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The Genesis and Evolution of the Autobiographical Genre in Russian Early Modern Manuscript Culture

Ivan Poliakov and Maria Smirnova
National Library of Russia
(ivan669@bk.ru; smirnmar@gmail.com)

Abstract

The article analyzes an important aspect of early modern Russian culture: the emergence and evolution of the autobiographical genre within the framework of traditional Old Russian manuscript heritage. The earliest personal notes, that can be defined proto-autobiographical, appeared in the Muscovite state in the seventeenth century within the ruling and intellectual elite, while the less 'enlightened' social groups turned to the autobiographical genre in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For the most part, early Russian autobiographical texts are either memo records or inscriptions on the margins of manuscripts or printed books. The article investigates the emergence of the new autobiographical genre within the framework of traditional Russian mediaeval forms; it analyzes several models used by Russian authors of the early modern and modern period in their search for an appropriate form to note down their personal records: in textbooks and notebooks, bookkeeping ledgers, as additions to a handwritten miscellanea, as marginalia in a manuscript book or a printed one. The case studies examined reveal the ways in which, while retaining their original traditional character, the works in which the personal annotations were inscribed underwent an inner transformation precisely because of the autobiographical additions, thus acquiring a new function by being transformed into record books.

Keywords: *Autobiographies, Early Modern History, History of Russia, Manuscript Studies*

1. Introduction: *The Early Modern Period in Russia and Manuscript Culture*

A major mental rift occurred in the early modern period, laying the foundations of a transformation of the traditional Muscovite state into the westernized 'enlightened' Russian Empire. A salient feature of this time was the gradual emergence of a secular

culture, both in its traditional Old Russian forms and within the framework of new genres and of European trends.¹

One of the preeminent aspects of Russian culture in the early modern period was literary culture. New works of literature were being created, new genres emerged, printed books made their debut and were being disseminated, while European writings and periodicals found their way to the Muscovite state. In Russia, the early modern period was marked by an emergence of secular genres: memoirs, autobiographical notes and diaries. In the seventeenth century the secular genres were practised only by an intellectual, ruling elite of the Russian state. With profound changes in Russian culture, triggered both by the in-depth internal processes and certain reforms of Peter the Great, secular book culture encompassed a wider range of social groups. Because of these changes, two parallel phenomena emerged in the course of the eighteenth century: on the one hand, the dominant intellectual and ruling elite adopted the Western strategies and forms of the autobiographical genre under the influence of European art, literature and philosophy. These works written under European influence became quite common in high society: they were copied either in numerous handwritten miscellanea or published; on the other hand, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the less privileged social groups began to gradually get involved in manuscript writing. These groups turned to self-reflecting biographical accounts and diaries in imitation of the culture and lifestyle of the nobility, but also because of the need for self-reflection, typical of modern individuals. In the second half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these processes led to a considerable increase in the number of autobiographies and diary-based writings, in the range of authors, and in genre diversity. The analysis of the surviving documents that reflect this trend showed that this manuscript tradition was the one wherein the forms of the memoir and autobiographical genre that had been typical of Russian national culture were sustained and developed further. What makes these texts unique, is that they had never fallen under any palpable European influence, but carried on the Russian manuscript tradition of the seventeenth century.

In the present article, we have tried to give an account of the rich critical trend in the field of European early modern studies by Russian scholars, although the term 'early modern' has only recently emerged in studies of Russian culture, and the chronological limits of the period are still open to debate. While Russian scholars have been using it rather freely to describe European cultural contexts, the term is much less commonly used when referring to Russian history. According to Alexey Krylov, in an article on this issue, this has to do with discussions concerning the idiosyncratic historical development of Russia and with the question of to what extent the sociological and philosophical term *modernity* is applicable to Russian history (2020, 76).

The present article is based on the assumption that the beginning of the early modern period in Russia dates back to the sixteenth century, and its end to the Napoleonic Wars Era. We share the standpoint of Denis Tsympkin who considers the technique, system and 'self-identification' of writing and written culture, as related to the dynamics of the early modern period. He believes that the perceived trends and processes point to the deeply rooted changes within the Old Russian writing culture (that reveal certain Westernization trends), that peaked in the second half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Tsympkin 2020). We also need to point out the major gap in the educational and cultural levels of the various strata of Russian 'society', which seems to indicate that it only entered the classical modern period in the early

¹ The present study was funded by RFBR (Russian Foundation for Basic Research) according to research project no. 20-39-70005.

nineteenth century. These discrepancies in the models of readership culture of the European society are convincingly described in the monograph by Roger Chartier (1994). We also share a conclusion of Paul Bushkovitch, who maintains ‘that the period of greatest change in Russian history before the twentieth century was the early modern era’ (2015, 316).

The analysis of the debated issues in studies of the autobiographical genre in early modern Russian book culture calls for a brief outline of the terminological controversies related to the problem of systematizing autobiographical works. Over the last two hundred years, the terminology has much changed, reflecting the alterations of the methodological paradigms and approaches. We use the terms *autobiographical notes* and *autobiographical text* to designate the whole range of writings that an author has left behind and that pertain to him/herself and to various realms that are somehow related to his/her life or reflect his/her outlook on events and phenomena. We also appreciate the definition of *autobiography* by Philippe Lejeune as ‘a retrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality’ (1989, 4). Yet, because hardly any of the analyzed works belong to the genre of ‘mature’ autobiography, being proto-autobiographical texts, autobiographical notes and autobiographical motives/elements, we hardly use the term ‘autobiography’ at all.²

As for the terminology used in textology and manuscript studies, it should be pointed out that we use the term *text* for the collections of notes we discuss. While we use the term *text* for more or less finalized pieces that the author regards as accomplished reading material, the term *document* is used to designate the material form of the recording of a text. In the present article, manuscripts and printed books and documents that contain autobiographical texts or notes are studied as documents. We use the term *author* to refer to the creator of the autobiographical notes, rather than the creator of the basic document to which the notes have been added. The author, in certain cases, can be either individual or collective.³

2. Early Modern Russian Autobiography: An Outline of Critical Responses

The main problem we encountered in our research was the transformation of the characteristics of Russian medieval literary genres into the forms of the early modern era. In the second half of the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth century autobiographical and proto-memoir works and individual records concerning the life of the author, the history of his family, as well as describing the events that he witnessed, began to appear in the manuscript culture of the Moscow state. These works had the external form and the content of typical Old Russian works very common in the manuscript culture of the period. For this reason, for a long time, this kind of autobiographical work did not attract the attention of researchers – the majority saw in them only private versions of well-known narratives, unable to provide any interesting information for Russian socio-political and socio-economic history.

Studies that deal with the emergence of the autobiographical genre in Russian literature are numerous. The works belonging to the positivist paradigm of the 1950s-1990s mostly outline the theoretical issues concerning their classification, and the definition of the limits of the genre, thereby dating the emergence of autobiographical literature. Since a vast number of general and specialized studies have been published during this period, we will only consider

² For a treatment of the various forms of autobiographical narratives, see the work of Adam Smyth, who gives an accurate outline of the genre and contributes the terms for the definition of each type (2016, 87).

³ The most useful definition of the above-mentioned terms is to be found in an article by Hans Walter Gabler (2012).

the ones that contain reflections and conclusions which are particularly relevant to our project. The classic works summarizing the 150-year-long efforts in the studies of early modern Russian autobiographical literature are the monographs by Andrey G. Tartakovskii (1991, 1997) and his followers (Kriuchkova 1994; Chekunova 1995 and others). The survey of Russian contributions to autobiographical studies in the last thirty years shows a decline of interest in theoretical issues. In the works that are based on the interdisciplinary approach and that use the categories of the postmodernist paradigm, the limits of the autobiographical genre are treated as vague, and the terms *autobiographical texts* and *egodocuments* can apply to almost any narrative (Bezrogov 2000, 2001; Zaretskii 2002, 2016). The whole body of the studies concerning Russian autobiographical culture is based on the analysis of the memoirs and diaries of the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, that are actually samples of the fully-formed varieties of the autobiographical genre.

