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ПРОБЛЕМЫ ТЕКСТОЛОГИИ И ПОЭТИКИ ДРЕВНЕРУССКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ



Научная статья

Возможный источник изображения лошадей на конных портретах царей в XVII в.

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Аннотация. Развитие портретного искусства, на которое значительное влияние оказали художественные приемы мастеров Западной Европы, является одним из наиболее важных аспектов изменения культуры России накануне Нового времени. Среди известных примеров таких портретов (парсун) можно назвать конные изображения царей Михаила Федоровича и Алексея Михайловича. Считается, что они были созданы с середины 1670-х до первой половины 1680-х гг. художниками Оружейной палаты, которые иллюстрировали «Царский титулярник» 1672 г. и его списки. В научной литературе, посвященной конным портретам, как правило, анализируются изображения всадников – царей. В статье исследуются изображения лошадей, выдвигается гипотеза о том, что их художники могли частично подражать гравюрам в книгах Антуана де Плювинеля об искусстве верховой езды. Его богато иллюстрированные книги попали в Москву и там же были переведены в 1670 и 1677 гг. Роскошные рукописи переводов включали гравюры, вырезанные из книг, и были раскрашены художниками царского скриптория, подготовившими подносные экземпляры Титулярника.

Ключевые слова: русский портрет XVII в., парсуна, конная живопись, Антуан де Плювинель, Оружейная палата, Титулярник, П. В. Николаев

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ISSUES OF TEXTUAL CRITICISM AND POETICS OF OLD RUS-SIAN LITERATURE Article

A Possible Source for the Depiction of the Horses in the 17th-century Equestrian Portraits of the Tsars

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Abstract. One of the significant cultural changes taking place in Early Modern Russia was the development of portraiture influenced by the artistic tastes of Western Europe. Among the well-known examples of such portraits (generally termed *parsuny*) are equestrian portraits of Tsars Mikhail Fedorovich and Aleksei Mikhailovich. There is a consensus that these images were painted in the 1670s or early 1680s, most probably by artists working in the Moscow Armory (*Oruzheinaia palata*) who also were illustrating the *Tituliarnik*, first produced in 1672 and known in subsequent presentation copies. Scholarly analysis of the royal equine portraits has focused on the depictions of the tsars. However, little attention has been devoted to the horses on which they ride and the possible sources for the equine imagery. This article focuses on the horses and argues that the artists who depicted them may well have been inspired at least in part by the elegant engravings in Antoine de Pluvinel's book on equitation. The Pluvinel books (two different editions) had been obtained in Moscow and were the source for Russian translations whose presentation manuscript copies were illustrated the original engravings and illuminated by the artists in the Kremlin's royal workshop.

Keywords: portraiture in 17th century Russia, parsuna, equine imagery, Antoine de Pluvinel, Oruzheinaia palata, Tituliarnik, P. V. Nikolaev

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The 'transitional period' in Russian culture of the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth centuries provides a seemingly inexhaustible source of material for new scholarly interpretation. Among the areas of inquiry are the changes in the visual arts: new themes in painting within the Orthodox canon and the emergence of secular portraiture, developments which frequently can be explained at least in part by acquaintance with the art of Renaissance and Baroque Europe. For example, the mural decoration of the church of Elijah the Prophet in Iaroslavl' clearly reflects the artists' knowledge of the engravings in the so-called Piscator Bible published in the Netherlands [Некрасова, 1964]. Arguably, the interest of such examples is not so much to demonstrate that there was slavish cultural borrowing but rather that they may illustrate creative adaptation to established tradition by artists whose training and skills had not necessarily prepared them to replicate the current style and content of the Western imagery. The emergence of 'western-style' portraiture was a slow and uneven process, beginning with what clearly are 'icon-portraits' (posthumous images of the subjects; parsuny), and only gradually arriving at representations which quite fully embodied the realism in contemporary European portraiture of living people. A particularly valuable presentation of that development was in a major exhibition organized by the State Historical Museum (Государственный исторический музей, ГИМ) in Moscow in 2003–2004, whose elegantly published catalogue is now a fundamental resource for any subsequent study of the material [Русский исторический портрет, 2004]. Among the paintings included in that exhibit and catalogue are equestrian images of the first two Romanov tsars, paintings which, surprisingly, seem to have received relatively little scholarly attention. The present article, whose author is not an art history expert, is an attempt to stimulate further study of those images by suggesting some new hypotheses about their history and possible sources.

The Moscow exhibit catalogues seven equestrian images: the three in Russian collections include one painting of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich (ΓИМ 32936/ИІ-3459) and two of Aleksei Mikhailovich (Ж-2015/1 [collection of the Moscow Kremlin]; ГИМ 32935/ИІ-3460). The other paintings, now in the National Museum in Copenhagen, include depictions of Mikhail Fedorovich (KMS 1402) and Aleksei Mikhailovich (KMS 1401), and images traditionally (if, apparently, incorrectly) identified as depicting Ottoman Sultan Bayazid I (KMS 1403) and Tamerlane (KMS 1400)¹. The Copenhagen paintings of Aleksei Mikhailovich and Tamerlane have not been reproduced in the Moscow catalogue. We shall focus on the images in the Moscow collections, since they seem to embody the earliest stages in the creation of the series; for convenience we shall refer to the pictures by their inventory numbers (Fig. 1). According to the exhibit catalogue,

The catalogue of the Danish royal collection depicts the paintings there of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich (Inv. 1402), a 'nobleman on Horseback' (i.e., 'Bayezid', Inv. 1403), and 'Tamerlane' (Inv. 1400) [Gundestrup, 1992, 352, 354, 355]. I am grateful to Claudia Jensen for providing me with copies of the relevant pages in the Copenhagen catalogue and for her comments on a draft of this article.







