
Between 2000 and 2020 historians and philologists in the US published a considerable number of books and articles on Muscovite history from 1462 to 1689. On nearly all major issues there is no consensus, so it is impossible to speak of a “US school” of Russian historiography. This survey, organized thematically, will reference thirty-three books and approximately 350 articles. In each rubric authors are listed alphabetically and their publications chronologically. The survey selectively mentions unstudied topics or topics that require further study and briefly summarizes differences of opinion.

Keywords: Muscovy, 1462, 1649, United States, historiography

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Introduction

There is no “US School” of Muscovite History. US historians and philologists disagree about virtually all major topics in Muscovite history from 1462 to 1689, including the periodization of 1462-1689 that defines this survey. One author even called the field “fractious.” Some authors refer to the late fifteenth century as “late medieval history.” Others refer to the 1462-1689 period as “pre-modern” rather than “early modern.” A growing number now apply to Russia the periodization of European history of “early modern” defined as 1500-1800. This absence of consensus entails that any summary of “American” views on a given issue has to explicate multiple points of view.

Furthermore, US scholars on Muscovy have been impressively prolific. While I rigidly excluded publications that appeared before 2000, I included publications whose authors begin before 1462 or end after 1689. I omitted publications in languages other than English but

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1 I wish to express my appreciation to Nikolaos Chrissidis and Paul Bushkovich for early bibliographic assistance in preparing this survey and Valerie Kivelson for reading a draft.
2 This survey does not include bibliography which became available to me after September 9, 2020.
3 All authors cited in this survey are or were employed in the US except for two in Canada, one in Israel, and one in Prague, whom I included because they will not appear in any other national survey, and one affiliated with a German university but who published in English, so it was decided to include her within US historiography.
included works in English regardless of country of publication. The survey mentions fifty-two authors,\textsuperscript{4} some of whom are no longer with us, who published 33 books and, even after excluding articles subsequently incorporated into monographs, approximately 350 articles, far too many to summarize, let alone engage individually, even after I arbitrarily omitted some more. Because some publications treat longer periods, even the entire sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a chronological arrangement would not have been convenient. I chose a broad thematic organization, although it is not without flaws. Many publications qualify under multiple rubrics, so my categorizations are often debatable. Moreover, such a structure distributes the publications of an author over several rubrics, obscuring the underlying unity of that author’s point of view. I have not been consistent in separating source-studies from substantive themes. I neither broke down the material into micro-themes nor included all possible themes. There is no rubric for foreign policy or diplomacy, which has not been the primary focus of any author,\textsuperscript{5} but they are often treated in political narratives or works on military history. It would have been impractical to create a rubric for the growing number of studies of regionalism. Similarly, it was not possible to devote separate space to new areas of research now found in fields other than Russian history such as material culture,\textsuperscript{6} environmental history, or the global turn without disrupting the major rubrics.

For each rubric, as I deemed advisable, I have identified the topics at issue as “Questions,” unstudied or understudied themes as “Lacunae,” and major differences of opinion as “Summary.” Here I sometimes make generic reference to authors not cited under that rubric. Space precludes referring to everyone’s views. When I could not personalize the disagreement, I referred to “previous” or “earlier” works. Under each rubric authors appear in alphabetical order and their publications in chronological order. A list of abbreviations appears at the end of this survey.

I cannot draw any synthetic conclusions about the US field of Muscovite history save its productivity and scope.

\textsuperscript{4} I have not counted co-authors who are not from the US or not specialists in Muscovite history.
\textsuperscript{5} There is no US equivalent to Jan Hennings of Central European University. I sincerely hope one of the other contributions to this issue will include him.
\textsuperscript{6} See Kaiser on tombstones, Kain on Patriarch Nikon, Chrissidis on drinking vessels, and Russell Martin on gifts.
Periodization

Questions
Is the Petrine divide no longer a legitimate marker of the “end” of “Muscovite” history? What does utilizing the periodization of “Early Modern” European history, 1500-1800, entail for the concept of Russian “exceptionalism”?

