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Peter the Great and the West in Russian Culture and State¹

The Westernization of Russian culture was the most enduring of Peter the Great's reforms and innovations. The most commonly adduced borrowings, the theory and practice of absolutism and German cameralism, are a historiographical illusion. The Western authors that influenced Peter and his spokesmen, Samuel Pufendorf and Hugo Grotius, were not "absolutists" but theorists of state sovereignty. The Swedish model for Peter's administrative reforms appeared before cameralism, which had no traceable impact on Russian thought or practice until much later. The real impact was the westernization of the culture of the court that replaced a largely religious ceremonial with secular events and celebrations. Peter's reforms were a turn toward the culture of northern Europe in place of the Catholic Baroque culture coming from Poland and the Kiev Academy so visible in the last decades of the seventeenth century. That turn included the spread of knowledge in the natural sciences and technology, a particular effort of Peter himself. All of these trends were largely the work of the tsar, but their impact is also visible in the culture of the Russian elite, including those who were skeptical of some of Peter's measures. Peter built on emerging cultural trends. His personal contribution was the turn to northern Europe and the radical acceleration of change.

Keywords: Peter the Great, Westernization, culture of the court, historiography, reforms

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Since the 1830's if not earlier the central question of the reign of Peter the Great has been the relationship of the tsar and his transformation of the Russian state and Russian culture to the West, meaning Western Europe. Recent work on Peter's reign has focused to a large extent on the state and its organization, but this is also a problem of culture, since it involves the relationship of Peter's transformation of the state to Western models. Other historians have devoted attention to some prominent figures in Peter's entourage (Prokopovich, Matveev, Bruce, and a few others), the details of the rapidly changing ceremonial and festivals of the court, and finally to his travels in Western Europe, the great embassy of 1697-98 and later journeys. All of this work has been extremely useful, though it leaves open a number of basic problems.

The first of these problems is the nature of the "Western" culture from which Peter borrowed. A quick glance at the writers whom Peter or his allies allegedly admired or borrowed from reveals that very few if any of them appear in the standard histories of West European culture as major figures. Peter never met or had any indirect interaction with any of the major writers or scientists of his era with one major exception: G. W. Leibniz. The meetings and correspondence were the initiative of Leibniz, not the tsar, but Peter kept up the contacts. Leibniz proposed several times plans for an Academy of Sciences, plans much too grandiose for Russia's limited means, but he certainly kept the idea in Peter's mind. The philosopher's death in 1716 meant that he never saw the Russian academy, but he certainly contributed to its foundation. It was his follower Christian Wolff who provided Schumacher with the most authoritative advice on the Academy to take back to the tsar.² The only political writer whom Peter seems to have known is Pufendorf, about whom there will be more below.

The second problem is to determine exactly what Peter and spokesmen like Prokopovich actually knew and read. Among political thinkers they did not read Hobbes, Locke, Bodin, or Machiavelli. Whose work did they know besides that of Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf? Peter was

² W. GUERRIER, *Leibniz in seinen Beziehungen zu Russland und Peter dem Grossen* (St. Petersburg-Leipzig: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1873); Idem (V. I. GER'E), *Otnosheniia Leibnitsa k Rossii i Petru Vellikomu* (St. Petersburg: Pechatnia V. I. Golovina, 1871), reprinted in idem, *Leibnits i ego vek* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2008); ARIST ARISTOVICH KUNIK, *Briefe von Christian Wolff aus den Jahren 1719-1753* (St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1860); REGINA STUBER, "Leibniz' Bemühungen um Russland: eine Annäherung", in MICHAEL KEMPE (Hg.), *1716 – Leibniz' letztes Lebensjahr. Unbekanntes zu einem bekannten Universalgelehrten* (Hannover: Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Bibliothek, Forschung Bd. 2, 2016), S. 203-239; IU. KH. KOPELEVICH, *Osnovanie Peterburgskoi Akademii nauk* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1977).

particularly interested in the natural sciences, but what did he actually know? Or did he rely on subordinates? We know some of the answers here, but we have far from full knowledge. We do know something about the books that he had in his library.³ There is also some knowledge about the books he ordered translated and published. The impact of Western political thought is a good example of all of these issues. The following are some of the major areas of potential impact.

Absolutism or Sovereignty

In this case the real influence of the West is entangled with the supposed influence of “absolutist” writers and with the use of the term absolutism to describe Europe and Russia in the eighteenth century. The use of the term is more recent than it seems. Absolutism was not a popular term among historians of Western Europe until the 1950s, though it was a concept that historians of law in law faculties of Russian and European universities did use.⁴ It also got into sociology, in many cases a product of the law faculties of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There have been numerous challenges to the usefulness of the term for the description of European and Russian states, but there is also a problem with the correctness of the term “absolutist” to describe the writers of the time. Unfortunately, many scholars of various disciplines have been quick to paint any writer of the early modern era with a positive view of royal power as an “absolutist”.

The only political writer that Peter can be demonstrated to have followed to any extent is Samuel Pufendorf. Toward the end of his life Peter ordered the publication of a translation of Pufendorf’s *De officiis hominis et civis juxta legem naturalem* (1673), and it duly appeared in Russian in 1726.⁵ Pufendorf, however, was not an absolutist. He provided an analysis, not recommendations, of several European states, including the Holy Roman Empire with its intricate combination of estates and local privileges. He was trying to understand state sovereignty, not to promote a form of government. As Ian Hunter puts it, “each of the three forms of government – monarchy,

³ E. I. BOBROVA, *Biblioteka Petra I* (Leningrad: Biblioteka AN SSSR, 1978); I. N. LEBEDEVA, *Biblioteka Petra I: opisanie rukopisnykh knig* (St. Petersburg: Biblioteka Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk, 2003); OLGA MEDVEDKOVA, *Pierre le Grand et ses livres: Les arts et les sciences de l’Europe dans la bibliotheque du Tsar* (Paris: CNRS/Alain Baudry et Cie, 2016).

⁴ The Bol’shevik writer and former law faculty student M. S. Ol’minskii (Aleksandrov) used the term “absolutism” as early as 1910, though for him it was the same as *samoderzhavie*. “Absolutism” was also current among Soviet historians of law by the 1930s. M. S. OL’MINSKII, *Gosudarstvo, biurokratiia i absoliutizm* (Moscow-Leningrad: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel’stvo, 1925) (originally 1910); M.A. KISELEV, “Reguliarnoe” *gosudarstvo Petra I v stalinskoi Rossii* (St. Petersburg-Ekaterinburg, Nestor-Istoriia, 2020), 157-186.

⁵ P. P. PEKARSKII, *Nauka i literature pri Petre Velikom* (St. Petersburg: Obshchestvennaia pol’za, 1862), I, 213.

aristocracy, democracy – is an appropriate bearer of sovereignty” according to Pufendorf.⁶ His 1684 history of Europe described each state in its historical evolution and tried to account for it, whether England, Holland, France or Sweden. What he did insist upon was that the state was sovereign, again whether it was Sweden (after 1680 absolutist) or the Dutch republic.

