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THE RULER AND THE SOCIETY IN MEDIEVAL EASTERN EUROPE IN 10TH–14TH CC.: ABOUT THE MECHANISMS OF POWER LEGITIMIZATION AND SACRALIZATION

ПРАВИТЕЛЬ И ОБЩЕСТВО В СРЕДНЕВЕКОВОЙ ВОСТОЧНОЙ ЕВРОПЕ В 10–14 ВВ.: О МЕХАНИЗМАХ ЛЕГИТИМИЗАЦИИ И САКРАЛИЗАЦИИ ВЛАСТИ

Summary: The article deals with the main mechanisms of power legitimization and sacralization in Medieval states of Eastern Europe. The analysis of a ruler`s power based on personal qualities and sacrality is given. The author pays the great attention to administrative, political, military abilities of the Princes of Rus` and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the process of power institutionalization in comparison with the same processes in Medieval Western Europe. Theoretical aspects of power legitimacy are analyzed.

Key words: ruler, society, power, legitimization, duke, king, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Belarusian lands.

Nowadays a lot of scientists pay great attention to the problem of state formation. And if such processes in Western Europe were learnt enough during the 20th century, the development of states in Eastern Europe, including lands of former Rus` and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, are still the subject of proper interest.

It`s not a surprise that one of the most important signs (or characteristics) of any state is a specific control mechanism which is often called "power". The main criteria of transformation from one stage of a society development to another are changes in a society attitude to this management mechanism, evolution of its functions and its nature itself. Mechanisms of power institutionalization also play a great role in this process.

So power is one of the most important things which a researcher should investigate while learning history of a state formation in a region.

In the very beginning of the 20th century an outstanding German scientist, historian and sociologist Maximilian Weber, better known as Max Weber (1864 – 1920), investigated the mechanisms of power and society interaction. He was the person who introduced the concept of power legitimization which was based on a society belief in it [15, p. 78]. He pointed out that along with other preceding political unions a state was nothing but relations between people which were grounded on smb`s power and his force as a legitimate source of a ruler`s being.

Max Weber also pointed out three bases of a ruler`s power.

First of all, it is authority of "previous being". It means authority of traditions, which were sanctified by time and necessity of their observance. Then we can speak about a ruler`s charisma – the authority of a ruler`s unusual talent. Population completely believed him and his authority because of his personal qualities (heroism, strength, wisdom, etc). The third one is power due to "legality", or some rules which create rational mechanism of society functioning [12, p. 154]. So a ruler used not only force to preserve his power, there was also return connection between him and society, first of all, a society`s interest in his power.

The same ideas can be found in research works of many famous scientists of the 20th – 21st cc.

For example, a famous American historian and political anthropologist Elman Service pointed out that the main function of a state was not to preserve power of rulers from their population but to organize economy. Of course a ruler was the representative of the whole society and should have been protected. But on the first steps of a state development he had more responsibility for his society than rights. He helped to organize economy, protected his lands from the enemies and so on. And it was quite natural that power needed a specific "cultural frame" to its definition and promotion of its demands in future. Political elite needed some symbolic forms, which could present the fact of its being and could justify expectations of population. For this reason various forms of ceremonies, rituals, legends were used. Due to all these mechanisms power gained the aura of something "sacral", "higher", so legitimacy of a ruler had first of all symbolic and ideological nature. Moreover ideology itself was also one of the main mechanisms which helped to save power and strengthen its nature. Just later legitimization due to the law appeared. The principles of succession were also invented not at once and it took a long time to form all the particular principles and rules.

Religion was one more important mechanism of power legitimization. It could consolidate society and bring aura of sacrality to a ruler, which in its turn was also very important during the process of power legitimization. People believed that some of them had special abilities to communicate with idols, had spiritual power/ As they were a kind of intermediate between people and supernatural forces they could better manage with the administrative functions and protection of their population [15, p. 74].

