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Nikolay Karamzin’s Dedication to the Emperor Alexander I as a Preamble to the “History of Russian State” in Manchu and Chinese Translation by Zakhar Leontievsky

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Abstract: The first official history of the Russian state “*Istoriia gosudarstva Rossijskogo*” (“History of Russian State”) was compiled by Nikolay Karamzin in 12 volumes (published in 1816–1828). The first eight volumes were printed in 1816–1818 and were most probably taken to Beijing by the members of the 10th Ecclesiastic mission (1820–1830). Among the students of that mission was Zakhar Leontievsky (1799–1874), who had spent ten years in Beijing and had perfectly mastered the Chinese and Manchu languages. During his stay in China, Leontievsky has translated into Chinese three volumes of Karamzin’s “History of Russian state”. Nowadays, the manuscript copies of this translation are kept in the Oriental collections in St. Petersburg, Russia. The Russian original by Karamzin begins with the Dedication to the Russian tzar Alexander I. Only the manuscript from the Oriental department of the Scientific library of the St. Petersburg state university has the Dedication translated into two languages — Manchu and Chinese. The comparison of the Russian original with the Manchu and Chinese versions shows that the translations turn to be Leontievsky’s interpretations of the original text written according to the rules of Chinese addresses to the throne. Additional translator’s comments were added to explain some episodes from the Russian history to the Chinese reader. Zakhar Leontievsky’s translation of the “History of Russian state” was the first introduction of Russian history to China.

Key words: Nikolay Karamzin, “History of Russian State”, dedication, Zakhar Leontievsky, Manchu translation, Chinese translation

The first official history of the Russian state was compiled by Nikolay M. Karamzin (1766–1826) and is titled “*Istoriia gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*”. It covers the period of the Russian history from ancient times until Ivan the Terrible (1530–1584) and the disturbance period of *Smutnoe vremia*

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(1598–1613). This grand project was initiated by N. Karamzin in 1790s when he became interested in the studies of the Russian historical documents and thought of a literary description of the events. In 1803, he asked the Russian Emperor Alexander I for a paid position of an official historiographer with an access to the historical archives. Karamzin was granted this position and started writing the “History of Russian state” based on the original historical sources. The main idea of Karamzin’s “History” is glorification of a strong monarchy guided by a wise ruler. It was clearly expressed in the author’s dedication of the “History” to his patron Alexander I. The 19th c. editions begin with the “Dedication to the Monarch Emperor Alexander Pavlovich, the autocrat of All Russia”. It was not included in the later editions. This is why the early editions and the text of the dedication are bibliographic rarities.

The Russian text of Karamzin’s dedication is as follows:¹

ПОСВЯЩЕНИЕ

ВСЕМИЛОСТИВѢЙШІЙ ГОСУДАРЬ!

Съ благоговѣніемъ представляю ВАШЕМУ ИМПЕРАТОРСКОМУ ВЕЛИЧЕСТВУ плодь усердныхъ, двѣнадцати-лѣтнихъ трудовъ. Не хважуся ревностію и постоянствомъ: ободренный ВАМИ, могъ ли я не имѣть ихъ?

Въ 1811 году, въ счастливѣйшія, незабвенныя минуты жизни моей, читаль я ВАМЪ, Государь, нѣкоторыя главы сей Исторіи — объ ужасахъ Батыева нашествія; о подвигѣ Героя, Димитрія Донскаго — въ то время, когда густая туча бѣдствій висѣла надъ Европою, угрожая и нашему любезному отечеству, ВЫ слушали съ восхитительнымъ для меня вниманіемъ; сравнивали давно-минувшее съ настоящимъ, и не завидовали славнымъ опасностямъ Димитрія, ибо предвидѣли для Себя еще славнѣйшія. Великодушное предчувствіе исполнилось: туча грянула надъ Россією — но мы спасены, прославлены; врагъ истребленъ, Европа свободна, и глава АЛЕКСАНДРОВА сіяетъ въ лучезарномъ вѣнцѣ безсмертія. Государь! Если счастье ВАШЕГО добродѣтельнаго сердца равно ВАШЕЙ славы, то ВЫ счастливѣе всѣхъ земно-родныхъ.

¹ KARAMZIN 1816: 1–4.

Новая эпоха наступила. Будущее извѣстно единому Богу; но мы, судя по вѣроятностямъ разума, ожидаемъ мира твердаго, столь вожде-лѣннаго для народовъ и Вѣнценосцевъ, которые хотя въ властвовать для пользы людей, для успѣховъ нравственности, добродѣтели, Наукъ, Искусствъ гражданскихъ, благосостоянія государственнаго и частнаго. Побѣдою устранивъ препятствія въ семь истинно Царскомъ дѣлѣ, даровавъ златую тишину намъ и Европѣ, чего ВЫ, Государь, не совершите въ крѣпости мужества, въ теченіе жизни долговременной, общаемой ВАМЪ и закономъ Природы и теплою молитвою подданныхъ!

Бодрствуйте, Монархъ возлюбленный! Сердцевѣдецъ читаетъ мысли, Исторія предастъ дѣянія великодушныхъ Царей, и въ самое отдаленное потомство вселяетъ любовь къ ихъ священной памяти. Примите милостиво книгу, служащую тому доказательствомъ. Исторія народа принадлежитъ Царю.

ВАШЕГО ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО
ВЕЛИЧЕСТВА,
вѣрноподанный
Николай Карамзинъ.

Translation from Russian

Most grateful Your Majesty,

With reverence I present to Your Imperial Majesty the result of my twelve years diligent labor. Not boasting of being ardent and constant, encouraged by You, how could I have done it?

In 1811, in the happiest and unforgettable moments of my life, when I read to You, Your Majesty, some chapters of this History — about the horror of Batyi's invasion, about the great deeds of the hero Dmitry Donskoy — at the times when a dark cloud of distress was hanging over Europe threatening our beloved fatherland, You listened to me with admirable attention, comparing the remote past with our days, without envy to the dangers of Dmitry, since You had predicted even greater for Yourself. Majesty's premonition realized: the cloud burst over Russia — but we are saved, glorified, the enemy is destroyed, Europe is free, and the head of Alexander shines with the wreath of Majesty's eternity! If the happiness of Your

virtuous heart is equal to Your glory, then You are the happiest of all creature.

A new era has arrived. Only God knows the future, but we according to the capabilities of the mind expect solid peace which is so wished by the peoples and monarchs who want to govern for the sake of people, virtue, Science, civil Arts, prosperity of state and individual. Victoriously destroying all the obstacles to this real Tzar's deeds, granting golden peace to us and Europe, what would not You, Your Majesty, accomplish in courage during Your long life, which is promised to You by the law of Nature and warm pray of subjects?

Keep awake, beloved Monarch! Clairvoyant reads thoughts, History tells about the deeds of generous Tzars and inspires love of the far descendants to their holly memory. Graciously accept this book as a proof that History of the people belongs to the Tzar.

Your Imperial Majesty's
Loyal subject
Nikolay Karamzin

Although Nikolay Karamzin officially started working on the "History" in 1803 when he became a court historiographer, the dedication mentions the year of 1811. That year, upon the request of Ekaterina Pavlovna, a sister of Alexander I, Karamzin compiled "A note on ancient and new Russia in its political and civil state" and delivered it to the Emperor. This note was a short program of the "History of Russian state", and from that date Karamzin started his work on the compilation of his great masterpiece. In his dedication Karamzin compares Alexander I battles against Napoleon with the Duke Dmitry Donskoy war against the Tatar-Mongols: both invasions were stopped by brave and wise leadership of Russian rulers.

The first eight volumes of the "History of Russian state" were printed in 1816–1818. The last volume number twelve was published in 1828 after Karamzin's death. The work was so popular that the first three thousand copies of the first edition were sold out in twenty-five days, and the second edition of the first eight volumes was published in 1818–1819.