The popular idea that Peter’s spokesman Feofan Prokopovich was influenced by Hobbes to be an absolutist is a historiographical myth, a myth made all the stranger by the fact that the supposed founder of it, Georgii Gurvich, explicitly denied any such influence. Gurvich analyzed Feofan’s *Pravda voli monarshi* and concluded that there was influence from Grotius, maybe from Pufendorf, but no evidence of any impact of Hobbes.⁷ As he said, “Был ли в действительности знаком Феофан с проиведениями Гоббса, или нет, конечно, решить трудно; во всяком случае, анализ содержащейся в ‘Правде’ доктрины не дает достаточных оснований для такого заключения.”⁸ It was Gurvich’s academic adviser F. V. Taranovskii who supplied a preface to Gurvich’s book praising it but scolding his pupil for failing to see the influence of Hobbes, which he asserted (without evidence) must have been there.⁹ Again what Feofan saw in Grotius (the spokesman of the Dutch republic, not of a monarchy) was the notion of state sovereignty. Prokopovich did adopt that idea from Hugo Grotius, a nearly unique case of the impact of a major Western thinker, but state sovereignty is not absolute monarchy. Russians of the later seventeenth century and later Prokopovich did read and admire western political writers, but not the ones that appear in handbooks of the history of West European political thought. Instead, he read the Spanish writers Antonio Guevara and Diego Saavedra Fajardo, or others who were bestsellers in seventeenth century Europe but now largely forgotten.¹⁰ The problem here in

⁶ IAN HUNTER, *Rival Enlightenments: Civil and Metaphysical Philosophy in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 190. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511490583>; THOMAS BEHME, *Samuel von Pufendorf: Naturrecht und Staat: eine Analyse und Interpretation seiner Theorie, ihrer Grundlagen und Probleme* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

⁷ GEORGII GURVICH, *‘Pravda voli monarshei’ Feofana Prokopovicha i ee zapadnoevropeiskie istochniki* (Uchenye zapiski imperatorskogo Iur’evskogo universiteta, god 23, no. 11, Iur’ev: Tipografiia K. Mattisena, 1915).

Fiametta Palladini’s attempt to make Pufendorf a disciple of Hobbes is unconvincing, and in any case she admits that contemporaries saw him as an opponent of the English thinker.

⁸ GURVICH, *‘Pravda’*, 110.

⁹ F. TARANOVSKII, “Predislovie”, in Gurvich, *‘Pravda’*, viii-ix.

¹⁰ Antonio Guevara’s *Reloj de Principes* (1529) was translated into Latin as *Horologium Principis*. Pavel, mitropolit Sarskii i Podonskii, had a copy. V. M. “UNDOL’SKII, Biblioteka Pavla mitropolitsa Sarskogo i Podonskogo i knigi imushchestvo Epifaniia Slavinetskogo,” *Vremennik OADR* 5 (1850): 67, 72. Prokopovich wrote a preface to a manuscript translation of Saavedra Fajardo’s emblem book *Empresas politicas: Idea de un principe politico Cristiano*

part is that the Russian historian looking in the scholarly literature on European culture of the time will find that his colleagues describe writers interesting to modern scholars, like Machiavelli, not the writers popular at the time. Machiavelli, often labeled the founder of modern political thought, may indeed have produced the first “modern” theory of politics, but in his time he was more reviled than read. After the publication of *The Prince* in 1513, it enjoyed a certain vogue in Italy, but landed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1559. After that publication stopped in all Catholic countries other than France, was not common there, and was largely known from the few editions of the Latin translation – a work for scholars.¹¹ Antonio Guevara’s *Relej de principes*, in contrast, a series of clichés about the good king and his wise rule, was read everywhere and eventually appeared in Russian libraries (in Latin) toward the end of the seventeenth century. Saavedra Fajardo was the only European political writer of whom Feofan Prokopovich entirely approved (he wrote a preface to a translation), and he was explicitly opposed to absolute monarchy, which he called tyranny. In the Russian version, “совершенное и самовольное единовластительство есть мучительство”, from the Latin version, “potestas absoluta tyrannis est.”¹²

Prokopovich was not an “absolutist,” and neither was Peter’s favorite Pufendorf. Once this lumber is discarded, the question remains, what did Peter and Feofan get from Western political thought? Perhaps the most important aspect of Western political thought that came to Russia was that it was secular. Russia before Peter did not have political thought as such, it had ideas about the nature of the monarch, who was supposed to be a good Orthodox Christian. The tsardom, like all other states, was established by God and there was no discussion of which sort of state was better. The assumption was that it was a monarchy, and it is not even clear that the Russians clearly understood what a “republic” was. Their world history, the *Khronograf*, began with the kings of Israel, appointed by God. The history of ancient Greece was about Alexander the Great, and Athens was mentioned only in passing.¹³ Similarly the story of Rome was first that of the kings, followed by a very brief account of the rule of the consuls (*ipaty*, from the Greek hypatoi).¹⁴ The great bulk of the text was the story of the Roman emperors, from Augustus on through the Byzantines. The

of 1640: PAUL BUSHKOVITCH, *Succession to the Throne in Early Modern Russia: The Transfer of Power 1450-1725* (Cambridge, CUP, 2021), 314-315. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108783156>

¹¹ GIULIANO PROCACCI, *Macchiavelli nella cultura europea del l’età moderna* (Roma: Laterza, 1995).

¹² BUSHKOVITCH, *Succession*, 316-317. The Russian term for tyrant in medieval texts was always мучитель.

¹³ *Russkii Khronograf*, PSRL 22, 185-215,

¹⁴ *Russkii Khronograf*, PSRL 22, 226-228.

crucial issues then were the character of the monarch and the place of Russia in world history. That place, it is unfortunately still necessary to emphasize, was the New Israel, not the Third Rome.¹⁵ The New Israel was the right metaphor because ancient Israel was the only state in the world with the true religion, like Russia after 1453. The prince was always supposed to be a faithful Orthodox Christian as well as just, stern, but also merciful. These were the clichés of Byzantine as well as Western “Mirrors of Princes”, the standard popular (in the sense of not learned) descriptions of rulers.

The Renaissance added a new note to this type of thinking in the West, not in rejecting the idea that God had established states but developing ideas of the state that were not tied to Christian morality. The prince or king should be magnificent, for example. This was not pride or vainglory, it was part of the role of the monarch. Eventually Western scholars evolved ideas like the sovereignty of the state (Bodin) and natural law (Grotius, Pufendorf). It was these ideas that the Russians got from the West; a new analysis of the nature of the state, not a concrete political program (“absolutism”). Otherwise, Peter borrowed the practical achievements of the Western states, particularly Sweden but also the stimulation of learning and technology that was virtually universal by 1700.

The Ghost of Cameralism

Historians may be skeptical of the importance of culture, at the court or elsewhere, but they have opinions on the supposed rationale behind Peter’s innovations in the structure of the state and the legal system. The usual solutions are to describe those structures as evidence of the “regular state” (Syromiatnikov), the *Polizeistaat* (Raeff), or cameralism (Anisimov).¹⁶

Cameralism seems to be the most popular, drawing on the 1979 work of Claes Peterson.¹⁷ The

¹⁵ DANIEL ROWLAND, "Moscow - the Third Rome or the New Israel?", *Russian Review* 55 (1996): 591-614. <https://doi.org/10.2307/131866>

¹⁶ B. I. SYROMIATNIKOV, *Reguliarnoe gosudarstvo Petra I i ego ideologii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1943); MARC RAEFF, *The Well-ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through Law in the Germanies and Russia 1600-1800* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983); E. V. ANISIMOV, *Gosudarstvennye preobrazovaniia i samoderzhavie Petra Velikogo* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1997).