Christianity made a very big contribution in accretion of a ruler`s power, giving him not only a social significant role, but endow him with a specific sacral meaning, even more than in pagan times. In fact a ruler was declared to be the God`s messenger. With the appearance of Christianity the most famous phrase concerning the rulers appeared: "The only God in the sky – the only ruler on the desk". So rulers consolidated their power even more than before, combining not only legitimacy, but sacrality also.

In Western Europe in the Medieval Ages we can even speak about the royal sainthood which could be found in many early states of that period. According to European historical science the model of royal sacrality appeared in the early Middle Ages, drawing the elements from different traditions.

Famous dynasties of that time – the Carolings, the Ottonians – took the imperial traditions of sacrality, Christian rules of sanctifying a ruler, especially unction and coronation. The latest one was considered to be the most important mechanism of power institutionalization as it created a new person – a king who was sacrified by God during the ceremony. The king, the God`s messenger, needed to display his sacrality so he used all possible symbolic and liturgical means. These included crown wearing (or going under the crown), church consecrations and repeated solemn receptions of the king in the cities of the realm and also the singing of the liturgical representations of "the anointed king" [1, p. 49]. Moreover the inventory of sacral emblems was soon extended to include the ideology of the rulers as "vicarious Dei" and as possessor of "two bodies" – one personal and one sacral [4, p. 82]. All this was also crowned by king dynasties by collecting holy relicts which could explain the rulers` strength.

In Western Europe the king sainthood reached its glory in the 13th century. An interesting description of such processes could be found in a book by a famous French investigator, historian-medievalist Georges Duby (1919 – 1996). He pointed out that during the period French kings managed to concentrate power in their hands and become real sacrified rulers. It could be seen through the ceremonies which were held. The headstones of these kings allowed to distinguish all the features of the rulers – handsome, wise and noble ones. They were differentiated by power attributes which were given to them during the crowning ceremony: a sword which helped them to fight with the Evil, a scepter – a symbol of justice and a crown – a sign of the power given them by God [13, p. 147].

All this gave European rulers the great strengths in the eyes of their society. But of course it needed a special basis for this extreme power force explanation. That`s why on that stage of state development a great role was given to chronicles,

where the annalists could explain something, and also to rituals which were an initial part of the Medieval epoch.

Of course the similar processes of power institutionalization and sacralization took place in Eastern Europe, but with some differences. If we compare the position of a ruler, a king in Western Europe in this period of time with a duke in Eastern Europe we should note that the state formation processes were going slower there, had their local characteristics, that`s why one should be very careful in such comparison. Nevertheless the structure of the process of power institutionalization was quite similar. And one of the most important role in legitimization was given to the sacrality and the personal authority of a ruler.

All these features can be characterized as general, or main mechanisms of power legitimization. However, there is no doubt that they must have had their particular features.

In the Early Middle Ages there were several duchies on the territory of Eastern Europe. One of the most famous early states of that time was Ancient (or Kievan) Rus`. The source material on Kievan Rus` is quite complicated. There are only a few original documents. Our knowledge is based mainly on the later stories, chronicles, sagas and so on. There are no primary sources relating to the events of the $10^{th} – 11^{th}$ cc.

One of the most significant figure in the history of Kievan Rus` was Vladimir, or Vladimir the Great, St. Vladimir, also known as the Babtist of Rus`. Prince Vladimir Svjatoslavich, the son of Prince Svjatoslav Igorevich, was the ruler of Kievan Rus` in the late 10th and early 11th cc. and was a "kniaz" who concentrated the great power in his hands.

The most important sources concerning his personage are the stories in the PVL- and NPL-chronicles, the eulogy on St. Vladimir by Metropolitan Illarion, the vita of St. Vladimir, i.e., the Pamjat I Pochvala of Jakov the Monk, the later Russian texts (like the Nikonovskij chronicle, Stepennaja Kniga, etc.) and several mentions in various Arabic, Greek, Western European and Scandinavian chronicles and sagas [16, p. 26].

