

Endre Sashalmi, Peter B. Brown, David Goldfrank, Lawrence N. Langer, Russell E. Martin, Donald Ostrowski, Carol B. Stevens, Eve Levin (ed.)

WHITHER INTELLECTUAL HISTORY?

A ROUNDTABLE ON ENDRE SASHALMI'S *RUSSIAN NOTIONS OF POWER AND STATE IN A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE, 1462–1725. ASSESSING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PETER I'S REIGN*

Introduction by Professor Eve Levin

Endre Sashalmi's 2022 monograph *Russian Notions of Power and State* was the topic of a particularly vibrant roundtable discussion at the 2024 convention of the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies in Boston, USA, on 24 November 2024. The book itself has received critical acclaim since its first appearance and was awarded the Marc Raeff prize of the Eighteenth-Century Russian Empire Studies Association in 2023. Despite the infelicitous scheduling of the panel on a Sunday morning, on the last half-day of the conference, it drew a large audience that actively participated in the discussion. The conversation continued after the formal close of the panel, both in the hallway and subsequently by email.

Professor Peter B. Brown of Rhode Island College organised the roundtable, and joined ex-officio the panellists of record: Professor Russell E. Martin of Westminster College, Professor Lawrence N. Langer of the University of Connecticut, Professor Carol B. Stevens of Colgate University, Professor David Goldfrank of Georgetown University, and Professor Donald Ostrowski of Harvard University, with Professor Eve Levin of the University of Kansas presiding as chair. Professor Sashalmi was also afforded the opportunity to reply during the session. All of the participants are senior scholars of Russia, Muscovy, and premodern Rus' who have grappled with the issues tackled in Sashalmi's book.

The panellists put their verbal remarks made at the convention into written form in light of the group discussions, again together with Professor Sashalmi's responses. All the participants recognise Sashalmi's monograph as a milestone in key scholarly debates dating back decades, even centuries. To what extent do Russian notions of political power resemble – or not – those of European countries? Do the commonly used terms, for example 'the state' or 'political theology' or 'the common good', accurately encapsulate Russian conceptions? How were Russian ideas expressed in the absence of the type of treatises typical of western European thought? How did Russian notions change over time, in response to new challenges? Did the reign of Peter the Great represent continuity with the past, mark a drastic change from it, or

was it some kind of mixture of the old and the new? What periodisation of Russian history best captures the crucial points of change? These and many more questions are explored by Sashalmi in his magnum opus, and he addresses them with remarkable nuance and clarity, marshalling evidence to back his claims. Yet, as all contributors to this published version of the forum note, Sashalmi's book is not the final word, but rather an impetus for scholars to continue discussions in this vein.

In the spirit of pursuing a 'common good' – sharing expert knowledge and insights with the entire community – we are making this forum available to *Pro Publico Bono – Public Administration*.

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Professor Russell E. Martin

Paradigm Shifts and the Petrine Revolution

KEYWORDS:

Petrine Divide, periodisation, Muscovite political culture, the Orthodox Church, paradigm shifts

The pendulum swings. Paradigms shift. The ideas we once held dear and have long held sway, unassailed, will inevitably, and often permanently, be replaced by new ones. Perhaps, we began to think seriously about pendulums and paradigms when Thomas Kuhn systematised the idea of paradigm shifts, applying the concept to turnabouts in science.¹ Kuhn described for us how paradigm shifts come at the end of a long process, when the simple weight of mounting evidence leaves no other option but to change one's view on something that had become a commonplace. We change our minds about fundamental things, often begrudgingly, because the old way of interpreting the evidence simply no longer allows us to see things as we have seen them before. That is true of science, as Kuhn showed for the Copernican Revolution.² It is true in the buffeted Social Sciences and Humanities, as well – as the definitions of the Enlightenment,³ the Cognitive Revolution in Psychology⁴ and the Laryngeal Revolution in Linguistics⁵ (just to mention a few I know best) all show. Paradigm shifts happen in the field of history, too; including East Slavic history. We need not think any further than the Normanist/Anti-Normanist debates,⁶ the volumes devoted to the role of the Mongols in Russian history,⁷ or the now quaint-looking feuds over Feudalism in Kyivan or Appanage Rus⁸ – each of which pitted a dominant view that reigned supreme for a time against mounting new evidence that raised doubts and eventually ushered in a new paradigm.

Paradigm shifts are not grim moments, sapping us of our confidence that we can ever know anything. In fact, they are moments when the sciences or humanities lunge forward, and so are rightly welcomed. However, the entire neat and handy paradigm of paradigm shifts itself gets called into question when a book like Endre Sashalmi's appears.⁹ His book comes after a paradigm shift was, many of us had thought, already well underway in Russian history – this

¹ For the general model of how paradigm shifts work, see KUHN 1962.

² KUHN 1957 is still very much a classic to be consulted.

³ See the brilliant treatment by ISRAEL 2011.

⁴ Landmark works include MILLER 1956 and CHOMSKY 1957.

⁵ The starting points are SAUSSURE 1879 and KURYŁOWICZ 1927.

⁶ A still useful survey is PRITSAK 1982.

⁷ Compare, e.g. HALPERIN 1987 and OSTROWSKI 1998.

⁸ Setting aside the Soviet works, which were largely politically slanted, the list of non-Marxist approaches to the question of feudalism in Russia is still impressively long (and still frustratingly problematic). For starters, see VERNADSKY 1939; 1948; PIPES 1974: 48–57, 68, 100; RIASANOVSKY–STEINBERG 2004: 42, 45, 106–108, 145, 169–172; and HALPERIN 2015.

⁹ SASHALMI 2022.

one about the nature and significance of Peter the Great's reign. The received, dominant view had been, since the time of Vasilii Tatishchev, that Peter was the great revolutionary, the founder of modern Russia – and not just modern Russia, but of Russia itself.¹⁰ Perhaps the most recent advocate of this view has been James Cracraft, whose several monumental studies of the Petrine Revolution give us the most updated iteration of the familiar argument.¹¹ And that argument is powerful and convincing on many levels: Peter was a break in Russian history. There was before him, and then there was after him, and Russia was forever transformed by the indelible imprint of that one man and one reign. There is, of course, nuance in that traditional view. Evgenii Viktorovich Anisimov's essentially psychological approach to Peter's motivations and reforms come quickly to mind.¹² But even with all the variations on the theme, it is hard not to see the lengthy historiography on Peter as very much a paradigm.

But that paradigm, so perfectly reflected in Cracraft, has come under scrutiny in the past 30 or more years, as studies by Paul Bushkovitch, Ernest Zitser, Lindsey Hughes and Donald Ostrowski, for a start, all show.¹³ The evidence for continuities running through Peter's reign – in religious and political culture, in the unbroken prominence of Russia's great families, and even in attitudes toward change itself – has mounted to the point that, today, the old notion of Peter as a revolutionary reformer, builder, and refashioner of Russia is, for some, in doubt. Indeed, some are in open revolt against it. The pendulum was swinging. The evidence was mounting.

Enter Endre Sashalmi. His book comes to us after a large part (but certainly not all) of the field has warmed up to and perhaps even accepted the paradigm shift, whereby the continuities are more important than the discontinuities: Peter was the accelerator of change, not a revolutionary. The historiographical trends are altering, if not in unison, then certainly in a direction different from before. It is not quite the Kuhnian paradigm shift yet, but it is getting there. And now, Sashalmi has asked us to rethink the mounting evidence before we go too far.

I want to focus, on a conceptual level, on three themes that are linked to the broader argument about “notions of power in a European perspective” (to quote Sashalmi's title), which, I think, need to be considered if we are really going to step back and consider anew the Petrine paradigm. The first is that Sashalmi asks us to rethink the question of periodisation. It is not a stated goal of the book to readdress this seemingly stale, but actually quite important question. He does, however, put in the title of the book that his study goes from 1462 (the beginning of the reign of Ivan III) to 1725 (the death of Peter the Great). And he puts those dates alongside the subtitle: “Assessing the Significance of Peter's Reign”. So, periodisation and the Petrine Revolution are given equal billing right on the cover of the book. Peter's reign is, for Sashalmi, the dividing point between one period of history (the early modern period) and another (the

¹⁰ On Vasilii Tatishchev and Peter the Great, see DANIELS 1973, TOLOCHKO 2005 and KISELEVA 2017.

¹¹ The titles of James Cracraft's works (which often include the word “revolution”) tell the tale: CRACRAFT 1988; 1997; 2003; 2004.

¹² Of Anisimov's many excellent works on Peter the Great, I have in mind especially ANISIMOV 1989.

¹³ See BUSHKOVITCH 2001; ZITSER 2017, HUGHES 1998; 2002 and OSTROWSKI 2022. I would also add my own thoughts on change and continuity in the reign of Peter the Great in MARTIN 2021: 189–240.

modern). This is entirely in line with the traditional paradigm: Peter's reign was a divide in Russian history. But it is precisely such new thinking about periodisation that has offered some of the best evidence that the old Petrine paradigm is wearing out. The question for the traditional paradigm on Peter has always been: If we accept that Peter's reign was a great divide, then we are saying that the modern period starts with his death in 1725. But what then do we do with the rest of the eighteenth century – from 1725 to, say, 1800? That year – 1800 – is the traditional endpoint of the “early modern” period in the European West, and a benchmark in Russia, too.¹⁴ If, on the other hand, we think of Peter as a continuator and accelerator of processes that were already in motion and not the great divide we used to think he was, then we can take account of the rest of the eighteenth century and not leave it untethered. The year 1800 (generally) marks the transition to the modern period in Russia (as it does in the West). This is the argument that Ostrowski, Sergei Bogatyrev, and I (with commentary by Nancy Shields Kollmann) have made elsewhere.¹⁵ Sashalmi returns us to the view that Peter was, indeed, an important inflection point in Russian history; that the discontinuities between Russia before and after Peter self-evidently outweigh whatever continuities there may have been; and, consequently, that we have not at all reached the tipping point of mounting evidence to suggest a paradigm shift on Peter the Great has happened. Sashalmi is telling us to put on the brakes, though this, of course, again leaves stranded the liminal eighteenth century. The years between the deaths of Peter I and Paul I remain the odd man out – neither early modern nor modern. They are simply aberrant. It would therefore have been interesting to see Sashalmi directly confront and resolve the conceptual consequences of the Petrine Divide for the eighteenth century, which would have been a better subject to end the book on than Putin's Russia today. The arc of the story Sashalmi wants to tell ends, I think, in 1801, not in 1725 (or 2022).

Second, in arguing that power – and notions of power – moved from “personalised” to “abstract” around 1700, and that the impetus for that change was Russia's increasing engagement with the West, Sashalmi understates, I think, the degree to which Muscovy was already being influenced by cross-cultural borrowing – from the Byzantines, the Mongols' successor states, and even the West – as far back as 1462 (and, indeed, earlier). It is here unfortunate, but perfectly understandable, that Edward Keenan's “Folkways” model was not considered, since it provides a practical, appreciative assessment of political culture in the early modern centuries, which was formulated on both indigenous and borrowed notions of power and political habits of mind that formed in response to local circumstances and needs.¹⁶ There were weighty notions of power before Peter, although some cannot be observed directly, but – like some cosmological phenomena – only indirectly, as they influenced other celestial

¹⁴ See WIESNER-HANKS 2021, and FORD 1970: 1–4. See also the excellent treatment of this question in KOLLMANN 2017, which marks out the boundaries of the early modern period in Russian history 1450–1801 better than any current study.

¹⁵ See the forum “Divides and Ends: Periodizing the Early Modern in Russian History” in *Slavic Review*, consisting of BOGATYREV 2010; MARTIN 2010; OSTROWSKI 2010; and KOLLMANN 2010.

¹⁶ KEENAN 1986.

bodies. In short, was there a need in pre-modern Russia for “legal notions of sovereignty” or the “state” before the eighteenth century? Did the Muscovites have their own versions of these Western notions that worked just fine already? Are we being fair to Muscovy?

Finally, I think the Church plays more of a role here than the argument allows. It is, of course, a topic Sashalmi brings up – to be sure, he brings up well-nigh every relevant topic in this vast book. But Sashalmi is looking for “discourse”, which I think may be the wrong thing to look for. As Ostrowski has shown in his important book on the “intellectual silence” of Rus’, and as Lytvynenko and Shpakovskiy have shown in their work on Zinovii Otenskii, to name just two recent works I admire, the Orthodox Church, even more than the Byzantine Empire, provided a model not just for the cut of liturgical vestments or the placement of imitative diacritical marks in manuscripts.¹⁷ It offered a model of how to think about power, broadly conceived, including shared power (between a monarch and his nobles, as Anthony Kaldellis has been showing about Byzantium or Roger Mettam showed about Louis XIV’s France¹⁸). I think a model about notions of power that does not foreground the Orthodox Church is missing a big part of the picture, which is a critique I would also make (and have made) about Keenan’s “Folkways”, by the way.¹⁹ How does our new understanding of Peter’s own religiosity affect the traditional Petrine paradigm? Would not a comparative reading of Cracraft’s *Church Reform of Peter the Great* and Zitser’s *Transfigured Kingdom* not prompt us seriously to rethink the role of religion in Russia precisely in Peter’s reign?²⁰

Sashalmi’s is a book to be taken seriously. It is erudite, based on a broad reading of sources in multiple languages, rooted in philosophical trends in politics that reach back to the late Middle Ages, and is important historiographically. It asks us to check our progress on paradigm shifts, which is always helpful and necessary. And it poses, even for those of us who see the big picture differently than he does, serious questions about how far a pendulum can swing.