¹⁷ CLAES PETERSON, *Peter the Great's Administrative and Judicial Reforms: Swedish Antecedents and the Process of Reception* (Stockholm: Nordiska Bokhandeln, 1979); E. V. ANISIMOV, *Vremia petrovskikh reform* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1989), 240; Idem, *Gosudarstvennye preobrazovaniia i samoderzhavie Petra Velikogo* (St. Peterburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1997), 104-105; LINDSEY HUGHES, *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great* (New Haven-London: Yale

problem is that the actual prototype of most of Peter's final reforms of the state structure (1716-25) came from Sweden, as Claes Peterson demonstrated clearly in 1979.¹⁸ Yet a careful reading of Peterson's work, or a glance at the history of seventeenth-century Sweden, will show that the structures which Peter borrowed were laid down in the first half of the seventeenth century, before cameralism came into existence. The Colleges that formed the basis of Peter's reforms appeared in the Swedish Form of Government of 1634, but they were in fact already laid down early in the reign of Gustav Adolf.¹⁹ The Swedish judicial system that Peter copied was the result of ordinances from 1614 and 1615, and local government came from the Form of Government and the instructions to local administrators from 1635.²⁰ The other difficulty with the Swedish model is that the Sweden of the time of Gustav Adolf was not an absolute monarchy. The king was supposed to make laws with the Riksdag, and most of the great officials, including the members of the Council of the Realm (Riksråd) served for life, or at least on good behavior. If Peter was trying to create "absolutism" with a new administrative structure, the arrangements of a constitutional state with a strong aristocracy would not seem appropriate. The proclamation of absolutism in Sweden in 1680 by Charles XI certainly changed the role of the king in that state, but not its administrative structure.²¹ The changes that came after that moment were in the details, not the basic system.

Clearly none of these Swedish developments had anything to do with German cameralism. The first of the "cameralist" works, for example, is supposed to be Veit Ludwig von Seckendorff's *Teutscher Fürsten Staat*, published only in 1655/56. Johann Joachim Becher's *Politischer Discurs* came in 1668. Peter's library had no copies of any of Seckendorff's work or Becher's discussions of politics. His library included only Becher's *Närrische Weisheit* of 1683. There is no way to

University Press, 1998), 107, 162; D. A. REDIN, *Administrativnye struktury i biurokratiia Urala v epokhu petrovskikh reform* (Ekaterinburg: Volot, 2007), 213.

¹⁸ PETERSON, *Peter*, 5-6, 114-115. Peterson mentioned both cameralism and the "police state" but could cite only the 1656 work of Seckendorff. For the Swedish background he followed NIL EDÉN, *Den svenska centralregeringens utveckling till kollegial organization i början af sjuttionde århundradet (1602-1634)* (Uppsala: Akademiska bokhandeln, 1902). Edén said nothing whatever about cameralism, giving instead an account of practical measures that eventually resulted in a collegial system: EDÉN, *Den svenska centralregeringens*, 126-127.

¹⁹ PETERSON, *Reforms*, 141-143 (Kammerkollegium).

²⁰ PETERSON, *Reforms*, 308-311 (justice); MICHAEL ROBERTS, *Gustavus Adolphus: a History of Sweden 1611-1632* (London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), vol. 1, 255-349.

²¹ ANTHONY UPTON, *Charles XI and Swedish Absolutism* (Cambridge, 1998).

know if Peter could or did read it.²² If he did, he would have learned nothing about administration or state power. The book is a series of sketches of inventions to improve all sorts of manufactures such as weaving or casting iron, accounts of trading companies, canals, and waterworks, some the work of private individuals, some sponsored by one or another state. Peter could have gotten some ideas for the manufactures he encouraged, but nothing about the state other than economic policy, and on that only very specific proposals.

The idea that cameralism was about administration and “absolutism” has also not been the only or even dominant interpretation of that current of ideas. Cameralism in the nineteenth century was understood as an economic doctrine, a German version of mercantilism, but in the early twentieth century a new interpretation appeared that stressed the administrative side of the cameralists, even though the bulk of their work was a series of schemes, often impractical, for economic development.²³ More recent historians have reestablished the balance with studies of Becher’s extensive involvement with alchemy and his many contacts with other scientists and inventors, not just princes.²⁴ Andre Wakefield’s study of Seckendorf comes to a more radical conclusion: “Police ordinances and cameralist texts might dwell on the “common good” and the “general welfare,” on how the interests of the wise prince coincided with the interests of his subjects. But in the secret sphere of the Kammer, where it was a matter of filling the duke’s treasury with silver, there was no time for that. Seckendorff, in keeping with the oath of secrecy, went to his grave with that knowledge... The cameral sciences were *strategic*. By painting idealized pictures of the fiscal-police state, cameralist texts served at the same time to promote it.”²⁵ In other words, cameralism was about increasing revenue: it was an economic, or rather fiscal, doctrine, and its literature was essentially propaganda. The cameralist literature was also written for the particular conditions of Germany, the small princely states or the rather unwieldy Habsburg monarchy, a jumble of

²² BOBROVA, *Biblioteka*, 109. Bobrova’s list may include books added to his library collection after his death. MEDVEDKOVA, *Pierre le Grand*, does not include it.

²³ GUSTAV MARCHET, *Studien über die Entwicklung der Verwaltungslehre in Deutschland von der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (1885); ALBION W. SMALL, *Cameralists* (Chicago, 1909). See in contrast HERBERT HASSINGER, *Johann Joachim Becher, 1635-1682; Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Merkantilismus*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Neuere Geschichte Österreichs, 38 (Wien: A. Holzhausens Nfg., 1951).

²⁴ PAMELA H. SMITH, *The Business of Alchemy: Science and Culture in the Holy Roman Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), esp. 20-21, note 15, and 260-62 (on *Närrische Weisheit*).

²⁵ ANDRE WAKEFIELD, *The Disordered Police State: German Cameralism as Science and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 138-39. <https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226870229.001.0001>

separate states --- Bohemia, Hungary, Upper, Lower, and Inner Austria – held together by the dynasty. Russia was something quite different.

What attracted Peter in terms of administrative matters was Sweden, not cameralist theory. Sweden was a good choice not because its administration followed any general or abstract scheme but because the Swedish state was in one crucial respect like Russia's: it was new. Sweden certainly had an ancient monarchy, but from 1397 until 1523 it was part of the united kingdom of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden under the Danish crown. When the rebellious Swedes elected Gustav Vasa king in 1523, he had to build a state that was to a large extent new, a central government and army, and a new judicial system. All he had were the local governments of the Swedish provinces, with local legal and political traditions that survived under Danish rule.²⁶ Sweden was also developing rapidly in the sixteenth century, both internally and as a military power. It was able to get northern Estonia out of the wreck of the Teutonic Order, defeating both Russia and Poland in the process. The revolt of Karl IX against his Polish Vasa relatives meant another long struggle, and it is not surprising that both he and his son Gustav Adolf rebuilt the state in the process. Peter was in a similar position: Russia had been a large but thinly settled state on the northeast periphery of Europe in 1500, and by the 1690s had grown to be more populous than either Poland or Sweden, a trading partner of the Dutch and the English, the conqueror and settler of Siberia, and a major power in northern and eastern Europe. The Swedish model was perfect: a new and simple structure for a state that indeed had a long history but a new place in the world.

Finally, the recognition that cameralism was essentially an economic doctrine about the development of revenue by means of expanded crafts and industries should lead to a closer examination of the only one of Peter's colleges that would seem to fit this model: the *Bergkollegii*. Peterson came to the conclusion that the Russian *Bergkollegii* of 1719 did not resemble the analogous Swedish institution. Furthermore, N. I. Pavlenko found German origins for the documents that established the Russian mining administration. Peterson did find many similarities

²⁶ NILS EDÉN, *Om centralregeringens organization under den äldre vasatiden 1523-1594* (Upsala: Almqvist och Wiksell, 1899); MICHAEL ROBERTS, *The Early Vasas: A History of Sweden 1523-1611* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 189-193.

in the general justification of the law establishing the *Berg-kollegiia* with the Swedish edict of 1649, but that is again before cameralism.²⁷ The first head of the *Berg-kollegiia* was Iakov Bruce, who actually did possess some of the relevant cameralist works in his library. He had three of Becher's works, but they were about alchemy and medicine.²⁸ He also owned Seckendorf's main work, which really did have some proposals about administration, but Bruce owned the 1720 edition. It would seem that he came to cameralism after he came to lead the *Berg-kollegiia*, not before.²⁹ Since the Russian mining operations in the Urals were largely the work of V. N. Tatishchev and Georg Wilhelm Henning (De-Gennin), perhaps that is another place to look for economic and technological cameralism.³⁰ Otherwise the documentable impact of (later) cameralism comes only in the *Nakaz* of Catherine the Great to the Legislative Commission of 1767.³¹

Culture and the Court

The impact of the West on the Russian court, its ceremonies, festivals, and institutions is quite obvious, though it is a relatively new subject. The attention of scholars was focused elsewhere. Yet Peter not only reorganized the state, he also reorganized the court, with the result that the traditional Kremlin court with its division into men's and women's parts and its largely religious ceremonial gave way to a court that was little different from the European courts of the time.³²

The West European royal courts were left until recently to popular biographers and occasional art historians. In fact, the courts were centers of cultural production, a production that certainly served the interests of the monarchs but also resulted in work that remains part of the Western canon of

²⁷ PETERSON, *Peter*, 373-380; N. I. PAVLENKO, *Razvitie metallurgicheskoi promyshlennosti Rossii v pervoi polovine XVIII veka* (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1953).