Summary
Kollmann, Russell Martin and Ostrowski all advocate the European periodization, but they and other historians continue to write studies of “Muscovite history.” Thyrêt observes that different spheres of Muscovite history might abide different periodizations.


SOURCE STUDY

Authenticity and Attribution

Summary
Boeck and Ostrowski have revived criticism of the attribution of literary works to Prince Andrei Kurbskii and Ivan IV and impugned their authenticity, dissenting from Halperin’s conclusions. Keenan disagreed with everyone who attributed Ivan Timofeev’s Vremennik to Ivan Timofeev.


**Book of Degrees (Stepennaia kniga)**

**Questions**

Who compiled the text, when, for what audience, what was its message, and why was it unfinished?

**Summary**

Except for Keenan, US specialists attribute the *Book of Degrees* to the metropolitan’s chancery during the late 1550s to early 1560s. Lenhoff alone ascribes compilation to igumen Levkii of the Moscow Kremlin Chudov Monastery, as opposed to Metropolitan Makarii or Metropolitan Andrei-Afanasii in earlier scholarship, endorses the theory that the text was an Aesopian criticism of Ivan IV’s increasingly arbitrary actions, and argues that work stopped because his behavior could no longer be justified. Halperin disagrees.


**Illustrated Chronicle Compilation (Litsevoi letopisnyi svod)**

**Questions**
Who compiled the text, when, for what audience, what was its message, and why was it unfinished? Who wrote the interpolations in the Tsar’s Book (Tsarstvennaia kniga)? How do revisions of the text of the Book of Degrees by the compilers of the Illustrated Chronicle Compilation reflect their respective sponsorships or time of compilation? Are the text and miniatures of an event always consistent, and if not, what does that tell us about the editorial management of the project? What is a Russian translation of a Latin prose version of a French chivalric romance almost devoid of Christianity by a thirteenth-century Sicilian judge and poet doing in the Illustrated Chronicle Compilation?

Summary

Research on the miniatures of the Illustrated Chronicle Compilation is only in its nascent stages and takes various approaches. Kivelson and Kollmann examine the semiotics of gestures, Lenhoff demonstrates inconsistency is drawing Ivan IV post-1547 coronation with a five-pointed crown, not the Cap of Monomakh, and Kleimola argues that the illustrations of Prince Andrei Staritskii’s so-called “revolt” show more sympathy for him than the text. It is premature to judge if all these studies will produce a consistent and coherent understanding of the significance of the miniatures. The common assumption of official patronage of the project by the government and/or the church is impugned by Thyrêt’s conclusion that the text contradicted Makarii’s Great Menology on whether Grand Prince Mikhail of Tver was a martyr for the faith and Rowland’s conclusion that the Illustrated Chronicle Compilation imagined the monarchy more as a corporate than a personal enterprise in a nostalgic evocation of royal consultation in sharp contrast with Ivan IV’s lethal treatment of his advisors during the oprichnina.


ISOLDE THYRÊT: “Saint Stephen of Perm’ and the Dual Faith Phenomenon in Muscovite Texts and Images,” in Seeing Muscovy Anew, 189-205; “Visualizing the Literary Image of

**Foreigner Accounts**

*Summary*

Poe defends the reliability of the information in foreigner accounts that Muscovy was a despotism. Adherents of the consensual-collegial interpretation of the nature of the Muscovite state see a “facade of autocracy.” In practice most historians evaluate information from foreigner accounts on an individual basis, not by judging the genre of source as a whole.


**Political History**

**The Nature of the Muscovite State**

*Summary*

Poe, Hellie, and Goldfrank support the theory that Muscovy was a hypertrophic state, although Goldfrank argues that such a state did not require an autocratic ruler and refines Poe’s definition of despotism, Hellie conceded that during the Troubles some Muscovites favored a non-autocratic ruler and Poe wrote that Muscovy under Aleksei Mikhailovich was ruled by a coalition of royals, boyars, clerics and military servitors. Kivelson, Ostrowski, Kollmann, and Russell Martin reject the hypertrophic paradigm in favor of the consensual-collegial model. Dunning rejects the theory of absolutism for the fiscal-military state model, but Davies denies that a concept applied to states with totally different political structures has much analytic power. Davies impugns dualistic alternatives as simplistic. Muscovy was under-administered. Halperin concludes that no single model fits the entire Muscovite period.


