

RUSSIAN EMBASSIES
TO THE GEORGIAN
KINGS, 1589–1605,
VOLUME II

W.E.D. Allen



THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY

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Russian Embassies to the Georgian Kings, 1589–1605

Volume II

Edited by
W.E.D. ALLEN

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VOLUME II

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'The men of Erzurum attacked by Simün.' This is the only known likeness of Mad Simon of Kartli.

From the *Sheja'atname* of Asafi, MS. TY 6043, fol. 109r. of Istanbul University Library.

RUSSIAN EMBASSIES
TO THE
GEORGIAN KINGS
(1589 - 1605)

VOLUME II

Edited with Introduction, Additional Notes, Commentaries and
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(refs. Belokurov, *Snosheniya*, pp. 223-65, 314 ff.; Brosset, *EC/BHP* Nos. 16-18, cols. 239-72, Nos. 19-21, cols. 288-302; also see Introduction, pp. 79-83.)

THE Georgian ambassadors Prince Suliman¹ and Khurshit who travelled to Russia with Zvenigorodski reached Moscow on 30 November 7099 (1590). On 13 December they were received in audience by Tsar Fedor. In his speech Suliman called King Alexander the Tsar's tributary and asked for protection against Shevkal.

King Alexander's letter, which the Georgian ambassadors brought with them, complained of raids by mountaineers who were secure in their fastnesses. The King asked for more falcons, three icon-painters and a gunner.

On 7 March 1591, the Georgian ambassadors were informed at the Posolski Prikaz that Alexander was being granted everything he had requested, with the exception of the gunner because all the gunners were at Pskov. The Russians were told by the Georgian ambassadors that Alexander could muster an army of 40,000 men and that it would need one month to reach Shevkal's land.

On 19 April the Georgian ambassadors were received by Patriarch Job and later the same day by Boris Godunov whom they asked to intercede with Tsar Fedor on Alexander's behalf and ensure that a Russian army would be sent against Shevkal. Boris promised that this would be done. The promise to help Alexander against Shevkal was repeated at the farewell audience.

¹ For Prince Suliman (Suleyman), see Commentary 36.

The Georgian ambassadors were given leave to return to King Alexander in April 1591 (7099). They were accompanied by the Tsar's new ambassadors Vasili Timofeyevich Pleshcheyev (who was given for the occasion the rank of *dvoryanin* and Lord Lieutenant of Kozel) and under-dyak Timofey Kudrin with instructions to tell Alexander that the Tsar, in reply to his entreaty, was sending an army under Prince Grigori Zasekin to wage war on Shevkal. They took with them three icon-painters (to replace the men who had stayed in Georgia after Zvenigorodski's embassy) and falconers with falcons. Pleshcheyev was instructed to tell the Georgian ambassadors, when they reached the Terek, that the expedition against Shevkal would be undertaken by 5,000 of the Tsar's men with firearms and a muster of 10,000 Cherkesses; the Georgians were to be prevented from witnessing the build-up of Russian forces. The ambassadors were given a message for King Alexander to hold off his own attack on Shevkal until he heard from Zasekin. They were also instructed to try and persuade Simon of Kartli to come under the Tsar's 'hand'. Patriarch Job's letter to Alexander made no reference to spiritual matters, nor were any clerics sent with the embassy. (Pleshcheyev's *stateyny spisok* is not published by Belokurov.)

Pleshcheyev and Kudrin returned from Georgia in December 1592 (7101). They were accompanied by King Alexander's ambassadors Prince Aram¹ and Archimandrite Kiril. They were received by Godunov on 3 January 1593, to whom they conveyed Alexander's thanks for Zasekin's expedition against Shevkal. (The result of this minor expedition appears to have been the capture and burning of Andreyevo in 1592; Shevkal was wounded in the fighting; the Russians then withdrew.) Aram and Kiril petitioned that the Russians should occupy Tarku and use it as a base for further operations against Shevkal; they wanted the Russians to open up the road to Georgia

¹ For Prince Aram, see Commentary 61 (c).

across Shevkal's domains. The Georgian ambassadors were told in July 1593 that the Tsar was giving instructions for a force of 15,000 men under Prince Andrey Khvorostinin to march against Shevkal; Tarku was to be occupied and Russian men and Alexander's ally the Krym-Shevkal were to be installed there.