I would like to thank Eve Levin for her comments on an early draft of this paper, and the other members of the 2024 ASEES roundtable in Boston, at which a still earlier version of the paper was presented. I also thank Endre Sashalmi for his responses at the roundtable and invitation to publish this and the other papers presented in discussion of his important (and award winning) new book.

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¹⁷ OSTROWSKI 2018, and LYTVYENKO–SHPAKOVSKIY 2023.

¹⁸ KALDELLIS 2015 and METTAM 1988.

¹⁹ See, e.g. MARTIN 2006.

²⁰ CRACRAFT 1971; ZITSER 2017.

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Professor Lawrence N. Langer

Peter I and the Russian State: New Notions of Power and the State

KEYWORDS:

intellectual history, Russian state, Peter I of Russia, Ivan III

Endre Sashalmi's book *Russian Notions of Power and State in a European Perspective, 1462–1725. Assessing the Significance of Peter's Reign* is a deeply learned study. As I am not as conversant with the original sources as other contributors to this forum, I thought it best to approach Sashalmi's study much as I would were this a graduate seminar, which in some ways is what this roundtable is. Sashalmi raises many important issues, but in my limited space here I can address only two or three concerns that I have.

The study presents itself as an exercise in – shall we call it – “intellectual” history, but one that eschews the formal analysis of the major texts of European political theory. This is not to say that the author is unfamiliar with the canonical texts. Indeed, we will find many references to some of the usual suspects: Aquinas, Augustine, Bodin, Bossuet, Grotius, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Pufendorf, Richelieu, etc., but Sashalmi is less interested in formal political thought than he is in the more informal attitudes towards power and rulership found in literature, visual images, rituals, buildings, and sacred space. He is more concerned with notions of power rather than the concrete realities of the state as a force or an institution. Bereft of any philosophical or legal abstractions concerning the state, the exercise of power, or any constitutional limitations of autocracy, Russians fell back on the centrality of the Bible and religious concepts of good and bad autocrats. To the Russians, the only true sovereign was God. The grand prince, later the tsar, was God's viceroy, whose commands reflected the will of God. He was chosen by God and, like an icon, he embodied the image of God on earth.

In Sashalmi's view, Muscovites had no concept of the state, whether religious or secular. The concept of a modern secular state in Europe, Sashalmi argues, began in the second half of the fifteenth century, whereas in Russia the idea of a secular state took hold only with Peter the Great, becoming more widespread and accepted in the second half of the eighteenth century. What Sashalmi offers for the pre-Petrine period are notions of power and governance that might better be termed a *mentalité*, a set of attitudes that may be held for centuries (*longue durée*). Sashalmi perhaps too easily dismisses the political theology associated with Iosif Volotskii, or with Metropolitan Makarii, or the *Book of Degrees* (*Stepennaia kniga*). Further, when the taxman arrived, or when conscription into the army occurred, or when Russians were summoned to court, Russians would have been cognisant of at least the power exercised by institutions one would associate with a state.

It is a pity that Sashalmi has little to say about concrete governance, whether political, social, religious, or economic. He makes it quite clear that the concrete state is not the subject of his book and one cannot fault him for not writing a different book. But there is an important issue that needs to be addressed: namely, the relationship between attitudes/notions, ideology,

mentalités and, let us call it, the concrete material world, that is, economy, social order, military, family life, etc. One does not have to be a Marxist to inquire whether change in one, such as a change in the notions concerning grand princely or tsarist power, reflects or is influenced by developments within the material world. Does the history of ideas function in a kind of vacuum, which is the impression one might take away from Sashalmi's study?

Tsars were traditionally seen as autocrats; the term *samoderzhets* first appears in the mid-fifteenth century but is not part of the ruler's titulature before the seventeenth century, not becoming legally accepted until the end of Peter's reign. Sashalmi duly takes note of the centrality of service that Russians were expected to perform until 1762, but Russians understood such service as obligations to God rather than to the state. Sashalmi is so insistent that Russian notions of the state are so separate from European secular political thought that he will not entertain the thought that Russia in any given time period may lie on a historical continuum of west to east. For example, does the western concept of the king's two bodies and the Byzantine concept of symphonia each function in a completely separate historical universe, or do they touch on a Christian historical continuum, such as the importance of a ruler's piety? He also has little to say about Edward L. Keenan's three cultures of Muscovy: peasant, monastic-ecclesiastical, and court-bureaucratic.²¹ Was there a court culture that can be distinguished from the monastery, one that was more secular? What was the Russian state and how did it differ from the west? There is no easy answer because there were many different definitions of the state in Europe. One finds in the historical literature absolute monarchy, autocracy, composite monarchy, estates-based state, composite-dynastic state, fiscal-military state (which could apply either to an absolute monarchy or a republic), patrimonial state, steppe monarch in council, and the autocratic fiscal-military state. With so many possibilities (Sashalmi tends to favour autocratic fiscal-military state), in lesser hands one might run the risk of a kind of "definitional history".

Sashalmi's insistence that the concept of a secular state does not take hold until the reign of Peter raises again the old issue of the degree to which Peter marks a sharp break with Muscovy. While antecedents to Peter's reign may be found, such as new military regiments and some degree of Western culture in the court, the shift "from personalized power towards an abstract notion of power and state accelerated around 1700, when the modern concept of state and sovereignty came to influence Russian thought on power".²² Sashalmi's study supports the argument that Peter was in fact a sharp break with Muscovy. This is not the place for an evaluation of Peter's reign, but I would like to note simply a few salient issues that would require further elucidation and which would seem to support Sashalmi's contention that by 1725 Peter had introduced a number of policies that in effect marked a sharp shift away from Muscovy.

It is only with Peter that the tsar is considered to be the first servant of the state whose reign – and the state itself – work for the common good. A distinction is drawn between

²¹ KEENAN 1986.

²² SASHALMI 2022: 5.

the ruler (*gosudar'*) and the state (*gosudarstvo*). Whereas in Muscovy the ruler legislates to repair or resolve issues within Muscovite traditions, Peter sought to break free and end Muscovite traditions such as certain religious rituals. There would be no return to Muscovite governmental practices. This raises the question of whether the shift from *prikaz* to *kollegii*, *duma* to the Senate, or the patriarchate to the Holy Synod was more than simply retaining the old boyar power structure in a new guise. An attempt was made to structure a new set of principles to undergird administrative practices: principles reflecting *polizei*, rationalism, utility, *reguliarnost'*. The imagery of divine grace would be drawn from ancient Rome, that is, from non-Orthodox traditions.

One of the most important breaks with Muscovy concerns the women of the court, who were brought out of the *terem* and seclusion. There is a decided emphasis on the cultivation and worship of the feminine, the models of Venus and Minerva, and on neo-Platonic love. Sashalmi intimates that there is a certain parallel between Peter and Ivan III. Because Moscow, according to Sashalmi, had no territorial or institutional antecedents with Kyivan Rus', Ivan had to create his own form of legitimacy, one that was based on the two pillars of Orthodoxy and autocracy, that is, the unlimited power of the ruler. Ivan III's reign was a fundamental turning point in Russian history; one that marked a break with appanage Rus' and grand princely rule. But Peter shifted governance away from one centred on dynasty and God to one centred on a secular state, a state that in theory could be non-Orthodox and which embodied secular principles, such as the common good. Both Ivan III and Peter declared their exclusive right to choose their successors, but there was a critical difference: Ivan's successor would be male and Orthodox, whereas Peter could nominate a woman, or anyone who was non-Orthodox, or indeed a person who had no blood ties to the ruling family. Peter's succession law of 1722 completely overturned Muscovite politics centred on marriage and clan since the ruler could marry outside of Russian society.

One could argue that the founding of St. Petersburg was the founding of a new political and social world. To be sure, Peter and through him, the state, would regulate public behaviour at least within the court, but Russians were no longer to be obedient slaves; both men and women would learn the fine arts of speaking, dancing, music, shaven beards and proper eating etiquette. St. Petersburg raises the interesting question of architecture and its impact (or not) on the psychology of behaviour.

There are a multitude of changes that Peter brought to bear on Russian society. Hegel says there is a relationship between quantity and quality, that is, a change in quantity (either reduced or increased) leads to corresponding changes in quality. If this is so, then given the many changes that Peter's era represents, even if some of the changes have their roots in Muscovy, Peter set in motion a sharp break, perhaps even a revolutionary break, with Muscovy. One of these sharp breaks was the emergence of a concept – a notion – of the secular state.

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Professor Peter B. Brown

Taking the Plunge

KEYWORDS:

statehood, accelerated Westernisation, etymology, textual exegesis, comparative

Endre Sashalmi's encompassing and challenging monograph offers a plethora of information on the forging of the Russian service state/realm, which was to achieve its supposed apogee during Peter the Great's reign. Best used as an encyclopedic guide, *Russian Notions of Power and State* makes extensive comparisons to Western European state formations and political theorists, unreservedly tunnels into words' meanings, and in unhindered manner – even brashly – wields the essayist's brush. At the start of paragraphs, Sashalmi boldly charges in with pro-and-con opinions on other historians' pronouncements. Pertinent bullet-point lists²³ buttress his assertions and arrested this reviewer's attention. From start to finish, he tries to clarify as much as possible how abstraction was applied to practice, and connects "accelerated Westernization"²⁴ to this process. His findings support what we know already about the late seventeenth century and Peter's reign but with their own flair and emendations.

The author's death-grip fixation to leave no stone unturned, while laudable, does lead to perplexities, chiefly wordiness. Temperamentally, Sashalmi is an intellectual high-swinger. His wording at times rambles, an understandable result of his urge to outpour his thinking. His huge number of explanations do require tighter integration in order to better project a straightforward, rather than at times a meandering (some might claim), story line. A glossary, tables to make correspondences and a lengthy index with sub-entries galore would have been a boon. There are places requiring clarification. For instance, did he really mean that Russia became integrated into the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia system?²⁵

On the other hand, Sashalmi's style is not a North American one. He expects the reader to plunge into this *tour de force* and welter of information, and wander as one will. His polycentricity will baffle some. What some might regard as extravagant digressions should be re-construed as microcosms, nuggets to be unlocked for intellectual probing and enrichment. He packs in more subjects than most historians do, and does not shy from elaborate exposition of supportive topics. This is his architectonic structure. The *Weltanschauung* is there.

Sashalmi does not slouch when it comes to weaving his visual, allegorical, metaphorical, and literary jaunts into galvanising narrative. He tacitly reminds historians that it never hurts to immerse oneself in these venues. His extended forays into Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern theological and political thought, cartographic engravings pertaining to political power and the state, and the voluminous, parsable iterations of the above reward the reader.

²³ SASHALMI 2022: 94–95, 104–105, 219–220, 321, 342.

²⁴ SASHALMI 2022: 331.

²⁵ SASHALMI 2022: 145.

The list of those upon whom he performs textual exegesis and comparative thrusts is imposing: e.g. Aristotle, Ovid, Cardin Le Bret, Francis Bacon, Jacopo Amiconi, Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius, Samuel Pufendorf, François de Callières, Johann Sadeler, Ivan Peresvetov, Grigorii Kotoshikhin, Simeon Polotskii, Petr Shafirov, Denis Fonvizin.

Sashalmi's myriad etymological and comparative expeditions into words both Russian and foreign are fruitful and engrossing, and range at length. Some of them are *samoderzhavets* (person "who rules on his own"),²⁶ *potestas absoluta* (absolute power),²⁷ *spravedlivost'* (righteousness),²⁸ *Staatskunst* (the art of statescraft),²⁹ *tselost' gosudarstva* (integrity of the state),³⁰ *vol'nyi chelovek* (free man),³¹ *kholop* (servant),³² *Christianitas* and *respublica Christiana* (community conceived on religious grounds),³³ *politeia* (the motto),³⁴ *indigesta moles* (amorphous/shapeless mass),³⁵ *terminus technicus* (police state),³⁶ *rossiane* (subjects of Russia),³⁷ *imago divinitatis* (image of divinity),³⁸ *ex defectu tituli* (lack of title)³⁹, and many more. His forays into seventeenth-century Muscovite legal history, oaths, political crime and comparisons to France⁴⁰ make one sit up and take note.

To be sure, his is a state-driven narrative, focusing on leaders, ideas, laws and institutions which dominate overwhelmingly, but harmoniously gear with his work's interdisciplinary features. Highlighting all of this are eight criteria for Western and Central Europe from 1450 to 1700 that explain the emergence of the "modern state".⁴¹ He argues for their appearance in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Russia.