Most likely, this edition of the "History of Russian state" was taken to Beijing in 1820 by the members of the Tenth Ecclesiastic Mission (1820–

1830). Among the students of that Mission was Zakhar Fedorovich Leontievsky (1799–1874), who had spent ten years in Beijing and had perfectly mastered the Chinese and Manchu languages. His knowledge of these languages is proved by numerous Russian translations of Chinese and Manchu historical and literary texts that were published in St. Petersburg after his return to Russia.² During his stay in Beijing, Leontievsky has translated into Chinese three volumes of Karamzin’s “History of Russian state”. Nowadays, the manuscript copies of this translation are kept in St. Petersburg: one copy at the Russian National library, three at the Oriental department of the Scientific library of the St. Petersburg state university, four copies at the Institute of Oriental manuscripts, RAS.³

The manuscripts are written on Chinese paper, the fascicles in yellow cover are put into a cardboard cover/*tao* with yellow silk cover. The information on the attached labels tells that Zakhar Leontievsky has presented four fair copies of his translation to four St. Petersburg centers of Oriental studies: Imperial library (now — Russian National library), Asiatic department of the Ministry of Foreign affairs and Asiatic Museum (now both collections are kept at the Institute of Oriental manuscripts, RAS) and Petersburg university (now — Scientific library of the St. Petersburg state university). Draft copies are also kept in IOM, RAS and Russian National Library. According to the studies of Sergei Peshtich and Isolda Ciperovich, the fair copy from IOM, RAS (M-30) was most probably aimed for the Chinese Emperor, since it is of big format, bound in golden silk and has a red label with golden printed title.⁴ Two draft copies of the “History of Russian state” were possibly acquired by the Petersburg university library from the private collection of Zakhar Leontievsky (Xyl. 1062 и Xyl. 2565). According to the studies of the manuscripts, the fair and draft copies were definitely done by Chinese scribe, while corrections in draft copies were made by a foreign hand. The corrections mainly concern style, as well as transcription of geographic and personal names. Characterizing the Chinese translation of the “History”, the scholars write that “the translator left behind four chapters (from the 4th to the 7th) of the third volume; the translation

² SKACHKOV 1977: 134–1384; PANG 2021: 84.

³ For detailed descriptions of the St. Petersburg copies see PANG & MAYATSKY & LIU RUO-MEI 2019: 5–35. The Chinese texts of the St. Petersburg manuscripts are published in LIU RUO-MEI 2021.

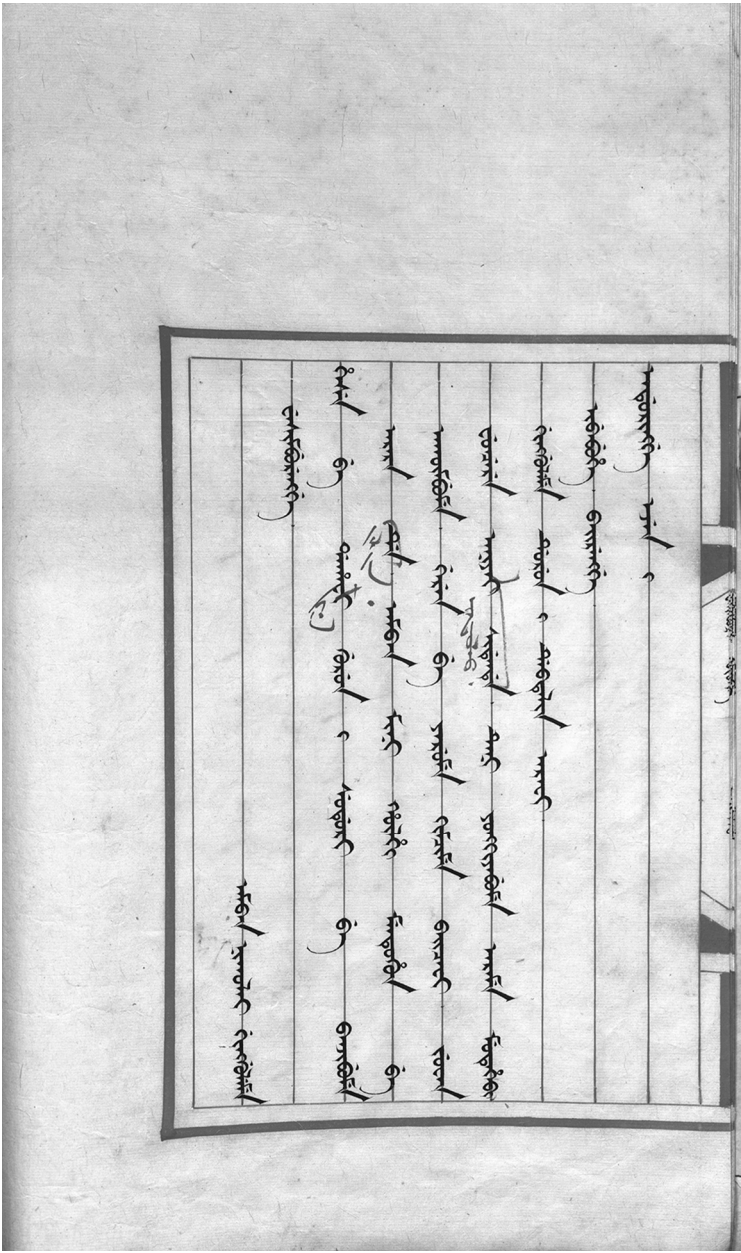
⁴ PESHTICH & CIPEROVICH 1968: 126.

does not include Karamzin's "Commentaries", <...> as well as chapters where Karamzin lists the sources for his multivolume "History". All this indicates a popular character of the Chinese translation".⁵

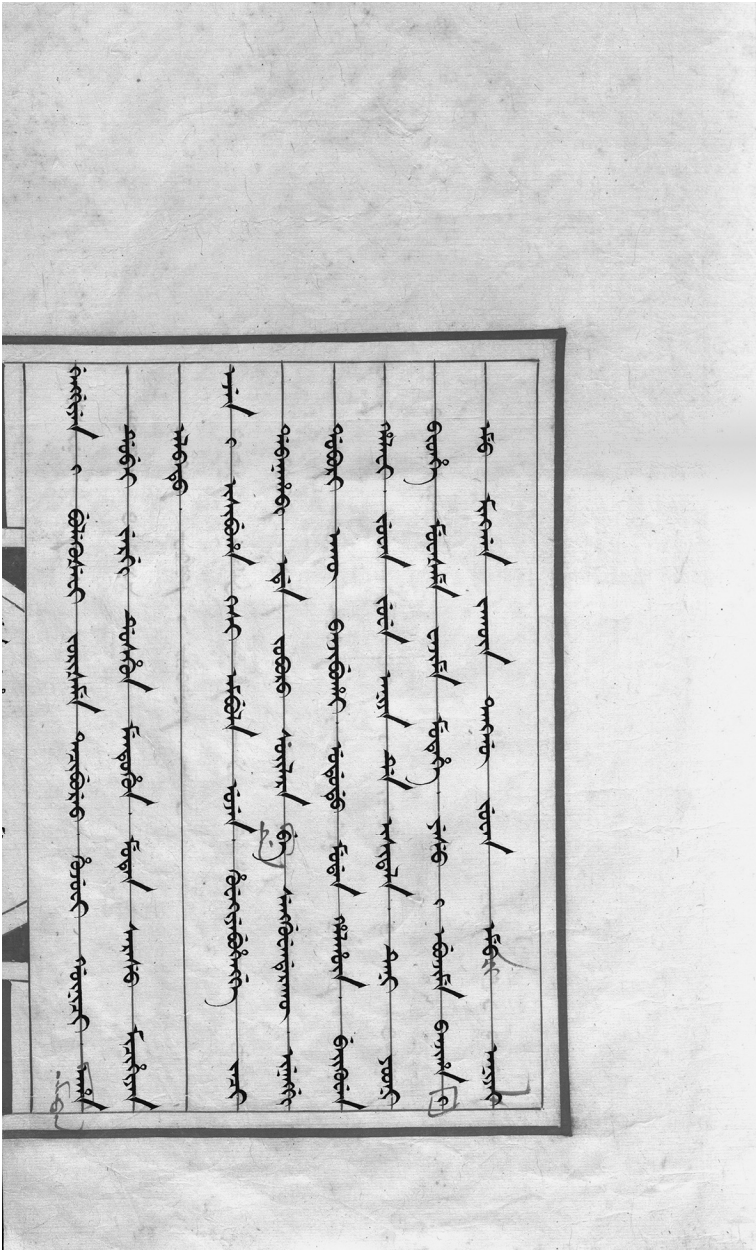
All existing copies of the Chinese translation of the "History of Russian state" are almost identical, but only two manuscripts begin with Karamzin's Dedication to the Russian Emperor Alexander I: The first fascicle of the Russian National library manuscript has the text in Chinese, the copy of the University library begins with the Dedication in Chinese and Manchu (Xyl. F-60). It is the only sample with Manchu language translation of the Dedication. The Manchu text is written in black ink from left to right (ff. 1a–5a), after it goes the Chinese translation, but written from right to left (ff. 1a–3a). The Manchu text bares corrections in red ink done by another hand. The main corrections concern the style of the language: the Manchu *aha* 'slave' is regularly changed to *amban* 'official' that also corresponds to the Chinese version of the text. The translator did not understand the Chinese sentence 波及大西洋 ('[this] also influenced Europe') and translated it as *amba si yang ni niyalma de isitala* ('reached the people of great Si-yang') not recognizing the word 'Europe'. These small hints lead to a conclusion that the Chinese version was done first and then translated into Manchu. Dedications in Manchu and Chinese languages are not direct translations of the Russian original, but have more detailed references to the Russian history and sometimes need comments for the foreign reader.