Aleksei Mikhailovich

ГИМ 32935

ГИМ 32936 Mikhail Fedorovich

Fig. 1. The equestrian images of Tsars Aleksei Mikhailovich and Mikhail Fedorovich in the Moscow collections / Конные портреты царей Алексея Михайловича и Михаила Федоровича, хранящиеся в Московских собраниях. After: [Русский исторический портрет, 2004, с. 124, 122, 121 (№№ 38, 37, 36)]

all seven paintings are attributed to the 'Armory [Оружейная палата] School' and date between the second half of the 1670s and first half of the 1680s².

The pioneering monograph on the *parsuny* by Ekaterina Sergeevna Ovchinnikova discussed but briefly the two Russian royal portraits (ΓИМ 32936; ГИМ 32935) [ОВЧИННИКОВА, 1955, с. 78–79]. Ovchinnikova noted similarities between the depiction of Mikhail Fedorovich and the 'portrait' of him in the *Tituliarnik* of 1672, an elaborately illustrated compendium of royal portraits and titulature (with accompanying descriptive text) which was produced in the Armory workshop (Fig. 2)³. In her interpretation, the equestrian portrait must have been produced at the same time as or soon after the *Tituliarnik* in the 1670s. There is a curious juxtaposition of 'real' portraiture in the face of Mikhail Fedorovich with sketchy renderings of hands and feet. Of course, one may argue that the likeness of the face in the equestrian portrait to that in the *Tituliarnik* is at best approximate. Ovchinnikova concluded that both images must have been the work

The current descriptive captioning on the web pages of the State Historical Museum for ΓИМ 32936 (Available at: https://catalog.shm.ru/entity/OBJECT/3022843?query=парсуна&index=44) and ΓИМ 32935 (Available at: https://catalog.shm.ru/entity/OBJECT/3022850?query=парсуна&index=42), accessed 18 November 2023, reiterate the captioning in the 2004 exhibition. The collections web page for the Kremlin museums (Available at: https://collectiononline.kreml.ru/entity/OBJECT/8499?page=15&fund=2766569&index=725), accessed 18 November 2023, identifies XH-2015/1 as the work of an unknown (possibly Dutch) artist painted between the second half of the 1670s and first half of the 1680s.

³ Unless otherwise specified, our illustrations from the *Tituliarnik* are from the publication of its images in the primary, large-format manuscript (РГАДА. Ф. 135. № 401) [Портреты, 1903]. We include also a few images from the somewhat later presentation copy, now in PHБ, Эрмитажное собрание No. 440 (Available at: https://nlr.ru/manuscripts/RA1527/elektronnyiy-katalog?ab=E43F34DE-AB4B-4891-9B5F-DDB52238975F), accessed 18 November 2023. On the *Tituliarnik*, for a summary description and references, see [Каган, 2004].





Tituliarnik 1672 РГАДА, ф. 135, № 401

ГИМ 32936

Fig. 2. The depictions of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich in the Tituliarnik of 1672 (RSAAA, f. 135, no. 401) and in the equestrian portrait SHM 32936 / Изображения царя Михаила Федоровича в Титулярнике 1672 г. (РГАДА, ф. 135, № 401) и на конном портрете ГИМ 32936





Fig. 3. The emblem on the Muscovite state seal: engraving on the title page of the Moscow Bible of 1663; the seal of Grand Prince Ivan III / Эмблема на печати Московского государства: гравюра на титульном листе Московской Библии 1663 г.; печать вел. кн. Ивана III

of Russian artists. The pigments are egg tempera, but applied to canvas, not (as in the case of icon painting), to the prepared surface of boards. The artist(s) likely were in the employ of the Armory or the workshop of Simon Ushakov. The inscriptions on the paintings, identifying the royal equestrians with what arguably is standard calligraphy of the period, are additional evidence for the suggested date of the paintings.

Ovchinnikova's attempt to identify a possible inspiration for depicting the tsar on a horse was limited to a comment about depictions on coins and, as she illustrated, an engraved image on the title page of the Moscow Bible printed in 1663. The engraving shows the Russian imperial eagle, on whose chest is a heraldic shield depicting a crowned ruler slaving a dragon (Fig. 3). Ovchinnkova identifies that image from 1663 as Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. However, we would stress that this imagery may be of limited value for explaining the equestrian portraits we are studying. The horse and rider of these heraldic images tend to be shown galloping in profile and attacking a dragon or serpent with a spear. Our eques-

trian portraits show Mikhail Fedorovich on a sedately striding mount and, in a very different pose, Aleksei Mikhailovich on a rearing steed that leaps out toward the viewer. Certainly the older Russian artistic representations of horses and mounted warriors, well known from icons and manuscript miniatures – for example, icons of SS. Cosmos and Damian or depicting St. George slaying the dragon, and the countless scenes of mounted warriors in the famous sixteenth-century 'Illuminated compilation' (лицевой свод) – would appear to be of little relevance here as models for the paintings which are our subject.

In his important book on the imagery of Russian rulers, Frank Kämpfer discussed some of the antecedents to our equestrian portrait of Aleksei Mikhailovich, emphasizing the legacy from the Byzantine tradition of depicting emperors as secular military leaders [Kämpfer, 1978, pp. 198-199, 221-224]. His evidence for the Muscovite period includes a relief image of Tsar Fedor Ivanovich on the so-called 'Tsar Cannon' cast in 1586, which one can see in the Kremlin to this day. The image shows the tsar wearing a closely fitting crown-cap and holding a scepter as he rides on a galloping horse. Kämpfer also illustrates two of the coins of Aleksei Mikhailovich minted in 1654, a copper one with an image of the tsar on a striding horse that is similar to the image from the 1663 Bible, and a silver one with the tsar on a leaping horse that is a closer analogy to the image in our painting. In both of these, the tsar holds a scepter. As Kämpfer notes – here supporting the view of Ovchinnikova - it seems that the norm for such equestrian ruler images in Russia was to depict them mainly on coins or seals; so our painting is somewhat unusual, evoking the image perhaps of the holy martyr saint holding a cross.