²⁸ E. A. SAVEL'eva, *Biblioteka Ia. V. Briusa* (Leningrad: Biblioteka Akademii Nauk, 1989), 34-35, 257; ROBERT COLLIS, *The Petrine Instauration: Religion, Esotericism and Science at the Court of Peter the Great 1689-1725* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012), 104, 525. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004224391>

²⁹ SAVEL'eva, *Biblioteka*, 257.

³⁰ REDIN, *Administrativnye struktury*, 262-315. Redin maintains that their work showed "cameralist principles" (213) but cites no specific evidence. Tatishchev was in Germany, among other things collecting books for Iakov Bruce, and Henning came from the Siegen mining area, yet the literature about them does not seem to address the issue of cameralism or more generally their intellectual background.

³¹ Catherine made use of the work of the cameralists Jacob Friedrich Baron von Bielfeld and J. H. Gottlob von Justi: N. D. CHECHULIN, *Nakaz imperatritsy Ekateriny II* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia nauk, 1907), CXXXIII-CXL.

³² O. G. AGEeva, *Imperatorskii dvor Rossii 1700-1796 gody* (Moscow: Nauka, 2008); ELENA POGOSIAN, *Petr I – arkhitektor rossiiskoi istorii* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo-SPB, 2001).

literature and art. To be sure there were writers such as Cervantes, who had no relationship to the court and served as a soldier and minor government official. Other writers, especially playwrights like Shakespeare, were part of the court world even if not actually performing in the palace. Molière was essentially an employee of the court of Louis XIV, who produced plays and “comédies-ballets” that were presented at court for the entertainment of the king and his courtiers. Even when the Paris theater was not in the palace, as was the case of the Comédie-Française after 1680, it was in fact a court theater. The Habsburg court in Vienna had court musicians who put on a string of operas every year from the middle of the seventeenth century into the nineteenth. Many if not most of the Vienna operas and the Paris plays had some political subtext, however brilliant they may have been as art.

In this context it is striking that Peter did not have a court theater of any sort.³³ Russia had to wait for the reign of Empress Anna, who brought to St. Petersburg an Italian *commedia dell’arte* theater and the Neapolitan opera composer Francesco Araya. The absence of theater at Peter’s court is a notable fact, especially since his sister Natalia had one, and it needs to be explained. He knew what European court theater was like: he saw Henry Purcell’s *Dioclesian* in London in 1697 and the opera *Arsace* (music by Antonio Draghi) in Vienna the same year just before he returned. In Vienna he does not seem to have been impressed, for he spent much of the performance partaking of cold drinks (it was a very hot day).³⁴ At the very least, the absence of theater in St. Petersburg means that Peter was not blindly imitating Western models.

Peter’s interests in theater and music may have been undeveloped, but he certainly built a new city and a new residence for himself and his successors. That activity implied a command of architecture and the visual arts, which were certainly crucial importations from Europe. We know his tastes: Domenico Trezzini and his Peter and Paul Cathedral, the Dutch houses, the generally

³³ He did go to some theatrical performances: on 12 January 1724 he “изволил пойти в комедию”, *Pokhodnyi zhurnal 1724* (St. Petersburg, 1855): 33.

³⁴ Bogoslovskii did not identify the performances in London or Vienna: M. M. BOGOSLOVSKII, *Petr I*, vol. 2 (1941), 302, 478-479, nor did LEO LOEWENSON, “Some Detail of Peter the Great’s Stay in England in 1698: Neglected English Material,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 40, no. 95 (June 1962): 436-437. There was no other opera performed at that time in London with that title. The Vienna performance was to honor Emperor Leopold’s birthday (9/19 June). The identification of the Vienna performance comes from ALEXANDER VON WEILEN, *Zur Wiener Theatergeschichte* (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1901), 54; ANTONIO DRAGHI *Arsace fondatore dell’impero de’ Parthi* (Vienna: Susanna Cristina [1698]). I am very grateful to Suzanne Lovejoy of the Gilmore Music Library at Yale University for finding the libretto of *Arsace*.

north European aspect of early St. Petersburg. He did not like Versailles or French architecture in general.³⁵ He did like the Italian sculptures that Savva Vladislavich-Raguzinskii acquired for him in Rome for the Summer Garden.³⁶ The result was certainly a European style court, but a modest one by the standards of Paris or Vienna. In this sense Pushkin's bronze horseman is an anachronism: the grand imperial city of St. Petersburg was the creation of Peter's successors. One has only to see pictures of the Peterhof of his time and compare it with the buildings today. The only palace that came close to the later versions was the last Winter Palace of 1720.

Science and Religion

Modern historians of science have spilt much ink revising the nineteenth century notion of a conflict between science and religion in the early modern era. The recent trend has been to emphasize cooperation or at least coexistence and compromise rather than a sharp scientific "revolution". The emphasis has been on a slow and gradual replacement of Aristotelianism that lasted until well into the eighteenth century. Thus, the Jesuits tried to put together Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Copernicus by following Tycho Brahe, a system that actually got to Russia by way of the Leichoudes brothers. The problem for Russian historians is that the issues were quite different. Medieval Russia had no tradition of Aristotelian interpretation of the natural world. It had only the most elementary conceptions of nature inherited from the church fathers such as Basil the Great's *Hexaemeron*, an account of creation as portrayed in the Bible with some bits of ancient natural science here and there.³⁷ Only in the Kiev Academy (from 1654 part of Russia) and then the Slavo-Greco-Latin Academy (the 1680's) did Aristotelian natural philosophy appear in Russia, and already in a form that tried to make some compromises with the new science.³⁸ In the course of his reign Peter imported this new natural science of the late seventeenth century, with all its internal debates and contradictions and its complex institutional structure. The church had nothing to oppose it, so Peter simply added an entirely new body of knowledge.

³⁵ JAMES CRACRAFT, *The Petrine Revolution in Russian Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 147-154. SERGEI MEZIN, *Petr I vo Frantsii* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii dom, 2015), 158, notes his tastes but argues that he liked the French "representation of power", but the fact is that his palaces in St. Petersburg were quite modest compared to Versailles. If Peter imitated any French palace, it was Marly, not Versailles. Like the first Peterhof, this was a modest building with an elaborate park and water works.

³⁶ S. O. ANDROSOV, *Ital'ianskaia skul'ptura v sobranii Petra Velikogo* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999).

³⁷ The modest knowledge of medieval Rus' in the natural sciences is chronicled in R. A. SIMONOV, *Estestvennonauchnaia mysl' Drevnei Rusi* (Moscow: MGUP, 2001).

³⁸ NIKOLAOS A. CHRISSIDIS, *An Academy at the Court of the Tsars: Greek scholars and Jesuit Education in Early Modern Russia* (DeKalb, Ill.: NIU Press, 2016).