MARSHALL POE, “The Truth About Muscovy,” *Kritika* 3 no. 3 (Summer 2002): 473-86.

**Political Culture**

*Summary*

Kivelson formulates a theory of “subject-hood” as a substitute for the concept of “citizenship,” implicitly criticizing Hellie and others on Muscovite “servility.” Halperin treats political culture as diachronic, not synchronic.


**Narratives**

*Question*

Can the concept of “modernization” legitimately be applied to Muscovite history? What is the relationship of “state-building” to “empire-building”?

*Lacunae*
The reigns of Ivan III, Vasilii III, Fedor Ivanovich and Mikhail Romanov have not been much investigated.

**Summary**

Thyrêt critiqued (before the fact) Kotilaine and Poe’s application of the concept of modernization generically to seventeenth-century Muscovy by asserting that from 1400-1700 Muscovy might have been “early modern” in political and economic history but was “medieval” for cultural and religious history, partially supported by Rowland that until 1650 early modern Russian political thought was more early medieval than early modern European thought. Rowland referred to Muscovy’s “hypertrophic religion.” Against the more common view Keenan concluded that Ivan the Terrible was, if impetuous, not “terrible,” and certainly controlled by his “handlers.” Kleimola would not agree with Ostrowski that there were plots to replace Ivan with a Staritskii. Janet Martin disagrees with Ostrowski that Ivan elevated Simeon Bekbulatovich to the Moscow throne to ward off a plot to replace Ivan with the Crimean khan. Bushkovitch debunks Possevino’s still widely accepted story of the death of Ivan the Terrible’s son Tsarevich Ivan. Janet Martin dissents from Halperin’s overview of Ivan IV’s reign on gentry social stability. Dunning denies that Grigorii (Grisha) Otrep’ev was the First False Dmitrii or that there was a social phase to the Time of Troubles, dominant elements of all historiography of the period since Platonov. Kotilaine and Poe assert that until modernization began in the middle of the seventeenth century Muscovy had little in common with contemporary European states, it was stagnant and backward (a word Weickhardt applies to Muscovy), and there is little evidence of systematic or sustained change, despite repeated references to social change (whether state-directed or not) in Muscovy from 1462 on in the works of many authors (including Hellie), who (except Hellie) would also disapprove of the word “backward.”


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8 See the discussion of the publications of Cornelia Soldat in the survey of German historiography.

9 So does Maureen Perrie on Ivan and popular culture; see the survey of British historiography.


Political Institutions, Administration and Law

Questions
What was the Mongol contribution to Muscovite political institutions and practices? Did Muscovy have a “bureaucracy”?

Summary
Kollmann, Kivelson, and earlier scholars emphasize judicial diligence, Hellie mostly arbitrary injustice, and Weickhardt the brutality and violence of the judicial system. Kivelson adds that sentences could be merciless or humanitarian. Hellie’s assertion that the judicial oath declined because of doubts that Russian Orthodox Christianity was the sole source of truth fly in the face of Kaiser’s research demonstrating the role of religion in daily life. Brown’s conception of a “hypertrophic bureaucracy” in the seventeenth century needs to be reconciled with notions of an unlimited autocrat and/or oligarchic aristocracy.


RICHARD HELLIE: ”The Law [1462-1613],” in The Cambridge History of Russia, 360-86; “The Expanding Role of the State in Russia,” in Modernizing Muscovy, 27-53.


DONALD OSTROWSKI, “The Assembly of the Land (Zemskii sobor) as a Representative Institution,” in Modernizing Muscovy, 111-36.


Ideology

Lacunae

Who dictated the content of non-textual Muscovite ideology requires further study.

Summary

Bushkovitch uniquely interprets the message of the Moscow Kremlin’s architecture as religious, exalting God, not the ruler. Rowland denies Keenan’s theory of two cultures because of ecclesiastical cultural influence on the secular court. The atypical American consensus in minimizing the influence of Third Rome ideology on Muscovy contrasts with historiography in other countries.


