

## Studying the Transition Problems from Antiquity to Middle Ages in the Russian Historiography

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**Abstract:** In study the main approaches and achievements in studying of Late Antiquity transitional time from Antiquity to the Middle Ages in Russia are considered. An attempt to light activity of the leading scientists and their research as well as activities of various regional schools for Late Antiquity and history of early Byzantium studying is made. Researchers of the study come to a conclusion that in Russia there was no uniform understanding of this transitive era and experts prefer to work on regional material of either the Latin West or the Greek East. Besides, the “format” of antiquity and Byzantium-researchers, medievalists complicates integrative researches.

**Key words:** Late antiquity, middle ages, early Byzantium, history, historiography, Russia, Byzantium researcher, medievalists, antiquity researcher, regional schools

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### INTRODUCTION

The term “Late Antiquity” is understood as transitional time from classical Antiquity to the Middle Ages in Europe and the Mediterranean world. After the monograph issue by Peter Brown “The world of Late Antiquity”, the term “Late Antiquity” became included into scientific use and conditional borders of this period established on the 4-7th centuries.

The Roman Empire undergoes considerable social, cultural and organizational changes, beginning with Diocletian’s government (284-305); from it there is a custom of the empire division on Eastern and Western where several emperors ruled. During the reign of Constantine the Great (306-337) in the empire there comes an official Christianization and the capital moves to Constantinople in 330. Migrations of the German tribes broke the Roman domination at the end of the 4th century that led finally to disappearance of the Western empire in 476. Merge of the Greek-Roman, German and Christian traditions which formed a basis for future Western Europe became the result. Now the Eastern Roman Empire is of the greatest interest to domestic researchers.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

As sources of research works of modern domestic historians researchers of Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium act. Today the era of Late Antiquity is one of the most relevant and low-studied problems in historical

science. The history of Byzantium was traditionally studied in our historiography in indissoluble communication with history of the southern Slavs. The task consists in considering the direction and perspective of the last researches in the field in the main part of this research.

**Methodological basis:** The principles of objectivity and historicism in the context of the local civilizations theory. Methods content analysis, comparative-historical analysis and synthesis.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We will begin the review of historians activity with Moscow. We selected experts who are engaged only or mainly in late Antique (early Byzantine) period.

The doctor of historical sciences, professor Aleksandra Alekseevna Chekalova is the known Russian Byzantium researcher. In 1965 she graduated from History Department of Moscow State University of M.B. Lomonosov with specialization in department of the Middle Ages (history of Byzantium). After the termination of postgraduate study in the Institute of General History of the USSR Academy of Sciences she got the job at the Institute History of Byzantium Branch where works till present. Aleksandra Alekseevna specializes in social and economic and political history of Byzantium (mainly during its early period), social and historical thought, political theory, mentality of Byzantines, their life and

customs. She lectured about the early Byzantine nobility in Princeton, Harvard and Toronto. She is the author of 5 monographs and >100 scientific articles.

The book "Constantinople in the 6th century. Revolt of the Nick" became Chekalova's the first research. The monograph is devoted to one of the most tragic events of the Byzantine history to the revolt of "Nick" which burst in the capital of the empire-Constantinople-in January of 532 g. Revolt and its value are considered in the book on a wide background of socio-political and economic life of Constantinople, the largest city and the center of all the empire life (Chekalova, 1986). Then the commented translation with Ancient Greek compositions of the largest Byzantine historian Procopius of Scythopolis "War with Persians", "War with vandals", "Secret History" was published.

In 2007 the researcher issued the education guidance "At sources of the Byzantine statehood: the senate and the senatorial aristocracy of Constantinople IV the first half of the 7th centuries". The guidance is devoted to the analysis of the Byzantine statehood during its formation. The main attention is paid to the senate of the the empire capital-Constantinople. In this institute of power specifics of the socio-political device of Byzantium and its difference from the Western Roman Empire were shown most brightly. In the guidance genesis of the senate and senatorial estate is considered, close connection of the senate titulatura with positions in military administrative facilities of the empire, a role of intellectuals in the senate and their influence on mentality of senators, factors of senatorial estate stability, specifics of senatorial property, a role of the senate in the state and society is traced. The prosopographic method of research which allowed to come to new conclusions in studying this essentially important subject is especially widely applied (Chekalova, 2007).

