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A NOTE ON RECENT RESEARCH ON THE TERM THE 'TATAR YOKE' (TATARSKOE IGO)

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Abstract. Research objectives: This essay analyzes and critiques recent research on the genealogy of the expression "Tatar Yoke" (*Tatarskoe igo*), the standard term for the period of Mongol rule of Rus', in both Slavic and Latin.

Research materials: This essay is based upon publications from 1984 to the present by Halperin, Ostrowski, Keenan, Rudakov, and Seleznev.

Results and novelty of research: In 1984, Halperin identified the discovery of the earliest appearance of *Tatarskoe igo* in Slavic dated to the second half of the seventeenth century, made by Lev Dmitriev who did not appreciate its significance. Therefore the term was an anachronism if projected onto thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Rus'. This conclusion remained unchallenged until now. At that time, Halperin did not address the genealogy of the expression in Latin. Ostrowski and Keenan found theoretically the earliest Latin usages (iugum tartarico) in foreign texts from 1521 and 1575. Apparently Ostrowski's and Keenan's contributions to the topic escaped the attention of historians in Russia. Rudakov himself found Keenan's source but failed to notice that it referred not just to the "yoke" but the "Tatar Yoke," Seleznev has discovered two Latin references from the thirteenth century, one supposedly a translation from a no longer extant Slavic text. Selezney concludes that the expression "Tatar Yoke" was therefore known at the time and is not an anachronism. The present essay reinterprets the significance of Seleznev's findings for our understanding of the Latin genealogy of "Tatar Yoke." The existence of the term in Slavic is suspect, but in Latin clearly it is as old as Tatar rule. However, the significance of both Rudakov's and Seleznev's brilliant depiction of how writers both Catholic and Orthodox interpreted the Tatar conquest of Rus' via analogy with Old Testament narrations of the enslavement of the Hebrews by the Egyptians and the Babylonian Captivity of the Hebrews lies elsewhere. This essay argues that we have to consider that any author familiar with Scripture could easily independently have made the leap from "Yoke" to "Tatar Yoke," which renders a genealogy of the evolution of the term moot. Historians still need to address how Catholic writers in the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries made that conceptual link, but no Rus'/Russian author did so until the second half of the seventeenth century.

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Keywords: Tatarskoe igo, Donald Ostrowski, Edward Keenan, Vladimir Rudakov, Iurii Seleznev

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The term "the Tatar Yoke" (*Tatarskoe igo*)¹ is almost universally employed to denote the period of Tatar (Mongol) rule over the Rus' principalities during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, or more precisely from the Mongol conquest in 1237–1240 until Muscovy's so-called "liberation from the Tatar *igo*" in 1480. Even authors, including this writer, who label the term an anachronism still use it as a term of convenience². The history of the term, unfortunately, is problematic. It simply cannot be found in any thirteenth- to fifteenth-century Rus' source. Therefore when the term first appeared, either in Latin in a non-Russian source or in Slavic in a Russian source, becomes a significant issue, which this essay seeks to engage. Whether the term is an accurate conceptualization of Tatar rule is a separate and much broader question which falls outside the scope of this essay. I judge whether the term is an anachronism solely on textual grounds, whether the term appears literally, not on its conceptual substance.

In 1984 I called attention to the inadvertent identification of the first Slavic source to use the term by Lev Dmitriev³. The phrase "fierce Tatar *igo*" appeared in inserted paragraphs in 1660s manuscripts preceding the so-called "Western Rus" redaction of the "*Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche*," a member of the Kulikovo Cycle about the victory of Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi over the Tatar emir Mamai in 1380. Dmitriev attributed the insertions to Feodosii Safonovich, abbot of the St. Michael's Monastery in Kyiv. Mentions of the "Tatar *igo*" then accompanied the "*Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche*" in the 1674 and 1678 editions of the *Synopsis*, sometimes attributed to Innocent Gisel, abbot of the Kyiv-Pecherskii Monastery⁴. In other words, the term the "Tatar *igo*" not only originated long after Mongol rule had ceased, but did so in Ukraine, not Muscovy. Dmitriev apparently did not appreciate the significance of his discovery. The term entered and soon dominated Russian historiography not via its manuscripts but via the printed editions of the *Synopsis*, with a great deal of help from Nikolai Karamzin.