MARSHALL POE, “Moscow, the Third Rome: the Origin and Transformation of a “Pivotal Moment”,” JbfGOE 49 no. 3 (2001): 412-29,


Russia as an Empire

Questions
Kollmann follows Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper in defining “empire” as the politics of difference, but there are other definitions. Must an empire think of itself as an empire? Must an empire have colonies or think it had colonies? Did the Muscovite government conceive of Muscovy as the heir of the Juchidulus / Mongol Empire?

Summary
Kollmann and Romaniello portray a Russian empire pragmatic in practice, but Khodarkovsky attributes ideological motivation to its policies.


BASIL DMYTRYSHYN, “Russian Conquest and Subjugation of Northern Asia, 1580-1650,” in States, Societies, Cultures, 139-55.


MICHAEL P. ROMANIELLO, Elusive Empire: Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552-1671 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012).
Nationalities

Questions

How did Muscovy treat its ethnic and religious minorities? Did conversion “erase” ethnic divides? Did loyal service to the dynasty override non-Orthodox, even non-Christian affiliation? Was Muscovy more or less tolerant religiously than its western or eastern neighbors?


“Simeon Bekbulatovich and Steppe Politics: Some Thoughts on Donald Ostrowski’s Interpretation of the Tsar’s Remarkable Career,” RH 39 no. 3 (2012): 331-38.


Intellectual History

Questions
How did Muscovite political thought differ from West European? What were the limits of political toleration of dissident ideas? Did the absence of secular political theory inhibit Muscovite political actors?

Lacunae
Goldfrank has not attempted to project his concept of the “republic of sacred letters” into the seventeenth century.


Social History

Questions
Did the state dominate society? Did corporate estates exist? Were conditional land-grants hereditary? How did the elite change in the second half of the seventeenth century? How did religion impact daily life? How did witchcraft differ from elsewhere? Did Muscovy enter the “civilizing” process? What role did gender play in society? How important was the nuclear family versus the clan?

Lacunae
There are no new studies of the peasants/serfs or slaves, perhaps in deference to Hellie’s earlier monographs, which he summarized. Peasants show up in studies listed under various rubrics. How do we conceptualize Muscovite society before it supposedly became pro forma a caste society with the institution of serfdom? Did elements of individualism develop in society in tandem with communal identities?
Summary
Janet Martin disputes earlier US historiography on the heritability of conditional landed estates. Despite Hellie’s emphasis on gentry lifetime service, Janet Martin observes that frequently gentry-men were released from service for reasons of health or just age. No specialist has followed up on Hellie’s theories of the neurological pathology of the Russian peasantry. Historians contradict themselves on the degree of de facto social mobility. In general advocates of the hypertrophic state paradigm assert that the state dominated society, while opponents of that paradigm find autonomous spheres of activity in various social classes. Implicitly the conclusion of Chrissidis that there was no distinction between the culture of the church / monastery and that of the court /bureaucracy impugns Keenan’s model of the Two Cultures in the sixteenth century (Keenan does not project the Two Cultures into the seventeenth century). Chrissidis points out the lack of any medicinal discourse on tobacco in Muscovy, but Levin asserts that it was used medicinally anyway, which is not a contradiction because the foreign doctors of the Pharmacy Chancellery were familiar with that discourse before they arrived in Muscovy.


MARSHALL POE, “Absolutism and the New Men of Seventeenth-Century Russia,” in Modernizing Muscovy, 93-110.


**History of Women**

**Questions**

Were women’s rights increasing or decreasing in Muscovy, or both? Did royal women play a private role in politics despite the absence of a public role? Why did the government change its position on whether widows of conditional-land grant holders should receive a widow’s portion of the land or live with relatives? Why did the state begin to intervene in a sphere of private life previously left to the Russian Orthodox Church to regulate? Was women’s spirituality different than men’s?

**Lacunae**

Kollmann noted that women’s role in the economy has not been adequately studied. Eve Levin’s study of sexuality has not inspired further research.

**Discussion**

Kollmann consistently emphasizes the limited range of issues that government thought it necessary to deal with” but Kaiser and Janet Martin note gradual state intervention into family issues related to women.