Prince Ivan Nikitich Vsevolodski was sent to Georgia in July 1593 (7101), when Aram and Kiril returned home. He carried Godunov's letter informing Alexander of Khvorostinin's expedition and asking him to order his own army to Tarku and to send his son Yuri to Moscow to do homage to the Tsar. King Alexander was told in the letter not to send any of his children as hostages to Turkey or Persia without referring the matter to the Tsar. (Belokurov published no documents relating to Vsevolodski's embassy other than Boris's letter.)

Vsevolodski returned in December 7103 (1594). He was accompanied by Alexander's ambassadors Khurshit and Aram who carried a letter to Godunov in which the King wrote that Khvorostinin had ravaged and burnt many of Shevkal's places by the sea but never got close to Kakheti, with the result that the road through the Kumukh land remained closed. Alexander promised to send his son Yuri and his army to the Terek as soon as it was cleared. Alexander asked Godunov to petition the Tsar to send an expedition against Shevkal which would build a fort in the land of the Ghazi-Kumukhs. Khurshit and Aram remained in Russia until 1596 when they were sent home in the company of the Russian ambassadors Kuzma Petrovich Sovin and Andrey Polukhanov.

Sovin left Moscow on 6 June and, after a delay in Astrakhan, reached Terki on 11 October. The winter was already advancing when the ambassadorial party arrived at Soni on 28 November. To spare the exhausted and underfed horses, they had to march on foot day and night through the snow. On 7 December Alexander's *aznauri* Farsadan met them and escorted them to

Buyutan (Boetan) where the King was wintering in southern Kakheti on the banks of the Belakanis-tsqali, famed for its abundance of game.

Discussions dragged on for the following two months until the end of February 1597. The Georgians were at pains to explain their difficulties in mounting an attack against Shevkal across the high ridges of Daghestan. (There was some justice in their hesitations, since it took a nineteenth-century Russian army sixty years to impose their authority over the warlike tribes of these formidable ranges).

In April the Russians moved to Gremi and were assigned a camp at the village of Shilda. Here Georgians and Russians engaged in acrimonious disputes on their respective relations with the Kabardan princes. At last Sovin asked for leave to depart but King Alexander was in no hurry to let the Russians go, since it is evident that their continued presence gave him some prestige and potential bargaining power in the diplomatic game he had to continue to play between the changing Ottoman sultans and the Safavid Shah Abbas. Sovin was informed that snow still blocked the passes and, further, that the King was awaiting the return of a messenger despatched by him to King Simon of Kartli.

Between May and September the King persisted in his delaying tactic, and it was not until 3 October 1597 that Sovin finally left Gremi on the three weeks' ride to Soni. But he found no escort from the Terek waiting for him at Lars; instead, he received instructions to pass the winter in Kakheti and thus returned to Tog a week before Christmas. The unfortunate Polukhanov was ill and the ambassador's dragoman died. In April of the following year (1598), Sovin dined with the King at Aloni and at last took his leave.

On 5 June Sovin reached Soni, accompanied by a return Georgian mission to Moscow. The Kakhian representatives were Suliman Bayindirli and the dyak Levan Yankov (a

Russian rendering of 'son of Ianko'=G. Iankoshvili).¹ At Soni the party had to wait three months, for again no escort had been sent from the Terek to meet them – a fact which Brosset attributes to the uncertain conditions following the accession of Boris Godunov as Tsar in Moscow.

Sovin and the Georgian ambassadors Prince Suliman and dyak Levan at last reached Astrakhan in October 1598 (7107); they wintered there and arrived in Moscow on 9 July 1599. Tsar Boris received them on 23 August. They brought a letter in which Alexander complained that, although twelve years had elapsed since he first petitioned the Tsar and came under his hand, he had received no aid from the Tsar's army. He wrote: 'You are a great Sovereign and it will be improper for us to go on pestering you all the time. You sent us your bountiful royal word saying "I have taken King Alexander and his entire land into protection under my royal hand, and I shall not allow anybody to ravage your land." We had faith in this royal word and placed our hopes in you; but our land was laid waste in subsequent raids . . . There is nothing more to say . . .' In a letter to Boris he complained that Tsar Fedor had not sent him any falcons that year and that the Tsar's gifts were so poor as to be unfit even for a commoner. On 8 September 7108, the Georgian ambassadors were received by Patriarch Job and in July 1601 (7109) they were given leave to return home (they apparently complained that they had not been issued with sufficient food in Moscow).