It was a very powerful and at the same time extra ordinal figure in Rus` history. Vladimir was the son of Prince Svjatoslav of the Rurik dynasty. According to the legends and notes in the chronicles, his mother was a slave, so he was often called "a slave`s son". After his father`s death in 972, Vladimir, who was the prince of Novgorod, was forced to flee Scandinavia in 976 after his brother Yaropolk had murdered his other brother Oleg and conquered Rus`. In Sweden with the help of his relative, the ruler of Norway, he assembled a Varangian army and reconquered Novgorod from Yaropolk. That means that in fact he usurped power. Here one should notice that during that time Kievan Rus` didn`t know strong principles of succession and lands could be delivered between a duke`s son after his death though the main desk was usually given to the oldest one (but not always). Moreover quite often it could happen that brothers nd other relatives were fighting for the desk and for the lands. By the way it was one of the reasons of Kievan Rus` weakness in the end of the 12th century.

Nevertheless by 980 Vladimir had consolidated Rus` from modern-day Belarus, part of Russia and the Ukraine to the Baltic Sea and solidified the frontiers against the incursions of Bolgarian, Baltic tribes and Eastern nomads.

But how can we explain his political success?

One key was Vladimir`s position of political and military supremacy over Rus`, without serious rivals from within his own family, from other powerful magnates or from outsiders. This gave him a freer hand than his predecessors in determining which from public worship should take and the extent to which his subject should participate. At the same time Vladimir suffered from "legitimacy-deficit". He had usurped the throne of Kiev from his half-brother, Yaropolk, having fought his way back from exile in Scandinavia, overpowering such magnates as Rogvolod of Polotsk, whom he put to death. By the way, he wanted to marry Rogvolod`s daughter Rogneda and even sent messengers to her some time before these events. But the princess answered them that she didn`t want to marry "a slave`s son", just the noble prince Yaropolk could become her husband. After the murder of Rogvolod Vladimir married Rogneda by force and she became his wife (the second one, but we still don`t know if their marriage was official). Then Vladimir raised a war band of "Varangians" – Scandinavian warriors – while in exile, and greatly augmented his forces with large numbers of Novgorodians once he had regained his former throne-town. But he still faced the strong opposition in Kiev.

As both violent usurper and "a slave`s son", Vladimir had a good reason to seek ways of dignifying and legitimizing his regime, and this most probably accounts for his attemts to revitalize pagan worship soon after seizing power [11, p. 381].

The Primary Chronicle describes how six wooden idols were set up outside the princely hall in Kiev, and there was a comparable display in Novgorod. Besides appealing to the heterogeneous population of the Middle Dnieper, the "pantheon of wooden idols" – headed by Perun, the Slavic God of lightening and power – is the first recorded example of a Rus` prince attempt to institute regular public worship [11, p. 381].

It was also a question of prestige for Vladimir. He nailed his colors to the statues of Perun and the other idols at time when European rulers were proclaiming their conversion to Christianity. Miezko of Poland had adopted Christianity in the 960s, and in the mid-970s the leading Hungarian chieftain Geza accepted Christianity from German missionaries and had his son baptized with the name Stephen [3, p. 159].

One cannot say which of these considerations weighted heaviest with Vladimir, but there is the evidence that quite soon after instituting public idol-worship on Kiev he was taking soundings about religions long-established elsewhere. Vladimir`s final choice was in favor of the Greek`s religion.

And from this very time the image of Vladimir changes a lot. If before that events he had been mostly described as a cruel and strong usurper, since that time he appeared as a saver of Rus', a powerful ruler of the land. The imagery of later

churchmen, painting Vladimir as an "apostle among rulers" who had saved Rus' from the devil's wiles, was fostered by the spectacular way in which he had replaced the old cult with the new in the land of Rus'. Backed up by unchallengeable military power, Vladimir ordered the mass baptism of Kiev`s citizens in the Dnieper: *"Idols were smashed and icons of saints… installed…"*, and *"… wood was cut and churches put up on the sites were idols had stood"*. The idol of Perun was reportedly dragged down to the Dnieper and flung in the river [11, p. 383].