Natural science was perhaps Peter's most personal contribution to the process of Westernization, but it did not come all at once. It began with the *Kunstkamera*, a typical court product, and the Academy of Sciences.³⁹ The *Kunstkamera* was very much Peter's creation, coming as it did out of his time in Holland in 1697. The publications that came from the printing press on Peter's initiative included many translations of basic introductions to Western natural science, textbooks of mathematics and semi-popular introductions like the *Geographia Generalis* of Bernhard Varenius (1650, translated 1718).⁴⁰ Varenius did not provide a description of all the areas of the world, as the title might imply, so much as an introduction to geometry, a mathematical description of the earth and the meaning of longitude and latitude, and an account of the nature of mountains, lakes, rivers, and other natural features, and their causes. That is, it was an introduction to geology, meteorology, and other relevant sciences. Beyond publications there was also a library. The library that became the Academy's library came into being in 1714, again growing out Peter's own and inherited collections. In that year Johann Daniel Schumacher came to St. Petersburg to be the principal librarian, and it was he whom Peter delegated to travel in Europe in 1721, speaking with Christian Wolff and other luminaries to set up the Academy of Sciences. The Academy had an impact beyond the court, even if it was not really a "public" institution in the later sense.⁴¹ It was, however, the result of the tsar's initiative and remained part of the monarchy as was the case in Prussia or France. The academy in France came into being in 1666 on the initiative of Colbert, but its statute dates from 1699. It was a royal institution, its members named by the king and its meetings held in the Louvre.⁴² The Prussian academy of 1700 was also a royal institution, if founded on the initiative of Leibniz.⁴³ The Royal Society, in contrast, was a private society even

³⁹ T. V. STANIUKOVICH, *Kunstkamera Peterburgskoi Akademii nauk* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1953); JOZINA J. DRIESSEN-VAN HET REVE, *De Kunstkamera van Peter de Grote: de Hollandse inbreng, gereconstrueerd uit brieven van Albert Seba en Johann Daniel Schumacher uit de jaren 1711-1752* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2006); KOPELEVICH, *Osnovanie*, 32-79.

⁴⁰ T. A. BYKOVA, M. M. GUREVICH, *Opisanie izdaniĭ grazhdanskoi pečati 1708-ianvar' 1725* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk, 1955), 237-239; BERNHARDUS VARENIUS, *Geographia generalis* (Amsterdam: Officina Elzeviriana, 1671). See MARGARET SCHUCHARD, *Bernhard Varenius* (Brill, 2007). <https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004163638.i-351>

⁴¹ G.I. SMAGINA, *Akademiia nauk i Rossiiskaia shkola: vtoraiia polovina XVIII v.* (St. Petersburg: Nauka, 1996).

⁴² ROGER HAHN, *Anatomy of a Scientific Institution: the Paris Academy of Sciences 1666-1803* (1971). <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520336056>

⁴³ ADOLF HARNACK, *Geschichte der königlichen preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, B. 1/1 (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1900), 1-244.

if it enjoyed the patronage of the king.⁴⁴ This was not a possible arrangement in continental Europe.

What then was or was not, unique to Peter's Russia in the *Kunstkamera* and the Academy? One part of the story was the tsar's personal interest in the natural world, the practical part rather than the theoretical, but still very real. This was not absolutely unique, since several European rulers shared his enthusiasm. One part that was unique was simply speed. Peter made the evolution in thirty years that Western courts had witnessed in the whole period from the early sixteenth century of Aristotelianism to the late seventeenth century of the new science, from court patronage and cabinets of curiosities to academies of science.⁴⁵

What Peter gave to Russia was the natural sciences and what we now call engineering or technology. The Academy, it should be noted, did have a section for history and philology, but it was not filled until much later. In France, language and all that went with it was the province of the Académie Française, and Russia was not to get such an institution until much later. This was understandable, as the Russian language was very much in flux and there was almost no one in Russia with the understanding of language and literature current in the West at that time. There were only a few Slavonic grammars composed on the model of Baroque-era Latin grammars. For literature the translations from Polish and the court poetry and rhetoric of Simeon Polotskii and Karion Istomin in the later seventeenth century provided a new model of literature, with some secular elements.⁴⁶ Even if Peter established no academy of literature, language was not neglected. In 1708-10 Peter ordered his publisher Polikarpov to publish books on history and science in the new "civil script". The texts were also more or less vernacular, such as the first textbook of geometry of 1708. The *Geographia Generalis* came out in a form of Russian literary language that was no longer Slavonic or Old Russian, but a newer "simple" language closer to the vernacular.

⁴⁴ MICHAEL HUNTER, *Establishing the New Science: The Experience of the Early Royal Society* (Woodbridge, Suffolk; Wolfeboro, N.H., USA: Boydell Press, 1989).

⁴⁵ BRUCE T. MORAN, "Courts and Academies," in *The Cambridge History of Science* vol. 3 (2006), 251-71. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521572446.012>

⁴⁶ L. I. SAZONOVA, *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii: Ranee novoe vremia* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskikh kul'tur, 2006); S. I. NIKOLAEV, *Pol'skaia poeziiia v russkikh perevodakh (XVII-XVIII vv.)* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989).

The reform of language followed the natural sciences and history.⁴⁷ Peter's commands to Polikarpov were not merely the whims of a powerful ruler. Printing in Russia, from its appearance in the 1560s until late in the reign of Catherine the Great was not driven by the demand of the book market, as in the West. Most Russians were satisfied with manuscript books well into the eighteenth century and books could only be printed at a state subsidized, and thus directed, press. The audience for printed books was small and very much drawn from the elite, besides a few educated clerics.

Peter and his court were not insensitive to the need for more modern forms of history as well. That meant a more universal conception of world history, ancient and modern, than the *Khronograf's* story of the Bible and the Roman Empire. In 1709, with the battle of Poltava looming, Polikarpov's press put out the sixteenth-century Russian translation of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae*, a thirteenth century account of the Trojan war, and the story of Alexander the Great by Quintus Curtius (first century AD).⁴⁸ Later, in 1719 (and 1724) came Samuel Pufendorf's *Introduction to the History of Europe*, a very widely read basic work for students, translated into most European languages and circulating even to far-off Connecticut in North America. Older classics like Cesare Baronio (1719) and Wilhelm Stratemann (1724) appeared as well, offering respectively Catholic and Protestant views of the history of the church and the world. Peter's sponsorship of a history of the Northern War was also a radical departure from the Russian traditions of chronicles and the various editions of the Book of Degrees.⁴⁹ This reading matter was not merely for learning. Pufendorf thought that his history would be useful because he was looking at each state without passion, at the strengths and weaknesses of its form of government.⁵⁰ Peter's court ceremonies and public events assumed an awareness of the basic facts of the history of antiquity, as is clear already in the victory parade after the fall of Azov in 1697.⁵¹ Peter's language of presentation of the monarchy and its victories now added a secular, mainly classical

⁴⁷ V. M. ZHIVOV, *Iazyk i kul'tura v Rossii XVIII veka* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1996), 91-92. T. A. BYKOVA, M. M. GUREVICH, *Opisanie zdanii grazhdanskoi pechati 1708-ianvar' 1725 g.* (Moscow-Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo AN SSSR, 1955). Other books in 1708-09 dealt with geometry and fortification.

⁴⁸ POGOSIAN, *Petr I*, 191-197; Bykova-Gurevich *Opisanie*, 88-89, 91.

⁴⁹ POGOSIAN, *Petr I*, 244-286. *Gistoriia Sveiskoi voiny*, ed. T. S. MAIKOVA, 2 vols. (Moscow: Krug, 2004).