The problems of genre definition and of the appropriate terminology to describe it are highly relevant when we try to establish at what time the first Russian autobiographical narrative emerged. Overall, all the critical works published in the last 150 years can be conventionally divided into three groups. A minority of scholars interpret the term *autobiographical texts* broadly often coinciding with the term *autobiographical data*. Those who adopt this approach date the emergence of these narratives to the early period of Old Russia, typical examples being *Pouchenie* (Instruction to Sons) by the Grand Prince Vladimir the Monomakh (twelfth century), the Russian chronicles known as *letopisi* and other sources (Garanin 1986). The second research trend, which emerged in the nineteenth century with Piotr P. Pekarskiy, is based on a different approach, that claims the later, as compared with Western Europe, emergence of the autobiographical works in Russian culture (Pekarskiy 1855). The key point of this approach is the consideration of the rapid development of the Russian self that began with the reforms of Tsar Peter the Great, largely because of expanded contacts with the Europeans. As a result of this evolution, the first autobiographical works in Russian culture appeared in the form of large, completed texts: *Zapiski* (Notes) by Andrey A. Matveiev, the travel diary by Prince Boris I. Kurakin, etc. Recent major works on the topic tend to place the early examples of the future genre in the seventeenth century, yet the time of its actual emergence has unanimously been dated to the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries (Tartakovskii 1991, 1997; Kriuchkova 1994; Chekunova 1995). Finally, there is a third group of scholars, particularly relevant to our study, who analyze sixteenth- and seventeenth-century sources in order to pinpoint the beginnings of the autobiographical genre. Their works can only be linked up as belonging to the same critical trend only on the basis of the results obtained from the detailed analysis of the specific types of texts. These monographs and theoretical essays, by no means numerous, feature various outlooks on the early examples of the autobiographical genre. Thus, the classic study by Dmitry S. Likhachov (1970) states that the development of the self-narrative and of autobiographical motives, and the emergence of the 'Renaissance' person with individual emotions, feelings and attitudes were prompted by the novellas and short literary works created by the low classes (townspeople, soldiers, or impoverished nobility) in the aftermath of the upheaval of the Time of Troubles in the early seventeenth century. Long ago, researchers studying the clergy's literary legacy noticed that, in the late sixteenth and in the seventeenth century, autobiographical elements began to emerge in the *zhitie* genre, an Orthodox religious type of text that came to Old Russia from Greece and the Balkans and describes a saint's path to faith, his exploits or martyrdom (Afinogenov 2008). The *zhitie*s described the unique religious experiences of new saints from the point of view of authors who either knew the saint personally or were witnesses of their experience (Ranchin 1999). In the course of the religious struggles between

the Nikonians and the Old Believers in the second half of the seventeenth century, Avvakum, the ideologist of the latter, wrote his own *zhitie*, an autobiographical piece that described his life path, religious aspirations and suffering from persecutions (Demkova 1998; Zaretskii 2002). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, Andrey P. Bogdanov, a Moscow scholar, began working on the identification of the personal chronicles, i.e., historical works written in the form of the Russian *letopis*, conceived by the author and containing information on the events the author was an eyewitness to (Bogdanov 1985, 1990; Bogdanov and Belobrova 1985). He managed to identify a few works of the kind, yet they were only preserved in later copies, and in many cases the notion of the 'authored' and 'autobiographical' status is open to doubt. The most outstanding family chronicles of all those studied by Bogdanov were the personal records of the Shanturovs, a family of *ploshchadnie podiachii* (local clerks), a father and his two sons, from the mid-1680s to the mid-1690s, written on the first pages of one of the manuscripts they owned (Bogdanov 2020).

The earliest Russian autobiographical narrative was discovered at the turn of the twentieth century by Boris N. Morozov. It is known as the *Letopisec* (chronicle) of Iona Solovetskii,⁴ a renowned spiritual scholar who lived between the late-sixteenth and the early-seventeenth century, a vagrant monk who visited the northern monasteries and put together a unique encyclopedic collection of various historical, literary and scientific studies (Morozov 2001). Without going into the details of Iona Solovetskii's life story, we would like to point out that, according to Morozov, he kept a diary of sorts during the course of his travels, recording his itinerary. In early 1621, he put together his convolute miscellanea consisting of separate parts being written previously and kept in notebooks and accompanied it with an inscription on the first page, relating his whole life: the place and time of his birth, his studies, his taking vows. We may say that Iona Solovetskii's chronicle is the first known personal autobiography of Russian culture. The problem with contemporary historiography is that the followers of the second critical trend, who consider the emergence and development of autobiographical works as the results of Peter the Great's drastic reforms, mostly explore memoirs and diaries belonging to the second half of the eighteenth century and the nineteenth century; while individual scholars who work with texts belonging to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are historians and philologists specializing in the manuscript culture of the pre-Petrine Rus. Recent works do not seem to be interested in merging the two approaches – to trace the dynamics of the changes of the literary and historical works, to define their general and the specific features, to outline the tradition of the creation of the autobiographical works, to identify separate *topoi*, etc.

We believe that each of the above-mentioned approaches has its own merits and drawbacks. Therefore, we stress the importance of an integrated approach which includes two major lines of research. The subject of our study is, primarily, the analysis of the well-known texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries written in the traditional Old Russian genres (chronicle, *zhitie*, liturgy, etc), but differing from those traditional texts in meaning and authorial ideas and intent. The second line of our research takes into consideration the fact that the most part of early Russian autobiographical works (including the autobiography of Iona Solovetskii that is one the most grandiose and studied examples of the genre) appear handwritten inside other documents and that therefore it can hardly be found registered in archival catalogues; from this fact derives the necessity to search both handwritten and printed books in archives and libraries in order to discover those autobiographical works that may be hidden within them.

⁴ NLR, Ms. Dep., Q. XVII. 67.

For several years now, a group of scholars from the National Library of Russia, St. Petersburg State University and the Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents has conducted a project for the study of early Russian autobiographical texts based on this approach. Since certain texts are parts of various handwritten and printed books and documents (marginalia and records on the blank pages) or parts of miscellanea, rather than separate texts, they often go unidentified in the archival lists and descriptions. Using the largest archives of Russia, a comprehensive *de visu* checkout of the major collections of the Russian handwritten books has been undertaken. The preliminary result was the identification and attribution of over a hundred previously unknown autobiographical works and notes of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The comparative studies of their form, typology and contents have led to a number of observations and generalizations, and made it possible to propound several models that will be considered below.

3. Autobiographical Texts of the Seventeenth Century in the Manuscript Tradition of the Ruling Elite of the Muscovite State and the Culture of the 'Record Books'

In our work with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century handwritten books and documents, we focused on the writings of the secular elite of the Muscovite state. This approach has been chosen for two reasons. The first one is that the book culture of the Moscow aristocracy of this period and the problem of identifying their personal libraries is highly topical for historians. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the representatives of the Moscow ruling elite began to use their personal or family books as 'memo pads' of sorts, jotting down on their margins their readers' notes, or household records, sometimes copying personal or family documents. It seems that the analysis of these entries can help to identify the first proto-autobiographical works, such as, e.g., *Letopisec* of Iona Solovetskii (National Library of Russia, Ms. Dep., Q. XVII. 67, Iona Solovetskii, *Letopisec* (chronicle)). Secondly, most of the Soviet and Russian historians tended to concentrate on the monastic booklore and the libraries of renowned spiritual leaders, bibliophile monks, etc. The secular book culture seemed to be of little interest to these scholars, for it was thought that the Moscow aristocrats were for the most part illiterate, uneducated and uninterested in the cultural matters still prevailing in the scholarly community, even though these erroneous notions are gradually being discarded in recent studies. The above-mentioned features of this approach highlight the importance of the identification of the earliest autobiographical annotations in the private and family books of the secular elite, whose books still remain for the most part unexamined.