Of course we should understand that the monks who wrote the chronicles were Christians and it was in their interest to create the image of an ideal ruler, the first Christian "kniaz" of the land. Moreover our sources are not the original documents. The basic texts were written after the death of Vladimir. Even if original chronicles are from the 12th century, our copies are from the late 14th. The absolutely oldest material is hagiographic literature, which is worthy but cannot be accepted literally and had probably also undergone a later revision [16, p.12–13].

But Stepennaja Kniga thus describes the historical role of Vladimir the Great in the 16th century. *"… Who does not praise the goodness of him, the first true believing mentor, the pious Tsar and Grand-Prince Vladimir, as a gift to us, the Russian people, equal in wisdom and honour to the great Constantine? Just as he subjected the empire of the Greeks and the Romans to God, and with the holy fathers of the Council of Nicaea established the Christian law among men, the blessed Vladimir with the new fathers, the saints of Russia, by means of great effort established the law of grace among men who had only known of God for a short time…"* [5, p. 9].

Moreover if before 988 he was usually called "Vladimir" or "kniaz", since that date the chroniclers usually added words "great kniaz", "the only", "saint". So in all the Slavic chronicles he is shown as the second Constantine the Great, a real ruler and power of Rus`. It is very important to underline here the role of written sources for further generations in the process of his power legitimization. And even if we look at pictures of Vladimir in the Radziwill Chronicle we could notice the image of an ideal ruler which could have been created even during or right after his reign. At first descriptions of the events connected with his figure take a lot of place in the medieval written sources. And moreover – he has all necessary regalia of a ruler – a crown and so on – on the illustrations. In third, he is imaged not only concerning some military expeditions or diplomatic politics, but in strong connection with his population – healing sick people, helping the poor and so on. It differed a lot from the previous rulers who were mostly military and economical leaders. One more evidence of his successful efforts of power legitimization was the issue of his personal coins which appeared during his reign and on which one could find a portrait of Vladimir, a trident as a symbol of ruling dynasty and the inscription: *"Vladimir is on the desk and this is his silver"* [18, p. 109].

But of course, Vladimir wasn`t the only bright figure in Eastern-European history whose example we can use speaking about sacralization and forcing the

power. A period of the $10^{th} - 11^{th}$ century was quite difficult in history of these lands. It was a period of coexistence of new, Christian religion, and old, pagan, norms. Moreover one should understand that besides Kievan Rus` and its center in Kiev there were a lot of the other duchies which had their own rulers and which tried to identify their strengths from time to time. There was one small duchy which Kiev dukes tried to seize for many times but far not always they managed to and for the main period of time it was independent. It was situated on the territory of modern Belarus and its name was Polotsk Duchy. One of the most famous dukes of this state was Vseslav called the Sorcerer or Vseslav the Seer. He was on the desk with some breaks for 57 years from 1044 to 1101 and even managed to become Grand Prince of Kiev in 1068 – 1069.

He was the son of Bryachislav Izyaslavich, Prince of Polotsk and Vitebsk, and was the great-grandson of Vladimir the Great and Rogneda of Polotsk. He took the throne of Polotsk in 1044 upon his father`s death, and although since 1093 he was the senior member of the Rurik Dynasty for his generation, since his father hadn`t been the prince of Kiev, Vseslav was excluded from the grand princely succession. Unable to secure the capital, which was held by Yaroslav`s three sons, Vseslav started pillaging the northern areas of Kievan Rus`, mostly successful. During his reign Polotsk was a prosperous duchy. He was one of the most respected and powerful rulers of that time. Unfortunately after his death Polotsk duchy was divided between his six sons who struggled with each other for power and lands. That`s why since that period of time Polotsk has lost its political positions.