Economic History

Questions

How did conditional-land holders in the sixteenth century adapt to changing economic conditions? Was the seventeenth-century Muscovite government mercantilist? Were Muscovite merchants backward, weak, and dependent upon the state? Did Muscovy develop a bourgeoisie? What was the role of domestic and international trade in Muscovy? How monetary was the economy?

Lacunae

In general economic history has received less attention than other themes. No US historian has updated Petrikeev’s 1967 or Shvachenko’s 1990 study of large patrimonial estates in the seventeenth century. Artisans and all “suburban people” (posadskie liudi) have escaped serious attention.
Discussion

Monahan and Kotilaine follow Bushkovitch’s earlier study in rejecting Baron’s early depiction of the merchants as failing to live up to a non-existent Weberian ideal before Baron’s views evolved.


Religion and Ecclesiastical History

Questions

Were the Judaizers Judaizers? How did Muscovite monasteries differ in their social profiles, welfare activities, interpretation of monastic equality, organization, life-style, and links to the elite? How did the social affiliation of donors to monasteries affect the type of donations they made? Was the heightened role of confession in seventeenth-century Muscovy a product of Ukrainian influence? Can Avvakum’s life and writings be understood within the context of the concepts of Holy Foolishness and Wisdom theology? How prevalent were regional religious identities?

Summary

In general US scholars have turned increasingly to studies of Muscovites spirituality and religious practice. Bushkovitch, Goldfrank and Miller contest Ostrowski’s earlier argument that there were no monastic factions in mid sixteenth-century Muscovy. Miller disagrees with Bushkovitch on the role of the ruler in selecting heads of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is
unclear if Miller’s portrayal of Makarii as a conniving politician who rigged his own eventual elevation to the metropolitanate is compatible with Flier’s depiction of Makarii as the disinterested master political and ecclesiastical impresario of the first fifteen years of Ivan’s reign. Goldfrank dissents from Dykstra’s evaluation of the influence of the Iosifov Monastery before 1587. Kaiser, Crummey and others dispute Michels’s argument that neither the clergy nor the laity during the Schism were motivated by religion. According to Kaiser the Church had already imposed its rules forbidding consanguineous marriages before according to Michels the laity turned to the “schism” to repulse outside control of their lives. Kleimola evaluates Archbishop Afanasii differently than Michels. Kain’s image of Patriarch Nikon differs from that of Michels. Kain also concludes that seventeenth-century Old Believer clerical works do represent the views of the illiterate Old Believer masses. Thyrès and Levin see canonization as an amorphous bottom-up process, not controlled centrally, in which composing a vita was less important than Bushkovitch proposed. There is no consensus on the balance of religious and secular (mercenary and institutional) motives in the operation of monasteries, but in one case Thyrès follows Gruber’s “business, corporate enterprise” model of Muscovite monasteries, compatible with Michels’s judgment of virtually the entire seventeenth-century Russian ecclesiastical establishment. On the whole though Thyrès rejects Gruber’s attribution of a “profit mentality” to monasteries, including on commemoration prayers.

PAUL BUSHKOVITCH, “The Selection and Deposition of the Metropolitan and Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Russia, 1448-1619,” in Être catholique - être orthodoxe - être protestant. Confessions et identités culturelles en Europe médiévale et moderne, ed. MAREK DERWICH AND MIKHAIL V. DMITRIEV (Wrocław: LARHCOR, 2003), 123-150.


Nadieszda Kizenko, “The Sacrament of Confession as an Encounter with Early Modernity” in The State in Early Modern Russia, 163-89.


Iconography

Questions

How did regional, provincial iconography differ from royal iconography? What are the differences among the preservation, conservation, restoration and reconstruction of icons?

Military History

Questions

Was the sixteenth-century Muscovite army inferior to Western armies? What was the pace of military reform (“Westernization”) in the seventeenth century? When and how did new-formation infantry replace gentry archer-cavalry as the foundation of Muscovy’s armed forces?