Our research has brought to light a number of important autobiographical narratives belonging to the second half of the seventeenth century; and we believe that it may contribute to establishing an important scholarly perspective in the study of the emergence and development of the first Russian autobiographical works, as well as their different types and forms. We will now discuss in detail the two most interesting case studies.

The first and the most representative narrative are the notes by Prince Stepan Vasilievich Romodanovskiy (1661-1680), the son of an eminent aristocrat, Prince Vasilii Grigorjevich the Men'shoi Romodanovskiy, holder of important diplomatic and administrative posts in the reign of Tsar Alexey (1645-1676). Prince Stepan was born in 1661, and never lived to be twenty. It is very hard to reconstruct the story of his life, as he began his career in 1676 and passed away before getting a substantial number of commissions, or gaining influence at court. A book of learning materials was discovered by Ivan A. Poliakov in the Manuscript Department of the NLR (National Library of Russia), headed *Azbuka fryasckay* (The Alphabet with

printed initials).⁵ It consists of two cursive handwritten books with the typical elements of the alphabets (samples of 'cursive' and 'semi-formal' writing of various sizes and styles, graphic samples of 'cursive' letters with the large old-style initials, samples of ornamental frames and clauses), several literary and historical works of various genres, samples of spelling practice by Prince Romodanovskiy and his handwritten notes. Most sections of the manuscript were written by 'uchitel' pis'ma'⁶ (the teacher of writing) of Prince Romodanovskiy, Stefan Fedorov Kiriakov, who seemed to originate from the bureaucratic milieu and was a highly demanded calligraphist. The calligraphic quality of the books is extremely high, and the name of Stefan Kiriakov also surfaced in the analysis of another manuscript of Stepan Romodanovskiy, his genealogy book.⁷ Codicology and handwriting analysis of the manuscript has shown that the *Azbuka fryasckay* from the NLR was put together as a collection of the learning materials produced between 1675 and 1678. The book was to serve various purposes regarding Prince Stepan's education. By his coming of age, a young man was supposed to be able to read, write and do maths. In all probability, Stefan Kiriakov was to achieve a more challenging goal, that is, to introduce the young nobleman to the patterns of decoration of manuscript texts, old printed books, acts and charters. Moreover, the student, under the supervision of his teacher, was to train in handwritings of various sizes, to be used for various formats of the page. Samples of writing, provided in the manuscript by Stefan Kiriakov, can be defined as 'fashionable' not only in the Muscovite culture of the period of the rule of Tsar Fyodor (1676-1682), but, more generally, in the Western European manuscript tradition as well. At folio 12, Prince Stepan made an attempt to duplicate in cursive writing 'Po milosti Bozhii i velikogo pravednogo ottsa nashego Stefana Savvaita' (By God's mercy and that of the great righteous father Stefan Savvait) spelled by his teacher; in what we designate as the 'Alphabet' section, he attempted to copy the outline of the cursive letters as spelled by the instructor. Thus, Kiriakov was introducing the young man to the trendy types of spelling. Numerous patterns of decoration of the handwritten and printed texts (initials, clauses, ornaments, the *fryazian* [specific ornamental] letters) turned the manuscript into a book of examples. Having gained insight into the styles of book decor, Prince Stepan could use the patterns from the manuscript to commission new volumes for his library. The book of learning materials was instrumental for the Prince's other educational pursuits.

The Prince's personal entries in the manuscript are of a unique nature. They can be classified thematically: claim of ownership, chronicle-type records of the death of Tsar Alexey (1676), a snowstorm in Moscow (1678), a list of books from his library, a note on Boyar Boris I. Morozov's donation of a chandelier to the Cathedral of the Dormition (Moscow) and a number of autobiographical notes. The latter were added to the various pages of the manuscript in the course of two or three years. As a whole, the notes provide a brief outline of all the important events in the life of Prince Stepan: his birth (5 July 1661) (figure 1), the death of his father, Prince Vasilii (3 October 1671), the foundation of the church dedicated to the Mother-of-God icon of Kazan in the monastery of the Feast of the Cross (Moscow) as a last will of Prince Vasilii (10 November 1674), the investiture to the retinue of Tsar Alexey during the church ceremony to celebrate Epiphany (6 January 1676), the investiture to the position of *stolnik* (pantler) at the Tsar's court (29 March 1676), the marriage to Princess Avdotia Andreievna Golitsyna (15 May 1678), the birth of their daughter, Princess Marfa (18 August 1679) (figure 2). The positioning of certain entries in the

⁵ NLR, Ms. Dep., F. XIII.5.

⁶ NLR, Ms. Dep., F. XIII. 5, folio 10v.

⁷ SHM, Ms. Dep., coll. of Uvarov, no. 570.

manuscript is very telltale. The entries on the birth and marriage were made simultaneously and placed after a didactic tale, 'Kako podobayet detem chtiti roditeli svoikh' (How Children Should Respect their Parents). The entry concerning the construction of the church was placed inside the initial И (ѣ) with herbal motives, pre-written by Stefan Kiriakov (figure 3). Later, on the reverse side of the next page, Prince Stepan wrote down the note on the death of his father.

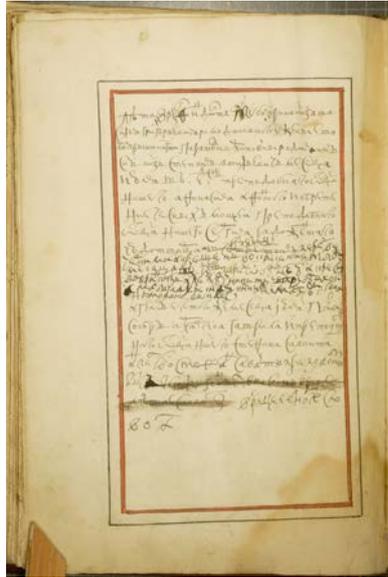


Figure 1 – The record by Prince Stepan V. Romodanovskiy about the date of his birth in his textbook, NLR, Ms. Dep., F.XIII.5, folio 91 v.



Figure 2 – The record by Prince Stepan V. Romodanovskiy about the date of his daughter's birth in his textbook, NLR, Ms. Dep., F.XIII.5, folio 92 v.



Figure 3 – The initial ‘Ts’ and the record by Prince Stepan V. Romodanovskiy about the foundation of church dedicated to the Mother-of-God icon of Kazan in the monastery of the Feast of the Cross (Moscow), NLR, Ms. Dep., F.XIII.5, folio 84

In all of his autobiographical entries, Prince Stepan followed the same precise pattern: the date (in many cases, mentioning the indiction and the moon circle); honour to the saints commemorated on the day of the event; description of the event; additional information (concerning the day of the baptism and the names of the godparents, the guests at the wedding, the specific time of the day when a certain ceremony was celebrated). The young man would obtain information about certain facts from witnesses of the event, e.g., the time of his own birth, which happened ‘pered vechernimi sluzhbami’⁸ (before the evening service). These notes seem to have been of great importance to the Prince. He would often go back to his entries, correcting the dates and adding new data. After 1678, the notes are arranged as a diary: Prince Stepan would record the prominent events he took part in. If the Prince had not died at the age of 19, in 1680, he would probably have gone on writing his ‘diary’. The following fragment is a typical Prince’s record:

Leta 7187-go avgusta v 18 den' na pamyat' svyatykh muchenik Flora i Lavra u knyaz' Stepana Vasil'yevicha Romodanovskogo i u zheny yevo knyagini Ovdot'i rodysya im d'cher' knyazhna Marfa Stepanovna v ponedelnik noch'yu. A krechena v voskresen'ya da obedni 24 den', svetago svyatitelya Petra mitropolita. A krestil boyarin knyaz' Fedor Grigor'yevich' da boyarynya knyaginiya Nastas'ya Ivanovna Romodanovskiy. Angel yeye v Semen den' prepodobnyya materi nasheya Marfy⁹

⁸ NLR, Ms. Dep., F. XIII. 5, folio 91v.