⁵ PESHTICH & CIPEROVICH 1968: 126.

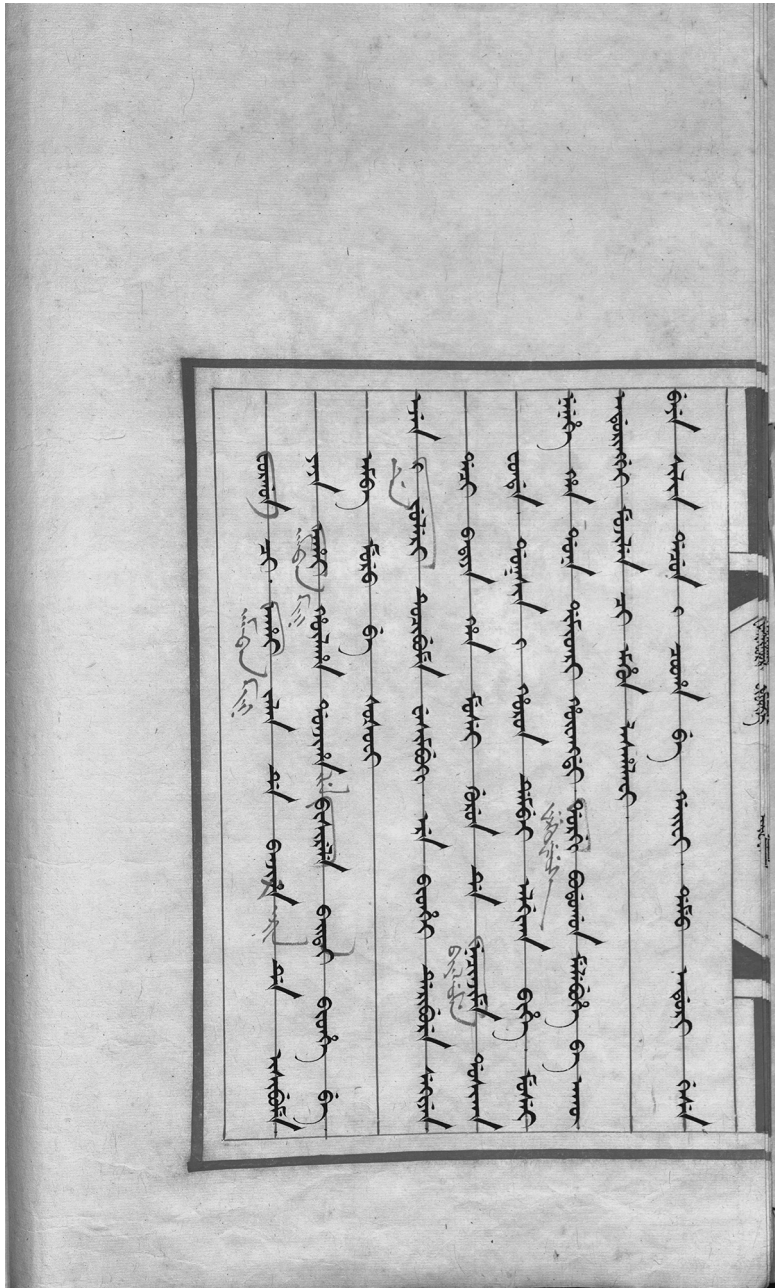
Dedication in Manchu



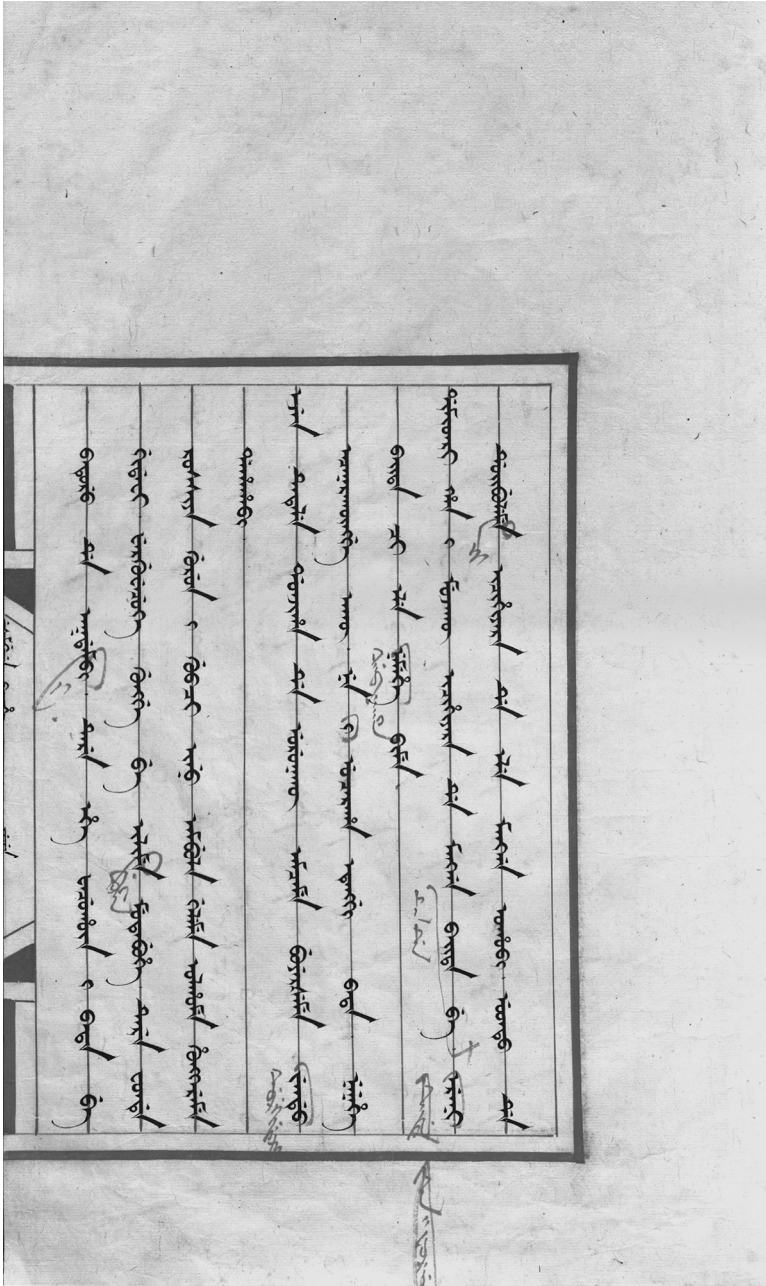
Pl. 1. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 1a