Ruminations on social history are sparse. Why not bring in, for example, serfdom, caste tensions, non-Russians within the Muscovite polity, and details on Muscovy's unique service-class system and its origin and procedures for recruitment, appointment and promotion? Much more needs to be said about the Muscovite chancellery system. These are essential topics when grappling with pre-Petrine Russia's place and the Petrine era.

I found intriguing his suggestion that advancing statistical knowledge (arithmetic data) helped develop political ideology or, on a more basic level, *gosudarstvennost'* (sense of the state).⁴² His connecting Petrine interest in European treaty wording to its effect upon Russian

²⁶ SASHALMI 2022: 13.

²⁷ SASHALMI 2022: 16.

²⁸ SASHALMI 2022: 32.

²⁹ SASHALMI 2022: 38.

³⁰ SASHALMI 2022: 49.

³¹ SASHALMI 2022: 74.

³² SASHALMI 2022: 80.

³³ SASHALMI 2022: 141.

³⁴ SASHALMI 2022: 129.

³⁵ SASHALMI 2022: 130–131.

³⁶ SASHALMI 2022: 157.

³⁷ SASHALMI 2022: 169.

³⁸ SASHALMI 2022: 211.

³⁹ SASHALMI 2022: 212.

⁴⁰ SASHALMI 2022: 311–326.

⁴¹ SASHALMI 2022: 6–9.

⁴² SASHALMI 2022: 7.

diplomatic thinking,⁴³ his expression “the marks of statehood”⁴⁴ and his itemisation of the elements of Classical “emblematics” and their infusion into “early modern visual allegories of the state”⁴⁵ are riveting. There are numerous other such cases. Much appreciated are his baskets of block quotes enabling readers to better come to grips with his directions. Most publishers normally eschew this practice, but so what?

To sum up, Sashalmi’s adventurous monograph should command both the specialist’s and general reader’s attention and respect. His encyclopaedic knowledge conjoined with Russian history is a worthy achievement.

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⁴³ SASHALMI 2022: 150.

⁴⁴ SASHALMI 2022: 8.

⁴⁵ SASHALMI 2022: 125.

Professor Carol B. Stevens

Reflections on Texts, Daily Life and Political Thought

KEYWORDS:

early modern Russia, translation, mapping, imagery, early Russian political thought

Endre Sashalmi has involved us in a profound discussion of political thought in early modern Russia. His goal, admirably executed, is to trace the pathways and transformations through which Russia developed critical concepts of political thought in the early modern period. As the title indicates, he primarily identifies a distinction between Russian political thought in the pre-Petrine era and that of Peter's reign onward; it was a shift most markedly embodied in the work of Feofan Prokopovich, a Ukrainian-born Orthodox bishop (1681–1736) and prominent supporter of Peter I. At the same time, Sashalmi explores differences in the context and content of Russian and West European political thought as each developed. Profound dissimilarities in the intellectual and socio-political climates, he argues, were hugely important, indeed causal, in explaining the distinctiveness of Russian “notions” from those of their West European neighbours. He points out crucial differences between a relatively unchanging Russian religious framework of rulership and evolving West European ideas about divine monarchy. His discussion also explores comparatively the impact of that difference in thinking about natural law, changing characterisations of “the state”, and how the ruler and the state were distinguished in the context of growing distinctions between secular and religious and between public and private.

Rather than debating these and other conclusions, I would like to use this forum to raise several issues for future conversation, beginning with a discussion of word usage and definitions. At the beginning of his book, Sashalmi talks about the Russians, before 1650 or so, as having rather vague “notions” about political thought;⁴⁶ as I understand this, Russians lacked specific concepts whose definitions had been discussed, debated, or agreed upon. Instead, the meanings of Russian words dealing with political thought prior to 1650–1725 were assumed, or rather it was assumed that there were commonly understood meanings for such words. It did not help to promote clarity and precision that Russian texts of the period (whether contributing to political thought or not) tended to be more than somewhat “laconic”.⁴⁷ Even after the transitional period identified by Sashalmi as 1650 into and beyond the Petrine era, concepts in political thought in Russia could still be fluid and changeable, with a considerable reliance on what he and Richard Wortman refer to as “charismatic words”.⁴⁸

As the title suggests, *Russian Notions of Power* painstakingly orients the evolution of Russian political ideas on the spectrum of Western European thought. In Western Europe,

⁴⁶ SASHALMI 2022: 13–25, 222–224, 230.

⁴⁷ SASHALMI 2022: 17, 195.

⁴⁸ SASHALMI 2022: 37, 205, 339.

the (secular) state, its unity and limitations to its rulers' purviews gained definition through challenge and confrontation. On a European scale, there were disputes between divinely-appointed kings and the Catholic Church, whose power was territorially and symbolically far broader than the sway of individual monarchs. There were also encounters between monarchs and organised secular entities within their realms, among others with "estates", corporations, and craft guilds. These social and institutional confrontations impelled a more exact delineation of the prerogatives of kings and definitions of the state, among other things, and these more precise ideas were expressed in a context of law and legal understandings. All of this took place over a considerable period, substantially before Russian political thought discussed such ideas explicitly.

West European definitions of political concepts emerged from and were shaped by such debates and confrontations, Sashalmi argues, thanks in part to certain intellectual predispositions. These included traditions from Greco-Roman worlds transmitted to Europe through the Arab empires, scholasticism, the existence of universities and a developed legal profession. These were phenomena which did not exist in the Russian world: not in the 1450s, and indeed in many cases not even by 1725.

If not through the same mechanisms as western Europe, then what impelled the fundamental transition in Russian political thought, beginning perhaps in 1650, but significantly gathering importance with the reign of Peter I? Arguably, writings about political thought were key instruments of that transition; there were a few Russian texts – most particularly the work of Feofan Prokopovich. Also important were translations of European political thought imported through Ukraine or directly from western Europe, as well as new considerations about law embodied in Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's Law Code of 1649. Collectively these works launched the evolution of more explicit written discussions by Russians of political thought and of their understandings of (secular) power. The cultural background against which these changes took place, however, were dramatically different in Russia than in the west. The Russian background historically lacked any notion of limiting the Tsar/Emperor's divinely appointed power. Before 1650, it was rather the spiritual and political agreement between Church and Tsar that were insisted upon. Given these and other persistent dissimilarities in the framework of foreign political thought, the translation of political terms played a significant role in Russian rethinking of traditional "notions" from the period prior to 1650 into later, more formal and more explicitly defined concepts.

It is worth noting, as Sashalmi points out, that major changes in the Russian discourse about political thought in 1650–1700 and thereafter were not exclusively verbal or written – any more than they had been in western Europe. Indeed, as Nancy Kollmann, Valerie Kivelson and others have agreed,⁴⁹ imagery held a uniquely privileged place in early modern Russian culture. And certainly, such imagery could be complex and multi-dimensional in a way that texts might not have been; this is evident, for example, in the controversial complexities of the

⁴⁹ Among numerous others, KOLLMANN 2009 and KIVELSON–NEUBERGER 2008.

mid-sixteenth century Church Militant Icon.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, prior to 1650, images explicitly depicting political power on earth were rudimentary and limited in number. By contrast, Simeon Ushakov's 1668 *Tree of the Muscovite State* icon offers an unusually complex visual explication of contemporary political thought. Notably, however, despite (or perhaps because of) the recent confrontations between Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and Patriarch Nikon, it presents Muscovite history as the development of church and state in harmony and mutual support.⁵¹ Otherwise, until the Petrine era, complex and typically secular allegorical references, of a kind prevalent in western Europe, were nearly entirely absent in Russia. There were some exceptional early uses of images surrounding political power (the crown of Monomakh in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; the double-headed eagle in the Russian coat of arms after Ivan III; Ivan IV's seal of 1562), but these were primarily used in dealing with Western Europe until the appearance of the 1667 seal of state and contemporaneous changes to Aleksei Mikhailovich's title. Even the most ordinary political (one might argue secular) portraiture of rulers was practically non-existent. There were the rare portraits of Aleksei Mikhailovich and Sofia and then, in a different environment, the numerous images of Peter I.

On a different note, the rather vague understandings of the territorial realm of pre-Petrine tsars are in some fashion reflected in seventeenth century maps. There, Russian boundaries – especially in Siberia – did not take the shape of sharp negotiated lines between political entities, but rather indicated widely distributed and uneven spheres of control, thus sidestepping any visual sense of the unity of the Russian realm. (Even though one could easily see this as portraying a real-existing condition in Russia, such conditions were not similarly portrayed in west European maps, even where they existed.) Petrine map-making, on the other hand, introduced Western European map-making with its sharp definitional lines.

In short, the absence of exact definition and secularisation in political thought prior to 1650 was not specifically limited to words and texts but was equally present in ritual and imagery, which chiefly impacted the elite, although in some cases it also affected those outside the court.

This brings me to two further issues warranting further research and discussion. Both are suggested by *Russian Notions of Power*, although they are certainly outside the scope of that already wide-ranging and erudite study.

Firstly, practical events may well have played a greater role than suggested by Sashalmi, in bringing forward political ideas that led to a separation of *gosudarstvo* (realm) from *gosudar'* (sovereign) as well as other important concepts in considering the secular state. Charles Halperin, as recently as the ASEEES conference of 2024, has warned us that it is nearly impossible to attribute changes in attitudes about the tsar to specific events.⁵² That is, "Russians" – whoever they were and however they were described – no doubt had some vision of the tsar as the earthly embodiment of the divine. Nonetheless, they also had some life experience of the practical functioning of their ruler's government and its impact on their daily lives, most vividly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such impacts might

⁵⁰ For example, BOGATYREV 2007; ROWLAND 2009.

⁵¹ WAUGH 2000; SASHALMI 2022: 77, 178, 180, 265, 277, 330.

⁵² HALPERIN 2024.

include orders to muster military forces (noble cavalry; later musketeers and infantry); the collection of taxes and customs duties; the encouragement of foreign trade; local policing to deal with bandits; military reforms – one could elaborate.

Such practical activities were usually implemented and experienced at a regional level. Their execution thus did not frequently interact with or impinge upon the notions of political power assumed to be in circulation at court. Nonetheless, there were moments when local understandings of political power were acted out on a larger stage, sometimes in contradiction to notions prevailing at court. To suggest a few examples: the beginning of the *Oprichnina*; the decision by Nizhni Novgorod in the fall of 1611 to tax itself and set up the administrative machinery for raising a militia to march on Moscow; the establishment of a *Zemskii sobor* in Iaroslavl; and the *Zemskii sobor* that elected Mikhail Romanov. Perhaps most dramatic among such events are the 1648 riots in Moscow that led to the Law Code of 1649, which Sashalmi credits with launching more legal interpretations of the ruler's powers and by implication of the ruler's bureaucracy or "state". At such moments, local experience and local bureaucratic practice uncharacteristically confronted the vision of the ruler offered in words and images. Quite obviously, they were not the product of the immediate moment when they appeared on a "national" stage. Rather, they should be understood as expressing attitudes derived from extensive, if local, experience. Endre Sashalmi, who understandably specifies that his extensive study focuses on written expressions of political thought, excluding inchoate and difficult expressions of popular ideas, here leads us to another rich research question. That is, the appearance of local or popular actions on the "national" stage, which implicitly contradicted written interpretations, offers fertile ground for the further investigation of Russian political thought and its evolution, even if the ideas impelling them were not represented in texts or images. Indeed, if confrontations with political power were key to shaping such debates in western Europe, why not in Russia, albeit in a different form?

Secondly, Sashalmi's work suggests another quite different direction for further investigation. In his book, the absence of precise political definitions and discourses on political thought are linked, not only to a description of pre-Petrine political "notions" and their survival after 1700, but also to the absence of certain Western European structures and intellectual traditions. His discussion of how those traditions played out against Russian culture from the Petrine era onward is particularly precise and admirable. Rather than being posed as "negatives" or as failures of Russian culture to develop on the western European spectrum, they appear as absences. A quite different, implied, and perhaps unanswerable question posed by the book is: What benefits did the prolonged retention of the political "notions" of pre-Petrine Russia offer for the functioning of that developing, spatially-expansive realm?

Russian Notions of Power offers an intense and learned vision of political thought in early modern Russia. It not only offers us more precise understandings of Russian developments in this field; it also raises a myriad of questions that await our further investigation.

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Professor David Goldfrank

In Dialogue with *Russian Notions of Power and State*

KEYWORDS:

early modern state, Iosif Volotskii, Aristotle's *Politics*, tyrannical kingship

Professor Endre Sashalmi's monograph is thoroughly thought out and researched, both from the European and Russian perspectives.⁵³ Its solidly elaborated main thesis is worthy of serious consideration by the regional and comparative historian. He propounds that the developing early modern European functions and organs of public administration and the concomitant notion of sovereignty as found in Jean Bodin, whereby governance could be separated from the person of the ruler, created what came to be called *il stato/l'état/der Staat/el estado/the state*. Sashalmi argues that the reign of Peter I and the theorising of Feofan Prokopovich were crucial for a similar Russian breakthrough. Due, however, to certain Russian peculiarities, the Russian sovereigns retained both in theory and via the prevailing political culture sufficient divinely assigned separate and superior power over their state to render to them and to the empire an essential difference from Europe's other great realms. For me one of the great aspects of Sashalmi's elaboration of his main thesis and other points is that he seems to be in dialogue with himself, aware that much of what he says represents not so much *le dernier mot* on a given issue as his latest thinking. Thus, his ideas should be envisioned as both forceful and *diskussionyi*, subject to modifications, including by him, in the light of the immense complexities of human societies and governance.