⁹ NLR, Ms. Dep., F. XIII. 5, folio 92 v. ‘Year 7187 (1679), Day 18 of August, commemoration of the holy martyrs Florus and Laurus, a daughter was born to Prince Stepan Vasilievich Romodanovskiy and his wife Princess Ovdotia, Princess Marfa Stepanovna, on the night of Monday. She was baptized on Sunday before midday liturgy on the 24th day, of the holy hierarch Peter the Metropolitan. The baptism was performed by Prince Fiodor Grigorievich Romodanovskiy and Princess Nastasia Ivanovna Romodanovskaya. Her tutelary saint is on the Simon day of our holy mother Martha’.

An important supplement to the autobiographical entries is the record about the Prince's personal library: on one of the pages, the young man listed the 20 manuscripts stored in his chest in 1678 (figure 4). This entry allowed Ivan Poliakov (2020) to correlate half of the handwritten books with the ones still kept in libraries, and discover the other parts of the Romodanovskiy library which was one of the five largest known private libraries of the ruling elite of the seventeenth century.



Figure 4 – The record by Prince Stepan V. Romodanovskiy about his library in his textbook, NLR, Ms. Dep., F.XIII.5, folio 6

The analysis of the personal notes of Prince Stepan Romodanovskiy shows that he deliberately collected the data about himself, his parents and family putting together a ‘personal chronicle’ of sorts. His intentions to learn more about his close relatives resulted in the creation of the original article about the Romodanovskiy Princes in the handwritten Ahnentafel (genealogical book) of the family.¹⁰ Apart from the data that are standard for this type of genealogy record, the manuscript contained information about the nicknames of the Prince's relatives, about the death of his granduncle Prince Ivan Petrovich Romodanovskiy, and about the number of wounds suffered and the number of years spent in various sieges by each member of the family. To the blank pages of his service book, the Prince also copied, from the family archives, over 15 charters by his grandfather, father and uncle containing historical information on their services.¹¹ Thus, between his sixteenth and nineteenth year, the young Prince Stepan Romodanovskiy turned his book of learning materials into a record book for reporting the events he found particularly interesting. These include the notes pertaining to the members of his family and the major events of his life. It is noteworthy that Stepan Romodanovskiy would go back to them, adding new facts and correcting mistakes (e.g., he had miscalculated

¹⁰ SHM, Ms. Dep., coll. of Uvarov, no. 570.

¹¹ The United Museum of Kaluga, no. 7051.

the date and the day of the week of his own birthday). This document is important because of its personal character. The young man would retain this record book and use it for his personal notes only – this specimen of proto-autobiography would reflect his own interests, desires and needs.

A less vivid, but still very interesting autobiographical specimen are the notes by the Kropotkin princes in their family *Svyatsy* (Ordo)¹². The manuscript was described by Yuriy V. Anikhimiuk, yet the content of the Ordo was never explored, nor were the entries, that were only described, but not treated as autobiographical annotations. The notes by Prince Vasilii Vasilievich Kropotkin in the *Svyatsy* of his father, Prince Vasilii Petrovich, may be considered as a kind of autobiographical narrative.¹³ Between the 1640s and the 1680s, Prince Vasilii Vasilievich would use the margins and the blank pages of the *Svyatsy* to record the family events of his clan: births, deaths, promotions, as well as the historical events, e.g., the deaths of Tsar Mikhail Fyodorovich, Tsaritsa Maria Ilyinichna Miloslavskaya, the birth of the children of Tsar Alexey Mikhailovich.¹⁴

For his entries, Prince Vasilii chose the same pattern as Prince Stepan Romodanovskiy: the date, the church holiday and the event. He would go back to the manuscript for 40 years, adding new entries about his family and about historical events, thus turning it into a family chronicle. On folio 339v he placed the 'Rospis' letam' (List of Ages), noting the age of 'myself, Prince Vasilii' and the members of the Kropotkin Prince's clan in 1646-1647, specifying the date and the month. It is noteworthy that, writing about himself, Prince Vasilii used the pronoun 'myself', which is by no means typical for seventeenth-century autobiographical narratives. The fact that Prince Vasilii recorded, on the blank pages of the *Svyatsy*, the dates of births and deaths of members of his family as well as the names of their holy patrons helped him in his commemoration practices. He treated the manuscript both as a family chronicle and a notebook, and recorded some of the events in a coded writing of his own invention, providing the code at the end of the manuscript. Apart from the form and the content, the notes by Prince Vasilii Kropotkin and Prince Stepan Romodanovskiy have one more feature in common: apparently, Prince Kropotkin also began to compile his record book on coming of age – his name was first mentioned in the boyar list as *stolnik* in 1646 (Belousov 2006, 256). Moreover, the manuscript also features the handwriting of the son of Prince Vasilii Kropotkin, Mikhail. The latter was a renowned scholar and translator of the last quarter of the seventeenth century, who made the translation of *Dvor turskago sultana i o chinu i o stroenii yego v Tsaregorode* (The Court of the Turkish Emperor and His Residence in Constantinople) by Szymon Starowolski (Belobrova 1993). Mikhail Kropotkin is a rare example of a scholar from the ruling elite of the Muscovite state who, in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, would hold a fairly high position at the royal court. The analysis of his legacy is still at a very early stage – the only known handwritten book of his translations still remains unpublished.¹⁵ Yet, we can surmise that, as in the case of Prince Stepan Romodanovskiy, Mikhail Kropotkin's creative interest was primarily triggered by the literary activities of his father and grandfather, who left their entries in the manuscript we have discovered.

¹² RSL, Ms. Dep., fond 711, no. 30.

¹³ RSL, Ms. Dep., fond 711, no. 30. Vasilii Vasilievich Kropotkin's autobiographical records were discovered and described by Iurij V. Anikhimiuk while he was cataloging fond 711, and added to the inventory. The document has not been further investigated so far.

¹⁴ RSL, Ms. Dep., fond 711, no. 30, folia 15v., 16-17v., 214-214v., 312v., 325v., 339v.-340 v.

¹⁵ RSL, Ms. Dep., fond 228, no. 173.

The analysis of the above-mentioned autobiographical records has shown that their creators were primarily motivated by interest in the history of their families and their own life stories. Unlike the nobility's books of genealogy and genealogical tables used by the ruling elite to determine the importance of their families and calculate their appropriate positions at the royal court, these documents were written and kept within the family circle. Their important difference from the simple ephemeral notes on various subjects (weather, interesting rumors, household issues, debts) is that they were created over a period of time. Both Prince Stepan Romodanovskiy and The Kropotkin princes *de facto* created a proto-diary, recording the most important events of their lives with exact dating and accurate details, and subsequently adding more data, also correcting the mistakes and slips of the pen. It seems that these autobiographies of the mid- and second-half of the seventeenth century, that reflect the tradition set by Iona Solovetskii, were motivated by the authors' genuine interests in their own biographies, the life stories of their kith and kin, family history and exciting historical events. Their distinctive features are that they were all recorded on the margins and blank pages of personal manuscripts, within the framework of the emerging culture of record book. They were, therefore, personal autobiographies, intended for personal and family use only, reflecting the family's concerns. We believe that these works offer a vivid picture of the crucial point in the life of the highly educated ruling elite, and testify to the gradual emergence of their individual selves in the second half of the seventeenth century, prior to Petrine reforms and to active contacts with Europeans, their cultures, lifestyles and ideologies.