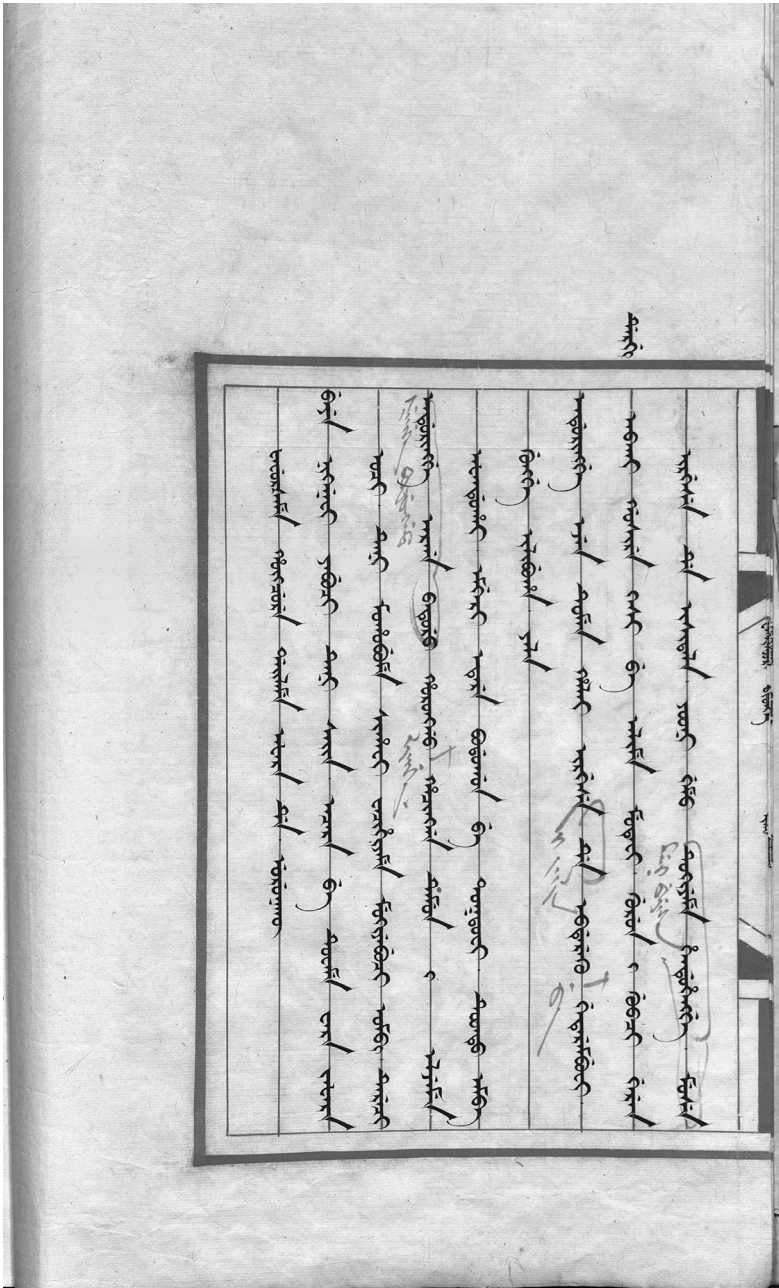
Pl. 2. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 1b



Pl. 3. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 2a



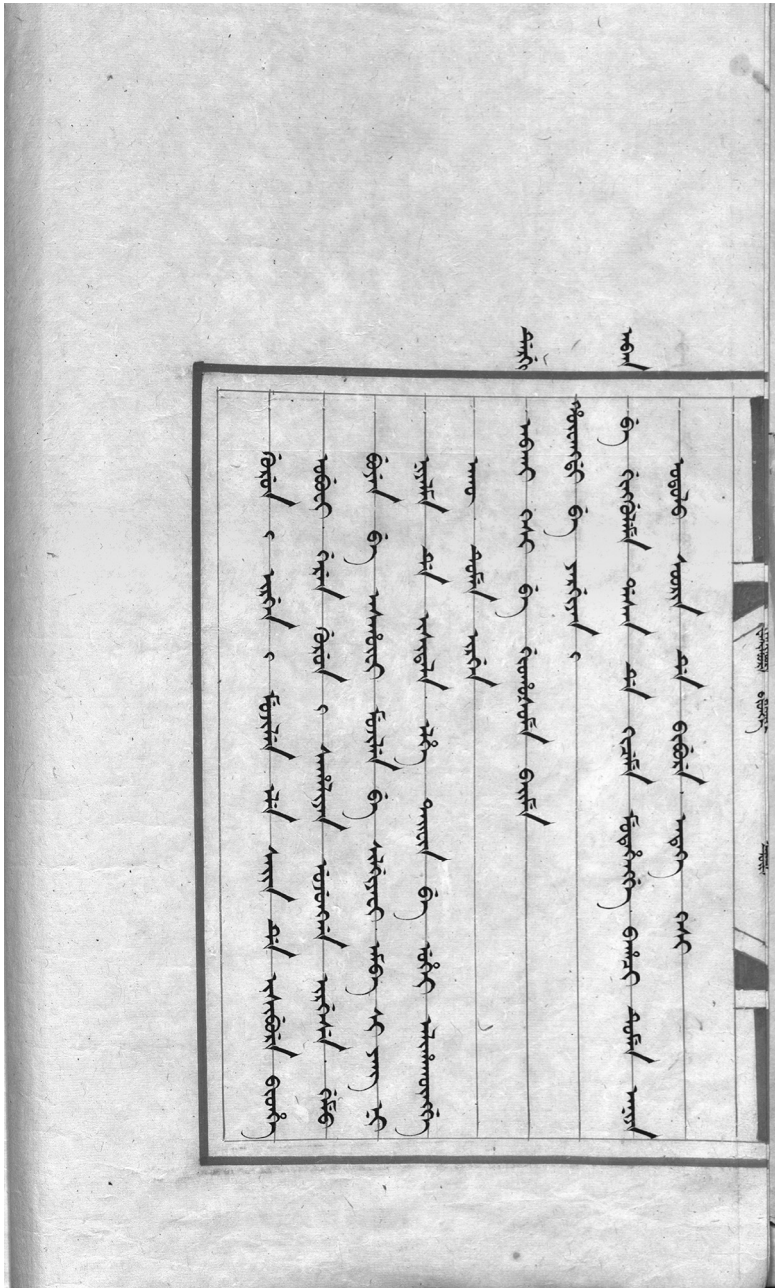
Pl. 4. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 2b



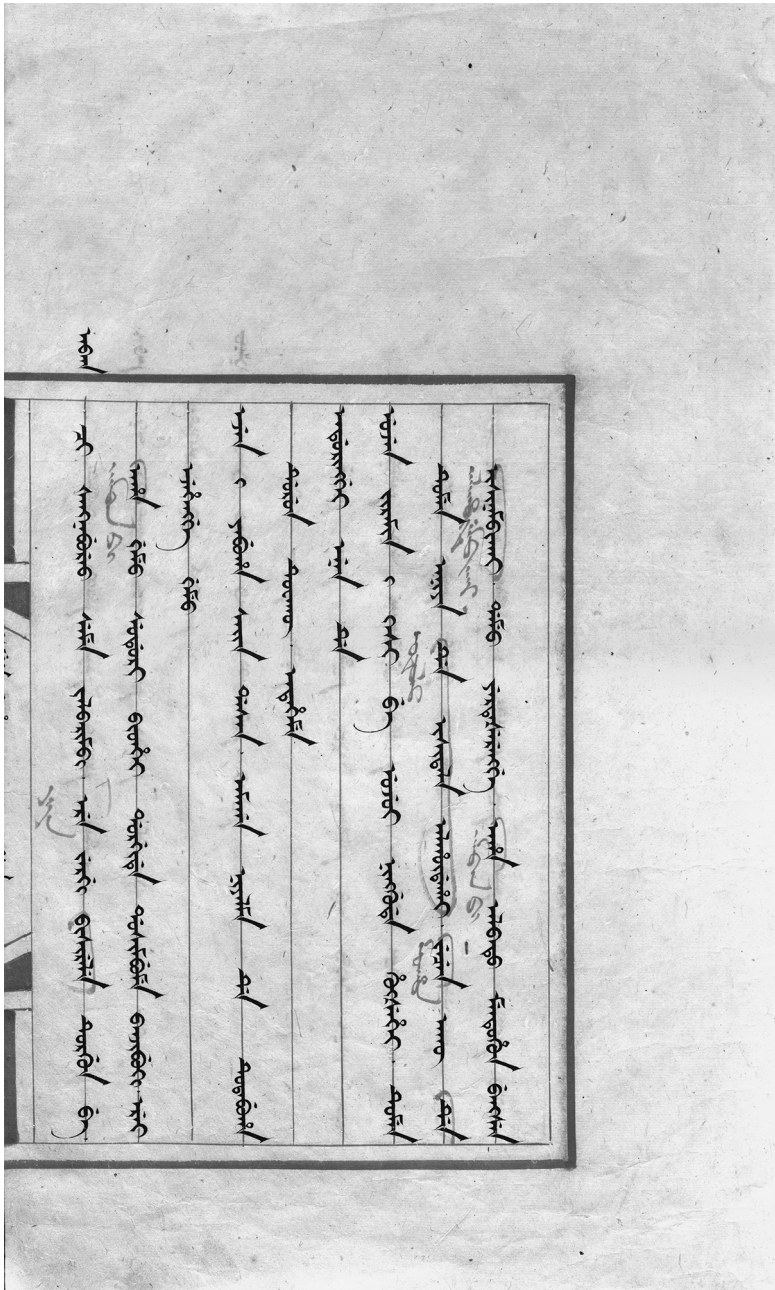
Pl. 5. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 3a