No less important is the school of studying Early Byzantium developed in St. Petersburg. One of unsurpassed domestic masters of Byzantium study is Georgy Lvovich Kurbatov (1929-2003) the doctor of historical sciences, professor, the honored science worker of Russia. Having entered the History Department of the Leningrad University in 1947, he was well trained there at the Byzantium Department. Department founder, M.V.Levchenko, who was making all efforts to revive domestic Byzantium study, became his research supervisor and focused the beginner Byzantium researcher on development of the city history of 4th-7th centuries whose evolution, as we know, in many respects defined specifics of Byzantium transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. Georgy Lvovich chose the thesis "City curia and curial strata in early Byzantium". From

1970-1989 Georgy Lvovich was Head of the Middle Ages History Department. From the first steps in science having concentrated attention on urbanistic perspective, in 1962 he published the monograph "The Early Byzantine City (Antiokhiya in the 4th Century)" (Kurbatov, 1962) the cornerstone made his earlier master's thesis defended six years prior. The young scientist managed to make a number of fruitful supervision over nature of the city relationship with the suburbs, seeking to unveil the most important features of development of the East Roman society on the Middle Ages threshold on local material. During further researches Georgy Lvovich introduced essential amendments in ideas of rates and specifics of social evolution of the early Byzantine empire. New ideas found accurate and reasoned expression in the book published in 1971. "The main problems of the Byzantine city internal development in 4th-7th centuries (the end of the antique city in Byzantium)" (Kurbatov, 1971) as well as in a cycle of articles devoted to the 7th century crisis. Destroying the popular belief, the author showed that it is possible to speak not so much about the crisis phenomena, as of the known economic life stabilization for a number of regions. G.L. Kurbatov vigorously argued the point of view on the nature of polis structures regeneration, for a role of circus parties, proving that neither the government, nor large landowners could not but reckon with interests of the majority city people and the free peasantry. Leaning on these conclusions, he resolutely rejected so popular theory of the early Byzantium "spontaneous feudalization". The concept developed by him stood up to the trial time.

In the book "The Early Byzantine Portraits (to History of Social and Political Thought)" (Kurbatov, 1991), investigating a literary heritage of the 4th-7th centuries, from an Antioch ritor of Libaniya to Procopius of Scythopolis, the historian put the task not so much to characterize views of these writers (to the matter in science much attention was always paid) but to reveal an outlook essence of various social Byzantium groups in its temporary dynamics through a prism of their compositions.

Both his textbooks and education guidances, such as "History of Byzantium" (Kurbatov, 1984) which the author devoted to the memory of N.V. Pigulevska are no less popular. In them he remains faithful to himself: skillfully preparing the sources he acquaints readers with fundamental, often highly debatable problems of modern science.

A specific place among education guidances is held by "History of Byzantium: Historiography" (Kurbatov, 1975) the first in domestic and foreign literature complete sketch of Byzantium researches development throughout

about five centuries from Renaissance and till 1970. The book was made by the lecture data he was reading to graduate students for many years. G.L. Kurbatov planned the patterns on which the domestic Byzantium researchers had to develop.

Galina Evgenyevna Lebedeva professor, the doctor of historical sciences, the manager of history department of the Middle Ages of the St. Petersburg State University since 1990. In 1972. E. Lebedeva defended the master's thesis, in 1980 she published her first monograph in 1989 she became the doctor of historical sciences and in 1990 the professor. Scientific interests of E. Lebedeva lie in the area of transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages in the history of Byzantium. She is one of the leading domestic Byzantium researchers, she conducts vigorous pedagogical activity. The first book by Lebedeva appeared in 1980 (Lebedeva, 1980). This monograph is, on one hand, is a known result of the previous researches of the author in the field of the "first floor" social structure of the early Byzantine public building; on the other very serious and successfully realized application for complex research of the early Byzantium ruling class development. G.E. Lebedeva uses the early Byzantine legislation for her research data. It reflected the main lines of the leading social groups development in the 4th-7th centuries in a general view. It, as the author emphasizes, makes possible to define the state social policy more accurate. The monograph proves huge opportunities of the early Byzantine legislation analysis for understanding development of the social sphere of the east Mediterranean region in the 4th-7th centuries. This subject formed the basis of the researcher doctoral dissertation. Among other works books of Galina Evgenyevna draw attention: "Byzantium: transition problems from Antiquity to feudalism" (Lebedeva, 1984), "Cathedra medii aevi: materials on history of the Leningrad medieval studies of the 1930-1950th years" (Lebedeva, 2008) and a huge number of articles.