4. Autobiographical Texts in the Middle-Class Manuscript Tradition of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries

The life-writing culture and practices that the Russian intellectual and aristocratic elite developed during the seventeenth century were emulated by lower social groups from the beginning of the eighteenth century. This fact involved predominantly merchants, petit bourgeois individuals, provincial military officers, minor civil servants and parish clergy, both urban and rural. They turned to the autobiographical genre aiming to imitate the culture and lifestyle of the nobility, but also owing to an independent urge to reflect on their own lives. Some scholars, though, have rightly claimed that the members of the eighteenth-century middle class had still a fairly low level of appreciation of their private life and their involvement in the history of the country (Chekunova 1995, 25). The analysis of the extant autobiographical narratives and writings suggests that it was in the written tradition of the urban population that the typical forms and genres of Russian manuscript culture were preserved and continued to evolve. What makes such auto-biographical texts unique is the absence of any tangible European influence on their authors, which makes them the continuation of the development of the Old Russian manuscript tradition. We must note, however, that, while it can be affirmed that the middle and low strata of Russian society took part, rather intensively, in the culture of autobiographical writing, the number of authors practising this genre was rather low. Our conclusions agree with the results obtained by Rudolph Dekker in his large-scale project about Dutch egodocuments, when he points out the meagre contribution of the lower classes to Dutch autobiographical culture of the early modern period (2000).

One of the issues concerning the autobiographical works created in the eighteenth century outside the ruling and intellectual elite is the problem of their detection and genre definition. Generally speaking, the researcher has to deal with fragmentary notes scribbled on the margins or on the blank pages of manuscripts and printed books; but not all these annotations can be considered autobiographical, for certain additions or reflections as are often found on the margins

of Russian handwritten and printed books, even in earlier periods, are simply a reader's reflections and comments concerning the contents of the book itself. In such cases, the annotations do not change the form and purpose of the receiving text. On the contrary, when the marginal additions and comments appear to be the writer's personal, autobiographical annotations, the genre of the receiving work and the document's function are changed, and the basic text, while retaining its original form, is turned into a record-book. In Russian eighteenth-century book culture, several types of such transformations can be observed. On the one hand, these types are similar to those present in early modern European book culture; on the other hand, they incorporate certain features of Old Russian literature. We will consider several scenarios in which authors have used various documents for their autobiographical writings, thus altering the initial purpose of the document, either partially or completely.

4.1 *Autobiographical Writings in Financial Ledgers*

In his studies of English autobiographical texts, Adam Smyth points out that accounting documents were one of the most widespread types of handwritten books of the early modern period containing autobiographical writings (2010, 57). Our large-scale research into Russian manuscript culture leads us to believe that in the Russian context accounting ledgers were also widely used as a support for personal annotations. This practice was prompted both by the size of such books (mostly *in quarto* or even *in octavo*), that were easy to carry around and keep close at hand, and by the author's regular references to it, since the accounting entries could be made monthly, weekly or even daily. It seems that, for a Russian commoner of the eighteenth century, accounting ledgers were the closest approximation to a notebook as it is perceived today. In particular, Russian merchants of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries used ledgers to write down their autobiographical notes. During this period, the number of merchants was growing, and more and more Russian entrepreneurs were acquiring the skills of keeping various kinds of financial accounts. Literacy evolved in urban environments, the higher stratum of the merchant class was involved in local self-government, and therefore introduced to a wide range of bureaucratic documents. The Age of Enlightenment, with its ideals of the 'perfect merchant' encouraged commercial education, while the books on commerce were offering information on accounting, ledgers and bookkeeping (Kozlova 1999, 40-41).

We will consider two texts as illustration of the autobiographical writings in the household documents of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries: the book of accounting records by Osip Beliankin, a St. Petersburg trader, and the memory book of the Kolegov Merchants.¹⁶ Both manuscripts are among the earliest known cases of a merchant's personal records in financial ledgers, and testify to the author's search for the most adequate form of personal writing.

The *Book* by Osip Beliankin is kept in the collection of the RSL (Russian State Library), in a bound volume bearing the title *Kniga zapisi kapitala, pribyli, raskhodov ikolichestva deneg v dolgakh sanktpeterburgskogo kuptsa 1-y gil'dii Osipa Belyankina sovместno s yego tovarishchem Grigoriyem Alekseyevichem Ryabovym* (Book recording the capital, profit, expenses and funds Owned by a St. Petersburg Merchant 1st Guild Osip Beliankin together with his Partner Grigorii Alekseiovich Riabov). The document is an autograph and is recorded in an *in folio* book of 78 folia. The differences in ink and manner of writing show that the *Book* was filled in from time to time, rather than all at once. Osip Dmitrievich Beliankin held a prominent position in the St. Petersburg Merchant Corporation, a company dealing with international maritime commerce (Smirnova 2020, 33-34).

¹⁶ RSL, Ms. Dep., fond 218, folder 1273, no. 18.

The *Book* contains two strata of records written in Osip Beliankin's hand. The first one contains the data on the monthly receipts and expenses. These entries date from the years 1791-1809 and are contained in the first 39 folia of the manuscript. On the second one, there is a separate section on certain family events – births, betrothals, marriages, deaths of family members, inventory of the daughter's dowry and data on the genealogy of the Beliankin family. The same section contains disparate notes on exchange rates in Holland and the losses suffered by the Russian merchants, dates of deaths of the Russian tsars and other notes for the years 1794-1807. These entries are located at the end of the manuscript, on folia 67v and 78v. Thus, the commercial calculations were entered from the beginning of the book, and the diary notes from a second section, going on by filling pages in succession. The divisions testify to the author's intention to differentiate the notes thematically.

The second document, the *Memory Book of the Kolegov Merchants*, is kept in the Manuscript Department, NLR; it is a small bound volume in *octavo* (figure 5).



Figure 5 – *Memory Book of the Kolegov Merchants*, NLR, Ms. Dep., O. XVII. 84

The document has the author's title, *Pamyanik Petra Kolegova s bratom yevo Kondratiyem Kolegovym* (Pamianik [Memory Book] of Piotr Kolegov and his Brother Kondratii Kolegov). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Kolegovs were merchants from Ust-Sysolsk (now Syktyvkar) in Komi, East of the Urals. The family was dealing in fur trade: acquiring pelts from the native population of Siberia, and sending them to the fairs and to Archangelsk for trade exports to Europe (Rogachov 2010, 64; Smirnova 2020, 37).

The records were made by several generations of the family. From 1719 to 1841, the manuscript features over 10 different handwritings. Comparable to the *Kniga zapisi kapitala* (Book Recording the Capital) by Osip Beliankin, the manuscript can be divided into thematic sections. Primarily, inscriptions concern records of gains and expenses. This section starts on the first page of the book and extends from the 1720s until the end of the century. All the respective notes were crisscrossed or crossed out as they lost purpose. The second section consists of autobiographical records, dating from the 1780s. These notes were inserted into blank spaces, often enough between the entries of gains and losses of the first half of the eighteenth century (figure 6).