Ivan Nashchokin and Ivan Levontyev were ordered on

¹ Brosset (*EC/BHP*, Nos. 16–18, col. 371, n. 134) states that in the rescript of King Alexander, which the ambassadors brought with them, the name of Revaz Mugalbegov appears instead of that of dyak Levan. Brosset professes to be unable to identify the family name Mugalbegov, but if we take the Russian termination – *begov* to be a translation of Georgian *aṭnaurishvili*, we can identify the stem *Mugal-*; this may correspond to the well-known Georgian princely name Maghala-shvili (cf. Chap. 2, p. 105, n. 3, for 'Mokholey's son Keleya' = Kolya Maghalashvili).

25 August 7109 (1601), to accompany Suliman and Levan to Georgia. They were instructed to take all necessary precautions while travelling between Kazan and Astrakhan so as not to suffer at the hands of 'outlaw Cossacks, Zaporozhians, Cherkesses and Tartars' (Belokurov, p. 330). In his message to Alexander Tsar Boris made no reference to the King's complaints; he expressed readiness to keep Alexander under his royal hand just as Fedor had done, and promised to send an army under Ivan P. Romodanovski against Shevkal; Alexander was asked to send his army to combine with the Russians for these operations. Boris also asked Alexander to renew his oath of allegiance saying that the failure of Khvorostinin's expedition (in 1594) was due to Alexander's failure to send his army against Shevkal at the same time. In case Alexander complained of delays in the dispatch of the Russian army against Shevkal, Nashchokin and Levontyev were asked to draw his attention to the great fire at Astrakhan, witnessed by the Georgian ambassadors, when the suburb (*posad*) and the blockhouse (*ostrog*) were destroyed with heavy loss of the food and various stores needed for an expedition; among the property destroyed were the houses of Russian, Bukharan and Ghilan merchants. Stocks sufficient for five, six or even ten years were normally stored at Astrakhan; now everything was lost (Belokurov, p. 337).

Nashchokin and Levontyev were accompanied by two icon-painters (to replace the men sent earlier) and four carpenters skilled in building churches. They also carried five falcons (one died at Murom).

They were held up by bad weather on the Volga and only reached Astrakhan on 7 November. The journey was marked by continuous bickering with Suliman who complained of inadequacy of provisions. There were further delays at Astrakhan and further arguments with Suliman about the onward journey.

In a letter from Gremi dated 27 September (? 7111-1602) the ambassadors reported that they had reached Georgia on 1 July 1602. They were received by Kings Alexander and David who took the oath to the Tsar. King David then set off against Aristov of Soni 'and he sent us off to an empty spot, in the woods. And we suffered dishonour and great hunger there. We sent the interpreter Dmitri and the under-dyak Timokha to King David to say that we were dying of hunger. The King got angry and he sent us, your servants, far from him to Zagem in the month of August. And at Zagem, Sire, we suffered even greater hunger and great dishonour; at that time of the year even local inhabitants leave Zagem for the mountains because of the heat. And your Majesty's falconers, and the under-dyak and *streltsy* and many of our men, died and we, your servants, are ill.' King David returned to Gremi from his expedition against Aristov in October and sent messengers to fetch the ambassadors. But he fell ill and died on the fifth day. Alexander, who then returned to the throne, told the ambassadors: 'Sixteen years have passed since I grasped the tail of the Muscovite Sovereign's coat, but I have seen no help. And you, ambassadors, have misled me . . .' 'And King Alexander said improper words and he imprisoned us, your servants.'

Nashchokin and Levontyev wintered in Georgia. They left Astrakhan on their way back to Moscow on 13 September 1603. Nashchokin died at Kazan. The remainder of the party – which included Kiril, Alexander's ambassador – were at Nizhni Novgorod on 7 December.

