher noted that:

The first sense concerns what we might term the despotic power of the state elite, the range of actions which the elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups, тогда как a second sense, infrastructural power, the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society, and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm (MANN, 1984: 188-189).

We propose to proceed from the fact that the notorious despotic power in relation to the era of the early Modern time was precisely declarative power, describing the claims of the supreme power to absolute external and internal sovereignty. Infrastructure power in our case is represented by the actual powers of the supreme sovereign and the government, their actual ability to achieve their goals.

It seems that the monarchs of the early New Age and their ministers and advisers, though intuitively, were aware of the existing gap between the despotic power ascribed to them and the infrastructural power they had in fact. Trying to fill this gap, they developed various kinds of strategies that allowed them to expand the scope of their competence and increase their authority gradually and indirectly. In this case, they relied on two ideas. The first is the concept of the so-called Sinews of power (BREWER, 1989). Describing these sinews of power, Kollmann noted that they included «new taxes and bureaucratic institutions to administer the territory, collect revenues and mobilize human and material resources» and virtual superstructure in the form of legislative bodies and the reinforcement of these new taxes and bureaucratic institutions.

This superstructure was formed as new codifications of the law and the new centralized judicial systems, as well as the corresponding confessional policy and the political ideology closely associated with it and based on its political ideology, which drew ideas and support in religious dogmas and canons) (KOLLMANN, 2012). N. Kollmann makes another important observation for our work regarding the development of an early modern Europe statehood - confessionalization processes were typical for the European society of the early Modern period to define the faith and discipline members – complemented states' efforts to consolidate society around state and church... (highlighted by us - Auth.) (KOLLMANN, 2012).

It is not by chance that we highlighted this point in this phrase by the historian - this consolidation, carried out on a religious basis with the active participation and assistance of the church (actually, it would not have taken place at all without it, because there was no alternative to the religious basis of this consolidation for that era) was included in the set of those strategies and management methods through which the supreme power gradually increased and improved its infrastructure capacity. And here it is worth mentioning another important concept for us, formulated by Koenigsberger and developed by Elliott. It is about the concept of the so-called composite state (KOENIGSBERGER, 1978). Its essence was that, according to Elliott, sixteenth-century Europe was a Europe of composite states, coexisting with a myriad of smaller territorial and jurisdictional units jealously guarding their independent status (ELLIOTT, 1992).

Summing up, let us note that we will proceed from the fact that Russia of the long XVIth century as an early modern state was a complex, composite polity, which rather was decentralized than centralized (in the classical sense) monarchy. This composite nature and decentralization, conditioned by supreme power weakness, whose muscles were in the process of development, inevitably led to the fact that power depended on the support of influential forces in society as well as in the center and in the provinces. Cooperation with them, the preservation of their traditional privileges and rights, coupled with their involvement in management and administration guaranteed their loyalty to the supreme power and the effectiveness of managerial task solution. The Orthodox Church ranked far from the last position in this list because the success of state strengthening policy pursued by the supreme authority largely depended on it.

3. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Russian historian Kamensky noted that Orthodoxy ensured the unity of the Russian people played the role similar to the role of Judaism for the Jews, i.e., acted as a kind of marker, which allowed to clearly separate compatriot from stranger (although it is worth noting that loyalty to sovereign and local community played an equal, and sometimes a greater role). And then he pointed out that religious unity was the most important condition, the ideological basis for a new statehood development, and the role that the church played for the

collection of Russian lands under the authority of Moscow gave the state institution status to the church (KAMENSKY, 1999).

Naturally, this could not entail significant consequences both for the church and for the state and society. The church supported the state, acted as a peculiar nucleus around which a new political, cultural and, of course, religious identity, the Russian spirit was developed. Obviously, this did not go without a certain influence of the Byzantine tradition, and although it is possible to argue about how great this influence was, there is no doubt that this influence took place. According to Litavrin the official state doctrine in Russia, as well as in the empire and other Orthodox states of the southeast of Europe and the Caucasus, was based on the teachings of the Eastern Christian church ... Neophytes could not accept the Byzantine religious doctrine partially or in a modified form. They had to learn it entirely (LITAVRIN, 1999).

Among the most important principles of this doctrine, one can attribute, firstly, the principle of the symphony as the collaboration of two authorities, secular and spiritual, and they were considered in the framework of this doctrine as equal, but with priority in honor for spiritual power. Secondly, another Byzantine principle which was even more important in some sense - "It is foolish to give up your good and disclose the knowledge of the being to other nations, by which the Romanian race is proud and we honor the nation for this" (HOOKER, 2009: 401). Thus, the contractual essence of Moscow political system,

the mutual obligations between the supreme authority, personified in the image of the Orthodox emperor, and his people, eluded foreign observers who were not admitted the backstage of Russian political life.

In the 1st half of the XVth century we can still observe a close bond of grand-ducal power and metropolitan authority, and although during the War of the Golden Belt between Vasily the Dark and his uncle Yuri and his sons, the princes of the Russian church changed their political orientation more than once, they remained unshakable concerning the loyalty to the Moscow princely home, regardless of Moscow princes. This loyalty to the Russian church was fully rewarded by the government - by the end of turmoil, the metropolitan's long-time vacant seat was taken by the Ryazan bishop Jonah, who was elected by the council of the Russian bishops with the consent of Grand Duke Basil II. This election took place without the approval of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and de facto meant that the Russian church now gained autocephalous status.