Indeed, one of the important features of our royal equestrian images is that both of the tsars hold Orthodox crosses as their ideologically most important identifying attributes. This fact appears to be the main reason S. B. Mordvinova, in her dissertation on the parsuny (which we have not been able to consult directly), argued that equestrian portraits should be dated between 1658 and 1666 and are a response to the conflict between Aleksei Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon [Мордвинова, 1985, с. 85-89, cited from Русский исторический портрет, 2004, c. 120]. That is, the tsars are depicted as the true defenders of Orthodoxy, and, at least by implication, this is an assertion of the primacy of the secular ruler over the Church. Mordvinova's argument seems not to have been widely accepted. However, if we were wishing to place at least the image of Aleksei Mikhailovich in such an earlier context, it could be of interest to juxtapose it with images of his contemporary rulers and military leaders (Fig. 4), depicted in engravings on leaping horses and brandishing either swords or scepters. Such imagery was common fare in the imprints of the time; certainly in the depictions of the horses one can see a kind of common artistic cliché that also is evident in the picture of the tsar. That Aleksei Mikhailovich bears a cross, rather than brandishes a sword or scepter, would suggest he is the leader of a crusade for the true religion (Orthodoxy). This could be a specific reference to the fact that, unlike his father who never participated in a military campaign, he actually marched out at the head of the Russian army in the early stages of the war against the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 1650s. This is a tempting hypothesis and one which retains some interpretive value (even if the paintings cannot be dated as early as Mordvinova has posited).

Were we to search in Russia for analogues of an equestrian ruler bearing a cross in a military procession, the obvious comparison which comes to mind is in the famous icon of the 'Church Militant', depicting the procession of the victorious armies that celebrates the conquest of Kazan' in 1552. In the center













Fig. 4. The equestrian portrait of Aleksei Mikhailovich (SHM 32935) compared with engravings depicting his contemporary military and political leaders (clockwise from lower left: Count Nikolaus Zrinyi, Elector Johann Georg I of Saxony, Emperor Leopold I, Elector Maximilian I of Bavaria, King Jan III Sobieski) / Конный портрет царя Алексея Михайловича в сравнении с гравюрами, изображающими современных ему военачальников и политических фигур (по часовой стрелке, с левой стороны внизу: граф Николаус Зрини [Николай Зринский], саксонский курфюрст Йоханн Георг I, император Леопольд I, баварский курфюрст Максимилиан I, польский король Ян III Собеский)

of the massed troops rides a prominent figure bearing a cross, now commonly believed to depict the first Christian Emperor Constantine I (Fig. 5). The icon was prominently displayed in the Cathedral of the Dormition in the Moscow Kremlin; at least one much truncated copy of it is known. Of course, in terms of artistic conventions and context, there is no real parallel here to the equestrian portraits we are discussing.

To the best of my knowledge, the most detailed analysis of our equestrian images, presenting some intriguing new hypotheses about their origins and who the artists most likely were, is in the work of Pavel Vladimirovich Nikolaev,

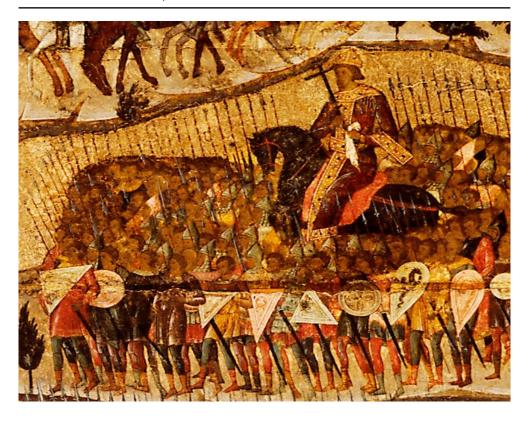


Fig. 5. Detail from the icon of the "Blessed Host of the Heavenly King" ("Church Militant") / Деталь иконы «Благословенно воинство Небесного Царя» («Церковь воинствующая»). After: icon-art.info

whose focus is on the material objects depicted in the paintings [Николаев, 2011; 2014, с. 20–24]. Nikolaev argues that all seven of the equestrian images represent illustrations prepared for three different 'editions' of an illuminated book, the *Vasiliologion* (Василиологион). Its text was compiled by the erudite Nikolai Spafarii Milescu, and the first illuminated presentation copy was prepared by the artists of the Armory at the behest of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich in 1673. There is documentary evidence that the artist responsible for illustrating that copy was an Armenian émigré from Persia, Bogdan Saltanov. As we know, only from the written evidence, the book included pictures of Russian rulers among 26 illustrations of rulers from the ancient Near East up through Classical Greece and Rome. Unfortunately, the verbal description of what those pictures may have been is so cryptic as to leave some uncertainty, in my mind, whether our equestrian images were among them. In Nikolaev's argument, Saltanov was

uniquely qualified to do a series of paintings which would incorporate 'Oriental features', with which he would have been familiar at the court of the Safavid shahs before he came to Russia. Unfortunately, Nikolaev does not attempt to provide comparative examples to illustrate what 'Oriental features' in Safavid painting might have inspired specific elements in the paintings done in Moscow. An artist at the Safavid court would certainly have had experience in producing equestrian imagery. However, stylistically the norms of Islamic painting meant that such depictions come across as two-dimensional and differ in other ways from what we see in the paintings which are our focus here (see below).

