



Etiquette Formulas In Russian Diplomatic Documents Of The Posolsky Prikaz Of The 17th Century Concerning The Khivan Prince Afghan- Muhammad

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Abstract: This article examines the etiquette expressions and formulaic politeness structures found in the diplomatic documents of the 17th-century Posolsky Prikaz (Ambassadorial Office), specifically those related to the Khivan prince Afghan-Muhammad. By analyzing the lexical, stylistic, and pragmatic features of these documents, the study reveals the mechanisms of political communication, hierarchical representation, and interstate courtesy between Muscovy and the Khanate of Khiva. The research demonstrates that the rich system of address formulas, honorifics, blessings, and deferential constructions played an important role in shaping diplomatic relations and maintaining ceremonial order in early Russian bureaucratic culture.

Keywords: Diplomatic relations, ceremonial order, lexical, stylistic, and pragmatic features.

Introduction: The Russian Posolsky Prikaz, established in the 16th century and active throughout the 17th century, served as the central institution responsible for foreign diplomacy, interstate correspondence, and negotiation protocols. Diplomatic exchanges between Muscovy and the Central Asian khanates, including Bukhara, Khiva, and Khorezm, were characterized by formalized etiquette, ritual politeness, and ceremonial expressions coded in written texts.

Among the figures mentioned in these documents is the Khivan prince **Afghan-Muhammad**, a political actor whose status and activities required careful rhetorical

treatment. Etiquette expressions in such documents were more than linguistic ornamentation: they reflected power hierarchies, interstate relations, cultural norms, and expectations of respect.

This article provides a linguistic and historical analysis of the etiquette expressions used in the Posolsky Prikaz documents that refer to Afghan-Muhammad, exploring their structure, function, and political significance.

Historical Background

The Posolsky Prikaz as a diplomatic institution

The Posolsky Prikaz managed:

- diplomatic correspondence,
- negotiations with ambassadors,
- drafting and storing foreign relations documents,
- linguistic translations (Persian, Turkic, Latin languages),
- preparation of ceremonial protocols.

Its clerks developed a stable bureaucratic writing style featuring:

- standardized formulas,
- honorifics,
- ritualized greetings,
- rhetorical mitigation strategies.

The great importance of etiquette expressions lies in their ability to represent the Tsar's authority and the state's dignity while ensuring peaceful dialogue with foreign rulers.

Muscovy–Khiva diplomatic relations

Relations between Muscovy and the Khivan Khanate in the 17th century included:

- trade,
- prisoner exchanges,
- military concerns in the Caspian region,
- negotiations involving frontier peoples.

The mention of Afghan-Muhammad in Russian documents indicates his involvement in political and dynastic matters of Khiva.

The Nature of Etiquette Expressions in 17th-Century Russian Diplomatic Documents

Etiquette expressions were shaped by:

- Orthodox Christian influence,
- Muscovite autocratic ideology,
- medieval ceremonial norms,
- interactions with Eastern diplomatic traditions.

They fall into several categories:

1. **Titles and honorifics**
2. **Benedictory (blessing) formulas**
3. **Expressions of humility**
4. **Expressions of goodwill and loyalty**
5. **Formulaic closing statements**

Each type contributed to shaping interstate communication.

Lexical and Stylistic Analysis of Etiquette Expressions

Honorific Titles and Forms of Address

In addressing Afghan-Muhammad, the documents used formulas like:

- “царевич хивинский” — “the Khivan prince”
- “великого государя холоп” — “the humble servant of the Great Sovereign”

These expressions reflect both:

- respect for the prince's lineage,
- Muscovy's hierarchical worldview.

Russian diplomatic etiquette required acknowledging a foreign prince's noble status while simultaneously implying the superiority of the Tsar.

Expressions of Respect and Politeness

Typical formulas include:

- “милостивое повеление” — “gracious command”
- “по государевой милости” — “by the Sovereign's grace”
- “великому государю челом бьёт” — “bows in deep reverence before the Great Sovereign”

Such expressions emphasized loyalty and submission, even when describing non-Russian rulers or princes, reflecting Muscovy's ceremonial ideology.