Stimulated by Sashalmi's book, I shall in the remainder of the brief space allotted to me indicate how some my own musing and inner dialogues on the problem of Russia's governance intersect with his ideas. First, as a prelude to Russia's acquisition and development of Western style political thinking – here specifically concerning Russia's late medieval notion of the public good – let me cite from a previous piece of mine concerning Iosif Volotskii, which is fully consistent with the religious framing of Muscovite political doctrines, including Iosif's, as underscored by Sashalmi:⁵⁴

“Even without an abstract, all-inclusive term, society at large, at least Russia's Orthodox Christian society, as well as Iosif's monastic community and office status, was central to the sense of mission and ‘socially ratified personal identity’ of this widely ‘knowledgeable actor’. For Iosif what we term society could be ‘all of us’,⁵⁵ ‘all people’,⁵⁶ ‘monks and

⁵³ SASHALMI 2022.

⁵⁴ GOLDFRANK 2017: 109–110; see especially sections 8.2–8.3 of SASHALMI 2022.

⁵⁵ VOLOTSKII 1972: 11: 423 (“Сіа оубо вса благаа равнѣ вси пріахомъ”).

⁵⁶ VOLOTSKII 1959: 162 (“аще не искоренится ныне той вторый Июда предатель, [...] во вся человеки внидет отступление”).

laymen and all’,⁵⁷ ‘the world, Christians’,⁵⁸ ‘Orthodox Christianity’,⁵⁹ ‘the entire land’,⁶⁰ ‘Rus’-land and all Orthodox Christianity’,⁶¹ ‘all of Orthodox Christianity of the entire Rus’-land’,⁶² or, figuratively in a lamentation, ‘all the Muscovite’ or ‘all the Rus’ pathways’.⁶³ [...] Iosif likewise grasped that at his time general security required solid principles shared among the governing and the governed. For ‘if the testimony of truthful witnesses is not accepted, then all good order and well-being, which are in cities and in homes and in markets and on roads, will be abolished, and all [*places*] will be filled with disorder and rebellion and sedition and turbulence, theft and robbery and murders and anarchy’.⁶⁴”

I would add here that according to the proceedings of the 12 January 1682 *Zemskii sobor*, which abolished *mestnichestvo*, Patriarch Ioakim, summing up some of what Tsar Feodor Alekseevich had purportedly said in his initial address, specifically referred to Feodor’s “such wise words pertaining to the general good of Christendom”.⁶⁵ In his 18 April 1688 charter to Kievo-Pecherskii monastery designating it as a joint tsarist-patriarchal “stauropigial” and the top ranking “archimandria” in the realm, Patriarch Ioakim referred specifically to where in God’s creation “there is civil society (*or citizenry – D.G.*)”.⁶⁶ So, in regard to general welfare, educated Russia by the late seventeenth century was prepared for more sophisticated political theory than was readily on hand.

What umbrella term shall we use for the pre- or extra-early modern European *apparati* of public power, in light of Sashalmi’s *Hauptidee*? More than a few of us have used the term “the state”. Indeed, Ivan IV himself might have recognised that concept when he excoriated what I have called, as if putting words in his mouth, his realm’s “deep *zemshchina*” – the *dvorovye* and *prikaznye liudi*.⁶⁷ Here we have the nagging problem of the classification of Russia’s structural peculiarities from a European standpoint – and from Sashalmi’s perspective how dynastically owned Russian royal authority differed from the various incarnations of more law-bound, dynastically owned European royal authority, such as the France of Louis XIV. In discussing Richard Pipes’s notion of patrimonialism as applied to Russia, I would be more

⁵⁷ VOLOTSKII 1959: 162 (“ныне и в домех, и в путех, и в тръжищих иноци и миръсти и вси сомнятся, вси о вере пытаются”).

⁵⁸ VOLOTSKII 1959: 139 (“Вы – господа, пастыреи, а мы – мир, христьяне”).

⁵⁹ VOLOTSKII 1959: 178 (“христианство православное гинет от их ереси”).

⁶⁰ VOLOTSKII 1959: 176 (“за государьское согрешение Бог всю землю казнит”).

⁶¹ VOLOTSKII 1959: 160 (“нынешняя великая беда, постигшия Рускую землю и все православное христианство”).

⁶² VOLOTSKII 1959: 195–196 (“ино вся Рускии земля государем государь Бог устроил вседержитель [...] и всего православного христьянства вся Руския земля власть и попечние вручил ему”).

⁶³ VOLOTSKII 1959: 157 (“не вси ли московстии, паче же рещи всяя Руси путие восплакашася?”).

⁶⁴ VOLOTSKII 1972: 14: 508.

⁶⁵ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov* 1830: vol. 1, 373 (No. 905) (“таковые мудрые глаголы, ко общему Христианскому добру надлежащие”).

⁶⁶ *Polnoe sobranie zakonov* 1830: vol. 2, 921 (No. 1295) (Идеже [...] содержится гражданство). A generation earlier, the 12 December synodal condemnation of Patriarch Nikon had accused him in general of “disturbing the peace and troubling society (гражданство)”: *Polnoe sobranie zakonov* 1830: Vol. 1: 656 (No. 383).

⁶⁷ GOLDFRANK 2020: 57.

critical than Sashalmi and rather than just to note George Weickhardt's work,⁶⁸ I would affirm that the latter, not Pipes, was absolutely correct concerning the prominent role of law in Muscovy.⁶⁹ From my own standpoint, Pipes, while claiming originality, actually clouds his dependence on Max Weber (the concept) and Karl August Wittfogel, the latter of whom surely overdid his polemical application of Aristotle's notion of total kingship (*πάντων κύριος*).⁷⁰ Here Sashalmi is on the mark with his approval of Marshall Poe's preference for the notion "nominal universal proprietorship" over the more loaded and semantically less precise "despotism" to characterise Muscovy's undeveloped concepts of tsarist authority.⁷¹ After all, what seems to have operated in this society which in theory demanded universal service of some kind was the notion that the servitors merited the means to perform their service. Regarding this phenomenon, I found a poignant observation in Angela Rustemeyer's *Dissens und Ehre. Majestätsverbrechen in Russland (1600–1800)*,⁷² and so wrote in my review of it that,

“the Russian authorities, worried over the tax base and support of state service, were far more solicitous in directly compensating landowners' losses from popular uprisings than were the Habsburgs, in whose domains stronger and hence more hands-off notions of private property prevailed”.⁷³

Continuing in this vein, I turn to Aristotle's classifications of kingship, which I probed a quarter of a century back in search of a useful characterisation of Muscovy's regal structure. In this study, I discovered in his “tyrannical kingship” – an idea which I think is more or less consistent with Sashalmi's views (but maybe I am mistaken):⁷⁴

“Dynastic Russia, of course, was far more stable than the tyrannies which Aristotle analyzed. Here too, except for the excesses of Ivan IV, the positive, king-like means Aristotle noted for preserving such a regime⁷⁵ seem to apply to Muscovy: a general image of a steward, not a tyrant, and a grave appearance to produce awe; zeal in public piety; avoidance of sexual offenses or other personal vices; measures to keep the women of the ruling family above suspicion; outward concern that public funds be well deployed for public purposes; efforts to adorn the capital city; refraining from lavishing gifts on favorites with money wrung from subjects; cultivation of military qualities; personal distribution of honors while letting the courts and magistrates dole out the punishments; neither allowing any individual to amass too much power, nor disgracing anyone too

⁶⁸ WEICKHARDT 1994.

⁶⁹ SASHALMI 2022: 283, footnote 1, discussing PIPES 1974.

⁷⁰ ARISTOTLE 1944: *Politics*: III.x.2, 252–255 (1285b). I have no space, much less need here, to elaborate on Pipes, Weber and Wittfogel.

⁷¹ SASHALMI 2022: 292, discussing POE 2000.

⁷² RUSTEMEYER 2006.

⁷³ GOLDFRANK 2015: 110–111. Due to a technical mishap, this publication was delayed seven years.

⁷⁴ GOLDFRANK 2001: 44–45. Though not in the title, this volume was a memorial festschrift for Hans-Joachim Torke.

⁷⁵ ARISTOTLE 1944: V.ix.2–9, 458–465 (1313a–1314a).

fast; being careful with people of sensitive honor; making punishments appear as paternal discipline; and getting both the rich and the poor alike to think that the ruler secures their position – which we see in the naive monarchism of the urban revolts and the pretender phenomenon.”

Then interpreting the implications of Aristotle’s practical advice here to monarchs ruling societies where tyrannical kingship was the norm, I continued:⁷⁶

“It is important to note here that Aristotle’s analysis, somewhat in contradiction with his famous stricture on ‘foreigners’ and ‘Asians’, assumes people with their own values, interests, ambitions, expectations from government – an implicit sense of social contract – and readiness to act – in other words, what Valerie Kivelson recently termed ‘empowered subjects’⁷⁷ – not simply a passive, fatalistic bunch of slavish underlings. The self-interested activism which, for example, Professor Kivelson has observed among Russia’s seventeenth-century provincial elites and argues is somewhat analogous to the English gentry,⁷⁸ in no way invalidates the classification of Muscovy within the rubric of Aristotle’s intermediary, second type of kingship.⁷⁹ For sure Western monarchies at times also exhibited some of the vicious traits noted by Aristotle, but none, I believe, did so to the extent that Muscovy did – which is why Western visitors, starting with the late fifteenth century, almost uniformly saw Russia as a tyranny or despotism, with a servile people under a normally stable, dynastic system.”

To conclude here, the “European Perspective” for any part of Russia’s history stands as an unavoidable component of sound analysis. Sashalmi’s mild, tweaking critique of Kivelson’s alleged “Western-couched wording” regarding the provincial gentry’s “political [...] identification” with “the Muscovite polity”⁸⁰ confirms that the above-noted umbrella type, however so termed, is real enough for him too, if not quite yet a “state” separable from the ruler as understood in his *Russian Notions of Power and State*.

So, I thank you, Professor Sashalmi, for your stimulating, excellent book, your contributions to our understanding of Russia’s structures and thinking over the centuries, as well as for prompting readers such as the author of these words – and I am certain many others – to revisit and rethink a host of historical issues. I also thank Russell Martin for his careful, critical reading of the initial draft, Eve Levin for her overall editorial efforts, all the other participants of our 24 November 2024 ASEES roundtable, and especially Endre Sashalmi for his coming to Boston to join us as we mused over his remarkable book.

⁷⁶ GOLDFRANK 2001: 45.

⁷⁷ KIVELSON 2002. A leitmotif of the article, but this specific formulation from an earlier draft is not preserved in the published version.

⁷⁸ KIVELSON 1996: xv–xviii, 36–39, 286–289, 276–277.

⁷⁹ ARISTOTLE 1944: III.ix.2, 254–255 (1285b). Added here: that is, intermediary between lawful and total kingship.

⁸⁰ SASHALMI 2022: 283–284, 295–296.

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Professor Donald Ostrowski

Parameters of Change: Assessing the Significance of a Ruler's Reign in Early Modern Russia

KEYWORDS:

periodisation, historical change, Russian rulers, parameters for evaluating significance

The subtitle of Endre Sashalmi's recent book promises an assessment of the reign of Peter I (r. 1682–1725).⁸¹ In my previously published review,⁸² I raised the question of how Sashalmi intended to assess the significance of Peter's reign between 1462 and 1725 when his reign ended in 1725. I wondered whether one should not be taking into consideration the impact of the reign after the reign was over. Sashalmi anticipated that question in his book and justifies the indicated date range in two ways. First, he says: "With the emphasis of the post-1700 years [i.e., 1700–1725] in the structure of the book, I intend to show the significance of the change that occurred in Russian thought on power both in texts and iconography in a short time, as well as highlight the problem of (the) reception of Western ideas."⁸³ Secondly, he points out that he attempts to take "a *longue durée* approach in understanding some aspects of Russian political thought and political vocabulary even as late as the twentieth and twenty-first centuries".⁸⁴

In a recent book of mine (which came out the same year as Sashalmi's), I argued that in order to do a thorough assessment of any early modern Russian ruler's reign, one should analyse the accomplishments and achievements in comparison with the reign of other early modern Russian rulers.⁸⁵ One of the theses of my book was that the reign of Peter I should not be considered a "continental divide" of Russian history and that Peter, while introducing many changes, did not change the course of Russian history. In other words, Russia of the time of Peter I was well on its way to modernising in a European mode. My discussion of Peter's accomplishments places them in the context of where Russia was at the time and where it headed afterward.⁸⁶ I concluded: "If a historian wants to assert that a historical figure changed things, then that historian should not assume that just because a historical figure changed something, such a change would not have resulted anyway."⁸⁷ In addition, I provided "A Brief Survey of Achievements of Other Russian Rulers"⁸⁸. Yet, I did not "crash" the two together; that is, I did not compare and contrast the changes that occurred during Peter's reign with the changes that occurred during the reigns of other early modern Russian rulers. I refrained

⁸¹ SASHALMI 2022.