Two additional copies of the Vasiliologion were ordered by the tsar; their illustration was done by one or more associates or pupils of Saltanov, in particular Karp Zolotarev. In this hypothetical scheme, which clearly is based in part on some unprovable assumptions, Nikolaev argues that only the equestrian image XK-2015/1 is Saltanov's work. The reasoning for this is that it was a portrait done in the tsar's lifetime, which would have meant the tsar could be depicted in clothing he would actually have worn (an elegant red caftan), not in the imagined gilded 'Classical' armor with which the Russian rulers were attired in the later copies of Saltykov's original paintings. The paired images ГИМ 32936 and ГИМ 32935 are from the slightly later second 'edition' of the book, and the Copenhagen images are the last to have been painted, for the third 'edition' of the book. Stylistic differences and variation in some of the decorative features of the several pictures reinforce these groupings. At some point, the paintings were removed from the book, mounted, and framed. The exact history of how they came into the collections where they are now housed is difficult to establish4.

Nikolaev discusses in a general way the several observations which others have made about possible artistic sources for the *parsuny*. Apparently he did not seek out (or at least did not find) specific sources; he is satisfied merely to summarize that the models were some kind of *friazhskie listy* (Western engravings) – such were known to have been available in Moscow during the seventeenth century. One should emphasize here that, apart from these seven paintings Nikolaev associates with the work on the *Vasiliologion*, no other images from its illuminated manscripts have survived, and there apparently is no indisputably attributed work by Saltanov or any of his putative collaborators with which to compare the paintings we have.

Whatever the weaknesses of his evidence, Nikolaev's hypotheses nonetheless provide a good framework for further investigation of the paintings. His chronology and explanation for his groupings of the images and the sequence of their development makes a lot of sense. The artist(s) responsible for the later versions of the images very likely were copying from the earliest renderings,

The two images now in the Historical Museum were purportedly bought in the market in the 1890s. Nikolaev disputes the contention (advanced in the exhibit catalogue and the catalogue of the Copenhagen collection) that the Copenhagen images entered the Danish royal treasury at the end of the seventeenth century; he argues that they had remained in Russia much later than that.

rather than beginning *de novo* to create a new set of pictures. So there are stylistic differences and different choices of detail, but the basic iconography is the same. Nikolaev's interpretation reinforces the views of earlier scholars in situating the work in the Armory and somewhat narrows down the date range to the period between 1673 and 1680. However, he leaves open the possibility that we might be able to say more concerning the sources for the imagery. Both in his work and in the earlier scholarship, the depictions of the rulers and their accoutrements seem to have attracted the greatest attention. Least of all have the depictions of the horses been analyzed. What follows here is an attempt address in particular that issue. The evidence which emerges may deepen our knowledge about the artistic production of the royal atelier in Moscow.

Antoine de Pluvinel's books on equitation and their translations in Russia

In a seminal article which retains its value to this day, I. M. Kudriavtsev wrote about the 'publishing activity' of the Ambassadorial Chancery (*Posol'skii prikaz*) in the second half of the seventeenth century [Кудрявцев, 1963]. In the late years of the reign of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, the staff in the chancery began producing a series of large-format, elegantly illustrated presentation manuscripts for the tsar and members of his family. Some of the books were translations of foreign books; the illustration and decoration of the manuscripts involved the artists of the Armory. Several of these manuscripts had attracted the attention of earlier scholars and had been reproduced in facsimile: the *Tituliarnik* of 1672 is one example, its text first published by Nikolai Novikov in the eighteenth century and the illustrations published in 1903 [Каган, 2004; Портреты, 1903].

Until recently, less well known and studied amongst these lavishly produced volumes from the royal workshop are the translations from the illustrated 'equitation manuals' attributed to a famous French master of equitation at the court of King Louis XIII, Antoine de Pluvinel. Thanks to the recent work by Prof. Ingrid Maier (Uppsala University), we now know precisely which of the Pluvinel books were obtained and translated in Russia, and we know a great deal about the history of their translation and the production of the presentation manuscript copies [Майер, 2021a, 2021b; Майер, Русаковский, 2019; Майер, Янссон, Русаковский, 2021; Waugh, Maier, 2023, pp. 246–253]. As Maier has established, two different bi-lingual (French and German) editions of the work attributed to Pluvinel were acquired in Moscow, each serving as the source for a different translation⁵. Pluvinel himself may not have been fully responsible for the text of the earlier edition and certainly not much of what is in the later edition, but for simplicity we shall designate the books as his. With the exception of a few epigrams and introductory verses, the translations are from the German texts. Both books were lavishly illustrated with engravings - based on

The books, both of which may be viewed online via the database of seventeenth-century German publications (Available at: http://www.vd17.de), are: Maneige Royal, 1626 (VD 17 3:315740C); L'Instruction du Roy, 1629 (VD 17 39:126115S).

the work of Crispin de Passe the Younger – which were cut and pasted into the manuscripts of the Russian translations.

So far there is little archival documentation about the first of the Russian translations, made from the edition of Pluvinel published in Braunschweig in 1626 in lavish landscape format. The translation was made in 1670, very likely the work of the multi-lingual Ivan Tiazhkogorskii on the staff of the Ambassadorial Chancery. How the book came to Russia is not known. It seems that the presentation copy of the book (now in RNB, OSRK, FXI.1), whose illumination may have taken some time to complete, was still in the library of the Ambassadorial Chancery in the 1680s, illustrated with the elegant original engravings of the print book. The translation was commissioned, most likely, for the young Tsarevich Fedor Alekseevich, who is known to have developed a passion for elegant horses. A dressage master, Taras Stepanovich Rostopchin, was hired to run the tsarevich's stable.

