English abstracts

Writing and Rewriting Russian History. From Ivan the Terrible to V.O. Kliuchevskii (1547-1917), edited by Pierre Gonneau and Ecatherina Rai.

Part I. Historical Constructions and Schools.

-Antiquity, Sanctity and Eschatology: At the Sources of Russian History

LENHOFF, Gail (University of California, Los Angeles). “The Book of Royal Degrees, or Hagiographical Rewriting of History (1555-1563)”.

This article focuses on the Book of Degrees treatment of Fedor Rostislavich († 1299), a prince from the house of Smolensk who founded the dynasty of Iaroslavl’, using a case study of one princely biography to illustrate the thematic choices and compositional challenges faced by the writers engaged in this project. Our analysis reveals an approach to history writing that was innovative in its context. Hagiographical stories, representing Fedor and other princes as model Christians and wonder-working saints, were treated as historical records with equal or greater documentary value than annalistic accounts of royal deeds. Select sources were extensively rewritten rather than mechanically copied. Certain revisions contributed to greater narrative logic and cohesion. Others reflected Orthodox dogma, Muscovite court etiquette and the political views of Ivan and his favored advisors.

PRIADKO, Eugène (Université Paris-Sorbonne). “The Historical Value of the Domostroi: or Russia Through the Prism of a Housekeeping book (c. 1560)”.

Because it is focused on domestic life, the Domostroi has a particular status among the sources on Ivan the Terrible and his time. It is used mainly for its informations on topics such as religious practices, popular superstitions, family relations, the place of women in society or food and drink. It is also often the target of ideologically-based criticism exposing the backwardness or the patriarchal structure of Russian traditional life. Still many methodological questions remain unanswered. The main one being : Is a normative text to be taken literally or does it provide an idealized picture ? This article tries to put the emphasis back on the question of textual tradition and the study of the different versions of the Domostroi. It elects the linguistic approach as the most promising way to classify the redactions.

TCHENTSOVA, Vera (Institute of Universal History, Russian Academy of Sciences). “Byzantine Eschatology and Historical Thinking at the Court of Alexis Romanov: Paisios Ligarides, Nicholas Spathar and Francesco Barozzi as Forerunners of Russian Messianism (1656-1673)”.

During the 1650s major Byzantine imperial relics were brought to Moscow to sanctify the Romanov dynasty. At the same time books of prophecies were translated into Russian to illustrate the filiation between Muscovy and great empires of the past. Such a manuscript was ordered by a Venetian astronomer and mathematician, Francesco Barozzi, and decorated by a Cretan painter, George Klontzas, at the end of the 16th C. It was translated into Russian by Nicholas Milescu (a.k.a the Spathar) in 1673. This article shows that the Greek original from
which it was translated is not, as it was considered until now, a collection of oracles, known as the *Chrēsmologion*, compiled by Paisios Ligarides, metropolitan of Gaza and guest of the Russian tsar (1656).

SASHALMI, Endre (Pécs University). “Writing and Painting Russian History: Griboedov’s *History of the Tsars and Grand Princes of the Rus’ Land* and the Icon *The Planting of the Tree of the Muscovite State* (1668-1669”).

In the second half of the 1660s there was a strong effort in Muscovy to buttress the legitimacy of the Romanov dynasty. Visual and written representations of Russian History aimed at describing the ruling tsar Alexis (1645-1676) and his family as saintly princes and worthy successors to the Rurikids. In 1668 the icon *The Planting of the Tree of the Muscovite State* was painted in the Kremlin workshop by Simon Ushakov, and by 1669 a short chronicle, the *History of the Tsars and Grand Princes of the Rus’ Land*, was finished by Fedor Griboedov. Although both works were greatly influenced by the *Book of Royal Degrees* of the early 1560s, they show a significant ideological shift, from the Byzantine concept of “symphony” between Tsar and Church to a new vision stressing the dominance of the sovereign.

BOYTSOV, Mikhaïl (Moscow High School of Economy). “Constructing a Useful Past : How Alexander the Great, Augustus and Constantine Became Historical Patrons of Moscow (15th-17th c.)”.

In the 15-17th centuries, Muscovy as an emerging great power, needed a “new past” in order to help legitimize the ruling dynasty and its expansionist projects. Muscovite bookmen showed unexpected creativity in seeing to it that three of the greatest ancient emperors appear as having bestowed on their sovereign a symbol of power. Having had Alexander the Great grant a charter of privilege to the “Moschi”, they went on to assert the Muscovite princes were of Roman imperial descent as Octavian-Augustus was their remote forbear (*Tale of the princes of Vladimir*), and then to unearth would-be imperial *regalia* bequeathed by both Augustus and Constantine the Great to the Muscovite rulers (*Epistle about Monomach’s crown* by Spiridon-Sava, *Tale of the white cowl of Novgorod*). The narratives produced in evidence to that imperial legacy are exclusively based on ancient Greek or Roman sources, which leaves one to wonder why their authors or compilers have totally ignored other traditions outside the Roman-Byzantine sphere.