⁸² OSTROWSKI 2023.

⁸³ SASHALMI 2022: 24.

⁸⁴ SASHALMI 2022: 48.

⁸⁵ OSTROWSKI 2022a.

⁸⁶ OSTROWSKI 2022a: 442–447.

⁸⁷ OSTROWSKI 2022a: 447.

⁸⁸ OSTROWSKI 2022a: 451–455.

from doing so in part because it was outside the scope of the book I was writing and in part because I did not have parameters for evaluating the significance one ruler's changes with that of another ruler's changes.

I would now like to propose those parameters. They are 1. duration; 2. depth; and 3. originality. No doubt there are other parameters that can be invoked to evaluate any particular ruler's significance. I hope that others will provide those other parameters if they think them necessary or even dispute the three parameters that I propose here.

By "duration" I mean how long a particular ruler's change lasted. It does not have to last to the present day, but it should have some lasting value that extends beyond that ruler's reign. For example, Ivan IV (r. 1533–1584) attempted at least twice to arrange for English craftsmen to build a fleet of ocean-going vessels.⁸⁹ We have no evidence whether any ships were eventually built, but the willingness of a Russian ruler to ask foreign shipwrights to construct a Russian navy could be seen as the intent that eventually led to the Russian navy we have today. The problem is one of duration – nothing, so far as we know, was built at the time and the intent was not revived until decades later. Likewise, Tsar Mikhail Fëdorovich set in motion the process to modernise the Russian army along European lines. The Treaty of Polianovka with the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1634, however, ended the process for the time being. In contrast Ivan III (r. 1462–1505) invited Italian architects in to build the churches and walls of the Kremlin, which still stand. Among other buildings that were built in the early modern period that exist today are St. Basil's Cathedral in Red Square, which was built during the reign of Ivan IV; the two-story Winter Palace in St. Petersburg that we see today was designed by the architect Domenico Trezzini (1670–1734) and commissioned by Empress Anna Ioannovna (r. 1730–1740); and the Catherinian, Alexander, and Pavlovsk palaces were built during the reign of Catherine II (r. 1762–1796). Although the printing press was introduced into Russia in the 1560s apparently as the result of actions by Ivan IV and Metropolitan Makarii (r. 1542–1563) to establish a printing house, it was of short duration⁹⁰ and resumed only later.

By "depth" I mean the impact a ruler's change had on the Russian population and Russian culture in general. The introduction of ballet by Anna has duration to the present day, but during the early modern period it affected only a small percentage of the population (mostly the ruling elite and their serf performers on their estates). Since then, especially if one wants to include Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, it has reached a greater percentage of that general populace and of the world.⁹¹ The requirement of courtiers to shave their beards off was not all that innovative since there is evidence of such practice at the court of Fëdor Alekseevich. The attempt to spread the fashion to the Russian populace with a decree establishing a tax on beards failed as that decree was rarely enforced, so elimination of facial hair (except for moustaches and eyebrows) gets a low score on the depth of its impact on society in general.

⁸⁹ BARON 1983: 110–114.

⁹⁰ ТИХОМИРОВ 1968. Tikhomirov states that printing in Moscow continued until the early seventeenth century; see the chapter "Nachalo knigopechataniia v Rossii".

⁹¹ Cf. the remarks of Count Rostov in TOWLES 2016.

By “originality” I mean the innovativeness of the ruler’s change not only in terms of his immediate predecessors but also in the context of the history of Eurasia (Europe and Asia combined) as a whole. One question to ask in this regard is whether what the ruler did would have occurred anyway without that ruler taking action. One could point to the *Ulozhenie of 1649* as an innovation. Although the *Sudebnik of 1497* had been promulgated under Ivan III and the *Sudebnik of 1550* had been promulgated under Ivan IV, these were judicial procedures and decisions. The *Ulozhenie* was a genuine law code not like any in effect in any other country at the time.

Let us go through some of the other changes that early modern Russian rulers instituted to see how they stack up when measured against these three parameters. The following survey is highly subjective and not intended to be comprehensive or even methodical. Nor do I discuss all early modern Russian rulers since to do so would be overly tedious in an essay of this kind. Its main intent is to show how a possible comparison of the significance of early modern Russian rulers might be done.

Ivan III used Morean Greek advisors to transform Muscovy from a khanate-type government and administration into a dynastic state-type government and administration.⁹² The type of government that resulted lasted in Russia until the Revolutions of 1917 (although one could argue that already by 1905 Russia was being transformed into a constitutional monarchy). This change had a profound impact on all social groups in Russia. It was innovative in that the adoption of a khanate form of government by Muscovite rulers in the fourteenth century was the result of imitating their overlords, but Ivan III’s innovation was not in imitation of any overlordship. It was a conscious decision to choose the most effective and appropriate form of government then available. Ivan also established *pomest’ e* as a means of rewarding his military servitors. These military servitors (*pomeshchiki*) in turn administered the *pomest’ e* for Ivan and passed on tax revenue. The *pomest’ e* system also provided the *pomeshchiki* with a means of independent support, thus reducing the burden on the government treasury. This system, when combined with the *votchina* system in the seventeenth century, was the basis for the ruling class until the 1917 revolutions. It thus had duration as well as depth in that it affected all layers of society. One cannot, however, call it particularly innovative since it was in imitation of *iqta* in the Ulus of Jochi and its successor khanates. Ivan’s bringing in of Italian architects and engineers, to design and build the Kremlin wall and churches, as well as construct canals and ramparts and to develop the manufacture of gunpowder had duration, depth, and was innovative in that such a practice was unknown in Muscovy before that time. It was not an uncommon practice, however, elsewhere among Eurasian polities.

Shortly after succeeding to the throne, Vasili III (r. 1505–1533) had the Khazanian tsarevich, Kudai Kul, convert to Christianity as Peter Ibramovich. Tsarevich Peter married Vasili’s sister Evdokhiia and became, until his death in 1521, the second most powerful person in the land after the grand prince. Sigismund von Herberstein credits Vasili with introducing the bride show for members of the ruling family to marry one of their own subjects rather

⁹² OSTROWSKI 2006: 233.

than foreigners.⁹³ The result was a significant change in marriage politics for Muscovy, as well as providing “a story motif in literature, music and art”, as Russell Martin pointed out.⁹⁴ Vasilii also worked unceasingly to take power away from his brothers, as his father also had done in relation to his own brothers. When Vasilii and his first wife did not produce a child, he divorced her, had her take the veil, and married Elena Glinskaia. Their son, Ivan, born in 1530, insured the succession would not pass to any of Vasilii’s surviving brothers. While this change had duration, it lacked depth into Russian society as a whole. It was innovative to the degree that Vasilii’s contemporary Henry VIII (r. 1509–1547) found himself in a similar situation but chose a different course of action.

Under Ivan IV, a new list of judicial rules, the *Sudebnik of 1550*, was issued, but it was more an expansion of the *Sudebnik of 1497*. The decisions of the *Stoglav* Church Council of 1551, over which both Metropolitan Makarii and Ivan IV presided, acted as an equivalent in the ecclesiastical realm by combining previous council decisions and decrees. Such a practice had ample precedence in the Orthodox Church although it had not yet occurred under any previous Rus’ metropolitan. Its impact was profound as it provided a base line for the Old Believers to refer to from the seventeenth century on. Ivan founded the *strel’tsi*, an arquebus-toting infantry. Modifying the military to update against the latest enemies had occurred before when Rus’ rulers adopted steppe-style weapons and tactics. Introducing arquebus infantry might not have been all that innovative. But this change was especially European and, it could be argued, represented the beginning of the modernisation of the Russian army along European lines. The *strel’tsi* regiments lasted well into the eighteenth century, despite the attempts of Peter I to strangle them, so the change also had duration. Since *strel’tsi* regiments were drawn from all layers of society, one could argue that this change also had depth. Under Ivan IV, Russia conquered Kazan’ and Astrakhan’ thus clearing the way for the taking over of control of the Volga River trade all the way to the Caspian Sea. As a result, Ivan declared himself *tsar*’ (khan) of Kazan’ and Astrakhan’, which was innovative since at the time only Chingissids could declare themselves khans. But Ivan had also sought approval from the Byzantine patriarch for adopting the title *tsar*’ in the sense of a basileus. His reign saw the beginning of the conquest of Siberia with the establishment of fortifications on the Tobol’ river in 1574. That conquest, however, was interrupted by the Time of Troubles and was only resumed by Tsar Mikhail.

Boris Godunov (r. 1598–1604) oversaw building projects of churches and fortresses as well as administrative reforms, many of which projects and reforms he had begun as major-domo under Fëdor I.⁹⁵ The construction at Smolensk of the largest fortress in the world was begun in 1596, which had 6.5 km of walls, ranging from 5 meters to 5.2 meters in width. It was later captured by the Poles. Boris innovated by sending Russians abroad to get an education, but a large number of them did not return to Russia. An evaluation of his reign would have to

⁹³ HERBERSTEIN 1851: I: 50.

⁹⁴ MARTIN 2012: 240.

⁹⁵ ROWLAND 2003.

acknowledge that his reign did not provide much depth or duration, and his originality was limited.

The reign of Mikhail Romanov (r. 1613–1645) saw the re-establishment of a stable Russian government after the Time of Troubles. Russian expeditions crossed to the Pacific Ocean, and Siberia (or at least parts of it) came under Russian rule. Mikhail started a comprehensive reform of the military on European lines. That reform was successful to the point that the Russian army could challenge the Polish stronghold at Smolensk. The siege failed and the Russian government had to agree not to import European officers or continue with the Europeanisation of the military. The conquest of Siberia had duration and depth as it was carried out mainly by non-elite and Cossack groups,⁹⁶ but it was not particularly innovative, being based on the Muscovite move into the northern Novgorodian provinces in the late sixteenth century. Moreover, the military reform lacked duration.

Aleksei Mikhailovich (r. 1645–1676) resumed the transformation of the Russian army into a European-style army. That transformation was well on its way by the time of the end of his reign. It affected every layer of society, since the highly skilled horse archers were replaced by common folk wielding firearms and pikes. Aleksei extensively revamped the *boiarstvo* allowing more members of the ruling class into the ruling elite.⁹⁷ Doing so effectively ended the boyar clan balance of power that hitherto had been in place. It also opened the way to the ending of two obsolete institutions – *mestnichestvo*, abolished under one of Aleksei's sons, Fëdor III (r. 1676–1682), in 1682, and the *terem*, abolished under another of Aleksei's sons, Peter, in 1718. Both institutions were artefacts of the boyar clan and marriage politics regime that was in effect when Aleksei came to power. That regime was replaced by a constellation of ruling elite families divided into two main factions – the Miloslavskiis and the Narsyshkins.⁹⁸ Perhaps Aleksei's single greatest accomplishment was the *Ulozhenie of 1649*, which served as the law code of the country until 1832 when it was superseded by Speranskii's *Code of Laws of the Russian Empire*. The *Ulozhenie* was the most advanced law code in effect in the world at the time. Its duration was 183 years, and it affected every layer of society. Moving to the arts, a European-style play was performed at court for the first time in 1672,⁹⁹ but Aleksei also banned *skomorokhi* performances. The former had duration, but it also found precedence of a sort in the latter. Given how the influence flows across Eurasia had been shifting since the mid-fifteenth century, no doubt European-style plays would eventually come to Russia, so Aleksei cannot be credited with originality for introducing them.

Many of the changes that ensued in the eighteenth century were derivative from and dependent on the changes that were already occurring during the seventeenth century. As I have argued this point extensively elsewhere,¹⁰⁰ I will spare the reader from an overly tiresome rehearsal of those arguments here. Instead, I will confine my remarks to a few salencies.

⁹⁶ WITZENRATH 2007.

⁹⁷ POE 2004.

⁹⁸ LEDONNE 1987.

⁹⁹ MARTIN 2010.

¹⁰⁰ OSTROWSKI 2010.