Other similar but not identical terms did appear in Rus' sources from the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries. Rus' bookmen viewed the world through the prism of Scriptures. They perceived Tatar rule as the equivalent of the slavery to which the Hebrews in Egypt were subjected. This exaggeration, ironically, eventually gener-

¹ Because, as explained below, *igo* and another word used to describe Tatar rule, *iarmo*, are both translated as "yoke," I will use the Russian words without translation. I translate Latin *iugum/jugum* as "yoke."

² As this author did in book titles! [2; 4; 7].

³ [6, p. 25–27]; reprinted in [4, p. 171–73].

⁴ [1, p. 70–71].

Manuscript: Skazanie o Mamaevom poboishche, West Rus' redaction, GPB (now

RNB), Pogodin collection, No. 1569, citing folio 71, described in [11, p. 104]. 1674 *Sinopsis*, GBL (now RNB), Otdel redkoi knigi, 110–13, 121–22.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Sinopsis, GBL (now RNB), Otdel redkoi knigi, 110–13, 121–22.

ated the phrase "the *igo* of slavery" (*rabotnoe igo*), applied to the Muscovite conquest of Novgorod under Ivan III according to the mid sixteenth-century *Kazanskaia istoriia* [4, p. 169–70], to which I will return. In another sixteenth-century text, the vita of St. Merkurii of Smolensk, Batu imposed his "yoke" and the "*igo* of slavery" (*igo i iarmo*⁵, *igo rabotnago*) on Rus', but not on Smolensk [4, p. 170]. An even more frequently used term was "oppression" or "coercion" (*nasilie*), which could take the form of "infidel (*poganoe*) oppression" in 1262 and 1375, Muslim (*besermenskoe*) oppression" in 1266, and "Tatar oppression" (*nasilie tatarskoe*) in 1328 [4, p. 175–80]. Finally, according to the sixteenth-century *Letopisets Avraamki* Novgorod in 1398 complained of "oppression" by Grand Prince Vasilii I, probably his attempt to impose Muscovite rule over the Dvina area, then subordinate to Novgorod [4, p. 180].

While all these phrases portray Tatar rule in a negative light, the pattern of verbal usage is not random. "Iarmo" is rarer than igo and never accompanied by the adjective "Tatar," although it can be qualified by an adjective denoting slavery (iarmo rabotnago). I would suggest that during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries there was no need for a Rus' bookman to identify an igo (or iarmo) as "Tatar" because there was only one "igo" over Rus', which everyone knew was Tatar. Of course this rationale lost its relevance when Tatar rule disappeared, datable to the destruction of the Great Horde by the Crimean Tatars in 1502, and is inapplicable to foreign sources altogether. Nevertheless the first redaction of the Nikon Chronicle from the 1530s, for example, chose not to take advantage of hindsight in rewriting Rus'-Tatar relations to articulate an ideology against the defeated "Tatar igo" [3]. *Iarmo* derives from the "voke" as a physical object, the "voke" of a team of oxen, a context in which igo seems not to have been used. However, iarmo could, like igo, be used in contexts involving foreign sovereignty. The linguistic nuances separating the terms await further elucidation, and I will return to this subject below. "Oppression" could be modified by "Tatar" because there were oppressors other than the Tatars; indeed, even the grand princes of Moscow, Vasilii I and Ivan III, could be accused of imposing "oppression" and even slavery, indeed the "igo of slavery," on fellow Russians, namely Novgorod. The variation among these terms almost entirely escaped my attention at the time I wrote this article, but recent scholarship has inspired me to engage this theme.

In 1984 I did not even raise two rather central questions of the evolution of the term "Tatar *igo*." The first was: did Safonovich invent or borrow the term? The second was: if Safonovich borrowed it, from whom, who originated it, and in what language? Both questions were and still are outside my competence. Fortuitously, eventually two American historians, the first consciously and the second unconsciously (like Dmitriev), have filled (in retrospect, thought they had filled) that void.