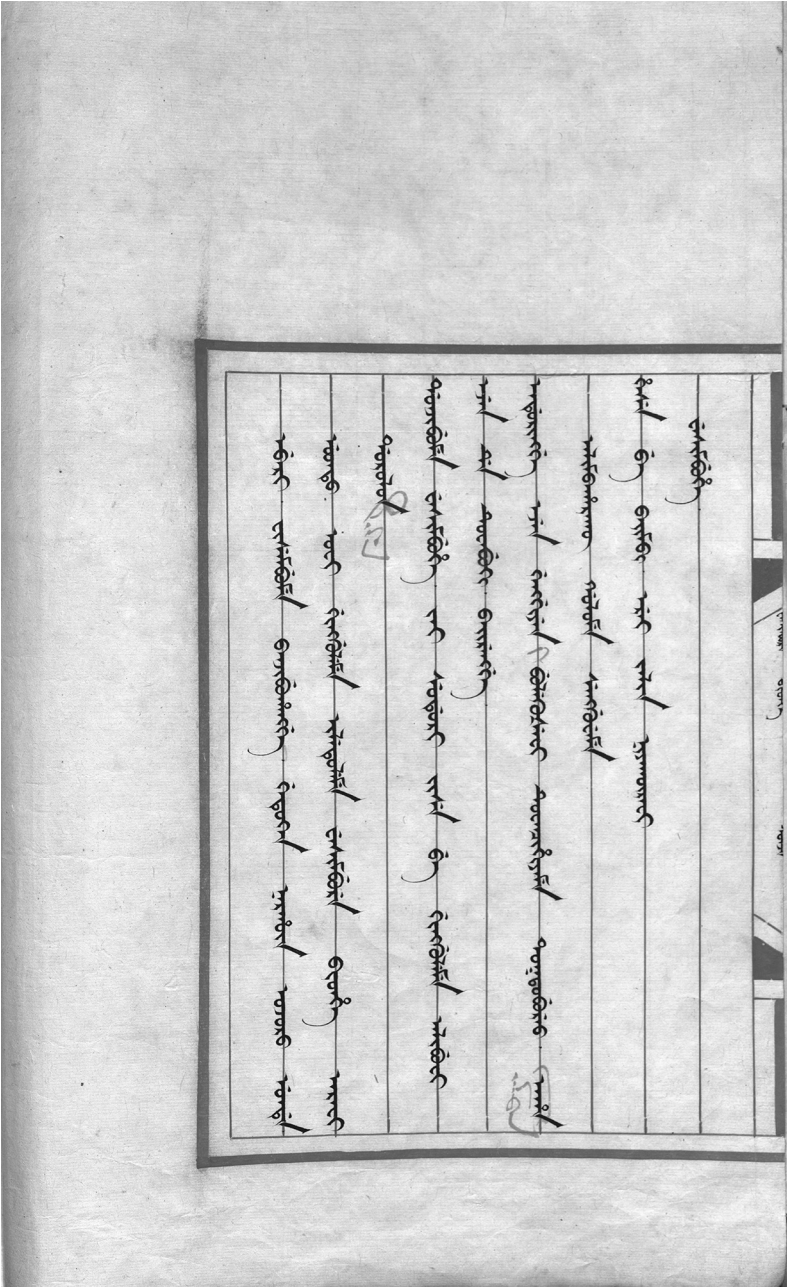
Pl. 6. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 3b



Pl. 7. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 4a



Pl. 8. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 4b



Pl. 9. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 5a

Transliteration

[f. 1a] amban Nikolai gingguleme / wesimburengge / hese be dahafi (*changed to: dahame*) gurun-i suduri be banjibume / arara de (*changed to: jalin*) amban mini hûlhi mentuhun be / akûmbume. geren be yarume kimcime baicafi. juwan / funcere aniyai sidende (*changed to: aniya otolo*). teni iongiyabume arame mutehebi. / gingguleme durun-i debtelin arafi / ibebuhe. bairengge / enduringge ejen-i // [f. 1b] genggiyen-i bulekušefi jorišame tacibureo. hujufi gûnici aha (*changed to: amban*) / dubei jergi dushun mentuhun. muten sarasu micihyan / albatu.ejen-i isibuha kesi ambula ujen. huwekiyebuhengge jaci / dabanahabi. ede joboro suilara be (*changed to: de*) sengguwenderakû inenggi / dobori akû banjibuhai. ududu mudan halhûn. beikuwen / halafi. juwan juwe aniya de isitala teni iooni / bithe muwašame wajime mutehe. Iesu-i ebunjime banjiha-î (*-i — cancelled*) / emu minggan jakûn tanggû juwan emu aniyai // [f. 2a] forgon (*changed to: emuci aniya*) ci. ahai (*changed to: amban mini*) jalan de banjiha (*changed to: banjirarin*) de isibume / yaya ahai (*changed to: amban mini*) hûlaha donjiha (*changed to: donjihale*) bisirele (*cancelled*) baitai (*changed to: baita*) bithe be / amba muru be šošofi / ejen-i juleri (*changed to: de*) tucibume wesimbuki. ere bithei deribure sekiyen / daci Batiya han musei gurun de necinjime (*changed to: biyalume*) dosikan / fonde doksin-i horon dembei algika bihe. musei / nenehe han Dona Dimitri hûwangdi dorgi (*changed to: ferguwecuke*) bodogon melebuhe ba akû / enduringgei mujilen ci emhun lshalafi. / beye silin dacun-i cooha be gaifi. damu enduri gese // [f. 2b] baturu de akdambi (*changed to: akdafi*). tere ehe facuhûn-i bata be / gidafi. ferguwecuke gungge be ilime (*changed to: ilibume*) mutebuhe. tere fonde / Rossiya gurun-i gubci inu ambula geleme olhome hungkereme / dahahabi./ ejen tetele donjiha de urunakû amcame buyeršeme jendu (*changed to: dorgideri*) / acanarakûngge akû. ne-î (*i — cancelled*) ucarahe etenggi bata nenehe / baita ci ele nelehe (*changed to: dabinaha*) bime. / Dimitri han-i mujakû icihiyara de mangga baita be (*inserted: te de*) ereni (*cancelled, two other corrections are also cancelled: tede, te-i fonde*) / duibuleme (*changed to: duibuleci*) icihiyara de ele mangga ohobi. uttu de // [f. 3a] fafuršame hûkcure dailame afara de urunakû / beye nikenefi yabuci teni sain acara be tuwame wara jafara / oci teni mohobume sihafi wacihiyame mukiyebuci ombi. tereci / enduringge arga baturu (*changed to: šengge bodonggo*) horonggo (*added: linge*) hacingga tumen-i eljeme / afanduhai emgeri etere

bodogon be toktofi tuttu amba / gungge ilibuha yala / enduringge ejen tumen halai irgese de (*changed to: irgese-i jalin*) ebdereku (*added: be*) geterembufi / dergi abkai gosire kesi be alime mutefi. gurun-i gubci geren / irgese de isitala iooni gemu tukiyeme henduhengge muse (*changed to: meni beyese*) // [f. 3b] amba hûwangdi-i deserengge kesi be alihangge. urunakû tumen / aniya otolo ferguwen elden tutabuci ogoro yargiyan-i / dele-i gosin şenggin (*changed to: jurgan*)-i amba hûturi. inu / ejen-i gosin algin ambarame badarambure adali (*added: seme maktame hendure*) oci (*changed to na: ohore*) abkai / fejergi-i niyalma. gemu kesi fulehun (*added: be*) de baimbikai (*changed to: alimbikai*). aha (*changed to: amban*) / uthai te-i forgon-i ejeme araci acara baita / teisulebuhede. daci dubede songkolome hacin dendeme narhûşame / faksalafi isamjame banjibumbi (*changed to: banjibume*). jai aha (*changed to: amban*) jalan-i baita be / tuwaci. tumen aniya iooni hûwaliasun oho manggi. meimeni // [f. 4a] gurun-i irgen-i mujilen ele sain de isibure bithe / obufi geren gurun-i sahaliyan ujingga irgese gemu / buyen be ashûfi mujilen be silgiyafi. amba si yang ni / niyalma de isitala. elhe taifin be uhei alihakûngge / akû tumen irgen / dergi abkai kesi be giyohoşome baime / hûwangdi be yargiyan-i / abka be gingguleme dasan de kiceme mutehengge bahaci tumen aniya / otolo soorin de bibure. enteke kesi // [f. 4b] abka ci şangnabureo seme jalbarimbi. ere (*changed to: yaya*) jergi bisirele turgun be / aha (*changed to: amban bi*) gemu suduri bithei dorgide dosimbume banjibuki. erei / ejehengge gemu / ejen-i yabuha sain dasan. amgan niyalma de tutabuha / durun tuwakû. enteheme / enduringgei enen de / ujen jiramin-i kesi be ujui ninggude hukşehi. tumen / tumen aniya de isitala alhûdahai (*changed to: otolo*). jecen (*changed to: mohon*) akû de isinambikai (*changed to: alahûndambikai*). damu yerteşerengge. aha (*changed to: amban bi*) albatu mentuhun bengsen // [f. 5a] eberi fisembume banjibuhangge. getuken narhûn ogoro unde / uttu ofi gingguleme iletuleme wesimbure bithe arafi / dorolon (*changed to: dorolohame*) / donjibume wesimbuhe. jai suduri jise be gingguleme alibufi / ejen de tuwabuki. bairengge / enduringge ejen genggiyen (*added: -i*) bulekuşefi tuwancihiyame tokto bureo. aha (*changed to: amban*) / alimbaharakû golome sengguweme / hese be baimbi. erei jalin niyakûrafi / wesimbuhe //