⁵⁰ SAMUEL PUFENDORF, *Einleitung zu der Historie der vornehmsten Reiche und Staaten so itziger Zeit in Europa sich befinden* (Frankfurt, 1704), iii.

⁵¹ E. A. TIUKHMENEVA, *Iskusstvo triumfal'nykh vrat v Rossii pervoi poloviny XVIII veka* (Moscow: Progress-traditsiia, 2005), 67-92, 111-126.

element, to the older religious framework.

That being said, Peter's most fundamental contribution was the natural sciences, something entirely new. The only people at Peter's court with any knowledge of that world were all foreigners: Frans Timmerman, Laurent Blumentrost, Areskine, and Iakov Bruce. To be sure they were involved both in what we now call science and the more dubious enterprises of alchemy, esoteric knowledge, but these interests were normal in the Europe of that time.⁵² Christian Wolff, the main Western adviser on the Academy, wrote to Blumentrost and Schumacher about the perpetual motion machine of Orfyrraeus (Johann Bessler), a project that attracted the attention of both rulers and scientists in the 1720s.⁵³ What Peter's Academy did was to bring to St. Petersburg West European scientists who were fully qualified and reputable, if not great geniuses. Genius was not what was needed, rather a solid knowledge of the subject and the most recent discoveries.

With its academy Russia was now in the same category as France, England, Sweden, and Prussia.⁵⁴ It was in fact ahead of Poland, until recently a source of knowledge for Russia, and most notably Austria. The Habsburg lands did not have an academy of sciences until 1847, and its universities were not the leaders in the Holy Roman Empire. They were still under the control of the church. The subsequent history of the Russian Academy is well known if still controversial. It was not, as often portrayed by nationalistically inclined historians, an assembly of foreigners with little relation to Russia other than the heroic figure of Lomonosov. Leonhard Euler's *Lettres à une princesse d'Allemagne sur divers sujets de physique et philosophie* (1768) was the basis for lectures he delivered (in French) to the Petersburg elite. It was also translated into Russian and went through four editions in the eighteenth century.⁵⁵ Euler first came to Russia in 1727 and seems to have learned some Russian. The Academy eventually published one of his mathematics textbooks in Russian and he had Russian students, all to be sure during his second time in Russia

⁵² ROBERT COLLIS, *The Petrine Instauration: Religion, Esotericism and Science at the Court of Peter the Great (1689-1725)* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2012).

⁵³ *Briefe von Christian Wolff aus den Jahren 1719-1753* (St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1860), 161-164.

⁵⁴ Sweden's Royal Society of Sciences in Uppsala was founded in 1710 but became the Royal Academy (Kungliga Vetenskaps Societeten in Uppsala) only in 1728. See its *Acta literaria Sueciae*, vol. 1. which contained mostly publications in natural sciences in spite of its title. Denmark had no Academy until 1742.

⁵⁵ SMAGINA, *Akademiia nauk*, 20-23, 27.

after 1766.⁵⁶

The science that came to Russia at Peter's prompting was new to the Russians in nearly all its details, but it was also new in Western Europe, the final phase of the replacement of Aristotle. It was a new description and analysis of the motions of the planets, the behavior of gases, of the circulation of the blood and many other things. It was also "operational" in the words of Peter Dear.⁵⁷ That is to say, it was directed at both a new understanding and at utility. New machines or processes, not just new theories, were part of the aims. That meant both a different relationship to nature and a different role for knowledge in society and the state.

Elite Reception

Finally, there is the question of audience. To what extent any of Peter's cultural innovations spread to the population at large is very difficult to assess. In the case of the church there were certainly many cases of discontent with the new culture, but the church elite was certainly in the Western camp, however they disagreed among themselves. Part of the reason was Peter's promotion of Ukrainians to the leadership roles in the church. The first to be promoted was Stefan Iavorskii, whose principal work, the *Kamen' very*, was mostly an adaptation of the work of Cardinal Robert Bellarmine SJ.⁵⁸ After the arrival of Feofan Prokopovich in the new capital in 1716, he and his Protestant-influenced theology dominated the church until his death.⁵⁹ The church elite was a force for Westernization, even if some of the bishops, like Iavorskii, did not follow Peter in all his attitudes and policies.

The story of the elite of laymen, the boyars, their sons and relatives, as well as the lesser landholders, is less well known, aside from a few major figures.⁶⁰ In 1697-98 Peter sent several

⁵⁶ RONALD S. CALINGER, *Leonhard Euler: Mathematical Genius in the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400866632>

⁵⁷ PETER DEAR, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions 1500-1700*. 2d.ed. (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009). See also STEVEN SHAPIN, *The Scientific Revolution*, 2d ed. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2018); and KATHARINE PARK, LORRAINE DASTON (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 3: Early Modern Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵⁸ IOANN MOREV, "*Kamen' very*" *Mitropolita Stefan Iavorskogo* (St. Petersburg, 1904).

⁵⁹ ANDREY IVANOV, *A Spiritual Revolution: The Impact of Reformation and Enlightenment in Orthodox Russia* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2020), 3-88. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv17hmb4d>

⁶⁰ The prominent foreigners, Patrick Gordon, Robert Erskine, Iakov Bruce, and the many Germans were both transmitters of Western culture and part of the audience. Theirs is a complex and important story but does not directly provide information on the Russian audience for Peter's innovations in culture.

hundred young noblemen, mostly “tsaredvortsy” to Holland and Venice, especially to study navigation, but of course in order to do that they had to learn the local languages and basic mathematics. Petr Andreevich Tolstoi was one of those and left a fairly detailed diary.⁶¹ This was a more powerful impulse than the small number of graduates of the Slavo-Greco-Latin Academy but unfortunately has not had as much scholarly attention. This experience and later diplomatic service put some of them and others in intimate contact with Western cities and courts.

Tolstoi’s diary of his time in Italy reveals his attitudes and response to Western culture.⁶² He spent the longest time of his travels in Venice. There he noted with appreciation both the opera, with its stories (*istorii*) set to music and the comedies, not as good as the opera but still entertaining.⁶³ He tells us little of his studies except to note the presence in the city of Vincenzo Coronelli, then a famous maker of globes and maps, supported, according to Tolstoi, by the Venetian republic (*Rech’ pospolitaiia*). He was impressed by the number and skill of the Venetian artisans, the extent and quality of the market, and the puppet shows that flourished in the public squares. He also reported the more exotic side of the city, the marriage of the Doge to the sea on Ascension Day and the famous Venetian courtesans. On the church he appreciated the beauty of the cathedrals, the presence of preachers who spoke to the public in Italian, and the nuns who put on services with singing that was so good that visitors came to Venice to hear it (the Ospedali grandi). There is much about daily life, such as the high quality of food at Venetian *osterie* and their cleanliness. Overall, the impression is that Tolstoi liked Venice, both the high culture and the daily life.⁶⁴ Yet, born in 1652, he was also well versed in the traditions of Orthodoxy. He attended the Greek church

⁶¹ *Puteshestvie stol’nika P. A. Tolstogo po Evrope 1697-1699*, eds. L. A. OL’SHEVSKAIA, S. N. TRAVNIKOV (Moscow: Nauka, 1992).

⁶² Tolstoi (1652-1729) came from a poor gentry family and served in the army during the wars of the 1660s and 1670s. A stol’nik from 1671 to Tsaritsa Natal’ia, he later served under Ivan Miloslavskii and in the court of Tsar Ivan, Peter’s brother. Voevoda of Ustiug by 1693, his onetime connection to Miloslavskii apparently had no influence on his career, as he served at Azov and then was sent to Italy. He is most famous for his role in bringing Tsarevich Aleksei back to Russia in 1717-18. *Puteshestvie*, 254-255; PAUL BUSHKOVITCH, *Peter the Great: The Struggle for Power 1671-1725* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 376-388, 401-411.