The abolishing of the *terem* by Peter I was long overdue since it had long since served its political purpose. Already from the 1670s and 1680s the rules regarding seclusion of elite women at the court were being relaxed.¹⁰¹ Outside the imperial court, the abolition had no effect since seclusion of women had never been practiced.¹⁰² Peter replaced the *mestnichestvo* system that had been ended in 1682 with the Table of Ranks in 1722, for which there was no equivalent ordering of civil, military, and court ranks in Europe. Andrei I. Osterman, who put together the Table at Peter's behest, did gather materials from the regulations of various European countries, such as Denmark, Prussia, and Sweden, but otherwise it does seem to be an innovation. Perhaps Peter had heard about a similar system – the *Mansabdār* – in Mughal India from Russian merchants who returned from there.¹⁰³ In any case, the Table had duration but lacked depth in that it excluded the vast majority of the Russian population. Historians make much of Peter's building of St. Petersburg as the new capital of Russia and “window on the West”. To be sure, the city had duration as well as societal depth in that tens of thousands of workers and serfs were pressed into service to build Peter's city on a swamp with untold numbers of them dying in the process. While building the city was not particularly innovative (the Russians had been building new towns in Siberia throughout the seventeenth century), the capital had not been moved from Moscow previously. However, the capital of Suzdal' land had been moved from Vladimir to Moscow in the fourteenth century.

During the ten-year reign of Anna Ioannovna (r. 1730–1740), the Academy of Sciences finally began to receive the financial support it lacked under Peter. She and her main foreign affairs advisor, Osterman, began the process of undoing Peter's disastrous Pruth Treaty with the Ottoman Empire. Osterman is also credited with introducing reforms in the judiciary and with improving Russia's credit by improving its financial condition. A Cadet Corps on the European model was a milestone in Russian education. At her court (besides European-style ballet) Italian chamber music, comedies, and operas were first performed in Russia. Anna approved and funded the second Kamchatka expedition which has been called “the world's greatest scientific expedition”¹⁰⁴. Although each of these changes under Anna had duration, they affected only the ruling class and the serfs of their serf theatres, but not the general population or culture as a whole.

During the reign of Elizabeth Petrovna (r. 1741–1762), the infrastructure of Russia, especially the roads and postal system, was improved, if only to fulfill the Empress's desire for goods shipped from all over the world. It did improve travel throughout the country, but for most Russians, travel was of a limited nature. Under Elizabeth, the arts, both visual and performing, flourished as she was firmly committed to them. Again, none of these changes were original (in the sense I am using the term) and affected mostly the ruling class of the country.

Catherine II (r. 1762–1796) instituted reforms in administration, restored the Russian navy, secularised church and monastic lands, and abolished *slovo i delo Gosudarevo* (word and deed

¹⁰¹ HUGHES 2001: 19.

¹⁰² KOLLMANN 1983.

¹⁰³ OSTROWSKI 2022a: 136–139.

¹⁰⁴ BOWN 2017: subtitle of the book.

against the sovereign). She funded female education,¹⁰⁵ and Russia acquired vast tracts of land in Poland through diplomacy. Along with Potemkin, she opened up and developed “New Russia”. She established codes for the behaviour of the nobility. Her support of the arts was unstinting. Catherine put down the most serious uprising against the state since the Time of Troubles in the Pugachev Rebellion. Taken as a whole, the changes in her reign had depth and duration, and some of them, especially female education, could be considered innovative.

The Law of Succession of Paul (r. 1796–1801) transformed the procedure by which the ruler was chosen. Changing the procedure for choosing the ruler of the land had ample precedent.¹⁰⁶ It lasted until 1917 and thus had duration but not originality or depth since it affected only those immediately connected with the tsar.

In a sense, any change that a ruler made that drew on what was already occurring in early modern Russia could be said to have “speeded up” the historical process. Such an evaluation, however, would depend on whether that particular process continued on after the end of the reign of that particular ruler. It would also depend on what one means by “historical process”. If the historian means “Europeanisation” or “Westernisation”, then the answer might be one way. But if one means improving the state of affairs of the country in general, then one might answer differently.

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Professor Endre Sashalmi

Answers to Comments

KEYWORDS:

the king's two bodies, Petrine paradigm, integrity of the state, power discourse, political culture

The issues raised by the contributors commenting on my book vary as to their content and number, yet, as would be expected, quite a few of the themes they raise are mentioned by more than one of them. Therefore, in my response, while highlighting the particular remarks of each and every individual commentator, I combine this approach with thematic grouping to avoid unnecessary repetition.

I begin with the shortest commentary, the remarks of Professor Peter Brown, as the issues he raised do not require lengthy answers. His list of topics (“Why not bring in, for example, serfdom, caste tensions, non-Russians within the Muscovite polity, and details on Muscovy’s unique service-class system and its origin and procedures for recruitment, appointment, and promotion?”), which are indeed missing from the book,¹⁰⁷ would provide material for more than one volume. However, I do not see how these themes could contribute to examining the nuances of the perception of power and the state, beyond, of course, underlining the importance of the principles of service and deference required from the society as a whole, issues which are treated in the book. Brown stated that in the book “there are places requiring clarification”, but he provided only one example, concerning Russia’s place in the European system of states, asking: “For instance did he [Sashalmi] really mean that Russia became integrated into the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia system?” Indeed, it would have been an error had I written that. My statement, however, referred not to the Westphalian but the Utrecht system. The sentences in question read: “By 1713 the European state system had become more integrated geographically and institutionally (permanent embassies on the basis of parity with professional staffs came into existence), and it began to function according to new principles. The legitimacy of the participants in this system was not deduced from tradition, which had been so important in Westphalia, but from reality: it rested on ‘rationality and not traditionalism’, which made possible Russia’s integration into it.”¹⁰⁸

Regarding Professor Lawrence N. Langer’s remarks, I shall refer, for the time being, only to his last point called “definitionalism”, because, to a great extent, it contains in a nutshell the other issues he raised for discussion. I examined the various terms historians have proposed to describe state structures existing in Western Christendom between the fourteenth and the early eighteenth century in order to ponder the relevance of these terms, firstly with regard to Western Christendom. By implication, these terms (such as the “fiscal-military state”,

¹⁰⁷ Except the topic of chancelleries – to which this remark was made: “Much more needs to be said about the Muscovite chancellery system” – an issue that will be commented on later in the text.

¹⁰⁸ SASHALMI 2022: 145.

“absolute monarchy”, etc.) require definition so that we know what phenomena to associate with them – and this is all the more important when Russia is compared with the countries/states of Western Christendom in applying the terms in question. These comparisons, of course, also have to be self-reflective, and the very same approach applies to the comparison of intellectual concepts.

Let me begin this analysis by responding to Professor David Goldfrank, who proposed an alternative interpretation of the *common good* for most of the Muscovite era, identifying its core issues as the protection and preservation of the Orthodox faith, the punishment of evildoers, and safeguarding the general order of society. In his view “Russia’s late medieval notion of the public good” was “fully consistent with the religious framing of Muscovite political doctrines, including Iosif’s [Volotskii’s]”, in which a prominent role was attributed (to quote Iosif himself) to “all of Orthodox Christianity of the entire Rus’-land”. In this sense the *common good*, in fact, comprised the duties the ruler was expected to fulfil. If I am not mistaken, in the Muscovite era these expectations were the very ideas subsumed in the term *pravda*, or the phrase *pravit’ v pravdu*. But *pravda*, which, for want of a better alternative, is generally translated as *justice*, in most of the Muscovite era meant the harmonious order of the world created by God, rather than legal justice as such. Hence, it was, by and large, synonymous with *vera*, i.e. *faith*.¹⁰⁹ However, the *common good* (*bonum commune/bonum publicum*), on the contrary, was used in Western Christendom in a secular sense referring to the just government of a political community. To be sure, the *common good* was first conceived in a static sense, i.e. something to be preserved. From the late-fifteenth century onward, however, *common good* was something to be promoted: if government complied with human positive laws and natural law, it served the common good. Therefore, to apply the same term, the *common good*, to Muscovite ideology, at least before the late seventeenth century, would in effect obscure the major difference between contemporary Western and Muscovite Russian perceptions of governmental power, as the latter was deeply embedded in theology, and lacked a legal and philosophical underpinning. Peter I’s use of *obshchee dobro/blago* in a secular sense, as a synonym of common good, which he rhetorically intended to serve and promote, reinforces my stand on this issue. With regard to the late seventeenth century, of course, there is no disagreement between us, similarly to the classification of Muscovy’s political system, if we wish to classify it in Aristotelian terms. Or, alternatively, we can use the description of Professor Nancy Shields Kollmann (whom I quoted on this point): in which the ruler was a “stern but fair, merciful and forgiving” father who “provided justice and order”, and who, above all, bestowed “providential blessing upon his people and his realm”, as a good shepherd.¹¹⁰ Concluding my response to Goldfrank’s remarks, he is right in saying that (to some extent) my book is a dialogue with myself: indeed, it ponders the possible ways of interpreting Russian notions of power and the state using methods through which

¹⁰⁹ See SASHALMI 2022: 32–33, 205–207.

¹¹⁰ SASHALMI 2022: 191, quoting KOLLMANN 1997.

similarities and differences can be measured and placed on the scales, and this dialogue also involves the interconnections between written and pictorial sources.

Following the thread of “definitionalism” within the realm of intellectual concepts, I must undertake a longer exposition with regard to Langer’s query whether “the western concept of the king’s two bodies and the Byzantine concept of *symphonia* [...] touch on a Christian historical continuum, such as the importance of a ruler’s piety”, and his criticism that I “too easily dismiss[ed] political theology associated with Iosif Volotskii, or with Metropolitan Makarii, or the *Book of Degrees (Stepennaia kniga)*”. It may be illuminative on this point to provide a critical assessment of Edward L. Keenan’s posthumously published lecture, *The Tsar’s Two Bodies*.¹¹¹ This lecture pertains to the heart of the argument I expounded in the book, i.e., the highly personal perception of ruling power and the state in Russia, or, to put it differently, the lack of or weakness of the distinction between the power of a given ruler and ruling power as such. In addition, it addresses the problem of whether or not “political theology” existed in Muscovite Russia. Let me summarise briefly Keenan’s argument, inspired by Ernst H. Kantorowicz’s book, *The King’s Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*,¹¹² in which Kantorowicz traced the origins and development of the doctrine advocated by lawyers of the late Tudor period, who made a distinction between the person of the king, i.e., his “body natural” on the one hand, and the impersonal rights of government he exercised due to his office, his “body politic”, on the other. In presenting Keenan’s approach, to be as faithful to his argument as possible, I will quote extensively from his text.

“One extension of this doctrine not extensively developed by Kantorowicz but inherent in the English version was that the Parliament and Courts of the crown and all of their agents were members of the king’s body politic.¹¹³ The necessity for such a conceptual extension of the king’s body was of course most obvious when the king in body natural was indeed a child, an imbecile, or otherwise incapacitated, but it was a neat rationalization as well of the reality that in a developed state even the functions specifically reserved to the royal person, such as justice, could not be exercised by the king himself, and were carried out by his agents – the members of his body politic – in his name and hence, legally, by him... Now, by the middle of the 16th century Muscovy was such a state, and although I am unaware that such matters were discussed in the terms that were used in the west, one may perhaps speak of the two bodies of the grand prince *de facto*, one painfully infirm and the other – the king’s courts and ministers – remarkably strong and vigorous.”¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ KEENAN 2017: 3–28.

¹¹² KANTOROWICZ 1957.

¹¹³ Quoting a short passage from the introduction of Kantorowicz’s book, Keenan states that the “general acceptance” of the ideas encapsulated in the legal doctrine of the king’s two bodies, “permitted Parliament, in 1642, to declare that ‘the Court and Ministers are the King’s body politic and must do their duty therein, although the King (meaning Charles I) opposes them’”. KEENAN 2017: 18.

¹¹⁴ KEENAN 2017: 19–20.

In the footnote pertaining to this statement Keenan raised the question: “if such was the case, how can it be that no articulation of any Muscovite version of the ‘two bodies’ theory seems to have survived – or existed?” And immediately added:

“I can only plead, in defense of my admittedly evasive treatment of ‘Muscovite ideology’ that: 1) the provenance of most of the sources involved is still insufficiently established; 2) it is not clear what effects the notions traditionally associated with ‘the school of Makarii [metropolitan of Moscow]’ had upon the thinking of those who were in charge of the Muscovite state at the time; and 3) the whole matter of the ‘Muscovite state theory’ is too complex and problematic to be included in this brief presentation of what are matters of reality, not conceptualization, albeit presented with reference to Kantorowicz’s scheme.”¹¹⁵

While, as we can see, Keenan elegantly put aside a discussion of the nature of “Muscovite state ideology” – a phrase which I refrained from using in my book, precisely because the concept of state did not exist during most of Muscovite history, unless we use the term *state* with a very general meaning. This long paragraph of Keenan’s eloquently shows the very heart of his approach, as well as the problems with it. Besides the missing discussion of “Muscovite notions of power” (to use my own phrase), he underlines, by his use of italics that he speaks of a *de facto* “body politic”, a position he reinforces with the end of the last sentence quoted, namely, that he is dealing with “matters of reality, not conceptualization, albeit presented with reference to Kantorowicz’s scheme”. No doubt, many examples of *de facto* government by persons instead of by the legitimate ruler – due to the mental and/or physical incapacities of the ruler – could be cited from the histories of various countries from various ages, although this would not help very much to understand the differences of views on governmental power across ages and cultures. However, “Kantorowicz’s scheme” is the discussion of the legal issue of relationship between the *individual* ruler and the *office* held by a ruler – an issue that is plainly apparent in the laconic statement by the parliamentary army, “We fight the king to protect the King”, meaning their fight against *king Charles I as an individual* was intended to protect the *King of England, i.e. the office of kingship*.¹¹⁶

To conclude on this point: Keenan admitted that he shifted the focus of “Kantorowicz’s scheme”. The discussion of the peculiarities of the “king’s two bodies”, the “body natural” and the “body politic” (“the legal doctrine, particularly explicit in English law”, as Keenan put it) as well as the relations between the two, were part of an *intellectual discourse* – they were both part of what is called *governance*, or *theory of government*. Keenan attributed great importance in the Muscovite context to the work done by the *duma secretaries (dumnye diaki)* – who represented continuity in and through the different stages of Ivan IV’s life and even after his death, and as such were a crucial element of state administration, embodying immortality of a kind. However, when he extended the concept of the “body politic” to the

¹¹⁵ KEENAN 2017: 19, footnote 135.