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PART II

THE EMBASSY OF
TATISHCHEV AND IVANOV
(1604-5)

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CHAPTER 8

GEORGIANS AT THE COURT OF BORIS GODUNOV

[The Georgian ambassador Kiril and his men, who travelled to Russia in the company of Nashchokin and Levontyev on their way back from the court of King Alexander, left Astrakhan on 13 September 1603. Nashchokin died in Kazan. [Levontyev and the Georgians left Kazan on 30 November and reached Nizhni Novgorod on 7 December.] Nashchokin and Levontyev having complained to the Tsar of their ill-treatment when they were in Georgia, retaliatory action was taken against the monk Kiril: he and his men were issued with 'scanty provisions', just enough not to be hungry. The Georgians were detained in Nizhni Novgorod and the Tsar's letter of 31 December contained instructions that 'no foreigners or Russians' were to be admitted to the Georgian ambassadors and that 'nobody should converse with them about anything and none of their men should wander about the market-place or the streets needlessly'. The attendant Russian squire was instructed to accompany the Georgian ambassadors every time they left their quarters. On 30 January 1604 the Tsar gave orders to have the Georgian ambassadors brought to Moscow. On 18 February they were received by Tatishchev and dyak Grigori Klobukov at the Posolski Prikaz¹.]

The Georgian King Alexander's ambassadors, the monk Kiril (377) and the under-dyak Savva were received on the 18th of February by the gentleman of the Privy Council and Master of the Horse [*yaselnichi*] Mikhail Ignatyevich Tatishchev² and dyak Grigori Klobukov³ at the Posolski Prikaz, at the command

¹ For the history of the Posolski Prikaz, see Commentary 45.

² For the rank of *yaselnichi* and the background of Mikhail Tatishchev, see Commentary 46.

³ Dyak Grigori Klobukov, nicknamed *zloba*, the spiteful, was himself

of the Sovereign Tsar and great Prince Boris Fedorovich of all Russia. The attendant officers Grigori Elizarov and Misyur Solovtsev had been sent to fetch the Georgian ambassadors. Horses from the royal stables and a sledge from the Chudov monastery were sent for the Archimandrite, and a sledge-horse and a sledge from the royal stables for the underdyak. There were forty town gentry in clean mourning attire in the ante-chamber of the Posolskaya Palata, while *streltsy* in ordinary uniforms were placed in the square in front of the (378) Posolskaya Palata. When King Alexander's ambassadors drove into the walled town, they were taken past the Razryadny Seni,¹ and they alighted from the sledges in front of the Posolskaya Palata. When they entered the chamber the gentleman of the Privy Council and Master of the Horse Mikhail Ignatyevich and dyak Grigori Klobukov got up and asked the monk whether he was a priest; he replied that he was an Archimandrite. So they asked for his blessing and went back to their seats, and they bade the Archimandrite and under-dyak Savva sit down, too.

After they had remained seated for a short while, Tatishchev said to the monk Kiril: 'Kiril! By what custom did King Alexander say many unseemly things about the great Sovereign Tsar and great Prince Boris Fedorovich, Autocrat of all Russia, things which the mind refuses even to contemplate? ...' (380) The monk Kiril replied: 'Far from such things having been done or uttered, I am seized with fright even when I hear such unseemly things from you. I am a Greek by birth and a the son of a *dyak* whose duties had included participation in diplomatic missions. In 1598 he was a member of the council which brought Godunov to the throne. In 1601 he was sent to Tsarev-Borisov for talks with Crimean ambassadors, and in 1603-4 he was the head of the Novgorod department (*RBS*, under name).

¹ The antechamber to the Razryadny Prikaz, the Department concerned with military affairs and fortifications; the service records which determined the seniority of the nobility were kept in this Prikaz (ref. Brockhaus and Efron).

Christian. A fast for the salvation of our souls has begun for all Orthodox Christians. I swear on my Christian faith and my monastic vows and my priesthood that at the court of my lord King Alexander I heard no unseemly speeches about the great Sovereign Tsar . . .'