But we should point out the reason of his success. According to the legend he was born because of magic so he had some unusual powerful force. He was born with a caul on his head, and the sorcerers told his mother that it was a sign of good luck. And it was really so. He held a very successful military politic. And during the period he was a ruler of the Duchy of Polotsk it was prosperous. And of course his contemporaries tried to find the reason of such success. In several folk-tales of that time he was depicted as a werewolf who could quickly transfer from one place to another, who had unusual abilities and, according to some legends, could even hear the bells of his native churches in Polotsk all the way while returning from Kiev (which is more than 700 km). As nobody else in Belorusian history this ruler illustrated the mechanisms of power authority which combined supernatural force, his own charisma and successful and wise politics which helped him not just to keep his desk but to stay in people`s memory [19, p. 123].

The period of the middle of the 12th – the beginning of the 13th century was very complicated for Eastern European lands. It was the epoch of a strong feudal division, constant wars and weakness of the duchies. In the middle of the 13th century we can speak about the formation of a new state formation – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – and about the first Lithuanian duke – Mindaugas. But we can`t compare him with famous European leaders of that time as he was mostly a military leader who fight with enemies and tried to gather lands under his control.

It would be nice to notice that the first dukes of this state didn`t have strong power and gave all their force to save the territories and power in their hands.

Nevertheless even Mindaugas used different sources of power legitimization and, first of all, his personal authority and religion. He was the duke who is considered to be the first ruler of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

We know little of his origins, early life, or rise to power. In chronicles he is mentioned in a 1219 treaty as an elder duke, and in 1236 as the leader of all the Lithuanians. But the contemporary written sources mentioning Mindaugas are very scarce. Much what is known about his reign is obtained from the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle and the Hypatian Codex. Both of these chronicles were produced by the enemies of Lithuania and thus have anti-Lithuanian bias, particularly the Hypatian Codex. They are also incomplete: both of them lack dates and locations even for the most important events. His father is mentioned in the Livonian Rhymed Chronicle as a powerful duke, but is not named; later chronicles give his name of Ryngold [8, p. 17–32].

Midaugas` path to the title of the king of all Lithuania is not clear. Ruthenian chronicles mention that he murdered or expelled several other dukes, including his relatives. Historian S.C. Rowell has described his rise to power as taking place through "the familiar processes of marriage, murder and military conquest." During the 1230s and 1240s, Mindaugas strengthened and established his power in various Baltic and Slavic lands.

In 1251 Mindaugas was baptized to gain the control over some lands in western Lithuania and to get an acknowledgment by Pope Innocent IV as king. The Pope welcomed a Christian Lithuania as a bulwark against Mongol threats; in turn, Mindaugas sought papal intervention in the ongoing Lithuanian conflicts with the Christian orders. The process of coronation and the establishment of Christian institutions would take two years. The duke and his wife Morta were crowned during the summer of 1253. Relative peace and stability prevailed for about eight years. Mindaugas used this opportunity to concentrate on the expansion to the east, and to establish and organize state institutions [14, p. 148–155]. Lithuanian relationships with Western Europe and the Holy See were reinforced. But opposition to his power continued. He wasn`t a strong leader who managed to concentrate all power in his hands. The Livonian Order used their alliance with Mindaugas to gain control over Samogitian lands. Mindaugas broke peace with the Order. The gains he had expected from Christianization had proven to be minor.

Mindaugas may have reverted to paganism afterwards. His motivation for conversion is often described by modern historians as merely strategic. The chroniclers write that Mindaugas continued to practice paganism, making sacrifices to his god and conducting pagan rites in public. The Lithuanian king was killed with his two sons in 1263 by the alliance of Daumantas and Treniota after which Lithuania lapsed into the internal disorder [9, c. 39–43].