-Men and Women Historians, Historical Methods-

LAVROV, Aleksandr (Université Paris-Sorbonne). “Was Vasilii Tatishchev the « Russian Mabillon », or a Forger ? *The Ioakimovskaia letopis ’* in *Istoria Rossii* (c. 1748-1750)”. Joachim’s Chronicle or *Ioakimovskaia letopis ’*, one of the lost sources used in Tatishchev’s *History of Russia*, has often been suspected of being a fake. This article shows that it has undisputable connections with printed 18th C. works such as *Das Nord- und Östliche Theil von Europa und Asia* by Philipp-Johann Strahlenberg (1730). As a result, Tatishchev appears as the forger, whose aim was to produce evidence, albeit fabricated, in support of the Norman origin of the Rurikid dynasty and of his own theory that the Orthodox Church had been a violent and intolerant force from its earliest stages ever since the conversion of Novgorod. Following the pattern of explanation provided by Swedish “Gothicism” of the 16th-18th C., Tatishchev introduced the Varangians as the mythical Nordic ancestors of the Russians. His “Normanism” was first and foremost an instrument to integrate Russian history into the broader context of Northern Europe.

KOSHELEVA, Olga (Institute of Universal History, Russian Academy of Sciences). “When Russian History Becomes Textbook Matter (17th - 18th C.)”.
The emergence of Russian history as a subject was progressive and slow. The Synopsis, printed in Kiev in 1674, was the first textbook on Eastern European history ever written and was to remain the only one in use in classes for another century as school alphabets of the 1680s did not provide for history lessons. Under Peter the Great the only history which was considered worth teaching was that of Antiquity. Finally, in 1760, Lomonosov's Short Russian Chronicle replaced the Synopsis. Catherine II ordered a new textbook, but it did not come out before 1799. Only at the beginning of the 19th C. could Russian History obtain recognition as a proper academic subject.

VIELLARD, Stéphane (Université Paris-Sorbonne). “Ivan Snegirev’s Views on Russian History in The Russians through their Proverbs (1831-1834)”.

Between 1831 and 1834 the Russian linguist Ivan Snegirev published the 4 volumes of The Russians through their Proverbs. Before him N. Karamzin had stressed the importance of proverbs as auxiliary sources of History. While acknowledging his debt to Karamzin, Snegirev developped his own paremiological analysis. In Book 4 an entire section is devoted to “historical proverbs”. Not only did Snegirev compile thematic lists, but he also set the sayings in an anthropological perspective. Under the Soviet regime, his work was condemned as “nationalist” and forgotten. Nowadays it can be reexamined in a new light as a worthy part of the heritage of Russian historical anthropology.

BOHN, Thomas (Justus-Liebig University, Giessen). “Historicism or Historical Sociology? Karamzin’s, Solovev’s and Kliuchevskii’s Historical Method (1816-1910)”.

The paper looks into the degree of compliance of Russian pre-revolutionnary historiography with 19th century German historicism on the basis of its three fundamental works: Karamzin’s History of the Russian State (1816-1829), Solovev’s History of Russia from the Earliest Times (1851-1879) and Kliuchevskii’s Course of Russian History (1904-1910/1921). Although all three Russian historians did follow the prescribed historical method in all its stages - heuristics, criticism and, finally, interpretation-, the theory which shaped German historiography found little resonance among them because from the outset their main interest resided in the laws of history. They did however successfully take the turn from an individualising, politically- and legally-oriented historiography to a collective social and economic one.

RUSTEMEYER, Angela (University of Vienna). “Jurists as “Autobiographers of the State” in the Late Russian Empire”.

History writing in late imperial Russia was only partially the work of historians. A considerable part of historiography dealing with the state and, more particularly, with what was considered as the policing of society, was produced by jurists. Historiography arising from within the organs of executive power or from circles close to them often showed signs of institutional self-description. This tradition was only temporarily interrupted when jurisprudence was abolished as an academic subject in early Soviet Russia. In 1917 the state’s autobiographers found themselves faced with a collapsed state. In order to reconstruct these experiences and their long-term effects, this paper comments on the works, the academic and non-academic activities, and the biographies of jurists in universities at the periphery of the Russian Empire during its last decades.