Translation from Manchu following the corrections in the text

[f. 1a] Official Nikolay respectfully reports:

Following the Imperial order to compile the history of the state, I, humble person, with all my efforts have checked all the facts and after more than ten years have finished (writing the history). With respect I present the final version (of the text). [f. 1b] Submitting it for Imperial consideration, I humbly ask for corrections and instructions of the sage Monarch. With bound head I dare to think that I, an official of low grade, stupid and boor, had been bestowed an exceptional grace of the Monarch. That is why day and night I have worked selflessly. Heat and cold have changed each other many times, and after twelve years I have finished the draft of the book. [f. 2a] Starting from the year 1811 from the Nativity of Christ I have collected almost everything that I had heard or read from my birth in order to present all this to the Monarch.

This book begins with the time when Batyi-han invaded our state being known for his cruelty. Our blessed duke Dmitry Donskoy himself compiled a secret plan, not missing anything, himself collected selected and brave troops. [f. 2b] Relying on the Spirit of War, he destroyed bad enemy and performed miraculous feats of valor. At that time the whole Russian state was seized by fear, the leaders were persecuted(?), nobody met secretly. Now, when they faced a strong envy, all forces were collected. And when the duke Dmitry headed a great affair, everybody bravely set out. [f. 3a] They were fighting courageously unexpectedly attacking the enemy. When he caught the enemy, he killed him; when chased the enemy, he brought him to exhaustion and completely destroyed. Various fearsome, sagacious, divine heroes were fighting with numerous enemies, but once decided to win a victory, they accomplished a great feat.⁶ Indeed, the wise Monarch has destroyed the villain for the sake of ten thousand families of his state; have received the grace of the Heaven which has reached everyone in the state. Everybody was praying: may this mercy pour out [f. 3b] and may its light remain for ten thousand years, as well as great happiness of high and fair love. Indeed, the while spreads the fame of the Monarch's love, everybody in the Underheaven receives alms. I, an official, when compiled and wrote

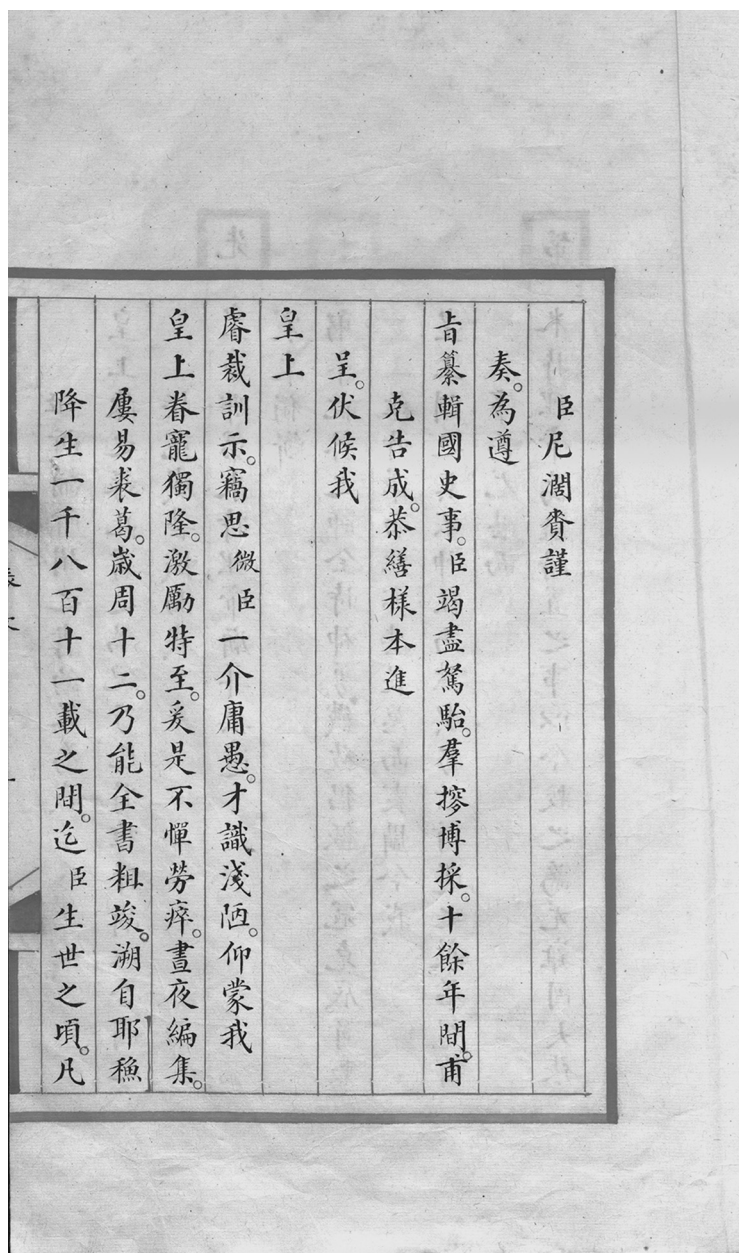
⁶ The battle on the Kulikov field on September 8, 1380.

down the events of our times, I thoroughly selected them and put into chapters in consecutive order. Then, I, an official, have checked all deeds of all generations that lived in peace for ten thousand years, wrote down about good and bad affairs of every people of the states; refused from the desires of common people of [f. 4a] these states, and with clear heart reached the peoples of great Siyang (Europe). Haven't they reached prosperity(?) Ten thousand people prayed for the grace of the Heaven asking for ten thousand years rule of the Emperor who venerates the Veritable Heaven. We pray for this Heaven grace.