⁶³ P. A. TOLSTOI, 106, TIM CARTER, “Mask and Illusion: Italian Opera after 1637,” in TIM CARTER, JOHN BUTT (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 241-282. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521792738.010>; ELLEN ROSAND, *Opera in Seventeenth-Century Venice: The Creation of a Genre* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).; ELEANOR SELFRIDGE-FIELD, *A New Chronology of Venetian Opera and Related Genres, 1660-1760* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781503619975>

⁶⁴ TOLSTOI, *Puteshestvie*, 101-111. On the many ceremonies that Tolstoi described see EDWARD MUIR, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691201351>

in Venice and noted the deviations from Russian practice in the ritual of the services.⁶⁵ Nowhere in the text is there any sense of rejection of Western culture.

Another of the same contingent of noblemen was Prince Boris Kurakin.⁶⁶ Kurakin (1676-1727) was actually Peter's brother-in-law (Tsaritza Evdokiia was the sister of Kurakin's wife) and had an important diplomatic career from 1707 onward. He also wrote a history of the early reign of Peter, as well as an autobiography in the form of travel notes and much surviving correspondence. The very first line of his autobiography demonstrates the impact of his time and studies in Venice: "Vita del principe Boris Kurakin". In it he tells us that in Venice he learned mathematics: arithmetic, geometry, trigonometry, navigation, ballistics, and fortification. He also learned to speak, read, and write Italian, "dovolen".⁶⁷ He described Peter's first reforms: the new Order of St. Andrew, the introduction of "Hungarian" dress, the first financial innovations. He also noted the establishment of the Blizhnaia kantseliariia under Nikita Zotov, and praised it.⁶⁸ The rest of the text continued to list Peter's further innovations in a very neutral tone, among them a brief mention of the new schools (the School of Navigation) and the German comedy.⁶⁹ In 1705-06 he was in Karlsbad for a cure of one of his many illnesses and had his sons study German.⁷⁰ In 1707 he was in Rome on diplomatic business with Pope Clement XI and recounted the great honor his reception there did him.⁷¹ On the way home he stopped in Venice, visiting his old friend Francesco Morosini (presumably a relative of the Doge and commander) and acquiring a mistress, a "citadina" named Francesca Rota, and he nearly fought a duel with two Venetian "dzhentiliomy," Pallavicini and Spioveni.⁷² Back in Russia he had his son study Latin.⁷³ In 1708 he sent Peter some books from Hamburg: Handel's oratorio *Armida abbandonata*, and some other musical pieces (scores? libretti?).⁷⁴ Kurakin was present at the battle of Poltava, commanding the Semenovskii

⁶⁵ TOLSTOI, *Puteshestvie*, 99-100.

⁶⁶ ERNEST A. ZITSER, "The Vita of Prince Boris Ivanovich 'Korybut'-Kurakin: Personal Life-Writing and Aristocratic Self-Fashioning at the Court of Peter the Great," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 2011, Neue Folge, B. 59/2, 163-194. IU V. TRIFANKOVA, "Diplomat B. I. Kurakin: Portret na fone epokhi", *Vestnik Cheliabinskogo Gos. Universiteta*, no. 11 (2011): 97-101.

⁶⁷ M. I. SEMEVSKII (ed.), *Arkhiv F. A. Kurakina I* (S. Petersburg: Balashev, 1890), 255.

⁶⁸ *Arkhiv Kurakina I*, 257-258.

⁶⁹ *Arkhiv Kurakina I*, 259-287, 268-269 (schools and theater)

⁷⁰ *Arkhiv Kurakina I*, 274.

⁷¹ *Arkhiv Kurakina I*, 276-77.

⁷² *Arkhiv Kurakina I*, 278-79.

⁷³ *Arkhiv Kurakina I*, 283.

⁷⁴ *Arkhiv Kurakina IV* (Saratov: Iakovlev, 1893), 130-132.

regiment, but says nothing about it. Instead, he records the coldness of the tsar to him, Menshikov's friendship, and the rivalry and hostility of Peter's other favorite, Prince V.V. Dolgorukii.⁷⁵ Kurakin was a hypochondriac, obsessed with honor and position, but a capable diplomat. He even enjoyed Handel's music, which he heard in London in 1711 at the ceremonies for Queen Ann's birthday. He thought it was much better than any Italian music.⁷⁶ There is nothing in his autobiography that suggests that he was in any way hostile to the Westernization of Russian culture, even though he seems to have been sympathetic to Tsarevich Aleksei and critical of Peter.⁷⁷

A third member of the elite about whom there is information on cultural attitudes is Andrei Artamonovich Matveev. Born in 1666, he was the son of Artamon Sergeevich Matveev, the principal favorite of Tsar Aleksei in his last years and a loyal ally of the Naryshkins, who was killed by the musketeers in 1682. Andrei Artamonovich soon became a chamber stol'nik (of whom?), an okol'nichii in 1692 and a voevoda in the north in 1692-94. He knew Latin, which served him well in his later diplomatic career. He owned one of the manuscript translations from Polish of Baronio and in his manuscript history of the 1682 revolt of the musketeers referred to the work of Saavedra Fajardo.⁷⁸ By the time of his death in 1728 he had a library of over six hundred books, most of them in Latin with some in French.⁷⁹ Perhaps best known for his account of the 1682 musketeer revolt that led to the enthronement of Ivan Alekseevich as co-tsar along with Peter, he also produced a detailed description of Paris, the French court and the government of Louis XIV as part of his diplomatic service in The Hague. To present Paris he combined his own observations with factual detail from a French description of the city that he bought while he was there.⁸⁰ The report covered not only architecture and politics. He did not neglect to describe with admiration the education of the king's son and grandson at the hands of Bossuet and Fénelon, the Sorbonne, the Académie Française, the academy of sciences, and the king's art collection. He

⁷⁵ *Arkhiv Kurakina* I, 283-85. The relevant passages are in Italian.

⁷⁶ *Arkhiv Kurakina* IV, 6.

⁷⁷ The autobiography contains no hint of these attitudes other than the lack of warmth from Peter. For his political sympathies see BUSHKOVITCH, *Peter*, 420-421, 437-439, 441-442.

⁷⁸ A. I. SOBOLEVSKII, *Perevodnaia literatura Moskovskoi Rusi XIV-XVII vekov*, eds. B. A. USPENSKII, DIETRICH FREYDANK (Köln-Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1989), 85; BUSHKOVITCH, *Peter*, 440, n. 41.

⁷⁹ I. M. POLONSKAIA et al., *Biblioteka A. A. Matveeva* (Moscow: Gos. Biblioteka SSSR im. V. I. Lenina, 1986).

⁸⁰ GERMAIN BRICE, *Description nouvelle de la ville de Paris*, 3 vols. (Paris: Nicolas le Gras, 1706); POLONSKAIA, *Biblioteka Matveeva*, 72; I. S. SHARKOVA (ed.), *Russkii diplomat vo Frantsii (Zapiski Andreia Matveeva)* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972), 48-70.

singled out Veronese and Charles Lebrun for praise, the latter also for his paintings in the gallery at Versailles. Matveev was at home in West European culture. There are traces of his upbringing: he calls the portraits by Hyacinthe Rigaud, Louis XIV's favorite painter "portrety, ili zhivopisnye persony".⁸¹ He thought so well of Rigaud that he had him paint portraits of himself and his wife, now in the Hermitage.