KAPPELER, Andreas (University of Vienna). “First Women Historians in Russian Empire (c. 1870-1917)”.
Russia’s first women writers appear at the end of the 18th C., the most famous of them being Empress Catherine II. A century later, although higher feminine courses are created – mostly for women from the upper classes - (1869-1872), women cannot obtain the equivalent of men’s degrees until 1910-1914. Nevertheless about a dozen female historians succeed in acquiring a reputation in the field. Most of them come from relatively privileged backgrounds and are wives, daughters or assistants to a professor, under whose protection they make their debut. As a majority they have studied either abroad or at higher feminine courses. This article attempts an overview of the female side of the historical profession in pre-revolutionary Russia and looks into the biography of one of the most successful woman historian of her times, Aleksandra Jefymenko (1848-1918).

NETHERCOTT, Frances (University of S. Andrews). “Vasilii Kliuchevskii and His Literary Muses : the Historian as a Writer”.

Occupying a privileged place within Vasilii Kliuchevskii's rich 'laboratory of sources' were belles lettres. Fictional protagonists and plot provided him with original materials for charting social transformation, but also mentality and everyday life in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The socio-psychological portraits he created, particularly his portrayal of the changing moeurs of the Russian nobility, effectively integrated the provinces of literary imagination and historical enquiry, namely the personalizing, subjective view of the novelist/poet and the (putatively) distanced, more inclusive perspective of the historian. Focusing on his essays dedicated to Fonvizin, Pushkin, and Lermontov (written in the 1880s and 1890s), we explore the reasons for this conflation of literature and history in Kliuchevskii's work, together with the broader questions it raises about the nature of university-based historical writing in the late 19th C., an age dominated by the positivist, 'scientific' paradigm with which Kliuchevskii is more usually associated.

Part II Dramatization and Moralization: Heroes and Staging of History

-Great Figures of the Russian Past


The article shows that the style, structure and thematic content of the tale of princess Ol’ga’s baptism in the Tale of the Bygone Years are directly patterned after certain religious services in the Byzantine Orthodox liturgical tradition, particularly the major Feasts of the Theotokos and the Nativity of St. John the Forerunner. The hymns and canons about Mary and St. John the Baptist are, quite literally, supplying the phraseology and story line for Ol'ga's conversion, baptism and burial in the chronicle. This suggests a new model for understanding (at least some of) the narratives in the Povest’ vremennykh let. They arise from a monastic mentality which privileges liturgical schemes of history, schemes that function to accord Rus' the Biblical-liturgical status previously enjoyed by Old Testament Israel and the Christianized Byzantine Empire.

MOUCHARD, Florent (Université Rennes II). “Grand-Duke Vitovt of Lituania in Muscovite Historiography, or Family Fiend (1472-1544)”.

Grand-duke of Lituania Vitovt (Vytautas, or Witold, 1392-1430) was closely related to the Muscovite dynasty: he was step-father to Vasilii I and grand-father to Vasilii II. Yet, around 1472 Muscovite historiography started producing narratives describing atrocities which he supposedly committed against Russian principalities, the Golden Horde, and orthodoxy when
he took Smolensk (1395 and 1404), during battle on the Vorskla (1399), in his complicated relations with the schismatic metropolitan Gregory Tsamblak (1417-1419), or at the siege of Porkhov (1428). Between the 1480s and the 1550s the narratives underwent a series of subtle variations, from which emerged an archetypal character of villain, only saved from being devilish by his family connection with the ruling grand prince.

GARZANITI, Marcello (Florence University). “Maxim the Greek in 19th C. Russian Historiography. A Byzantine Orthodox Ulysses Facing the Sirens of Western Culture”. 19th-C. Russian historiography took great pains to diminish the significance of the Council of Florence in 1439, no matter how numerous the Russian delegation was, and relied almost exclusively on sources firmly rejecting the “Latin” seduction and the Union of Churches, ignoring documentation which expresses any form of interest for Western ways. In the Soviet era all display of opening to Western culture in this period was related to religious dissent and therefore construed as so many attempts to contaminate Russia with heresy. The figure of Michael Trivolis, or Maxim the Greek (c. 1470-1556) has suffered from the same biases. Until E. Denissoff (1943), a Russian émigré who converted to Catholicism, reconstructed his full biography in 1943, he was invariably presented as a champion of orthodoxy. In fact, before becoming an orthodox cleric, Maxim the Greek had been a novice in the San Marco Dominican convent in Florence and while living in Italy a convinced humanist. Now that new scholarly edition of Maxim’s complete works is in progress at the Russian Academy of Sciences, it is time to rediscover the complexity and richness of his legacy.