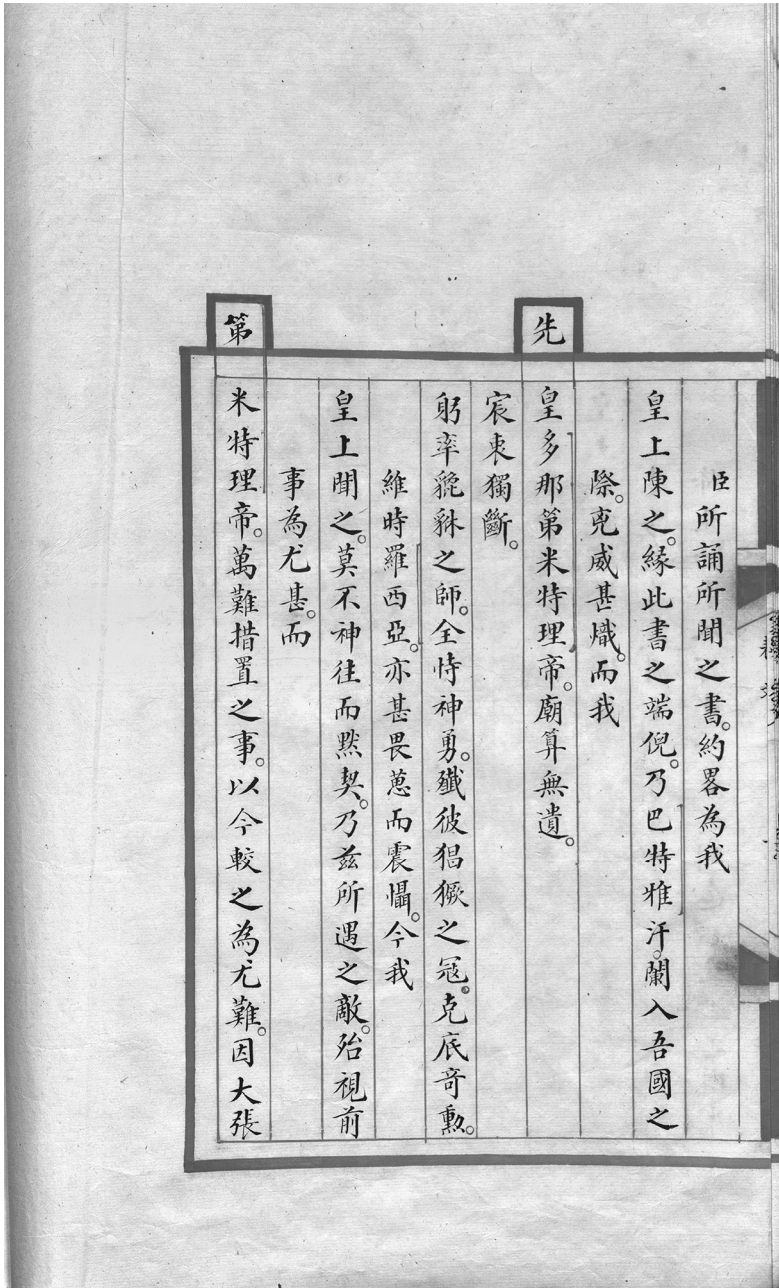
[f. 4b] That were the reasons why I, an official, have compiled this book of history. Everything what is written there will be an example for future generations and will be useful for good governing. May it be a sample for imitation to eternal sage coming generations for ten thousand years and forever.

[f. 5a] With great embarrassment I, an official, humble and stupid, have told and collected [the stories]. Though haven't made [the book] clear and well organized, I dare to report and present the book for the Monarch will look through the respectfully delivered the draft of the history. [I] humbly ask the sage Monarch to check, correct and approve [the book]. I, an official, am much timid and scared to receive the [imperial] decision. For this I report [to the Monarch] standing on my knees.