Tatishchev and dyak Grigori then said: 'When King David ⁽³⁸²⁾ left Shemta¹ on an expedition against Prince Aristov who holds a fief from him, he sent Ivan Nashchokin and Ivan Levontyev to an uninhabited spot in the forest of Morkanch.² They experienced hardships when they were encamped there;

¹ *Shemta* = Shua-mta, a monastery five or six versts to the south of Telavi, to the left of the route from central Kakheti to Tbilisi, leading up the valley of the Turdis-tsqali across the pass over the Gombori mountains. The name means literally 'amidst the mountains'; for the monastery is surrounded on three sides by woods and high peaks (cf. Bakradze, *Akty*, Vol. 5, p. 1100). An ancient cult centre, with shrines dating back to the seventh century A.D., Shua-mta rose to fame as the favourite residence of Tinatin, the first queen of King Levan. About 1527-8 she endowed a church and monastery which Chubinashvili (*AK*, Vol. 1, pp. 440-5 and Vol. 2, pls. 353-9) describes as an outstanding monument of the renaissance of Kakhian architecture during the first half of the sixteenth century. In September 1850 Brosset (*VA, Ier Rapport*, pp. 57 ff.) crossed the Gombori mountains to Shua-mta and noted the wild beauty of the countryside and the lack of security from Lesghian bandits. Chubinashvili (Vol. 11, pl. 359b) reproduces a faded fresco portrait of Tinatin and Levan. For a description in English of Shua-mta, see Taqaishvili, 'Antiquities of Georgia' in *Georgica*, Vols. 4-5 (1937), pp. 109-11 and pls. xv-xviii.

² *Morkanch*: Although Alexander describes Morkanch as 'a large place' frequented by his father 'King Levont', the meticulous Wakhushst, writing only a century and a quarter later, makes no mention of Morkanch. It is possible that the Russian form 'Morkanch' may be a distortion of the name of the village of Mukhrawan which lay between Martqopi and Ujarma. In 1850, Brosset was told by peasants that in the forest about three versts from Ujarma were the ruins of an ancient citadel and the remains of a residence of King Gurgaslan who flourished in the fifth century A.D. (cf. *VA, Ier Rapport*, p. 56). Attributions to King Gurgaslan were as common as those to Queen Tamar or to Tamerlane, and there is a possibility that here was 'the large place' frequented by 'King Levont'. It may well have been destroyed during the repeated devastations of Kakheti by Shah Abbas I.

wattle huts¹ were made expressly for them, and they received scanty provisions, and even these were issued every other day and sometimes once in three days; nor could they buy provisions anywhere. The ambassadors' men wandered through the woods and fed on apples, but the attendant officer gave orders not to let them into the woods, and to beat and tie up their men. Their horses were let out on waste land, and the Georgian peasant watchmen cut off the horses' tails,² insulted them and threw stones at the horses; many horses died because of it. The ambassadors sent the falconer Afanasi and the interpreter Dmitri to King Alexander in the monastery of Alaverdi, but King Alexander replied that he had given his realm to his son David and that the matter was no concern of his. He said that he knew everything which David did to the ambassadors; while he had been king, the Sovereign's men had not been subjected to such dishonour and ignominy.'

The monk Kiril said: 'His royal Majesty's ambassadors were quartered in houses at Morkanch. Morkanch is a large place; in previous years King Alexander's father King Levont went there every year, and always lived there in the summer in order to feel cooler. It is an old custom in the Iberian land to make wattle huts. The ambassadors were lodged in whatever quarters there happened to be. His royal Majesty's ambassadors did not suffer any dishonour, and they were issued with sufficient provisions. I do not know anything about thieving by attendant officers.'

Tatishchev and the dyak said: 'And Ivan Nashchokin and

¹ Wattle huts: temporary summer dwellings thrown up by the peasants – in contrast to the often luxurious tents under which the nobility and court officials would spend the hunting and campaigning seasons. For a wattle hut of the period, see Castelli's drawing reproduced in Allen, *HGP*, tail-piece to p. 256.

² 'Cut off the horses' tails': probably for the very saleable horse-hair – the motive being profit rather than malice. This lamentable practice still persists among the 'tinkers' of Ireland and is one of the reasons for their unpopularity among farmers.

Ivan Levontyev also wrote to King David that they were suffering great hardship on account of their quarters and through lack of provisions and the behaviour of the attendant officers, and King David commanded that they be moved far away from him, to Zagem. And at Zagem the attendant officer lodged them in the stables behind the King's court, where the King's donkeys had been stabled and which were full of droppings. They were issued with scanty provisions every other day or once in three days. They sold their clothes and belongings there and bought provisions in that way. The falconers and the under-dyak and *streltsy* and many of their men died there.'