In his 1998 monograph Donald Ostrowski wrote that he had discovered the term "Tatar *igo*" in Latin, "*jugo Tartarico*", in a 1575 report by the Holy Roman Empire's envoy to Moscow, Daniel Prinz, almost a century before its first appearance in Slavic. In 2009 the Edward Keenan published an article in which he drew scholarly attention to the use of the term also in Latin as a reference to "liberation"

⁵ If *igo* and *iarmo* were synonymous, then this phrase is redundant.

⁶ [12, p. 721] as cited by [10, p. 244–45].

from the Tatar yoke" in Maciej z Miechowa's (Miechowski's) *Chronica Polonorum* of 1521. Keenan noted that the source of Meichowski's information remains unknown, as well as how, when, where, and in what form his chronicle traveled to Muscovy. He did not note that this allusion to the Tatar *igo* in Latin preceded Ostrowski's by half a century.

Ostrowski suggested that Prinz had heard the term in Moscow where it was in common use, but did not explain, if it was so well-known, why no Moscow written source used the term, nor why it took almost another century after that for it to appear in Slavic, and then, at that, not in Moscow, but in Kyiv.

Keenan's research also created the possibility, which Ostrowski had not foreseen, that Prinz had not heard the term in Moscow but read it in Miechovski's chronicle. Miechovski had never been to Muscovy, so he could not have heard the term there. To my knowledge no one has claimed that Prinz borrowed the term from Miechowski. Nor has any scholar argued that Safonovich or whoever inserted the term "Tatar igo" in Slavic into the context of the Battle of Kulikovo Field had done so by reading it in Latin in Prinz or Miechowski, although it has been suggested that Safonovich or Gizel relied on Polish sources (see below). Certainly it is possible that Safonovich, born in Germany and educated in the West, knew Latin, and it is certain that Gisel, educated by the Jesuits after his conversion to Orthodoxy, knew Latin, so the possibility that either translated the term from Latin cannot be excluded. The fact that Miechovski dates the liberation of Russia from the Tatar igo to the reign of Ivan III. a century later than the Battle of Kulikovo in 1380, does not exclude the possibility that he took the liberty to apply it to a different period than its first appearance. I will suggest below that perhaps we do not need to look for literal textual antecedents for either author's use of the term.

Until quite recently it never occurred to me to investigate whether Ostrowski's and Keenan's discoveries were known to specialists on the Tatars in Russia. It is only since I became familiar with several articles, dated 2012 to 2024, by two Russian historians that I began to do so. The tentative answer seems to be negative.

In 2012 Vladimir Rudakov published an article on the Rus' conception of the "Tatar igo" [13]. He begins by declaring that although the Rus' book-men were familiar with the word "igo" in the form of "Christian igo" or "igo of slavery," during the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries the phrase "Tatar igo" was absent. The first foreigner to apply a translation or calque of the term "igo" (but not "Tatar igo) to Rus'-Tatar relations was the Polish author Jan Dlugosz just before Tatar rule ended at the end of the fifteenth century. The first text in Slavic containing the phrase "Tatar igo" was the Synopsis. Rudakov suggests that the compiler of the Synopsis was most likely familiar with the term from Polish sources [13, p. 24]. The main thrust of the article is to argue that the phrase "Tatar igo," regardless of when or where it originated, does not accurately represent the full gamut of Rus'-Tatar relations, an issue outside the scope of this essay. In passing Rudakov makes several astute comments relevant to the genealogy of the phrase "Tatar igo." Although chronicles from the Kyivan period took a very negative view of Kipchak raids, no Rus' source ever referred to a "Kipchak igo" (Polovetskoe igo). In 1480 bishop Vassian Rylo, in his "Epistle to the Ugra River" to Grand Prince Ivan III, likened Tatar rule to the enslavement of the Hebrews by Pharaoh, but he did not

⁷ [9, book 4, chapter 85, 377] as cited by [8, p. 241].

describe the conquest of Rus' by the Tatars as a "capture" (*plenenie*). Rus' bookmen also conceived of the Tatar conquest as an analogy of the Babylonian Captivity of the Hebrews. Rus'-Tatar relations did not coincide with the dramatic vocabulary expressed by book-men, *iarmo*, *igo*, and especially slavery (*rabstvo*). Dlugosz's "yoke" calqued *iarmo* or *rabstvo* [13, p. 27, 28, 29].