¹¹⁶ KANTOROWICZ 1957: 21–22.

field of *government in practice*, he veered into an interesting intellectual venture, which nonetheless *goes against the very essence of Kantorowicz's exposition*. For what Kantorowicz expounded in his magisterial book, substantiated by a legion of primary sources, was how the relationship between the *king* and the *concept of kingship* changed over time and developed from what he called “Christ-centred kingship” based in liturgy, into “Law-centred” and later “Polity-centred” kingship at the hands of lawyers trained in Canon Law and Roman Law. In other words, he traced how the legal idea of the crown (*corona regni*), the crown as a corporation, encompassing the totality of rights of governance detached and distinct from the person of the ruler, and even standing above individual interests, developed.¹¹⁷ In doing so Kantorowicz showed how theological metaphors and allegories (e.g. Christ as the bridegroom of the Church and the Church as his bride) were used by lawyers to describe and elucidate secular relations between the king and the kingdom.¹¹⁸ This is what he (and I, in his footsteps) meant by *political theology*: the use of theological concepts for secular purposes. Although other interpretations of the concept of political theology also exist, in the sense I employed this term there was no political theology in Muscovy. Therefore, on the basis of the reasoning expounded here, my final and overall conclusion concerning the usefulness of the “king’s two bodies” and “political theology” in the Muscovite era is that they cannot plausibly be seen “on a Christian historical continuum, such as the importance of a ruler’s piety”.

Although it was unknown to me and therefore not used in the book, one small section of my work nevertheless shows a distant parallel with the issue Keenan raised in his lecture regarding his approach to the Muscovite “body politic”: namely, whether a certain level of a government/state apparatus could have conceptual consequences. This is the theme of some pages in my book dealing with the missive sent by the monk Avraamii in 1696 to Peter I, which represents an interesting mixture of traditional and new ideas on the tsar’s duties. The way Avraamii used the word *gosudarstvo* in his missive, that is, in a sense close to the meaning of *state*, is all the more interesting, as he had been an official in one of the biggest Muscovite chancelleries before he became a monk.¹¹⁹ He reproached Peter in the following manner: “Having abandoned any kind of government of his state (*pokinuv vsiakoe pravlenie gosudarstva svoego*) he ordered that it be governed by a [...] bribe-taker, who just wants to get rich.”¹²⁰ In his missive he also complained about the growth in the number of officials in the chancelleries: in fact, the figure rose more than threefold between the 1640s and the

¹¹⁷ What stood behind the doctrine of the King’s Two Bodies was, quite simply, the concept of the crown, which had already developed in England and Hungary and elsewhere in Western Christendom by the early thirteenth century.

¹¹⁸ Keenan himself wrote of Kantorowicz’s work that it described “the efforts *within the secular law* to separate the *property rights of the crown as a corporation* from the *rights of the natural king*; [...] the attempts of *lawyers and philosophers* and statesmen to justify the dynastic fictions required by the contradiction between the physical realities of death, minority and incapacity in royal families and the politically necessary fictions of charisma and continuity” KEENAN 2017: 18. Emphasis added by E. S.

¹¹⁹ This is one of the many themes dealing with chancelleries in the book. For a more characteristic example see the theme of petitions and the Petition Chancellery. SASHALMI 2022: 274–276.

¹²⁰ SASHALMI 2022: 334.

1690s.¹²¹ I contended that there was a link between Avraamii's novel use of *gosudarstvo* and the bureaucratisation of the central government: the encounters with the state, in the sense of the state apparatus, became more tangible and the state became, so to speak, more visible. In this way the *practice of government* could have an effect on the *ideas of governance*, especially in the centre of administration. However, that would be only half of the story at best: the period of over a hundred years which separated Ivan IV's reign from Avraamii's missive is crucial, as the intellectual climate was changing in the second half of the seventeenth century. Employing Professor Daniel Rowland's formulation, I called the 1660s–1690s the “decades of fermentation”.¹²²

Avraamii's case also provides an illustrative example of what Professor Carol B. Stevens emphasised in her contribution, drawing attention to the impact of political events on Russian notions of power, or simply to those occasions when communities encountered the state directly and experienced its impact “on their daily lives” as well as “the practical functioning of their ruler's government” – an issue also raised by Langer, who formulated this problem laconically by noting that ideas on power did not exist in vacuum. With regard to Western Christendom, Stevens alone among the commentators discussed at length the interdependence of political ideas and what in hindsight can be called government practice, highlighting not only institutions but also the “challenges and confrontations” which took place over some centuries in the “West”. She stated, and rightly so, that the “social and institutional confrontations impelled a more exact delineation of the prerogatives of kings and definitions of the state, among other things, and these more precise ideas were expressed in a context of law and legal understandings”. Indeed, she neatly encapsulated the message of my argument in this sentence. Neither the timing of the publication of Bodin's (1576) nor Hobbes's work (1651) was a happenstance (just to mention the two landmarks of Early Modern state theory), the French Wars of Religion (1562–1598) and the Religious Wars of the British Isles (1640–1660) being the backgrounds, respectively. Following this thread, it was quite logical for her to ask: “If not through the same mechanisms as western Europe, then what impelled the fundamental transition in Russian political thought, beginning perhaps in 1650, but significantly gathering importance with the reign of Peter I?” By referring to “challenges and confrontations”, her terminology aptly characterises the various examples she gives as factors contributing to changes in Russian notions of power. Certainly, I agree that the impact of the Time of Troubles (1598–1613) was great, which is why I took it into consideration in my book, among other events, in connection with the appearance of a distinction between *gosudar* and *gosudarstvo*.¹²³ This phenomenon, as I have shown, was also reflected in the wording of the 1626 oath of loyalty to the tsar, which became a model for the rest of the century. Her other examples are, likewise, well-chosen, and would deserve further analysis. Without mentioning all of them, particularly notable are the Moscow revolt of 1648, which resulted

¹²¹ See details in SASHALMI 2022: 334–338.

¹²² SASHALMI 2022: 92, 327–339. Rowland used the phrase “ferment and innovation” for the years of 1645–1700; ROWLAND 2007: 273.

¹²³ SASHALMI 2022: 224–228.

in the 1649 Law Code called *Ulozhenie*; and the conflict between Tsar Alexis and Patriarch Nikon, which led to the appearance of the “two powers theory” in the debate, a doctrine which went against the idea of harmony inherent in the symphony between the tsar and the church and therefore signalled a break. I also dealt with this last issue in my book, although not in the framework of “challenges and confrontations” – a perspective which could be a fruitful venture if applied to the 17th century taken as a whole. Especially salient would be the addition of a further dimension she pinpointed, that of how local issues became countrywide issues, and how they eventually conflicted with established notions of rulership. The Law Code of 1649 is, in fact, a very good example of this. It suffices to mention the slight shift in the meaning of *pravda* towards *legal justice* in the *Ulozhenie* on the one hand, and the fact that many issues addressed in the Law Code originated from local initiative on the other. It is true that Muscovite society was not passive, yet mechanisms for the articulation of local interests were not institutionalised apart from the right of petitioning, as the *zemskii sobor* (which was not like the assemblies of estates in Western Christendom) was an occasion for gathering information or to calm unrest.

The major issue for several of the discussants is what can be called the “Petrine paradigm”, to use Professor Russell E. Martin’s phrase. This was practically the only theme of Professor Donald Ostrowski’s study-length commentary (which can be regarded as an afterthought on his book, *Russia in the Early Modern World. The Continuity of Change*),¹²⁴ while others (Martin, Stevens, and Langer) also devoted considerable space to it. Martin pondered the “Petrine paradigm” from two angles: an assessment of Peter’s reign within the flow of Russian history on the one hand, and the problems it entails for periodisation, concerning the use of the labels “early modern” and “modern” for Russia on the other. These two themes, but predominantly the first one, comprise the essence of Ostrowski’s contribution to the present discussion. As a preliminary remark to Ostrowski’s and Martin’s contributions, I have to mention that I deliberately refrained from using the term “early modern Russia” in the book, nor did I use the phrase “modern Russia”. This is not because I did not consider the “early modern” label to be applicable to Muscovite and Petrine Russia, but because it would have taken me on a tangent into another historiographical (and possibly book-length) problem. I have touched on some aspects of this question in an article which has been published in the journal *RussianStudiesHu*,¹²⁵ therefore I will not engage in this discussion here. Let me just mention that I would date “early modernity” in the context of Russian history beginning only from the 1650s – I accept 1801 as its end – and I ask readers to read my article to become acquainted with my arguments.

I would rather address here briefly the problem of continuity and discontinuity/change. A prefatory note may be in order here regarding Ostrowski’s reference to the subtitle of my book, namely, his view that one should assess the impact of a ruler’s reign only “after the reign was over”, a point he also mentioned in his published review.¹²⁶ To put it very briefly, I

¹²⁴ OSTROWSKI 2022.

¹²⁵ SASHALMI 2025.

¹²⁶ OSTROWSKI 2023: 1063.

think that a relevant perspective of the assessment in the case of Peter I may not only address the post-Petrine era but also pre-1700 Muscovy, a perspective which, in fact, appears in both Stevens's and Langer's contributions.¹²⁷

Regarding the assessment of a reign in terms of continuity and change, Ostrowski proposed three "parameters", namely, "1. duration; 2. depth; and 3. originality".¹²⁸ He started his well-documented commentary with the same time span I adopted, i.e. beginning with the reign of Ivan III (1462). Interestingly, none of the commentators who made remarks on chronology, including Ostrowski, mentioned Professor Paul Bushkovitch's book on Russian succession, which used almost the same chronological frame as mine (and even contains the label "early modern"), *Succession to the Throne in Early Modern Russia. The Transfer of Power 1450–1725*.¹²⁹ I quoted from Bushkovitch's book on many occasions, because he discussed the topic of succession within a very broad intellectual framework. Furthermore, on many points there are striking similarities between his and my views: e.g. the lack of genuine political thought in Muscovy.¹³⁰ I mention only this aspect because it is the one most closely related to Ostrowski's introductory comments, stating that I justified my "anticipated" assessment of the period ca. 1700–1725 on two grounds: 1. by emphasising "the significance of the change that occurred in Russian thought on power both in texts and iconography in a short time", highlighting, at the same time, "the problem of reception of Western ideas"; and 2. by adopting "a *longue durée* approach in understanding some aspects of Russian political thought and political vocabulary even as late as the twentieth and twenty-first centuries".¹³¹ However, none of these issues, which are indeed integral to my argument, are discussed in Ostrowski's contribution; to be sure, the book, as the title suggests, is on the Russian perception of ruling power. Ostrowski, however, focused on various other aspects that I touched upon only in passing, or not at all. Therefore, for the most part, I have to pass over his detailed and eloquent exposition without comment, although I think it could be a good starting point for a new discussion on the role of Peter the Great in Russian history. Nevertheless, I do not want to leave the core problem unanswered. Of course, I also made some definitive statements regarding a few aspects of Peter's reign other than those which can be subsumed under the term ideology of power, and whether his rule, taken as a whole, constitutes a turning point, or simply the continuation of trends (the latter opinion is advocated by Ostrowski). I remain committed to my view, while allowing, of course, that there can be other assessments of Peter's reign, placing emphasis on fields other than the ones I dealt with in my book.

¹²⁷ See these later in the relevant footnote.

¹²⁸ While I completely accept the first two parameters as crucial in assessing significant change, I do not think that the "originality" of a certain measure, in the sense that it is an invention of the person introducing the given measure, should be a decisive parameter. No doubt, most of Peter's "reforms", as they are usually called, came originally from Sweden, Denmark and Prussia, but they were novel in the Russian context. Furthermore, two other parameters might be worth considering to spur a further discussion: the *massive use of force* to achieve the intended effect on the one hand, and the *rapidity* of implementation on the other.

¹²⁹ BUSHKOVITCH 2021.

¹³⁰ I quoted him approvingly and extensively on this point in the book. SASHALMI 2022: 21.

¹³¹ These sentences are quotations from my book.