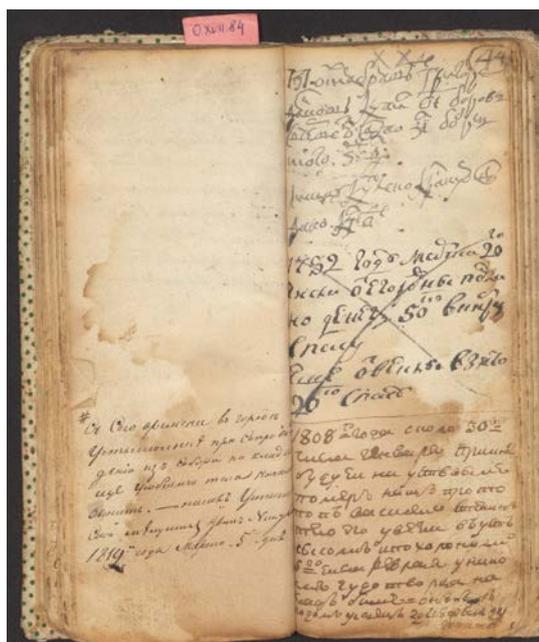


Figure 6 – *Memory Book of the Kolegov Merchants*, notes of 1737, 1752, 1808 and 1819, NLR, Ms. Dep., O. XVII. 84, folia 40 v.-41

The comparative analysis of the two types of text leads to a number of comments. Initially, both books were intended for recording financial data, but, over the course of time, came to be used for a completely different purpose, transforming them into record books of their owners: a personal one for Osip Beliankin and a family one for the Kolegovs. The recording of the dates of births and deaths was initially done for a practical purpose: they served as reminders of the commemorations in church. In this respect, the documents are close to the *synodics* (commemoration lists), or rather, to their specific type, the *pomianniks* (commemorations). Yet, over the course of time, the shortlisting of events became a supplement to the informal personal details: how a relative died, what kind of person he/she was and how pious he/she was, which are among the most notable facts of their biography. This shift of the record books into a family chronicle testifies the authors' urge to preserve the memory of their relatives and their clan against the flow of time.

The issue of defining the genre of such narratives is topical. What are they? Nancy Wright formulates this question when discussing the autobiographical components of the 1650s-1670s household accounts of lady Anne Clifford. Write's conclusions about the co-presence of different genres within one document of this type is extremely important for our study; for the case of Anne Clifford's household accounts examined by her is very close to the cases of Osip Beliankin's and the Kolegovs' books, in that they all present a combination of two genres in the same document for, in all these cases, personal notes were accompanied by financial ones. A close analysis of the entries in Clifford's accounts led Wright to conclude on the 'modulation of the genres of the household account and diary' (2006, 241) whenever the author had to enter the expenses related to her private life (e.g. erecting the tombstone for her mother). While we agree with Wright's general conclusions, we suggest to use the term notebook (close to *libro-zibaldone* in the Western tradition) for the writings of Osip Beliankin and the Kolegovs, meaning a book

that is intended for a variety of entries: household, autobiographical, pertaining to historical events, etc., i.e. universal in its purpose.

4.2 *Autobiographical Writings in Russian Handwritten Miscellanea*

The second type of documents containing autobiographical texts of the eighteenth century is found in various handwritten miscellanea. A researcher has to take into account the challenging issue of the authorship of the miscellanea, as it configures a very complicated relationship between the commissioner, the copyist and the reader. Roger Chartier points out the blurred margins between writing and reading in handwritten books, especially in comparison with printed ones (1996, 33-37). The miscellanea testifies to the same with the utmost precision: the commissioner would determine the contents, in certain cases he/she would also act as a reader, make notes and corrections and, as the author, supplement the book by adding his/her own texts.

The miscellanea of various kinds are a significant part of the main archives of Russian handwritten books; this fact is reflected in the composition of the private libraries and readers' collections of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The handwritten miscellanea were based on the readers' interests, including not only fiction that could be published in those days, but a huge volume of texts that would not be incorporated into the printed issues: books of home cures, herbals, pilgrims' lore, local lore, low fiction' etc. (Luppov 1975, 190-192). While in the eighteenth century, cultivated Russian people had turned to printed books, the middle and low literate classes had their own literary life and interests, largely different from those of the nobles, for their culture was predominantly handwritten and anonymous, which makes it comparable to seventeenth-century traditions (Speranskiy 1963, 15).

It is no wonder that a lot of autobiographical works of the early modern period are to be found in the handwritten miscellanea. As a case study, we will describe the chronicle of a family of Moscow merchants, the Porokhovshchikovs, dating to a period between the second half of the eighteenth century and the first years of the nineteenth, and recorded on the last pages of a miscellanea from the NLR collections.

Thematically, the manuscript can be divided into three sections. The first one (folia 1-209) is a copy of the mid-eighteenth-century *Chronograph*, a monument of Old Russian literature that systemizes and narrates historical data. The second one (folia 210-226) contains excerpts from various documents of the Holy Synod, printed decrees and reports. The third section of the manuscript (folia 247-255) features the notes of the Porokhovshchikovs. Judging by the watermarks, all the parts of the volume date back to the same period, the middle and the second half of the eighteenth century.

The Porokhovshchov family chronicles has an author's title, *Zapiski raznykh godov sobrannyye moskovskogo kuptsa Petra Porokhovshchikova* (Notes from Various Years Collected by the Moscow Merchant Piotr Porokhovshchikov).¹⁷ The *Notes* cover a long chronological period, 1753-1803, with 222 entries overall, from 1 to 11 entries for each year (figure 7).

¹⁷ NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 775, no. 4693, folio 247.

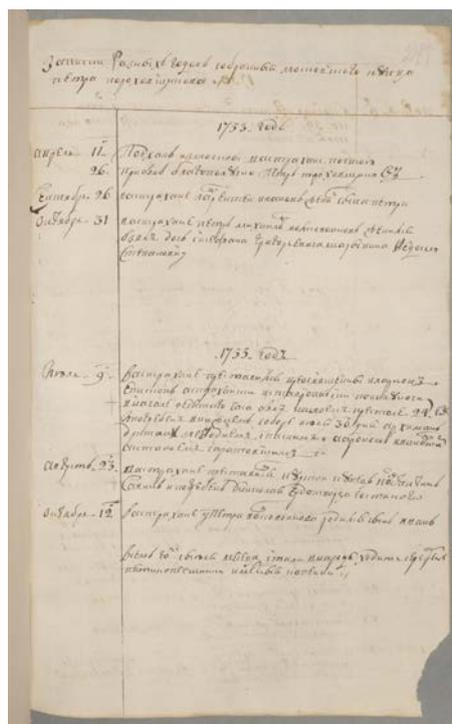


Figure 7 – The Notes from Various Years Collected by the Moscow Merchant Piotr Porokhovshchikov, NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 775, no. 4693, folio 247

The document's compiler and the owner of the manuscript was a Moscow merchant, Piotr Isaevich Porokhovshchikov (1722-1801), whose family was engaged in trade between Moscow and Astrakhan (Poliakov and Smirnova 2021, 12). With the exceptions of the last entries, he compiled the *Notes* by copying the whole text into the miscellanea in several installments. In mid-1801, his son Andrey went on with the writings and kept it alive until 1803. Such continuity is typical of the tradition of merchant families' chronicles, as shown before in the case of the Kolegovs' record book.

When we try to establish to which particular genre the family notes can be said to belong, we must consider that those of the Porokhovshchikov family belong to a tradition which was rife in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Russian literary culture, that of adding autobiographical records to handwritten miscellanea. These personal records were never the earliest inscriptions set down in the document: rather, they were additions to the basic text. This is also true in the case of the Porokhovshchikovs, who added their own 'chronicles' to their collection of historical documents and narratives. Thus, the national history told in the basic text was, in a way, supplemented by the history of one family and its environment: a practice which shows the author's deliberate intention to capture and fix the memory of himself and his family. Unlike the scattered annual entries that the Porokhovshchikovs had previously made, as well as the draft record book of the Kolegovs, this autobiographical text is specifically integrated into the miscellanea as a narrative piece not meant for practical purposes only, but also added as reading matter for the descendants and, potentially, for a broader circle of readers. We should also mention that the Porokhovshchikov's *Notes* are very close to the narratives of the Old Russian chronicles that were structured as annual

entries. This feature was singled out by Andrey G. Tartakovskii, who pointed out that, at its early stages, Russian autobiographical texts ‘would retain on their faces the “birthmarks” of the Medieval legacy, including the tradition of the chronicles, that reflects the specifics of the appreciation of history at the age and the respective perception of time’ (1997, 10). Thus, the *Notes* of the Porokhovshchikov merchants highlight the process of merging the new proto-diary genre to the habitual framework of traditional Russian manuscript culture.