The act of Jonah election as the Metropolitan of All Russia signified another, extremely important step towards the nationalization of the Russian church and its even greater rapprochement with the authorities than before. Without the support of the Constantinople Patriarchate, the Russian church, making an effort to preserve its originality and independence, was forced to seek support in power. However, the process of church submission to power turned out to be

completely non-linear, ambiguous and greatly extended in time, and the authorities relied on the church and listened to its opinion for a long time, fearing to affect its rights and privileges. The church used the advantages that it had gained in previous centuries and actively participated in the political life of the Russian state, acting as not an equal partner of the supreme power, but, in any case, a very influential player, without whom serious events did not take place.

First of all, let us touch upon such an extremely important aspect of this problem as the legitimization of supreme power. Once again let us recall the thesis, voiced by N. Kollmann, regarding the legitimization of the supreme power, achieved with the direct support and participation of the church. The Russian Church took a very active part in this, working out, on a Byzantine basis, the doctrine of royal power limits and the duties of a true Orthodox sovereign for several generations of intellectual scribes - the doctrine that can be called royal discourse for good reason (LIPICH, LIPICH, PENSKAYA, PENSKOY, SHILISHPANOV & STRAHOVA, 2018).

A very significant role was played by the church and its hierarchy in the sovereign affair, in the foreign policy of the Russian state. A number of characteristic examples demonstrate the influence that it had on the actions of secular authorities. Thus, in the late autumn of 1480, the appeal of the Rostov Archbishop Vassian to Grand Duke Ivan III played an important role in acute domestic political crisis resolution associated with the need to solve once and for

all the issue of tribute-paying to the Horde. From the middle of the 13th century, from the moment when the Horde subjugated Russia, the Horde khans were viewed in Russia as legitimate, tsars. A protest against them was regarded as insurrection and certainly did not have a legal character. However, Vassian, in his message to the Grand Duke, argued that the Horde king as a godless king did not have power over the Orthodox and opposing his demands, including by force of arms, is the deed pleasing to God and therefore completely legitimate.

Thus, Vassian brought the necessary legitimate basis to the overthrow of the Horde yoke, giving this act supreme legal force. And later, for example, Metropolitan Macary, already mentioned by us, as one of the main initiators of the war against the Kazan Khanate, blessed the Grand Duke to war with the Tatars, bringing under it the appropriate theological and, therefore, supreme legal force, turning this war into a just war.

The Russian church played a significant role not only in the ideological sphere and in foreign policy. The classic example of which so much has been written by historians of different eras is the active participation of Metropolitan Macary in the notorious reforms of the government - The Select Council. It is no secret that during their preparation and subsequent implementation, the Metropolitan and the Council of Higher Hierarchs of the Russian Church headed by him sanctioned and legitimized the most important steps of the government

and Ivan himself, aimed to stabilize the domestic political situation and strengthen the vertical of power in the country.

The activities of Metropolitan Macary as the head of the Russian Church in the 40s - 50s of XVIth century represents an interesting phenomenon from the point of view of the state and church interaction peculiarity study during the early modern times. Virtually none of the aspects of the church participation in the foreign and domestic affairs of the Russian state and society noted in the methodological part did not do without the participation of the metropolitan macary, who personified the Russian church. Foreign policy, legislation, the policy of confessionalization - almost no more or less important aspect of Russian state life and society took place without active participation of the Metropolitan and his approval. The church acted then, without exaggeration, as the most important and necessary part of the Russian state political system, which really gave some meaning to its activities.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Let us summarize all mentioned above. The early New Age Moscow society, being a cold society (C. Levi-Strauss), conservative, focused on the reproduction of antiquities, did not welcome the innovations at all. The supreme power, without a developed infrastructure of power, the very musculature represented by a

bureaucratic machine, a more or less permanent army subordinate and serving to the sovereign, a streamlined fiscal system, etc., could not impose its policy on society, moreover if such policy implied some change in tradition. In order to overcome the passive (at least) resistance of society (first of all, the political nation- in this regard, the examples of Prince A.M. Kurbsky and Bersen Beklemishev, who advocated the preservation of the dear old-time traditions, in which they acted as the co-rulers of the great Prince), the monarchy needed the support of the elite, including the spiritual princes of the church and the church itself.

The church acted as the force that could give the state the necessary arguments in the struggle with the supporters of the old days, give the authorities the necessary legitimacy before society and thereby contribute to the success of Moscow sovereign policy both outside and inside the state.

Of course, there is no need to say that the Byzantine ideal of state-church relations, the notorious symphony embodied in the Russian state during the era of early Modern Time - after all, the weight categories of the early modern state, albeit not centralized completely, and the church, were still incomparable. However, at this stage of development, the government could not do without the support of the church and was forced to listen to its opinion, to make concessions to it. At the same time, using various strategies, playing on contradictions within the church itself, the supreme power gradually,

step by step, limited the independence of the church, turning it into a part of the state mechanism. This process lasted for several centuries and was completed mainly under Peter I, who abolished the institution of the patriarchate and established the Synod based on the rights of a religious board.

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