And the monk Kiril said: 'His Royal Majesty's ambassadors Ivan Nashchokin and Ivan Levontyev sent to King David the under-dyak Timofey and the interpreter Dmitri asking for the king's permission to go and trade at Zagem. King David repeatedly sent messengers to them and told them himself (383) that it was very hot at Zagem, and that people felt very bad because of the heat, but they replied that they were not afraid of the heat. So the King gave them freedom of action. And they went on their own. The ambassadors lodged at Zagem in houses near the King's court and not in stables; the houses were ordinary ones – there is but one house at Zagem that is better: the royal court where the king lives . . . The ambassadors were given sufficient provisions and were subjected to no dishonour.'

Tatishchev and the dyak then said: 'When King David came to Krym he bade Ivan Nashchokin and Ivan Levontyev come to him there. They came on the 16th of October. And the attendant officer had their camp pitched in the forest, in an empty garden belonging to a doctor, and gave orders for their tent to be erected. And within the hour Prince Aram and ambassador Suliman and the same attendant officer Petr and you, monk Kiril, came to them from King David and

asked angrily on behalf of the King why they encamped in a doctor's garden close to Krym. Yet it was the attendant officer himself who had had their camp pitched there. The attendant officer beat the men who were putting up the tent and gave orders for the tent to be brought down on top of Ivan Nashchokin and Ivan Levontyev, and they narrowly missed being crushed by the tent. They were ejected from that spot at about four o'clock at night, and were taken back some five *versts* to an uninhabited spot in the forest, where they were abandoned on their own. They remained encamped there for a long time.'

The monk Kiril said: 'King David had sent messengers to fetch the ambassadors and he bade them come to him at Krym. And when they came to Krym they encamped near the king's court in a garden, and they had the king's tents erected. They encamped there without the king's knowledge. King David became angry with them because of it, and he commanded that they be moved to another spot. God and his Majesty the Tsar are free to do what they please: the deed was done by King David and not by King Alexander, and King David did not listen to his father in anything. His royal Majesty should extend his mercy to King Alexander, and should not subject him to his wrath because of King David's misdeeds. I do not know and did not hear of any dishonour which the attendant officer might have caused the ambassadors...'

- (387) Tatishchev and dyak Grigori also said: 'On the 12th day of January the Turkish Pasha of Genzha, Kaikhosr,¹ came to Zagem with King Alexander; Prince Yuri had asked the Pasha for his daughter in marriage. And the Pasha was lodged in the king's forecourt and he supped with the king every day, and Prince Yuri sat at table below him. And some three days later the Turkish *chaush* Illi-aga arrived, and the king

¹ For the Turkish Pasha of Genzha, Kaikhosr, see Commentary 47.

had him quartered in some Armenians' houses near his court; yet he had his royal Majesty's men quartered far away from him.'

And the monk Kiril said that the Pasha of Genzha was a Georgian by birth. He came to Zagem with King Alexander in order to effect a reconciliation between the king's sons King David and Prince Yuri; that the Pasha's wife and daughters are of the Christian faith, but he himself is a Moslem. 'Prince Yuri asked for his daughter in marriage because she is a Christian and the daughter of a great man, and I believe that Prince Yuri married her in the summer. His royal Majesty's ambassadors were not lodged near the Turkish *chaush* on purpose.'

Tatishchev and dyak Grigori said: 'And it is also written in Ivan Nashchokin and Ivan Levontyev's report: King Alexander told them – "The Sovereign wished to defend me but he will not defend me; there is no need even to ask for protection. None will be forthcoming".'

And the monk Kiril said that he did not ever hear at King Alexander's court such unseemly speeches about his royal Majesty; at King Alexander's court they always hear the king boast of the Tsar's mercy and protection.

Tatishchev and dyak Grigori went on: 'It is also written in the report: When the ambassadors left Zagem and were proceeding to Krym, the attendant officer brought them to a farmstead at about four o'clock in the night; the officer himself settled in the house, while they were quartered under the eaves near the house. From there as far as Krym they travelled without the attendant officer, who abandoned them. And as for the men who died at Krym of hardships, the king ordered that they should not be buried near a church, and they were buried in a waste piece of ground.'

And the monk Kiril said: 'If attendant officers behaved in that way, they did it lawlessly without the king's knowledge;