One more representative of this direction Pyotr Valeryevich Shuvalov (the candidate of historical sciences, the scientific secretary of the Greek center). In 1985 graduated from the Leningrad University History Department with honors, having defended the thesis on a subject: "Slavic attacks on the territory of Byzantium in the middle of the 6th cen: ways and season". From 1989-1998 P.V. Shuvalov worked as the research associate in the Group of Antique Archeology of the Leningrad Office of the USSR Academy of Sciences Institute of archeology (nowadays Institute of Material Culture History of the Russian Academy of Sciences) Since 1995 he lectured on department of Ancient Greece and Rome history at the St. Petersburg University. Pyotr Valeryevich

has over 60 scientific publications. Monograph "Secret of Justinian army: the East Roman army in 491-641" tells about history, organization and structure of the East Roman or Early Byzantine empire army of time of the great conquests carried out at the initiative of the emperor Justinian (527-565). Except Justinian's era the background of his army is considered. Also the history of army at the subsequent emperors up to reforms of the first Byzantine emperor Irakli is stated in detail. The special attention is paid to arms, tactics and strategy. Plans and description of all main battles of this time taking place between troops of the empire and barbarians are provided. No smaller attention of the author was drawn by psychology of soldiers and commanders, as well as common problems of efficiency and productivity of military operations (Shuvalov, 2006).

The history of Late Antiquity concerns not only the large cities of Russia scientists. This perspective is actively studied at the regional level.

Irina Yurevna Vashcheva is the doctor of historical sciences, the associate professor of medieval civilizations of the Nizhny Novgorod university of N.I. Lobachevsky (Nizhny Novgorod State University). In 2000 she successfully defended the dissertation "Evsevy Kesariysky and formation of early medieval historicism". In 2013 she defended the doctoral dissertation. "A phenomenon of Church stories during an era of Late Antiquity" (Belgorod) in which the complex analysis and judgment of all circle of "Church stories" of the 4-7th centuries, detection of their genre and conceptual features, aim and principles of functioning of this historical compositions type in cultural and historical space of an era and assessment of their role in formation of the historical consciousness new type inherent in an era of Late Antiquity is carried out (Vashcheva, 2013). Irina Yurevna served internship in the Oxford University (2006-2007). She specializes in history and culture of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, historical thought of the early Middle Ages.

The monograph "Evsevy Kesariysky and Formation of Early Medieval Historicism" is devoted to formation of special system of historical representations at a turn of antique and medieval eras, a problem of perception and judgment by the first Christians of the past and all human history. Evseviya Kesariysky's compositions are considered as starting point in the course of early medieval historicism type formation. In work the changes of temporal and spatial orientation of people on a threshold of the Middle Ages are consistently investigated, idea of driving history forces, direction of its development, its purpose and sense, at last, specially and systematically the history making technique of the church

historian, his relation to sources and working methods is considered. Research of this subject affects extremely relevant and little studied problem of modern historical science—a problem of global transformation of mental structures upon transition from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and gives material for judgment of mental shifts during critical eras of history (Vashcheva, 2006). Other publications of Irina Yurevna are devoted: To Gelasy Kesariysky; to the analysis of emergence, contents and cognitive opportunities of the concept of the Late Antiquity created by the British researchers (Vashcheva, 2009); to destruction of traditional the Roman values system, transformation and reconsideration of basic concepts and installations of the Roman mentality which became manifestation of antique society system crisis and made the independent phenomenon which can be considered as crisis of the Roman identity (Vashcheva, 2012), etc.