The second translation – from a different, expanded but more modestly printed edition of Pluvinel, published in Paris in 1629 in portrait format with copies of the original engravings – is very well documented. While it is not known how the book was acquired, the print edition was delivered to Tsar Fedor Alekseevich's chambers in December 1676, and at the beginning of March 1677, he ordered a translation be made for a presentation copy, the work to be completed by the beginning of June. The book was large, the timeline short; so the work was assigned to several of the most experienced translators, each responsible for a part of the volume. There were delays when some of the translators failed to do the job and their portions needed to be reassigned. The book was finally finished, illuminated, and bound only in mid-autumn 1677. As with the earlier translation, the engravings from the print book were cut out and pasted into the presentation manuscript, and a separate set of very elegant Renaissance engravings depicting horses ([Equile loannis Austriaci, 1580] or a later reprint) was bound in the book as an appendix.

We can only speculate on why the young Tsar Fedor Alekseevich commissioned the translation and specified a date for its completion that was quite unrealistic, given the complexity of the task. One theory is that the deadline (Trinity Day, 3 June) is somehow particularly venerated by 'horse fanciers', although what exactly that means is difficult to establish. More generally it is a day commonly celebrated in connection with the arrival of summer and associated with popular beliefs concerning fertility⁶.

A more plausible explanation for the tsar's interest is this: since he had been been seriously ill, confined to the palace all winter (when he could have been leafing through the print version of the book), as his health was improving in the spring, he looked forward to getting outside with the onset of warm

⁶ In discussing the translation, A. V. Lavrent'ev and E. N. Matveeva simply note that Trinity Day was "especially venerated by 'horse fanciers'" [Лаврентьев, Матвеева, 1992, c. 243]. Ethnographers have recorded in the Volga and southern Russian areas processions of mummers (who wear horse masks) on Trinity Day [Виноградова, Плотникова, 1995, c. 391]. However, it is extremely improbable that Fedor Alekseevich would even have known of this, much less associated it with the Pluvinel book.

weather, perhaps in time to celebrate his birthday just a few days after Trinity Day. The book, after all, has nothing to do with folk custom involving fertility rites. Rather, it celebrates the sophisticated culture of a royal court at which the ruler is receiving instruction about the mastery of one of the courtly skills associated with ideas of chivalry. Quite apart from its text, the illustrations in Pluvinel illustrated not simply the processes of training a horse to be able to perform fancy pirouettes and leaps but show how the royal patron learns to guide the animal through the same maneuvers. Furthermore, at least at the French court of the early seventeenth century, as the book illustrates, there still was at least ceremonial jousting in armor and demonstrations of the skill of a rider who could even spear a small target ring with a lance when at full gallop.

Pluvinel is shown explaining the training of the horse to his young (16-year-old) royal patron, the master's pupils demonstrating the fancy maneuvers. Then Pluvinel helps the king to mount and instructs him through the steps toward mastery of the equestrian arts. In the end we even see the king in the jousting lists displaying his skill to an appreciative audience of his teacher and some of the courtiers. We know that the horses in Fedor Alekseevich's stable were being trained to perform what we may assume were some of the same maneuvers, possibly guided by the program described in Pluvinel's book. Even though Fedor Alekseevich suffered from some physical disabilities, at least in part due to his having fallen from a horse some years earlier, he could still ride. Maybe as he was feeling healthier with the approach of spring in 1677, he dreamed of being able to emulate what the book depicted. At very least, the book could have lifted his spirits, as he once again contemplated being well enough to leave the palace and visit his stables. Granted, this is but another hypothesis about the tsar's interest in having the new translation, but one that seems to me more plausible than to think of some association here with the folk fertility rituals that greeted summer in some places remote from the Kremlin.

In any event, the important thing to emphasize is that the Pluvinel book(s) and their elegant engravings were available in Moscow and were known to the officials and artists who worked for the Ambassadorial Chancery and in the Armory. So, here we have a source of engravings with horse images, available in Moscow at the time our royal equestrian 'portraits' were being painted. The engravings could therefore have provided some models for the artists who produced our paintings and at the same time were illustrating the Tituliarnik. We should stress that the Pluvinel pictures were not necessarily the only possible 'source' for horse imagery, and even assuming they were drawn upon, the artists exercised considerable freedom in interpretation. Let us now look at concrete comparisons. We will use the engravings from the 1626 Braunschweig edition, since that is the one known to have been in Moscow at the time when the Tituliarnik and (according to Nikolaev) the earliest of our royal equestrian 'portraits' were being painted. The images in the Pluvinel editions show horses with riders, whereas those in the set of engravings appended to the second Russian translation (Equile Ioannis Austriaci) show somewhat idealized images of horse breeds - with one exception, riderless – posed against detailed backgrounds of imagined landscapes. It is not

inconceivable, of course, that those finely detailed engravings also were seen by the artists who created our equestrian images.

The possible influence of the Pluvinel engravings in workshop of the Armory

We might start with the several images of horses in the *Tituliarnik*. All of them are found in depictions of heraldic 'arms' of the various regions of the tsar's empire and selected coats of arms of some of the other states whose rulers are represented in the book. Here is a composite image of these depictions from the large-format original archival volume of the *Tituliarnik* of 1672, which, apparently, was kept in the Ambassadorial Chancery (Fig. 6). The work on the *Tituliarnik* was part of an effort precisely at this time to elaborate more fully the heraldic imagery of the Muscovite state? The Russian heraldic emblem for the Muscovite state can be traced back at least to the fifteenth century, when we first find it used on the seals of Grand Prince Ivan III [Каменцева, Устюгов, 1974, c. 122–128]. Depictions of St. George and the dragon are found centuries earlier on Russian coins and princely seals; obviously they were then adapted in the creation of the emblem that became a standard part of the the Muscovite state seal. Until the eighteenth century in Russia, that emblematic image was