4.3 *Autobiographical Marginalia in the Handwritten and Printed Books*

While the *Notes* by the Porokhovshchikovs are a more or less continuous narrative, the next type of autobiographical texts we are considering are fragmentary notes, marginalia from both handwritten and printed books. In the Introduction, we have outlined the fundamental differences between entries concerning the issue of ownership claims, that were also widespread in earlier periods, and the autobiographical records that highlight changes in the perception of the self and which are typical of the early modern period. According to the stimulating suggestion by Brian Vickers, ‘Early modern culture was a culture of the notebook’ (1968, 76-77). Since the notebooks or personal diaries, as independent documents were only introduced to the Russian manuscript culture in the Romantic period, in the eighteenth century a more appropriate form for recording private notes was deemed necessary. The forms could be either printed or handwritten books from the author’s library (not compiled by the owner, unlike the miscellanea), as well as various papers no longer used. We will consider a few examples of such documents dating from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. The material comes from the notebook of an unidentified military officer of the late eighteenth century and is a handwritten book of home cures discovered and researched by Alexandra B. Ippolitova (2008). The book is currently kept in the Manuscript Department of the State History Museum: it is a bound *in quarto* codex of 157 folia.¹⁸ The volume contains a herbal and a copy of the *Probladnii Vertograd* (Fresh Hortus Conclusus), a medical treatise widespread among readers and translated from Polish by Symeon Polotsky during the late-seventeenth century for the Russian Princess Sofia. In all the conceivable free spaces (margins, blank pages, reverse sides of the cover, unfilled graphs of the tables), feature numerous marginalia by the owner, from 28 January 1796, till 3 November 1815. The brief biographical data on the author, his interests, lifestyle, etc., can be recovered from his notes. Some of them are comments on the text, some are separated autobiographical records. Unfortunately, it seems unlikely that the name of the author could be found. Alexandra Ippolitova suggests that he was a military man, since the manuscript contains advice about repairing munitions and visiting military structures in the Caucasus (2008, 190). The composition of the entries is highly diverse, and seems to indicate that the owner was using the manuscript as a record book of a wider kind; indeed, among the notes are excerpts from books, religious, didactic and literary, encyclopedic data, records of dreams, household and culinary tips, and medical recipes.

One of the types of material used as the basis for note-taking were printed editions, including the *Mesiatseslovs* (menologies). A menology was a kind of calendar, officially printed in a book form since 1709, entitled *The Calendar*, or *Christian Menology*. The edition combines the actual calendar section with the arrangement of material by month and day of the week and a second, informative section. It had an enormous popularity in Russian society, since it combines practical information with scientific data and leisure reading.

¹⁸ SHM, Ms. Dep., coll. of Zabelin, no. 653.

The collection of Pavel N. Tikhanov in the Manuscript Department of the NLR features 23 menologies with the autobiographical entries running from 1733 to 1828.¹⁹ A meticulous analysis of the handwritings, entry structure and bindings led Tikhanov to distinguish several types of the menologies used as notebooks (1896).

The first author left his notes in the 1733 edition – only one volume of his notebooks has been preserved.²⁰ His entries are short and contain brief information about deaths (e.g., on folio 3: ‘Vasilevna umerla’ [Vasilevna has died]), about trips and visits from other people and about the conditions of the ice on the Oka River.

The second set of menologies dates back between 1772 and 1775, and comprises two books.²¹ The author is Archpriest Georgii Petrov (1742-1825) who, in the 1770s, served for the house church of Count Grigorii Orlov, the favorite of Catherine the Great, and from 1783 for the Smolensky Cemetery Church in St. Petersburg. As Pavel Tikhanov argues, the entries ‘are not what we normally consider to be properly made records: these are just brief mementos, sometimes memories’ (1896, III). Apart from the notes on the weather and the ice on the Neva River, typical for a St. Petersburg, as well as the entries on receipts and payments, there are records about the Archpriest’s church services (figure 8).

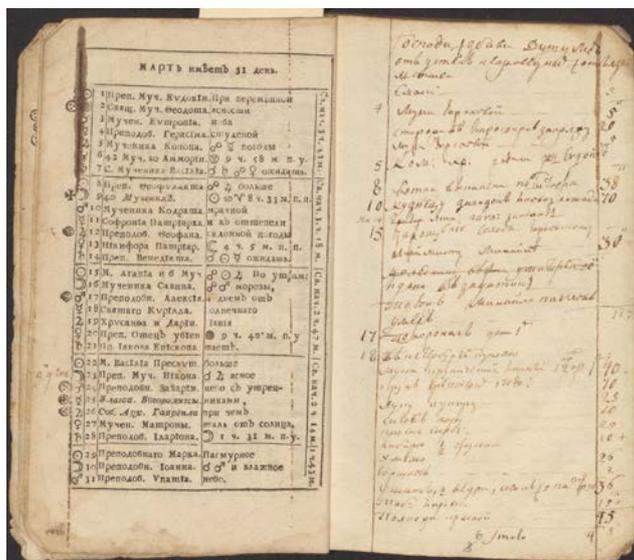


Figure 8 – The notes by Archpriest Georgii Petrov in the menology of 1775, NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 777, register 3, no. 253/4, folia 5 v.-6

The third set of menologies belongs to an unidentified author and comprises 14 books for the years 1772, 1776, 1778, 1785-1787, 1789-1796,²² with the first three written in an archaic manner, and the others by a different hand. Following Pavel Tichanov's method, we treat them as a single set for two main reasons: first, the volumes have similar stickers on the back, with the letters S.P.

¹⁹ NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 777, register 3, no. 253/1-23.

²⁰ NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 777, register 3, no. 253/1.

²¹ NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 777, register 3, no. 253/3, 4.

²² NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 777, register 3, no. 253/2, 5-17.

(St. Petersburg) and the year; second, the type of entries in these books is rather consistent. Many of them deal with life at court: the author records the name days and birthdays of eminent citizens, presumably his acquaintances, as well as the balls, dinners, concerts in the royal circles and, most importantly, the travels of the Empress and members of the royal family. Certain entries point indirectly to the fact that the author belonged to the royal clergy (figure 9).

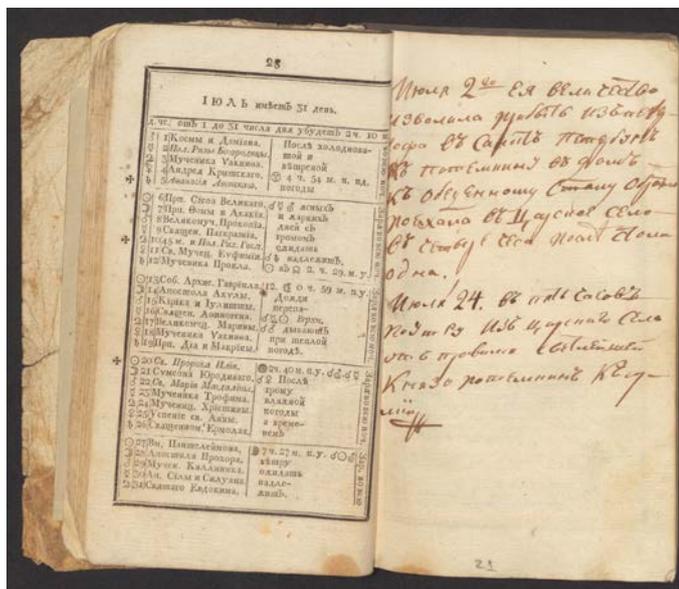


Figure 9 – Notes by the unknown author in the menology of 1791, NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 777, register 3, no. 253/12, folia 20 v.-21

The remaining four groups were not described by Pavel Tikhanov. They comprise one or two volumes each, from a later period: 1796, 1804, 1818 and 1819, 1818 and 1828.²³ The notebook of 1804 has only the back cover filled, while the volumes of 1818-1819 feature a stamp with the monogram *AN*. The book of 1796 probably belonged to a merchant, who left notes on the stock market. The latest pieces contain for the most part accounting entries.