Religious-Benedictory Expressions

The texts include blessings such as:

- “с Божиею помощью” — “with God's help”
- “да хранит Господь царевичев путь” — “may the Lord protect the prince's way”

These expressions blended religious rhetoric with diplomacy, reinforcing moral legitimacy.

Expressions of Humility and Modesty

Clerks often used self-deprecating formulas:

- “мы, холопи твои” — “we, your humble servants”
- “по нашему убогому разумению” — “according to our poor understanding”

Such forms served as rhetorical tools to demonstrate obedience and avoid offense.

4.5 Formulaic Statements of Intent

Examples include:

- “для дружбы и доброй воли” — “for friendship and goodwill”
- “для всякого государева дела” — “for all matters of the Sovereign”

These statements clarified political intentions in polite, ceremonial language.

Pragmatic Functions of Etiquette Expressions

Reinforcing Hierarchy

While recognizing Afghan-Muhammad’s princely status, documents still reflected Russian dominance by emphasizing the Tsar’s grace and authority.

5.2 Building Diplomatic Trust

Expressions of goodwill established a tone of cooperation, crucial in relations between distant states without stable diplomatic missions.

5.3 Avoiding Political Tension

Humility formulas protected both sides from potential offense — an essential aspect of pre-modern international communication.

5.4 Establishing Ritual Order

Ceremonial expressions maintained continuity with earlier traditions and ensured predictable diplomatic interaction.

6. Examples of Etiquette Expressions from the Documents

(Not verbatim quotations but reconstructed translations based on documented formulas of the period.)

1. **“From the Great Sovereign, Tsar and Grand Prince Alexei Mikhailovich, to Afghan-Muhammad, the Khivan prince, our well-wishing friend.”**
→ Displays respect + hierarchical nuance.
2. **“We send you greetings and wish God’s blessing upon your reign and your household.”**
→ Religious and benevolent formula.
3. **“Your humble envoy came with a bow and with words of loyalty.”**
→ Typical for reporting foreign delegations.
4. **“By the Sovereign’s gracious will, we answer with goodwill and sincerity.”**
→ Formula for peaceful response.
5. **“Let friendship between our states remain firm and pleasing before the Lord.”**
→ Diplomatic reassurance.

Comparative Elements: Russian and Central Asian Diplomatic Etiquette

While Muscovite diplomatic writing emphasized:

- humility,
- religious blessing,
- sovereign-centered hierarchy,

Central Asian diplomatic letters often emphasized:

- lineage (e.g., “son of the khan”),
- honor,
- mutual respect,
- Islamic greetings (e.g., “assalomu alaykum” equivalents in written Persian/Turkic).

The Russian documents mentioning Afghan-Muhammad combine both traditions, reflecting cultural accommodation.

DISCUSSION

The etiquette expressions in these documents reveal much more than politeness. They show how Muscovy positioned itself in relation to neighboring states, how it perceived foreign rulers, and how it constructed international relations through language.

Afghan-Muhammad appears in a discursive space governed by:

- ceremonial respect,
- controlled humility,
- expressions of divine legitimacy,
- formulaic representations of loyalty.

These linguistic strategies were essential for diplomacy in a period when misunderstandings could lead to conflict.

CONCLUSION

Etiquette expressions in the 17th-century Russian diplomatic documents of the Posolsky Prikaz were integral to maintaining political order and interstate relations. In references to Afghan-Muhammad, these formulas combined:

- recognition of princely dignity,
- assertion of the Tsar’s overarching authority,
- elaborate politeness,
- religious blessings,
- ritualized humility.

Their linguistic structure demonstrates the sophistication of Muscovite diplomatic language and its adaptability in communicating with Central Asian rulers. The documents serve as valuable sources for historical linguistics, intercultural communication, and the study of early modern diplomacy.

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