Fig. 6. Illustrations in the Tituliarnik of 1672 with depictions of horses on heraldic 'arms'. In the top row, center, the arms of the Muscovite state, flanked by seals for two of the chanceries. In the bottom row, seals for various regions, the image on the far right the arms of the Grand Principality of Lithuania, and next to it an image for the Grand Prince of Lithuania, bearing a shield with the double cross of the Jagiellonian Dynasty / Иллюстрации гербов, изображающих лошадей, в Титулярнике 1672 г. В верхнем ряду в центре герб Московского государства и по бокам печати двух приказов. Внизу, печати разных областей, включая (крайняя справа) гербы Великого княжества Литовского и великого князя Литовского (рядом), с крестом династии Ягеллонов на щите

⁷ The *Tituliarnik* depictions would seem to be the earliest ones known for many of the 'regional' coats of arms. The ones including horse images (except for the Lithuanian arms) were all reproduced in the well-known sketch made of of the seal of the Muscovite state which was published in Johann Korb's diary of the Austrian mission to Moscow at the end of the seventeenth century [Гербы городов, 1900, с. XI].

always identified as a prince or tsar. Thus it is plausible to suggest, as did Ovchinnikova, that the reproductions of the emblem in the time of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich should be understood as depicting him.

The heraldic symbols of Lithuania also have a long earlier history, the depiction of the armed horseman with the shield dating back at least to the the fourteenth century (Fig. 7)⁸.

More generally in Rus' there are similar images of mounted warriors on coins and seals of various princes from at least as early as the thirteenth century [Каменцева, Устюгов, 1974, с. 122–128]⁹. In the *Tituliarnik*, it seems that the artist responsible for the depiction of the several coats of arms with horsemen simply created a prototype image and then copied it with minor variations, his most likely inspiration some illustration of the Lithuanian heraldic arms (Fig. 8).

The poses in most of the smaller arms of the regions are almost identical, down to the armor, even if there is some differentiation in detail. Presumably the choice of a 'Lithuanian model' for the emblems for Vitebsk, Polotsk and Mstislav was deemed appropriate for the 'West Russian' regions which were now claimed by the Muscovite state. Even though the rider in the image for the Circassian and mountain region wears the same helmet, he is distinguished by his fur cloak and by carrying a spear instead of a sword.



Fig. 7. The seals of Moscow Grand Prince Vasilii II and his father-in-law, Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas / Печати великого князя московского Василия II и его свекра великого князя литовского Витовта



Fig. 8. The Lithuanian coat of arms from a manuscript dated ca. 1555 / Литовский герб (из рукописи ок. 1555 г.).
Wikimedia

⁸ The Lithuanian heraldry shows the mounted warrior wielding a sword, as we can see in this image of the seal of the Lithuanian ruler Vytautas (Vitovt). Grand Prince of Vladimir Vasilii II, Vitautas' son-in-law, copied that seal for his own, the example here attached to his will of 1423 [Лакиер, 1990, c. 76].

See [Янин, Гайдуков, 1998], in which the images can be searched via the index for 'vsadnik'.

It is tempting just to assume that the artist responsible for these several images might not have needed to consult a source other than the Lithuanian heraldry to draw a somewhat simplified depiction of a galloping equestrian knight. However, if Nikolaev's hypothesis about Saltanov is correct, that inspiration could have come as well from Persian painting, in which depictions of galloping horses are common (Fig. 9). Might we not also find some possible association



Fig. 9. Scenes of the royal hunt painted on the west wall of the Qaysariyyah Gate at one end of the central square (the maidan), Isfahan, early 17th century / Изображение королевской охоты на западной стене Кайсарийских ворот на окраине центральной площади (майдан), Исфахан, начало XVII в. Photo by D. Waugh

with images in the Pluvinel book? One of its engravings shows in miniature several stages of a rider galloping in the jousting lists, and then on subsequent pages, enlarged images depict the king astride the galloping horse, in one case spearing a target ring and in another striking the head of a dummy with the point of the lance (Fig. 10). The horses in these images convey the action and 'lightness' of the galloping animal better, one might argue, than do the other possible sources which could have inspired the artists of the *Tituliarnik*. Among other features, they have remarkably bushy tails which flow out behind them. Granted, the correlations here are imprecise, given the stylized miniaturization in the *Tituliarnik*, which very much simplifies its drawings. However, it seems at least possible that there could have been some inspiration from Pluvinel.

Another of the heraldic images in the *Tituliarnik* might have been inspired by Pluvinel's dramatic horse engravings (Fig. 11). It depicts a rearing horse (no rider), the inscription rendering this part of the tsar's titles as the 'Sovereign of all the Northern lands' (Всея северныя страны повелитель). While one could hypothesize any number of analogous images of a rearing horse, the pose in this particular engraving from Pluvinel is strikingly similar to that in the *Tituliarnik* images. Note, inter alia, the very bushy, detailed tail and the flowing mane.

Of particular interest among the heraldic depictions in the *Tituliarnik* with mounted riders, given the very different composition, is the image for the rulers of Georgia (Карталийских и грузинских царей - Fig. 12). Here, unlike in the case of the emblem of the Muscovite state, the horseman spearing a dragon is clearly St. George, with a halo and a cross on the breastplate of his armor. The perspective shows the horse moving toward the viewer, rather than appearing mainly in profile. The horse's head angles inward toward the dragon; the detailed mane flows out and the tail, only partially concealed behind a wing of the dragon is a detailed and bushy one. It is interesting to compare these images with a detail from an icon attributed to another of the artists of the Armory, Nikita Pavlovets, and painted around the year 1670 (Fig. 13)¹⁰. Even though there is an iconographic tradition of depicting the 'warrior saints' George and Demetrius of Salonika which can be traced back to Kievan times, this painting, which incorporates some of the elaborate architectural details typical in Russian icons of the seventeenth century, is of interest for its composition, with St. Demetrius in the foreground spearing an enemy, the saint's horse partially concealing an image of St. George spearing the dragon. We cannot see all of St. George's horse. However, its protome (foreparts) suggests a perspective very similar to what we see in the Tituliarnik images, if lacking some of the detailing in the latter.