Since the seven authors belonged to different families, we can state with confidence that they followed the widely spread tradition, using the menologies as material for personal note-taking. The format of these editions and their blank pages, coupled with the habit of consulting them on a daily basis, prompted the readers to use the books for their personal notes. We believe that Pavel Tikhanov, the scholar who owned and studied these documents, devised an appropriate name for them, the *Calendar*. It is also obvious that documents of this kind are very poorly preserved, since the contemporaries and their immediate descendants hardly attributed any value to such notes.

Another case of a document being used as a notebook is a manuscript that belonged to a village priest. It is kept in the Manuscript Department, NLR, and features 153 bound *in quarto* folia.²⁴ Andrey A. Titov, whose collection contains this manuscript, recorded its purchase in 1880 and suggested that the author was the father of Dmitrii Sergeievich Varnitskii, the Justice

²³ NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 777, register 3, no. 253/18-23.

²⁴ NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 775, no. 1062.

of the Peace of the city of Rostov, a former sexton of the church of the Holy Trinity Varnitskii Monastery in Rostov the Great. The Varnitskiis were a renowned noble family in Rostov and, in mid-nineteenth century Dmitrii Varnitskii, was known as an official of the Rostov Noble Custody Board. Presumably, Titov purchased the manuscript directly from him, and recorded this fact in accordance with Dmitrii Varnitskii's words.

Initially, the pages of the manuscript contained assignments for a Latin examination from the 1790s to the 1800s. Apparently, Varnitskii was a teacher of Latin, because all the sheets are filled in with students' tasks. Between students' exercises, there are various notes made by Varnitskii, in minute script. Most of them have to do with the accounting of the author's parish, his services and responsibilities, as well as with his personal accounts ('raskhod domashniy' [household expenses]), plus brief personal notes. Varnitskii inserted the entries between the lines and on the reverse side of the Latin exercises (sometimes upside down). These entries can be dated to a period between 1799 and 1805 (figure 10).

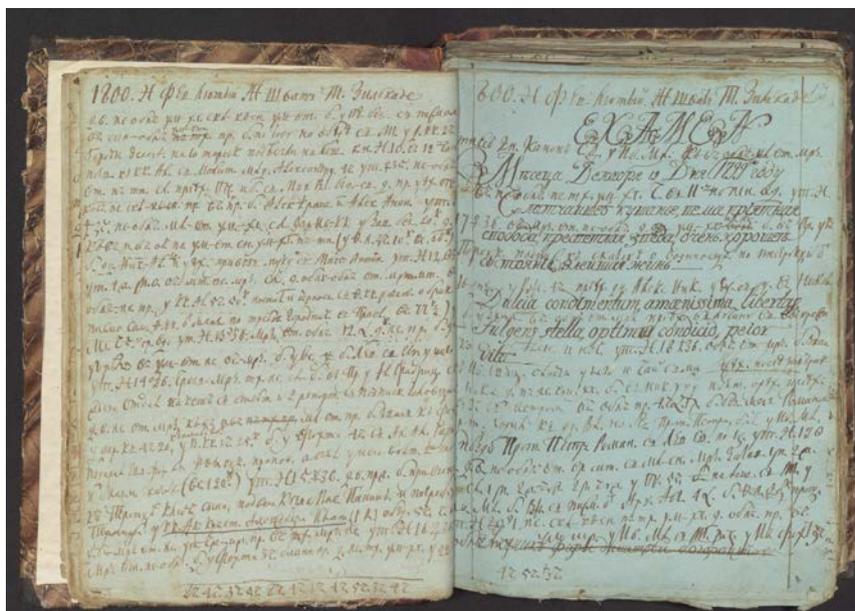


Figure 10 – Notes by S. Varnitskii on the pages of the Latin examination, NLR, Ms. Dep., fond 775, no. 1062, folia 12 v.-13

Amid the autobiographical entries, are *Rod svoy* (My family) – data on the birthdays of the family members. The text has another remarkable feature: the majority of words are abridged, which makes the work of a scholar extremely challenging.

How did Varnitskii work on the text? Judging by the way the pages are stitched into the binding, the author would take the pages covered with the Latin exercises and make his first autobiographical notes there. Subsequently, he stitched the pages, both covered with his notes and with the Latin exercises only, into one volume. Later, he would write on the pages of the bound book. Several pages towards the end of the manuscript remained blank. We may assume that, in his milieu, the author of this manuscript was a learned person for, in his record-book, he incorporated a lot of details such as the names of the months according to the Slavic, Jewish, and Moslem calendar, using the Zodiac signs as well.

Consequently, Varnitskii's notebook is an interesting case of various draft materials, i.e., pages covered with writings and no longer needed, being used as a notebook. The autobiographical notes are so tiny in size and hard to read, that one is left with the impression that the author's intention was to simply put them on paper rather than have them subsequently read. Instances of personal notes being made on the used pages are to be found in the merchants' archives until and as late as the 1880s. This practice highlights the fact that in the lower strata of the Russian society changes in self-perception, typical of the early modern period, would not occur until much later and, consequently, the adequate special form of a diary or notebook would only be introduced after a considerable lapse of time.

5. *Conclusions*

This article has taken into consideration several texts belonging to a proto-autobiographical genre produced in Russia: from the records inscribed by the representatives of the aristocratic Muscovy elite of the mid-seventeenth century and the notes jotted down by middle-class provincial authors of the late-eighteenth century. In all our case studies, the autobiographical texts are added as a supplement to existing handwritten or printed books, rather than represent autonomous documents. Prince Stepan Vasilievich Romodanovskiy put the entries into his own study book; the Kropotkin Princes used the family *Sviatsy* which contained the data on the church holidays; merchants Kolegovs and Osip Beliankin used their financial ledgers, and merchants Porokhovshchikovs the historical family miscellanea; an unidentified military officer put personal records into a manuscript book of cures; an anonymous man from St. Petersburg used printed copies of the menologies, and finally priest Varnitskii used the stitched-together pages with Latin exercises for his autobiographical records.

All these authors interfered with the initial form and purpose of the basic document's main intention. In some examples, the old form of the document went through an evolution and was adapted to the new content, other documents are considered as the result of the invasion by the author of the autobiographical notes into a completely extraneous manuscript and printed text, a fact which, however, triggers certain reflections in its reader and makes the reader position the entries in particular places (as additions). The texts described in this article demonstrate an extensive search by the Russian authors of the early modern period for the apt instruments to adequately consider the different means and forms in which authors configured their personal notes. It deals with a situation where many representatives of Russian society developed an inner desire to put on paper various issues that go beyond the purely practical records, while an accepted and stable form of making such records is absent. It took a century and a half to discover and validate it; the aristocratic and intellectual elite came up with the same need as early as mid-seventeenth century, when Russian book culture would mostly be restricted to the canon genre of Old Russian bookishness. We tend to agree with Andrey G. Tartakovskii who perceptively noted that, during the Old Russian literature period, there was no substantial literary memoir, but only disparate autobiographical notes. These mementoes 'never evolved into self-sufficient memoirs and autobiographical works, dissolving in the genre and etiquette forms that remained canonized at the period' (Tartakovskii 1980, 10). The Russian middle classes first turned to autobiographical texts and began to look for ways of recording them as late as the second half of the eighteenth century, when Russian culture fell noticeably under Western European influence. Still, until the end of the century, Russian autobiographical literature was almost entirely confined to the space of manuscript culture, being orientated towards family reading only, and was not perceived, by the authors, as a work.

No substantial changes in Russian autobiographical tradition materialized until the nineteenth century, when a culture of the notebook was finally established in Russian letters. Today, it is called the Classical Age of Russian memoirs, and coincides with the end of the transitional period of early modern times.

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