Rudakov does not highlight the most glaring contrast between the Kipchaks and the Tatars, namely that the Kipchaks never conquered Rus' or any region thereof, never established their own rule over one or more Rus' principalities. If that difference motivated the absence of the phrase "Kipchak *igo*" than we may infer that "*igo*" has linguistic baggage reflecting foreign conquest. Vassian's failure to refer to the Tatars as "capturing" (*plenenie*) Rus' is most curious, because the Rus' sources, chronicles and narratives, overwhelmingly refer to the Tatar conquest of 1237–1240 not as a "conquest" (*pokorenie*), the imposition of foreign sovereignty and a foreign ruler, but as the "capture" of cities, with the verb *pleniti* (as Rudokov expostulates in his second article). I have argued that this was a deliberate attempt to minimize that very change of sovereignty [7, p. 23–67; 2, p. 32–77]. Dlugosz took most of his information about Rus' from Rus' chronicles, but there is no way to identify the term he calqued as "*yugum*." To my knowledge no one has traced the Safonovich/*Synopsis* quotation to a Polish source, presumably in Latin, and Dlugosz referred to a "yoke" but not a "Tatar yoke."

In 2015 Rudakov fully expounded his contention that the Rus' conceived of Tatar rule as (metaphorically, not literally) slavery, not a "yoke" [14]. Here he equates "captivity" (plenenie) with slavery to the Tatars in works beginning with Metropolitan Serapion's sermons up to Vassian's epistle, including the phrase "iarmo of slavery" (pod iarmom raboty). Rudakov calls iarmo and igo synonyms. The Kazan' History (Kazanskaia istoriia) of the mid sixteenth century refers to "iarmo of the Muslim conquest" (iarmo pokoreniia busermanskogo), using a term denoting sovereignty [14, p. 437–43]. Citing my 1984 article in my 2009 anthology Rudakov refers to usages of "iarmo/igo" by itself or "igo of slavery" to apply to Rus'-Tatar and Novgorod-Moscow relations. Agreeing with my conclusion he reiterates that igo and Tatar rule were asynchronous. Dlugosz was the first to reference the "yoke" in Latin, the "barbaric yoke" or "yoke of servility" (jugum barbarum, jugum servitutis), which was copied by Miechowski, and later by Heidenstein writing about the Livonian War in Latin and Jacques Margeret writing about the Time of Troubles in French [14, p. 444–45]. Via the Synopsis the term traveled to Karamzin, who made it dominant but not universal in Russian historiography; Sergei Solov'ev and Nikolai Kostomarov eschewed it⁸ [14, p. 447, 449].

Rudakov avers that Miechowski borrowed his phrasing of a "yoke" from Dlugosz, but Dlugosz did not write "Tatar Yoke" and Miechowski (and Margeret) did. Rudakov does not refer to Prinz. This would suggest that Rudakov accessed neither Ostrowski nor Keenan, that he found Miechowski independently of Keenan but elided the difference between Miechowski's formulation and Dlugosz's. Even if he was influenced by Dlugosz, Miechowski revised Dlugosz by turning "barbaric yoke" or "yoke of servility" into "Tatar Yoke."

Rudakov's position is that the use in thirteenth- to fifteenth-century sources of *igo*, *iarmo* and "slavery" does not alter the fact that "Tatar Yoke" never appears

⁸ I certainly never noticed that omission before reading Rudakov's second article.

then and is therefore still an anachronism. Jurii Selezney takes a contrary position in his 2024 article. He also contends that "igo" does accurately reflect Rus'-Tatar relations, which is extraneous to this discussion [16]. Selezney contests the anachronistic status of "Tatar *igo*" for the thirteenth to fifteenth century as expressed in the Russian translation of my monograph *Tatarskoe igo* (which he edited) [2] on the basis of two Latin sources, the report of the deposition at the 1245 Council of Lyon by Archbishop Petr of Belgorod and the epistle of Pope Alexander IV to Prince Alexander Nevskii in 1248. The former refers to a jugum and the latter jugo Tartarice. Seleznev proposes that jugum could have been a translation of a term like *nevolia* (subordination) or *vole tatarskoe* (Tatar subordination), which appear in the thirteenth-century Galician-Volhynian chronicle. Petr knew no Latin, Greek or Hebrew. Catholic (and Orthodox) clergy envisaged the Mongol conquest as enslavement analogous to the Biblical Babylonian Captivity (plen) of the Hebrews. which was translated into Latin as iugum and into Slavic as iarmo or igo vavilonskoe (Babylonian voke). Therefore, the phrases "Tatar igo" or "Horde igo" cannot be classified as anachronisms, because at least Nevskii's princely chancellery had access to the term in Latin. How widespread familiarity with the text was remains an open question. Seleznev proposes that *iugum Tartarice* translated the Galician-Volhynian chronicle's nevolia Tatarskoe [16, p. 1127–137].