To formulate very briefly my standpoint on the “Petrine paradigm”, I completely agree with Martin’s interpretation of my book, namely that Peter I’s reign between ca. 1700 to 1725 is a landmark, and “Peter was, indeed, an important inflection point in Russian history; that the discontinuities between Russia before and after Peter self-evidently outweigh whatever continuities” can be identified¹³². As I put it plainly in the book: “I am not to say, of course, that ‘everything began with Peter’”.¹³³ But there was no return to the Muscovite past,¹³⁴ a statement which, of course, does not invalidate continuities in various fields (e.g. the composition of the ruling elite at the time of Peter’s death, or above all what Fernand Braudel called “material civilization”). Furthermore, in response to Martin, I think that the issue of changes/continuities under Peter I should not necessarily be seen through the prism of the “early modern” – “modern” divide of Russian history, not least because these terms were coined for European history, covering roughly the centuries between the 1450s and 1789.¹³⁵

Remaining within the field of chronological comments, I continue with an answer to Martin’s remark concerning the inclusion of the epilogue discussing contemporary Russia – an answer that also touches upon Ostrowski’s “durability” parameter. My aim with the epilogue was, in the first place, to show the plausibility of the method called “serial contextualism” (coined by David Armitage)¹³⁶ tracing the history of the phrase *tselost’ gosudarstva* (“unity/integrity of the state”). This phrase, which Richard Wortman termed a “charismatic word”, in its Russian interpretation means more than merely the inviolability of the state’s territory (which is common to each and every state) since *tselost’ gosudarstva* is closely connected to autocratic power, as Wortman has shown, presenting its history from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century.¹³⁷ Moreover, it has become the core of the “Russian state narrative”.¹³⁸ Regarding the history of this “charismatic word” I clearly stated that the main body of my book ends precisely where Wortman’s begins, that is, with Peter I. At the same time, in

¹³² I agree completely with the final section of Langer’s comments, comprising a little bit more than one third of his whole text, as it confirms my contention regarding the impact of Peter I on the course of Russia’s history. At the same time, Stevens’ comments (e.g. on the difference between pre-Petrine and Petrine map making, the latter reflecting the territorially-minded perception of the realm) also support my position. Martina Winkler has recently published an important biography of Peter, which there is not space to discuss here but which has a lot to say on the ongoing debate on Peter’s role and his reign in the context of Russian history. WINKLER 2024.

SASHALMI 2022: 26.

¹³⁴ For a cursory exposition of the various fields where crucial changes took place and which pertain to Ostrowski’s “depth” parameter, see SASHALMI 2022: 24–28. Many other issues could be added: e.g. the appearance of a socio-cultural rift between the lower strata of the population and the nobility above all; introduction of the poll tax which blurred the serf–slave distinction; conscription replacing military servitors as the source of manpower for the army; Russia’s becoming self-sufficient in producing iron and making armaments, and becoming the greatest producer of iron in Europe; the shift of Russia’s foreign trade towards Europe instead of Central Asia, etc. For military and military-related economic matters see SASHALMI 2024: 157–183.

¹³⁵ For other periodisations see my article: SASHALMI 2025. For the caveats against periodisation in general, and its implications for Russian history, see especially Nancy S. Kollmann’s comments. KOLLMANN 2010: 439–447. Indeed, a periodisation has to be “multilayered and self-reflective”. KOLLMANN 2010: 439.

¹³⁶ ARMITAGE 2012: 497–499.

¹³⁷ WORTMAN 2018: 159–181.

¹³⁸ See chapter 6 with the same title: *The Birth of the ‘Russian State Narrative’* SASHALMI 2022: 165–175.

the spirit of “serial contextualism” (and “durability”), I think it is justified to examine the importance of this phrase in some contemporary sources that Wortman did not analyse. Why? In Edwin Bacon’s opinion, as Marco Puleri quoted him, “in order to better understand a political system, we should pay close attention to the stories that its political actors tell about themselves and their system”. Puleri is right to claim that in Russia’s case “this entails mainly the need to reconsider the historical legacies coming from imperial and Soviet times”.¹³⁹ This statement applies directly to the “integrity of the state”, which is the core idea of the “strong state” narrative.¹⁴⁰

One last word on periodisation. My book concentrates on ideology and its expression in texts and imagery, and Martin rightly states that “periodization and the Petrine Revolution are given equal billing right on the cover of the book”. I suppose that his statement was motivated not just because the subtitle (“Assessing the Significance of Peter’s Reign”) is placed alongside the dates of 1462–1725, but also due to the iconography of the cover. If so, I must admit that its choice was quite deliberate! The frontispiece (Benjamin Patersen’s etching entitled *A Monument to Peter I, 1799*) serves as a paratext to my argument, showing the “Bronze Horseman” – the statue of the rider and the horse, although based on antique prototypes, is a characteristically early modern Western iconographic expression of rulership – and Neptune, the antique God of the sea, which is an allusion to Russia’s becoming a sea power (note that the depiction of pagan gods was forbidden by the Orthodox Church before Peter). At the same time, the Bronze Horseman erected by Catherine II (1782) is a *post mortem* assessment of Peter’s reign by the empress, and as such, a proof of the Petrine legacy in the eighteenth century.

Regarding Martin’s remark on the use of Keenan’s lengthy study, *Muscovite Political Folkways*,¹⁴¹ Keenan’s essay is, of course, an intelligent interpretation of Russian political culture and as such it has the advantages and at the same time the disadvantages/constraints characteristic of the genre. Indeed, the study may have deserved a reference in the book (especially because it goes beyond the Muscovite period) but as Keenan in this study did not analyse primary sources, I left it unmentioned. Moreover, in my view, Keenan understated the link between high and vernacular notions of power, which has been well documented by later historiography, first of all in the works of Maureen Perrie.¹⁴² However, some of Keenan’s categories that structure his narrative, e.g. “The Political Culture of the Muscovite Court”, and “The Political Culture of Muscovite bureaucracy”, are in fact reminiscent of a problem which can be called “the languages of power discourse”, an issue I pondered in the section of my book dealing with the “Prikaz notion of *gosudarstvo*”.¹⁴³ These two points are also answers

¹³⁹ PULERI 2020: 17.

¹⁴⁰ The criticism that the book ends with an epilogue focusing on contemporary Russia (the 1993 constitution of the Russian Federation and the presence of Petrine ideas in Putin’s rhetoric) came up in some of the reviews, while others, by contrast, welcomed it. Since this article is not about responding to published reviews, I do not cite them here. Regarding the importance of Peter’s image for Putin see also WINKLER 2024: 19–20, and also her “Conclusion” 449–452.

¹⁴¹ KEENAN 1986.

¹⁴² Among other works see especially PERRIE 1999.

¹⁴³ SASHALMI 2022: 312–339.

to Langer's similar observation concerning the analysis of "peasant, monastic-ecclesiastical, and court-bureaucratic cultures".

The languages of power discourse, and the issue of discourse itself in the narrow meaning used by the Cambridge School of intellectual history (which, in Martin's wording, "was not on the radar")¹⁴⁴ brings me to his questions: "[W]as there a need in pre-modern Russia for 'legal notions of sovereignty' or the 'state' before the eighteenth century? Did the Muscovites have their own versions of these western notions that worked just fine already?" These questions, indeed, are well-placed as they concern the key problems dealt with in the book, and, at the same time, relate to the "laconic character" of Muscovite ideology. Let me quote on this point Rowland, whose ideas have shaped my approach to a great extent:

"Although Russian thinkers were ignorant of the concept of sovereignty as a term in formal political discourse, if we were to ask who was sovereign in the Russian state, the only correct answer from any abstract or theoretical point of view, would be that God Himself was sovereign."¹⁴⁵

Formulations such as "The Tsar's heart is in God's hand", "There is no power but of God", are both biblical statements that comprise the very base of the Muscovite theological justification of power – this being not only the dominant but, by and large, the only conceptual language employed¹⁴⁶ – worked well not only in the Muscovite era but even later, in Petrine and post-Petrine Russia too. However, the conscious turn to the West, the new self-image of rulership on the one hand (ca. 1700), and the unintended effect of western ideas which could pose a threat to autocracy on the other, demanded new tools for its defence. At this point it is plausible to refer to Stevens' question: "What benefits did the prolonged retention of the political 'notions' of pre-Petrine Russia offer the functioning of that developing spatially-expansive realm?" In other words, how did the charismatic-theocratic perception of ruling power and the legal-rational definition of ruling power starting from the Petrine era co-exist?

Although the ruler became an *imperator* (from 1721), a person conceived as the source of law and the head of a bureaucratic government apparatus, he appeared in this guise mostly in the eyes of the westernised elite holding the most important posts in the army and the administration, while he remained *tsar*, the divinely appointed person, for most of the society. This was true not only for Russians but also for the various peoples of the constantly expanding multi-ethnic empire (probably with the exception of the peoples living in its western borderlands who, before their incorporation into Russia, had developed a different understanding of the ruler and rulership).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ That is why I called Muscovite ideas on power "monolithic", due to the lack of potentially rival ideas. SASHALMI 2022: 346–347.

¹⁴⁵ ROWLAND 2007: 278. In line with this he is also of the opinion that "terms like 'state' and 'sovereignty' are misleading" in the Muscovite context. ROWLAND 2020: 368.

¹⁴⁶ In Rowland's words, "the religious side of political thought was hypertrophied". ROWLAND 2007: 269.

¹⁴⁷ See, for instance, especially the case of the Kingdom of Poland which received a constitution in 1815!

The fact that the formula, “The Tsar’s heart is in God’s hand”, the very linchpin of the ideology of power, was recorded as a proverb in the seventeenth century (among many other proverbs of biblical and non-biblical provenance alike) is the best proof, in my view, of how the Russian Orthodox Church inculcated the basic tenets of ideology downwards through society. It is true, of course, that besides these laconic justifications of power there existed more sophisticated and literary justifications of power, such as the *Tale of the Vladimir Princes*, to name just one emblematic source. But even this text – which established the mythical descent of the Rurikids and hence of the Muscovite princes from Caesar Augustus through his mythical brother, Prus, and which was invoked in 1547 at Ivan IV’s coronation as tsar to justify this title – contains one of the first occurrences of the crucial premise: “The Tsar’s heart is in God’s hand”. Later on, it was enough simply to mention this legendary descent in short eulogising passages such as in the introduction of the seventeenth-century *Annals (Vremennik) of Ivan Timofeev*.

The problem referred to as the “model of notions of power” proposed by the Church – an issue similar to the one Langer raised regarding Volotskii and the *Book of Degrees* as “too easily dismissed” by me – in fact found ample expression in my book. There, I discussed Professor Sergei Bogatyrev’s interpretation of advice-taking, namely, that the Tsar and the boyars were conceived in the role of Christ and the apostles, respectively.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, the book contains a substantial exposition of the rather debatable idea of “symphony”: particularly its grandiose literary manifestation in the *Book of Degrees*, since (among others) it was “symphony” which comprised the structural principle of this work (as shown in Professor Gail Lehnhoff’s analysis).¹⁴⁹ Further, I traced its modification under the impact of the controversy between Nikon and tsar Alexis in the mid-seventeenth century. The idea of “symphony”, of course, could have been documented at more length in Muscovite sources, which, to be sure, are very scarce in this field. Let me quote on this point two lines from a very insightful article which has been published as part of a journal issue that I have edited together with Professor Ann Kleimola, and to which my article, mentioned previously, serves as an introduction: “Principles were, as a rule, not a matter of debate in Muscovite political culture. Experiences of crisis, such as the Time of Troubles or the conflict between Patriarch Nikon and Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, did, however, instigate pertinent fervent discussions.”¹⁵⁰ These topics are treated in some detail in the book.

Concluding my answer to the contributors (and addressing possible future readers of my book), let me note here that it is always the author who knows her/his own book the best in terms of “whys” (structure, topics included or excluded, didactical repetitions, etc.), but it goes without saying that it is perfectly natural that the “whys” can be different from the side of readers. This is the very nature of the phenomenon called “reception”.

¹⁴⁸ BOGATYREV 2000.

¹⁴⁹ LENHOFF 2005: 31–50. On Volotskii see SASHALMI 2022: 197–201, 203–210; on the *Book of Degrees* SASHALMI 2022: 191–197 and the numerous references elsewhere.

¹⁵⁰ PISSIS 2025: 98. These statements also underline the relevance of Stevens’ previous remarks.

I am very grateful to all who took part in the roundtable discussion, as well as the other scholars who wrote reviews of my book,¹⁵¹ and who are renowned authorities in the field of “early modern Russia”, that they took the time to read and comment on my work. Many thanks to Professor Eve Levin for being the moderator of the roundtable in Boston as well as for her hard work with editing. Once again, I cannot be grateful enough to Ann Kleimola whose continuous help made it possible for me to publish this book. Although many issues raised in the reviews surfaced during the roundtable discussion, and perhaps many remained unanswered even here, I consider the publication of the roundtable proceedings to be a fitting coda to the intellectual response my book evoked.

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