So if we try to sum up the sources which Mindaugas used for legitimization of his power we should point out that on this stage we can`t speak about intentional

politics of his power institutionalization. The first ruler of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania had to give all his efforts for saving his position in society and also to preserve his lands from the enemies' attacks, and – in the best case – to expand his territory. Nevertheless, ways with the help of which he preserved his power can be partially characterized as legitimization mechanisms. So Mindaugas, having been a strong, but ambiguous, leader strengthened his power with the help of force (including murders of his opponents), successful military politics and also with the efforts of economy organization. Also I would like to point out marriage as one of the ways of legitimization of his status. Nevertheless though his power had a certain authority, it wasn`t strong enough, as he had to maneuver between his enemies and allies all the time. And of course the most strategic effort or way to strength his power was his baptistery and coronation in 1251 – 1253 which let him to stay a ruler for more than ten years [16, p.20]. Nevertheless he was flexible even here and used even religion in his interests. That`s why seeing that new Christian religion is unpopular between ordinary population and the main part of nobles he continues to held pagan rituals and so find support from the both sides. It means that spirituals matters of the 1st Lithuanian king depended on his personal political interest [16, p.22].

Moreover one should notice that in spite of fact that he was a real ruler of the political formation his power wasn`t strong and established. And his murder with his sons in 1263 in a result of conspiracy just proves this fact. Fight for power after his death can also show us absence of mature system of state administration and succession. We can even make a conclusion that during this period of time supreme power could be not recognized by a certain pert of elite and the hierarchy itself wasn`t established too.

Just in the beginning of the 14th century, during the reign of Viten` and then Gediminas (1316 – 1341) and their generation we can speak about active development of power and mechanisms of its legitimization [20, p. 4].

Gediminas is considered to be the ruler who founded great political entity and expanded the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which, at the time of his death, spanned the area ranging from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Also he is one of the most significant personalities in the early Lithuanian history, as he created Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, and established the dynasty that can be traced to other European monarchies such as Poland or Hungary. As part of his legacy, he gained a reputation for being a champion of paganism, who successfully diverted attempts to Christianize his country by skillful negotiations with the Pope and other Christian rulers.

Gediminas was born in about 1275. Because written sources of the era are scarce, Gediminas' ancestry, early life, and assumption of the title of Grand Duke in 1316 are obscure and continue to be the subject of scholarly debate. Various theories have claimed that Gediminas was either his predecessor Grand Duke Vytenis' son, his brother, his cousin, or his hostler [7, p. 1–13]. Nevertheless he aimed and managed to establish a dynasty which made Lithuania not merely secure but powerful. For this purpose he entered into direct diplomatic negotiations

with the Holy See and wrote to Pope John XXII promising to be baptized. Despite that he died as a pagan reigning over semi-pagan lands [2, p. 34]. Therefore, the letters sent to the Pope were a wise diplomatic maneuver in order to protect his lands and strengthen his power. His internal administrations also beard all the signs of a wise ruler. He protected the Catholic as well as the Orthodox clergy, raised the Lithuanian army to the highest state of efficiency then attainable, defended his borders and built numerous castles in towns including Vilnius. Gediminas died in 1341, presumably killed during a coup d'état. He was a founder of a new Lithuanian dynasty; the Gediminids, and laid the foundations of the state's expansion while sometimes referred as the "true" state founder.

In his acts and diplomatic documents he was called as "rex Litvinorum Rutnenorumque" or "rex Litvinorum et multorum Rutenoram", which meant that power got its strength and authority both in the native lands and in front of the neighbors [17, p. 46, 218]. Personal authority of the ruler was supported by historical tradition and norms of forming law. So exactly from this period of time we can speak about strong power authority, which was the symbol of society well-being and secure. So to the end of the 14th century power administration has been formed and traditional mechanisms of power legitimization has been established and used.

To conclude I should say that during the process of state formation power was changing too using different mechanisms of its legitimization. The position of a ruler in Eastern European lands was under the influence of Byzantium, German and Norman tradition which were combined with the local features.

While speaking about general mechanisms of power institualization in Europe in Early Middle Ages one should point out:

• established tradition of the past to have a strong leader who cares about his society, its stability and secure;

• patrimonial tradition, principle of inheritance, which later was added by codification of legal succession;

• charisma of a ruler;

• sacralization of power which was closely connected with religion in general and special rituals and ceremonies in particular;

• ideology.

All this provided existence of power in a state and gave it not only responsibility but special rights and force and made a ruler the symbol of a state.

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