Seleznev's superb analysis of the impact of a Scriptural mentality on Catholic and Orthodox Christian perception of Rus'-Tatar relations, shared by Rudakov, lays a foundation for arguing that chronicle-writers might have been inspired to relegate the Tatar conquest to a "capture" (plenenie) on the basis of the model of the Babylonian Captivity (plen). As argued above, I do not think we can treat igo, nasilie and vole as perfect synonyms, nor iarmo and igo. I find his equation of multiple, admittedly overlapping, terms for Tatar rule less convincing, in part precisely because, to both Catholic and Orthodox authors, iugum/igo possessed a strong scriptural context, lacking in *nevole*. Selezney himself notes the connection of *igo* to foreigners (16, p. 1147), but fails to appreciate that "subordination" (nevole) lacked the same cultural baggage. We have no information on the basis of which to evaluate the quality of the Latin translation of Archbishop Petr's declaration. Only parallel texts could substantiate the assertion that Archbishop Petr translated nevole as iugum. If the original was tatarskoe nevole then we have to further explain the omission of the adjective "Tatar" in the translation. In any case, while the use of iugum without adjective antedates Dlugosz by over two centuries, it does not affect our analysis of "Tatar igo." Obviously the papal epistle also cannot represent a Rus' historical judgment. How the papal chancellery gained access to a phrase in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle is unexplored and unexplained; neither written nor oral communication seems convicning. Seleznev seems not to be familiar with either Ostrowski's or Keenan's location of jugum tartarce in sixteenth-century Latin texts, else he would have realized and called attention to a consequence of his discovery of the contents of the papal epistle. Selezney's allusion to "the Tatar Yoke" in Latin antedates Miechowski's by over two centuries.

The foreign context of *igo* informs the unique use of the term to convey Rus'-on-Rus' relations, specifically of the grand principality of Vladimir and then Moscow toward Novgorod, mentioned above. The *Kazanskaia istoriia*, which postdates the end of Tatar rule, notes that in Batu's time Novgorod freed itself from the "*igo* of slavery" to the Grand Principality of Vladimir and separated itself from Rus',

that is, became foreign to Rus', until Ivan III, Grand Prince of Vladimir and Moscow, restored Novgorod's subordination to the "*igo* of slavery." Still, it is very unexpected to say the least to find talk of Muscovy's imposition of an "*igo* of slavery" in Slavic in such a pro-Muscovite source as *Kazanskaia istoriia*.

Seleznev concedes but underestimates scholarly ignorance of the dissemination of the Latin phrase in Pope Alexander IV's epistle. If a Rus' bureaucrat. scribe or chronicler saw and understood the Latin "Tatar Yoke," then we have to explain why no Rus' book-man used it in Slavic for approximately the following four hundred years. Nevertheless, Seleznev's argument is a game-changer in another way in analyzing the evolution of "Tatar igo" in Latin, for two reasons. First, he has demonstrated that the phrase "Tatar Yoke" in Latin to describe Mongol rule of Rus' is as old as Tatar rule over Rus'. Of course we have no idea whether a papal letter to a Rus' prince in the thirteenth century, preserved in Papal archives, had anything to do with the appearance of the phrase "Tatar Yoke" in Latin in the sixteenth century or "Tatar igo" in Slavic in the seventeenth century. Evidence is totally lacking. But that may not matter, because, second, Seleznev's evocation of the Scriptural ancestry of "yoke" in Latin or "igo" in Slavic demonstrates that anyone familiar with the Old Testament would have had no difficulty in associating the Mongol conquest of Rus' with the model of the Egyptian slavery of the Hebrews or their Babylonian Captivity, Indeed Selezney and Rudakoy, despite their disagreements over whether "Tatar igo" is anachronistic or accurate, agree on the profound influence of the Scriptural world-view upon the perception of current events by medieval Christians east and west. Of course this is hardly a new idea, but the depth of their research raises the level of its application. It might very well be that our search for a linguistic genealogy of the phrase "Tatar Yoke" in Latin is misconceived. Multiple Latinophone authors over the course of the centuries of Tatar rule in Rus' and beyond could independently have made the leap to categorizing Tatar rule as the "Tatar Yoke."