Alexander Sergeevich Kozlov is the candidate of historical sciences, the associate professor of the ancient world and the Middle Ages of the Ural Federal University in Yekaterinburg. He studied in postgraduate study from professor M.Y. Syuzumov under the leadership of whom defended the master's thesis "Political opposition to the government of Byzantium at the end of 6th the beginning of the 6th centuries" in 1975. Works at Department of Ancient History and the Middle Ages since 1974. In 1982-1983 trained in Austria, in Byzantium Institute under the leadership of the President of the Austrian Academy of Sciences professor G. Hoonger. The participant of the All-Russian and international scientific conferences first of all, of Byzantium profile. Researcher of over 100 scientific articles and reviews. Area of scientific specialization: history of Late Antiquity, early European Middle Ages, historical thought.

Alexander Sergeevich devoted the most part of publications to studying of historical sources, first of all, Martsellin Komit's chronicles. For example, the research "To a Question of Authorship and Dating of Origo Constantini Imperatoris" focuses attention on a problem of authorship of the anonymous biography of Constantine the Great as late antique historical biography and subordination of chronological realities of this document as late antique biography of the ideological and political purpose of a source; other work "To history of studying Chronica Theodoriana" pays attention also to a problem of authorship of "Byzantiaca" as late antique historical composition and at social views of Malkh Filadelfiyts and many other articles in this direction. But the greatest merit of A.S. Kozlov is that he translated late antique and early medieval compositions into Russian: "The chronicle of the Successor Martsellin", "The Gallic

chronicle of 452 years", "The Gallic chronicle of 511", "Chronicon of acts of Normans in Frankia", "Teodoric chronicle", "An origin of the emperor Konstantin", etc.

Vadim Valentinovich Serov is the doctor of historical sciences, professor of Department for General History and International Relations of the Altai University. Defended the doctoral dissertation at the Tyumen University (Tyumen State University) in 2010 on the subject "Financial Policy of Early Byzantium Emperors in the 6th Century". Trainee-researcher of the Vienna University (Austria, 2007-2008). Professional interests: economic and political history of early Byzantium, numismatics. V.V. Serov (2000) undertook complex research of financial activity of all early Byzantine governments (the beginning of the 6th century inclusive) in their functioning order, meaning purposeful collecting, distribution and use of financial resources in the state purposes. Serov (2004) was the first who tried to construct research on the thematic principle combined with a chronological cut (for example, fiscal policy of governors is analyzed, starting with Diocletian and finishing with Anastasius). In the monograph "Financial Policy of the Early Byzantine Emperor (Analysis of Anastasius I Actions)" Serov draws a valid conclusion that Anastasius's government was guided by the principle of unjustified additional expenses reduction. He shows quite evidentially Anastasius's aspiration "to realize the ideal plan of all state arrangement" (Serov, 2000). In 2004 he published the translation of legislative monuments of Early Byzantium administrative and financial policy (364-491) (Serov, 2004). In the thesis Serov (2004) provides the description of the major political processes and events of the early Byzantine history from the non-conventional point of view for the first time—through a prism of financial interests; for the first time in a historiography he gives psychological portraits of emperors of the 6th century; studies in detail and describes financial actions of the early Byzantine governments; carries out approximate calculation of additional and extraordinary expenses and the income of the state and imperial funds (Serov, 2010).

Analyzing activity of the aforesaid researchers, we succeeded to reveal the following priority research subjects: economic, political and cultural history of Early Byzantium, as well as studying of historical sources and their translation.

## CONCLUSION

The term "Late Antiquity" is used by historians and other scientists to describe transitional time from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, both in continental Europe and in the Mediterranean world: from decline of the

Western Roman Empire since, 3rd century AD, before reformatting of Eastern Europe under the power of the Byzantine empire. One of the main problems in studying of Late Antiquity is a periodization problem. With accuracy it is impossible to outstrip when the transition period began and when it ended. In the last decades Late Antiquity studying draws attention of the increasing number of scientists. This period really is attractive area of research because society of Late Antiquity is in many respects comparable to the present. National schools are created, scientists unite in consortia for the solution of these objectives. Unfortunately, in the Russian Federation this direction has no such popularity as abroad. It is noticeable even that in so extensive territory we marked out only about 10 outstanding researchers. Besides, the translations of the above-stated authors compositions to the European languages are very few.

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