There is reason to hypothesize that the depictions of St. George in the *Tituliarnik* and the two saintly images in Pavlovets' icon could reflect an acquaintance with the Pluvinel engravings, even though it may also be possible to find analogues among the many other Russian icons depicting these saints. In Fig. 14, we compare Pavlovets' St. Demetrius with two of the images from

¹⁰ On Pavlovets, see [Николаева, 2012, с. 218-220; Брюсова, 1984, с. 47]. The reproduction of the icon is from [Брюсова, илл. 28].





Fig. 10. Engravings showing galloping horses in the Pluvinel book, ills. 38, 43 / Скачущие лошади на гравюрах книги Плювинеля, илл. 38 и 43







Fig. 11. The heraldic images for 'all the Northern lands' of the Muscovite state – in the Tituliarnik of 1672 (RSAAA, f. 135, no. 401) and RNL, Hermitage coll., no. 440; the possible "source" for the depiction, Pluvinel, ill. 10 / Гербы «всех северных стран» Московского государства – в Титулярнике 1672 г. (РГАДА, ф. 135, № 401) и РНБ, Эрмитажное собр., № 440; возможный источник в книге Плювинеля, илл. 10







Fig. 12. Images of St. George from the Tituliarnik and from the icon painted by Nikita Pavlovets / Изображения св. Георгия в Титулярнике и на иконе, написанной Н. Павловцем

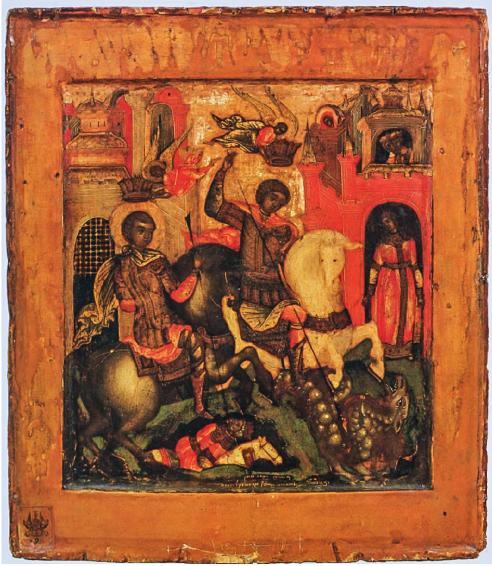


Fig. 13. Nikita Pavlovets' icon of SS. Demetrius of Thessaloniki and St. George, ca. 1670 / икона свв. Георгия и Димитрия Солунского, написанная Н. Павловцем, ок. 1670 г. After: [Брюсова, 1984, илл. 28]

Pluvinel, the poses of the horses quite similar even though the positioning of the legs (which can be seen in other engravings in the book) is somewhat different.

The more interesting comparison is what we find for the images of St. George, since these lead us directly as well to our equestrian image of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. At least three of the Pluvinel engravings depict the rider and his horse in a position that bears an uncanny resemblance to that which we see in the pictures of the tsar (Fig. 15). If we zoom in on the head of the horse, the details, to my mind, make this comparison even more convincing (Fig. 16).







Fig. 14. Comparison of Nikita Pavlovets' icon image of St. Demetrius of Thessaloniki and two of the analogous horse engravings in Pluvinel, ills. 15, 13 (reversed horizontally) / Сравнение изображения св. Дмитрия Солунского на иконе Н. Павловца с гравюрами лошадей в книге Плювинеля (Илл. 15, 13 [размещена горизонтально])











Fig. 15. Comparison of the equestrian images of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich with analogous engravings from the Pluvinel book (Ills. 26 [reversed horizontally], 15, 27a) / Сравнение конных портретов царя Алексея Михайловича с аналогичными гравюрами из книги Плювинеля (илл. 26 [размещена горизонтально], 15, 27a)









Fig. 16. Details of the horse protomes in the Russian portraits and in the Pluvinel engravings (ills. 15, 26) / Детали протом лошадей на русских портретах и гравюрах Плювинеля (илл. 15, 26)

The frontal gaze, the ears, the mane and forelock, and the nose strap are telling details (especially as shown in Pluvinel's ill. 15). We can also take a detail from that engraving, reverse it horizontally to have the horses all oriented in the same direction, and compare it with the St. George images in both the *Tituliarnik* and in Pavlovets' icon (Fig. 17). Here too, there is a striking correlation.

A comparison of the horse depictions in the picture of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich and in Pluvinel engravings is also very suggestive of imitation (Fig. 18). The bulky bodies of the horses are similar, as is the angle of the head and and neck (in the Pluvinel ill. 24). Even though the stride of the horse is reversed (that is, in the Russian painting, right leg forward, in the engravings, left leg forward), one can see how the artist of the tsar's portrait could easily have found a model for his depiction of the legs¹¹.

Of course, none of our comparisons provide iron-clad proof that the artists in the Armory were in fact consulting the engravings in the Pluvinel book. There could, after all, have been other options: observation from life, or inspiration







Fig. 17. Details of the horse protomes: in Pluvinel (III. 15), in the St. George images in the Tituliarnik of 1672, and in the icon painted by Pavlovets / Детали протом лошадей: у Плювинеля (илл. 15), изображений св. Георгия из Титулярника 1672 г. и на иконе, написанной Н. Павловцем

¹¹ For an engraving that shows the horse striding with its right leg forward (as in the image of Mikhail Fedorovich), compare in [Equile Ioannis Austriaci, 1580] the plate illustrating 'Eqvvs Germanvs', although the plate depicting 'Phryso' (with the left leg forward) is otherwise the one most resembling the pose in our image of Mikhail Fedorovich).