In a way, however, ironically, this understanding of the evolution of "Tatar Yoke" in Latin reinforces the anomaly that in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries Catholic writers made that leap from "yoke" to "iugum Tartarice" but no Slavic / Russian writer linked igo with tatarskoe until the second half of the seventeenth century. The asynchronous literary history of the Latin and Slavic versions of the phrase "Tatar Yoke" / Tatarskoe igo remains as mysterious as ever. 9

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⁹ Certainly Ivan IV's ideologues were arrogant and mendacious enough to reject the concept of a "Tatar *igo*" because it presumed foreign conquest, by infidels no less, a definite embarrassment. Muscovite diplomats shamelessly denied that the Tatars had ever done any such thing [15, p. 392–95]. Remember that Muscovite diplomats addressing a Lithuanian delegation denied that Ivan IV's *oprichnina* even existed.

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О НОВЕЙШИХ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯХ ТЕРМИНА «ТАТАРСКОЕ ИГО»

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Резюме. Цель исследования: проанализировать и обобщить новейшие исследования по генеалогии выражения «татарское иго», которое являлось общепринятым термином периода монгольского владычества на Руси, как в славянском, так и в латинском языках.

Материалы исследования: статья основана на публикациях Ч.Дж. Гальперина, Д. Островского, Э. Кинэна, В.Н. Рудакова и Ю.В. Селезнева с 1984 года по настоящее время. Результаты и новизна исследования: В 1984 году Ч.Дж. Гальперин определил самое раннее появление термина «татарского иго» в славянском языке, датированное вто-

рой половиной XVII века, которое впервые обозначил Л.А. Дмитриев, но не оценил значения своего открытия. Этот вывол оставался неоспоримым до сих пор. Но этот термин является анахронизмом, если его спроецировать на Русь XIII–XV веков. Л. Островский и Э. Кинэн обнаружили самое раннее употребление этого термина на латинском языке (jugum tartarico) в иностранных текстах 1521 и 1575 годов. Очевидно, вклад Л. Островского и Э. Кинэна в изучении данной темы ускользнул от внимания историков в России. В.Н. Рудаков нашел источник Э. Кинэна, но не заметил, что там говорится не просто о «иге», а о «татарском иге». Ю.В. Селезнев обнаружил две латинские ссылки из тринадцатого века, одна из которых, предположительно, является переводом несуществующего славянского текста. Ю.В. Селезнев заключает, что поэтому в то время было известно выражение «татарское иго», и не является анахронизмом. Настоящая статья по-новому интерпретирует значение открытий Ю.В. Селезнева для нашего понимания латинской генеалогии «татарского ига». Существование этого термина в славянском языке вызывает подозрение, но на латыни он явно стар, как и татарское правление. Однако значение выводов В.Н. Рудакова и Ю.В. Селезнева о том, как писатели, как католические, так и православные, интерпретировали татарское завоевание Руси по аналогии с ветхозаветными повествованиями о порабошении евреев египтянами и вавилонском пленении евреев, заключается в другом. В этой статье утверждается, что нам приходится пересмотреть тот факт, что любой автор, знакомый с Писанием, мог легко самостоятельно совершить переход от «ига» к «татарскому игу», что делает генеалогию эволюции термина спорной. Историкам еще предстоит разобраться в том, как католические писатели XIII и XVI веков установили эту концептуальную связь, но ни один русско-российский автор не делал этого до второй половины XVII века.

Ключевые слова: татарское иго, Дональд Островский, Эдвард Кинэн, Владимир Рудаков, Юрий Селезнев

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