Dedication in Chinese



Pl. 10. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 1a



Pl. 11. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 1b

上

捷伐。必繫乎

親行。相機勦捕。乃可掃穴犁庭。於是

神謨武烈。多方捍禦。既握勝算。乃奏膚功。洵為我

皇上為萬姓除殘。克邀

天眷佑。遂及普地。人氏胥稱。我等景仰

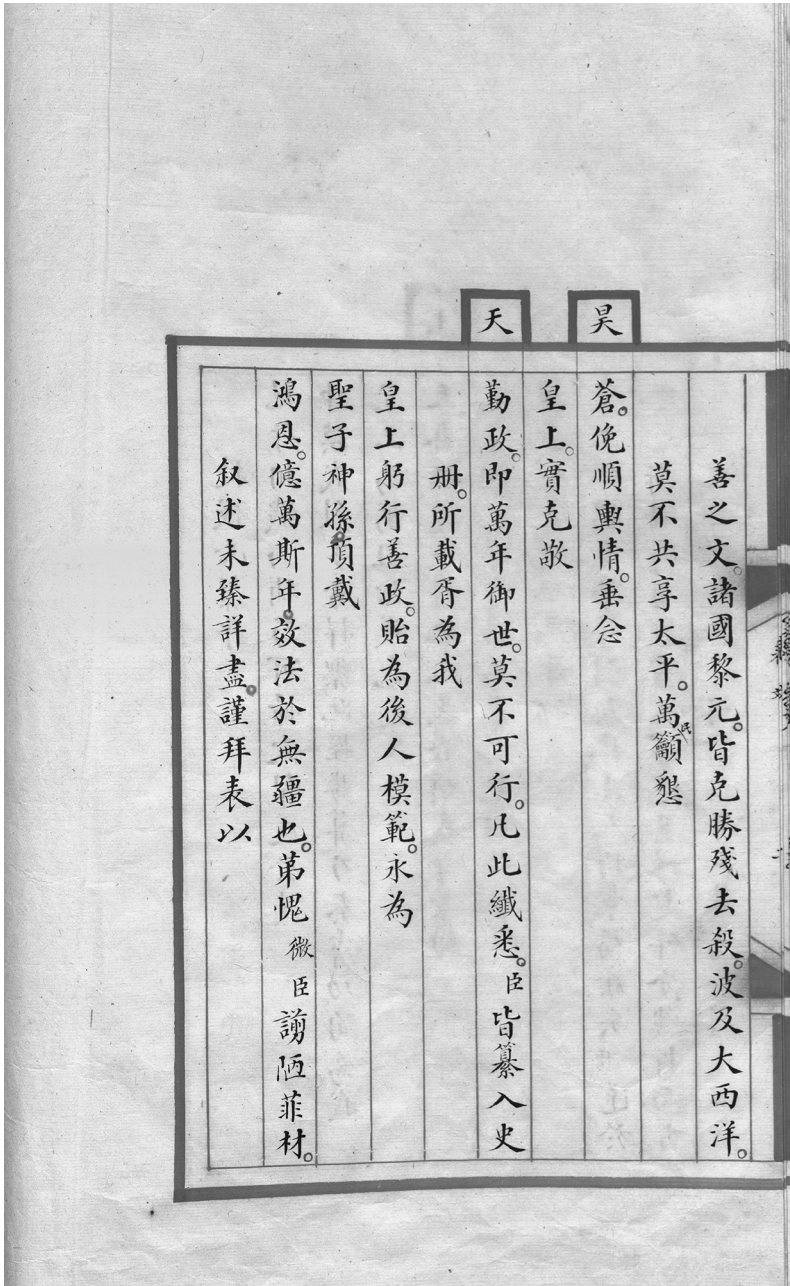
大皇帝之澤。實貽萬載之光明。誠

皇帝仁義之洪庥。亦似

皇上仁聞之芳聲。則大地生人。均蒙福蔭矣。臣遂於

斯世。遇有可書之事。迺具緣起。條分縷析。而書

之。抑臣觀今事。因念萬年和睦。為各國民心益



吳

善之文。諸國黎元。皆克勝殘。去殺。波及大西洋。
莫不共享太平。萬籟懇

蒼。俛順輿情。垂念

皇上。實克敬

勤政。卽萬年御世。莫不可行。凡此纖悉。臣皆纂入史

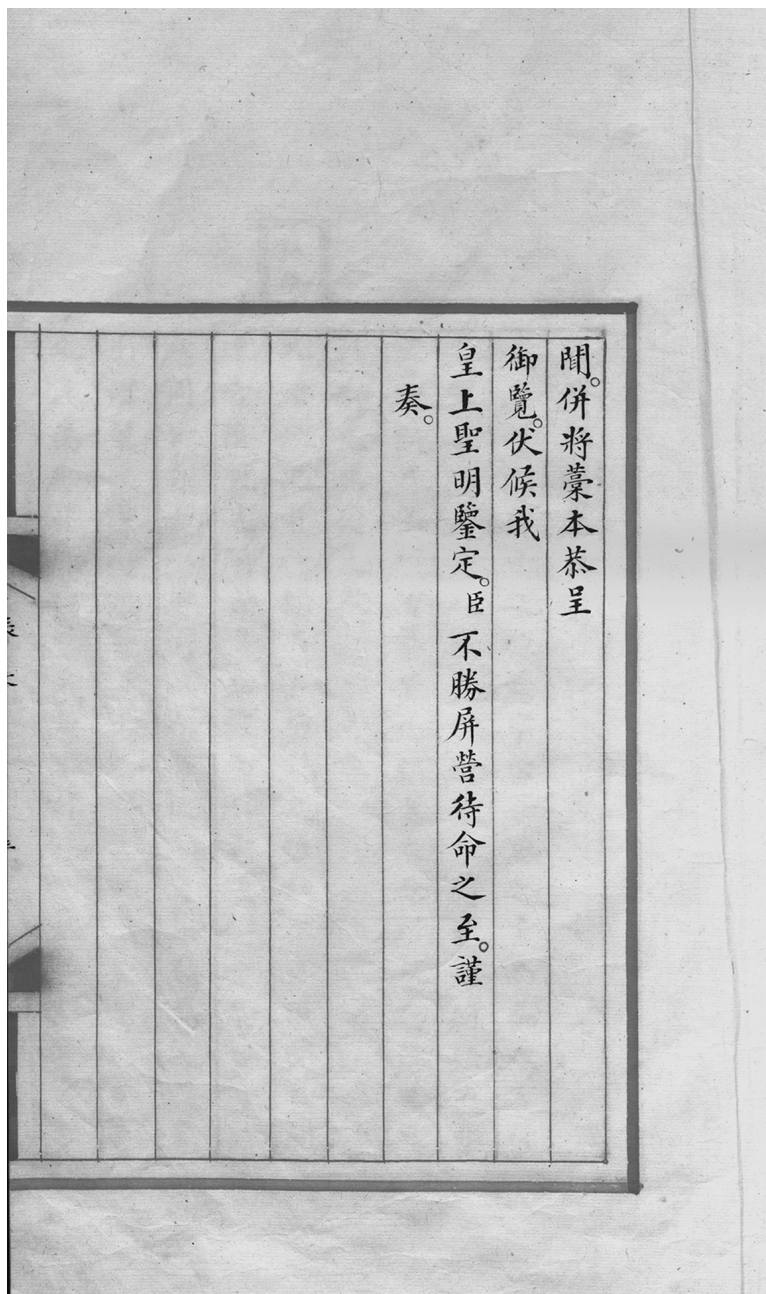
冊。所載胥為我

皇上躬行善政。貽為後人模範。永為

聖子神孫頌戴

鴻恩。億萬斯年。效法於無疆也。第愧微臣謏陋菲材。

敘述未臻詳盡。謹拜表以



Pl. 14. НБ СПбГУ, Xyl. F-60, f. 3a

[f. 1a] 臣尼濶賚謹奏為遵旨纂輯國史事。 臣竟盡驚駭。
 群摛博採。十餘年間。 甫克告成。 恭繕樣本進呈。
 伏候我皇上睿裁訓示。 窮思微臣一介庸愚。 才識淺陋。
 仰蒙我皇上眷寵獨隆。 激勵特至。 爰是不憚勞瘁。 晝夜編集。
 屢易裘葛。 歲周十二。 乃能全書粗竣。
 溯自耶穌降生一千八百十一載之間。 迄臣生世之頃。 凡 [f. 1b]
 臣所誦所聞之書。 約畧為我皇上陳之。 緣此書之端倪。
 乃巴特雅汗。闡 吾國之際。 兇威甚熾。 而我先皇多那第米特理帝。
 廟算無遺宸衷獨斷。 躬率貔貅之師。 全恃神勇。 殲彼猖獗之寇。
 克底竒動。 維時羅西亞。 亦甚畏憚而懼。 令我皇上聞之。
 莫不神往而默契。 乃茲所遇之敵。 殆視前事為尤甚。
 而第米特裏帝。 萬難措置之事。 以今較之為尤難。 因大張 [f. 2a]
 撻伐。 必擊乎親行。 相機剿捕。 乃可掃穴犁庭。 於是神謨武烈。
 多方捍禦。 既握勝算。 乃奏膚功。 洵為我皇上為萬姓除殘。
 克邀上天眷佑。 遂及普地人民胥稱。 我等景仰大皇帝之澤。
 實貽萬載之光明。 誠皇帝仁義之洪庥。 亦似皇上仁聞之芳聲。
 則大地生人。 均蒙福蔭矣。 臣遂於斯世。 遇有可書之事。
 跡其緣起。 條分縷析而書之。 抑臣觀今事。 因念萬年和睦。
 為各國民心益 [f. 2b] 善之文。 諸國黎元。 皆克勝殘去殺。
 波及大西洋。 莫不共享太平。 萬民籲懇吳蒼。 俛順輿情。
 垂念皇上。 實克敬天勤政。 即萬年禦世。 莫不可行。 凡此纖悉。
 臣皆纂入史冊。 所載胥為我皇上躬行善政。 貽為後人模範。
 永為聖子神孫頂戴。 鴻恩。 億萬斯年。 效法於無疆也。
 第愧微臣譎陋菲材。 敘述未臻詳盡。 謹拜表以 [f. 3a] 聞。
 併將藁本恭呈禦覽。 伏候我皇上聖明鑒定。 臣不勝屏營待命之至。
 謹奏。

Translation from Chinese

[f. 1a] The official Nikolay respectfully reports:
 Following the Imperial order to compile the history of the [Russian] state,
 I, humble person, with all my efforts have collected all the facts and after
 more than ten years can report on the end of the work. With respect I present

the final version of the book and ask for corrections and instructions of the sage Monarch. With bound head I dare to think that I, a humble person, stupid and boor, had been bestowed an exceptional grace of the Monarch and was greatly encouraged. That is why day and night I have worked selflessly compiling the History, changing winter to summer clothes many times, and after twelve years I have finished the draft of the book. Starting from 1811 from the Nativity of Christ I have collected almost everything that I had heard or read from my birth in order to present all this to the Monarch. [f. 1b] The reason why I started compilation of the book from the times when Batyi-han invaded our state being known for his cruelty. The duke Dmitry Donskoy himself decided to fight a battle and lead his brave troops. He defeated those rampant rebellions relying on [his] exceptional courage, and thus shook the foundations [of the Mongol rule]. Our Emperor knows that in those days Russia was in fear and embarrassment, he thought on the [history of the duke Dmitry] and understood it. But the war of Our Emperor was even more cruel⁷ than before. The duke Dmitry with great effort planed his strategy, while the war of our times was much difficult — it was not a battle, but a war. [f. 2a] The Emperor had to lead the war himself, and command according to the circumstances to win, completely destroy the enemy and push him from the country. Carefully planning, fighting bravely, protecting his forces (army), he was sure in his victory. Finally, he won a crushing victory. Indeed, Our Emperor has destroyed the villain for the sake of all peoples, and hence have received the grace of the Heaven and approval of the peoples of different countries. Peoples respect benevolence of our Emperor. Our Emperor has bestowed us with eternal light, happiness of imperial humanity and justice, as well as great happiness of high and fair love. Indeed, the while spreads the fame of the Monarch's love, and people everywhere receive alms. I live in the time which should be described. I have studied the roots of those events, collected them, and thoroughly put into chapters in consecutive order. That is how I saw the events and why it is necessary to preserve peace and eternal tranquility. I have compiled a book which would be useful to the peoples of different countries. [f. 2b] Common people of various states stopped fighting and killing, and that influenced on Europe. All peoples enjoy peace together. Ten thousand people prayed for the grace of the Heaven asking the Heaven to protect the Emperor. Our Emperor venerates the Heaven, rules diligently and protects the world. We

⁷ Karamzin speaks about the Russian war against Napoleon in 1812 and the battle of Borodino on September 7 (old style — August 26), 1812.

believe in it. I wrote about it in the book of History, and it contains the description of good government of my Emperor. It will be an example for future generations and will be useful for good governing. May it be a sample for imitation to eternal sage coming generations for ten thousand years and forever. With great embarrassment I, humble and stupid, though haven't made [the book] clear and well organized, [f. 3a] I dare to report and respectfully present the book for the Monarch. [I] humbly ask the sage Monarch to check, correct and approve [the book]. I am much timid and scared to receive the [imperial] decision. For this I report with respect [to the Monarch].

In “The History of the Russian State” the Dedication of Karamzin is addressed to the Russian tsar Alexander I, but the Manchu and Chinese texts are written according to the Chinese tradition of this genre, and actually they are interpretations of the Karamzin's original. The Manchu text is inserted only into the manuscript kept at the Scientific library of the St. Petersburg state university, the other copies of the translation are written entirely in Chinese. Zakhar Leontiyevsky follows the Chinese ethic rules referring to the Emperor calling himself 臣 — “your subject, official”, in Manchu version original *aha* — “a servant, slave” was changed to *amban* — “a subject, an official”. The main idea of Manchu and Chinese versions of the dedication is the importance of nourishing good moral qualities which help the monarch to fight against the enemy.

The translation of Karamzin's “History of Russian state” into Chinese was the first introduction of Russian history to the Chinese reader. The work by Zakhar Leontievsky have been kept in manuscript form for many years and only recently was published in China.⁸ The comparison of the original Karamzin's Dedication to the Russian tsar Alexander I with its Manchu and Chinese versions clearly shows the translator's way of interpretation of the text.

⁸ LIU RUOMEI 2021.

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