Summary

Davies attributes a longer-lasting military role to gentry cavalry in the seventeenth century than Hellie. Davies also rates the Muscovite placement of infantry behind wagenlagers as the major difference between eastern and western infantry tactics, not the contrast between musketeers (strel’tsy) and the new formation infantry regiments. Finally, Davies presents a more positive evaluation of Golitsyn’s campaigns against Crimea than that found in most works. Stephens questions the contrast between warfare on the western and eastern/southern fronts commonly found in the literature. Bushkovitch questions the impact of the new-style infantry regiments, the object of much attention by other historians, before Peter the Great.


WILLIAM M. REGER IV, “”European Mercenary Officers and the Reception of Military Reform in the Seventeenth-Century Russian Army,” in Modernizing Muscovy, 214-37.


Cultural History

Questions

Was late-fifteenth century Muscovite monastic culture exclusively anti-rational? What was the pace of cultural change in the seventeenth century? How much did seventeenth-century Muscovites know about the “outside world”? What form of communication provided this information? What impact did it have on government policy or elite mentality?

Lacunae

Romanchuk has not investigated what happened to Kirillo-Belozerskii Monastery pedagogy after 1501. Muscovy remained well-informed of developments among its steppe neighbors in the seventeenth-century such as the Crimea and Kalmyks, but Muscovite access to news on other sedentary states or empires bordering the Eurasian steppe (Ottoman, Safavid, Qing) merits attention equal to that given contacts with Europe.

Summary

Chriissidis challenges previous scholarship on the Latinophile versus Graecophile cultural factions in the second half of the seventeenth century.


Animals

Questions

Did animals play a different role in Muscovy than in Europe? What kinds of sources breached the wall separating animal from human?


Abbreviations

Book of Royal Decrees

The Book of Royal Decrees and the Genesis of Russian Historical Consciousness / “Stepennaia kniga tsarskogo rodosloviia” i genezis russkogo istoricheskogo soznaniia, ed. ANN M. KLEIMOLA AND GAIL LENHOFF (Bloomington: Slavica, 2011).

CASS Canadian-American Slavic Studies / Revue canadienne-américaine d'études slaves

CMR Cahiers du monde russe


Everyday Life in Russian History

FOG Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte

Holy Foolishness in Russia


HUS Harvard Ukrainian Studies

Information and empire mechanisms of communication


Iosif Volotskii and Eastern Christianity


JbfGOE Jahrbücher für Geschichte Ostueropas

JISS Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies

JMH Journal of Modern History

Kritika Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History

Letters from Heaven


Mesto Rossii v Evrazii


Modernizing Muscovy


Moskovskaia Rus’


The New Muscovite Cultural History

Novye napravleniia i rezul’taty v rusistike

Novye napravleniia i rezul’taty v rusistike / New Directions and Results in Russistics, ed. GYULA SZVÁK (Budapest: Magyar Ruskisztika Intézet, 2005).

Orthodox Russia


Religion and Identity in Russia

Religion and Identity in Russia and the Soviet Union. A Festschrift for Paul Bushkovitch, ed. NIKOLAOS CHRISISSIDIS, CATHY POTTER, DAVID SCHIMMELPENNINCK VAN DER OYE, AND JENNIFER SPOCK (Bloomington: Slavica, 2011).

RES Revue des Études Slaves

Rusistika Ruslana Skrynnikova


RH Russian history / Histoire russe

RR Russian Review

Rude & Barbarous Kingdom Revisited


Seeing Russia Anew


SR Slavic Review

The Cambridge History of Russia

The Cambridge History of Russia, v. I, From Early Rus’ to 1689, ed. MAUREEN PERRIE (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)
The Military and Society


The Military History of Tsarist Russia


The State in Early Modern Russia


States, Societies, Cultures


The Tapestry of Russian Christianity

*The Tapestry of Russian Christianity: Studies in History and Culture*, ed. Nicholas Lupinin, Donald Ostrowski, and Jennifer B. Spock (Columbus: The Ohio State University Department of Slavic and East European Languages and Cultures and Resource Center for Medieval Slavic Studies, 2016).

Tobacco in Russian History

*Tobacco in Russian History and Culture from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, ed. Matthew P. Romaniello and Tricia Starks (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2009)

Warfare in Eastern Europe