Matveev's account of France also allows some conclusions about his views of the state, monarchy, and the visual representation of kings in ceremony, festival, and royal palaces. His account ends with a detailed description of the Hall of Mirrors (la galerie des Glaces) in the palace at Versailles. Much of the description is taken up with the details of carving and architecture, but the ceiling and walls also displayed the work of Charles Lebrun, who depicted the first twenty years of the reign of Louis XIV. In the contemporary description, first place went to the painting of the king taking charge of the state on his majority in 1661: "le sujet du plus grand de ces Tableaux, qu'on doit regarder comme le premier."⁸² Matveev did not mention it; for him it was the other pictures of the military victories and triumphs that counted.⁸³ His account of the French court, government, and administration follows the structure found in *L'état de la France*, a semi-official publication that he kept in his library.⁸⁴ What Matveev added were descriptions of the character and abilities of the dignitaries. Thus, writing about the controller general of finances and secretary of state for the army, Michel Chamillart, he reported that his rise was due to the influence of Madame de Maintenon, and that he was mild in temper, not very efficient and not well liked by the officers in the army.⁸⁵ His work combined his experiences and observation with research of French descriptions of the city, the court, and the government. He saw the West mostly as the people of Western Europe did and reported in that manner back to Peter.

⁸¹ SHARKOVA (ed.), *Russkii diplomat*, 85-86, 210-223; Rigaud: 220.

⁸² PIERRE RAINSSANT, *Explication des Tableaux de la Galerie de Versailles et de ses deux salons* (Versailles: Par ordre exprès de sa Majesté, 1688), 9; PETER BURKE, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven-London: Yale University Press, 1992), 61-64. Matveev owned a description of the palace, but it was almost entirely devoted to the gardens and the sculpture in them. The Hall of Mirrors was barely mentioned: ANDRE FELIBIEN, *La description du chateau de Versailles* (Paris: Florentin et Pierre Delaulne, 1696) (POLONSKAIA, *Biblioteka Matveeva*, 94).

⁸³ SHARKOVA, *Russkii diplomat*, 231.

⁸⁴ POLONSKAIA, *Biblioteka Matveeva*, 93-94. On his copy he wrote his name on the title page in Latin script as "De Matveof" but on another page wrote his name in Russian with the title *blizhnii okol'nichii*.

⁸⁵ SHARKOVA, *Russkii diplomat*, 164-165. Matveev provided a full list and description of the king's mistresses and their children: *Ibid.*, 96-100.

One of the few other boyars who left records and was also the subject of scholarly study is Boris Sheremetev.⁸⁶ Boris Petrovich was the son of Petr Vasil'evich Sheremetev (died 1690), boyar from 1656, an important general and diplomat and in 1665-6 and again in 1681-82 voevoda of Kiev. There he supported the needs of the Kiev Academy and he met Patrick Gordon, with whom he remained in friendly correspondence.⁸⁷ Boris Petrovich (born 1652) spent some of his youth in Kiev with his father and married in 1669. He was an okol'nichii from 1676 and a boyar from 1682.⁸⁸ His career in the 1680s and 1690s was mainly military with some diplomacy, including a delegation to Emperor Leopold, to Pope Innocent XII, and to the Order of Malta in 1697-99.⁸⁹ The account he left of the embassy is to a large extent typical of the older Russian *stateinye spiski* compiled by ambassadors or their clerks, but has some new elements.⁹⁰ In January 1698 he arrived in Venice and met there the Russian noblemen studying in the city: Prince P. A. Golitsyn, Prince V. M. Dolgorukii, and Avram Lopukhin.⁹¹ He continued the journey with his two brothers, Vasilii and Vladimir Sheremetev, also among the contingent of Russians in Venice. In Venice he attended the Orthodox church but he went on to describe in some detail the churches and shrines of Italy, including the shrine of the Virgin at Loreto, where he stayed twenty-four hours to pray (*dliia nabozhentva*).⁹² In Rome, besides the audience with Pope Innocent XI he saw the many relics in the churches, which seemed to interest him more than the city itself or its architecture, and he heard mass in St. Peter's. He also visited the hospital of the Holy Spirit and the Jesuit monastery.⁹³ The aim of the journey was actually Malta, where he also visited churches and relics as well as the fortifications. The high point was the Grand Master's presentation of the cross of the Order of Malta.⁹⁴ In Naples he visited the Carthusian monastery of San Martino at the invitation of the papal nuncio. Here there were no relics, but Sheremetev admired both the beauty of the church and the

⁸⁶ A. I. ZAOZERSKII, *Fel'dmarshal B. P. Sheremetev* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989).

⁸⁷ *Diary of General Patrick Gordon of Auschlechries 1635-699, Volume IV: 1684-1689*, ed. DMITRY FEDOSOV (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 2013); ZAOZERSKII, *Fel'dmarshal*, 12-13.

⁸⁸ BUSHKOVITCH, *Peter*, 134

⁸⁹ ZAOZERSKII, *Fel'dmarshal*, 15.

⁹⁰ *Pamiatniki diplomaticheskikh snoshenii drevnei Rossii s derzhavami inostrannymi (PDS)* (St. Petersburg: 1871), vol. X.

⁹¹ *PDS* X, 1625-1626.

⁹² *PDS* X, 1630-31

⁹³ *PDS* X, 1632-1635, 1640-1643.

⁹⁴ *PDS* X, 1668-1674.

strictness of the life of the monks. Then he went to the Jesuit academy (presumably the Collegio Massimo), where the fathers taught both the written sciences and the military arts. One of the students, the son of a “senator,” gave a speech in Latin, and then Sheremetev was treated to a display of fencing and athletics.⁹⁵ After his return to Russia Sheremetev continued to serve in the army and Peter appointed him *fel’dmarshal* in 1702. He served in that capacity until his death in 1719, effectively the head of the Russian army under the tsar. Sheremetev’s culture seems to have had its roots in the Polish-Latin culture that was finding favor among the Russian elite from the 1660’s, probably reinforced by his contacts in Kiev. Again, there is no trace of hostility to Western culture or to the Catholic Church, of which he was quite respectful. Apparently, back in Moscow there was a rumor that the pope blessed him, but the report only says that the pope kissed him on the head as he departed.⁹⁶ Eventually, he was the subject of equestrian and other portraits in the style of European art, the extant ones showing him with the Maltese cross. Whatever Sheremetev may have thought about Peter’s particular innovations, he seems to have absorbed parts of Western culture without difficulty.

Perhaps the final word on the Westernization of Russian culture should go to a member of the Russian aristocracy who lived almost entirely in the new Russian-European culture, Prince V. N. Tatishchev. When Peter died in January 1725 Tatishchev was visiting the Swedish copper mine at Falun in Dalarna and he sent to I. A. Cherkasov (Peter’s Kabinet-sekretar’) a brief sketch of the late emperor’s accomplishments. He listed Peter’s victories and conquests, but also said that in spite of them: “he enriched his state, multiplied many times the manufactures and the merchantry, revealed the free sciences and arts [i.e. liberal arts], refuted superstition; brought good government [*pravlenie*], spiritual and worldly, into the desired condition, left jurisprudence in the highest condition in the whole state, and assiduously rooted out bribery and wrong-doing, which was not achieved with the greatest foresight to all the previous great and notable monarchs and republics.”⁹⁷

The Westernization of Russian culture in Peter’s time was his most fundamental and long-lasting

⁹⁵ PDS X, 1683-1685.

⁹⁶ BUSHKOVITCH, *Peter*, 202; PDS X, 1640.

⁹⁷ A. N. IUKHT (ed.), *Vasilii Nikitich Tatishchev: Zapiski, Pis'ma 1717-1750 gg.* (Nauchnoe nasledstvo 14, Moscow: Nauka, 1990), 107.

legacy. The state that he reformed and built changed over time and was ultimately swept away in 1917, but the culture remained. The reordering of Russian culture was to a great extent the result of his initiatives, but it is clear that the social and political elite of Russia not only went along with Westernization but in modest ways began to pick and choose among the Western cultural phenomena that they encountered. It is not necessary to try to find Western ideas that were not there, such as absolutism or cameralism, to recognize the enormous scope of that revolution.

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