Fig. 18. Comparison of the horses in the equestrian portrait of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich (SHM 32936) and two of the Pluvinel engravings (ills. 24, 39 [reversed horizontally]) / Сравнение изображений лошадей на конном портрете царя Михаила Федоровича (ГИМ 32936) и гравюрах в книге Плювинеля (илл. 24, 39 [размещены горизонтально])

from horse images that were common in the art of the time and in poses that very much replicate one another. We do need to recognize that many artistic representations of striding horses (for example, in the Islamic miniatures produced at the Safavid court) show analogous images, the horse raising one foreleg as it moves forward [Shahnama, 2016, p. 122] (Fig. 19). In a recent estate auction, there was an image identified as that of the Spanish King Philip IV, whose leaping horse is posed in a very similar way to that of Aleksei Mikhailovich [Spanish School] (Fig. 20). It is not inconceivable, of course, that the painter of that portrait in Spain consulted Pluvinel for his model, which then could explain the similarities we see.

I think what adds some force to our hypothesis regarding the possible inspiration from an acquaintance with the Pluvinel engravings is that there are several different points of intersection between his images and the depictions of horses in the work of the artists at the Armory. We are looking at work produced there in a relatively narrow span of years when the Pluvinel book surely was available. We are not just talking about some detail in a single image juxtaposed to a single engraving.

As Nikolaev's work reminds us, there certainly are significant differences between our paintings and this putative Western model. After all, the Russian rulers are not attired as were the courtiers and rulers in the Baroque courts. The painter of the paired images of the tsars now in GIM chose to dress them in Antique armor. Nikolaev's emphasis on how it would be inconceivable for a mounted soldier in the late seventeenth century actually to have worn such armor may not be accurate. At least breast-plate cuirasses were around for a long time, and, even if not actually worn in battle, were part of the iconography of military leaders. The important point here is that in these paintings, the attire of the tsars is a figment of the painters' imagination. We know that at the Muscovite court in the time of Aleksei Mikhailovich and his son there was an interest in Roman history, and the ideology of the state emphasized how Moscow was the Third Rome. Surely, as Nikolaev suggests but without identifying any specific example, there could have been other sources for that armor imagery and what



Fig. 19. Rustam, the hero of the Persian Shahnameh – detail from miniature painting, Isfahan, 1640–1650 / Рустам, герой «Шахнамэ» – детали миниатюры, Исфахан, 1640–1650. The David Collection (Copenhagen), Inv. No. 147/2006. Photo by Pernille Klemp. After: [Shahnama, 2016, p. 122, pl. 25]

he characterizes as 'Oriental' details in the paintings (notably, of course in the Copenhagen images of 'Bayezid' and 'Tamerlane').

It is tempting to posit a connection between the work of our artists and the first theatrical productions at Aleksei Mikhailovich's court in the 1670s. The 'ballets' performed in 1672 included characters garbed, perhaps, as 'Romans'. The plays, orchestrated by Artamon Matveev, the head of the Ambassadorial Chancery, and employing a large team of artists and artisans, depicted famous 'Oriental' royalty, including Assyrians, Bayezid and Tamerlane. The costuming included armor and weapons [Jensen et al., 2021]. There even are directorial notes suggesting horses, or at least models of them, would have appeared on stage. So there may well have been many opportunities for our painters to have found sources of inspiration when working on the equestrian portraits.

The bejeweled gold horse harness is not in the Pluvinel. Yet the artists surely could have seen some very similar breast straps and forehead pieces ('headstalls')



Fig. 20. Equestrian portrait of King Philip IV of Spain, 17th century / Конный портрет испанского короля Филиппа IV, XVII в. After: [Spanish school]

in the Armory collection, work probably crafted in the Ottoman Empire. Examples on display in the Kremlin museums today belonged to the boyar N. I. Romanov (d. 1654), a cousin of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich¹² [Парадное конское убранство]. In the paintings, these are not decorations created simply out of the artists' imaginations, even though, as Nikolaev points out, there was a conscious effort to standardize the style evident in the jewelry across both the horse decoration and that on the cap and garment of the ruler.

To summarize: the artists responsible for the equestrian images were illustrating some of the most exquisite books produced in late Muscovy. There is substantial evidence about how the painters were consciously drawing on artistic traditions from outside of Russia, some at least imagined as Oriental,

¹² Парадное конское убранство // Moscow Kremlin museums : website. Available at: https://www.kreml.ru/en-Us/about-museums/museum-collection/paradnoe-konskoe-ubranstvo (accessed 18.10.2024).

others Western. Their adaptations of equestrian imagery deliberately were intended to convey a particular vision about of the place of the Russian monarchs amongst the great rulers of earlier times and empires. In doing this, the artists were not slavishly replicating what they had in the way of possible foreign sources. The images in the *Tituliarnik*, for example, are very much simplified and standardized, to suit the format and purpose of the illustrations and in keeping with what previously had been done to create seals and coins. The paintings which have been the focus here certainly show a great deal of artistic invention, at the same time that the artists likely had been looking closely at engravings or other depictions in order to paint subjects such as horses, which may not previously have been in their repertoire of subject matter.

At very least we can hope that the hypotheses presented in this essay may encourage further research to identify what the artists of the Armory could have seen and and to see how they creatively adapted it in their work. Even though there has long been an interest in identifying the possible Western sources which fed into the transformation of Russian artistic culture in the seventeenth century, there is much more to be learned.

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