NIQUEUX, Michel (Université de Caen). “Ivan the Terrible and 19th-C. Russian Theatrical Censorship: a Tsar Under Surveillance”. The preventions expressed by 19th-C. censors while prohibiting the publication of a play on Ivan the Terrible or barring it from the stage, as well as the alterations the board prescribed when it authorized one help determine how the authorities intended that distant past to be portrayed. This study confronts for the first time censorship regulations, censors’ memoirs, and the correspondence of writers whose works had been banned or expurgated. The censor’s major preoccupation was to avoid arising or giving ground to any form of comparison between Ivan’s reign and their own time, especially with respect to ancient institutions such as the veche and the so-called “self-government” of the second half of the 19th C. As outcry or mockery in a theatre was deemed much more unsettling and dangerous than the disapproval of the enlightened reader, playwrights were allowed much less freedom than historians. Even during the liberal reign of Alexander II, the stage was watched very carefully and censors showed extreme pusillanimity.

EBBINGHAUS, Andreas (Julius-Maximilian University, Würzburg). “Interpretations of Boris Godunov in Russian Historiography and Literature: How a New Cain Turned into an Enlightened Monarch”. Boris Godunov’s political image underwent a number of different stages. One of the results of the canonization of the authentic tsarevich Dmitrii ordered by Vasilii Shuiskii on his accession in 1606 was that his death in Uglich (1591) could be reinterpreted as the assassination of a saint on Boris’s instruction. This in turn influenced the light in which the events of 1591 as well as Boris’ reign and death are shown in subsequent Muscovite and foreign sources. Most of them offer supposedly new facts which are often both totally unconfirmed and contradictory. This, of course, proved very misleading for historians, as can be seen in Nikolai Karamzin’s chapters on Boris in the History of the Russian State. For drama, and of course first and foremost for Pushkin, Boris proved on the opposite an all the more interesting character as historiographic material made it possible to construe him in
either as a cruel paranoid ruler on the model of Ivan the Terrible or as a reformist and a forerunner of Peter the Great.

RAI, Ecatherina (Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes). “Rewriting Stenka Razin’s Story : Sumarokov, an Amateur Historian”.
One of the first Russian studies about Stenka Razin’s revolt (1667-1671) was published in the middle of Emelian Pugachev’s upheaval (1773-1775) by the well-known poet Aleksandr Sumarokov (1774). Sumarokov, an amateur in the field of history, relied extensively on one source, a German translation of A Relation Concerning the Particulars of the Rebellion Lately Raised in Muscovy by Stenko Razin (first edition in 1672), but used only the information which served his purpose. His interpretation of revolt in this essay is the exact reflection of what he expressed in the poems in which he exposed Pugachev or in his earlier historical works about the streltsy revolt : in Sumarokov’s eyes mob rule is the end of all civilization and therefore repression is the only way of salvation.

LAUDIN, Gérard (Université Paris-Sorbonne). “Peter the Great, the Strelzi and False-Dmitrii in Late Enlightenment German Drama: Reforms or Barbarism”.
Thanks to books such as F. Chr. Weber’s Das veränderte Russland Peter the Great’s reforms were familiar to audiences throughout the Holy German Empire as early as 1721. Their interest for this country was kept alive during the entire 18th C. by accounts written by Germans who had travelled in Russia or served its crown. By the middle of the century, Russia had won its place on the stage as it offered a convenient setting for political and historical reflections. In the 1780s and the 1790s many playwrights took to setting their plots in Russia mostly in the age of Peter the Great, with a preference for the strel’cy revolt, or during the Time of Troubles. Tsarevitch Demetrius is indeed the hero of Schiller’s last work, which he undertook shortly before his death and left unfinished. The vast majority of those Russian plays are aimed at advocating enlightened monarchy and gradual reforms as a remedy to barbarism and mob rule.

-The Russian Land and its Frontier
GONNEAU, Pierre (Université Paris-Sorbonne). “Russia Under Siege. Tales of Siege and Obsidional Vision in Russian Historical Narrative Texts”.
Russian collective memory celebrates great defensive battles demonstrating the people’s capacity of resistance and their attachment to the national soil. Most frequently mentioned are the sieges of Sebastopol (1854-1855), Leningrad (1941-1944) and Stalingrad (1942-1943). However the prototypes of siege narratives date back to Old-Russian texts of the 11th - 17th centuries. Gradually, a grammar of the siege emerges as well as an image of Russia as a Christian land surrounded by Infidels. Siege narratives fall into three categories : a) the “heuristic siege”, where a clever ruse helps save a very compromised situation ; b) the “eschatological siege” where the besieged access to martyrdom by being slaughtered by the assailants; and c) the “heroic siege”, where the faith of the besieged and the protection of holy intercessors replace military skills in allowing them to surpass the limits of endurance.

KHODARKOVSKY, Michael (Loyola University, Chicago). “The Absence of Colonial Consciousness in the Russian Empire, or the Silence of Infinite Spaces”.
Whether liberal or conservative, Westernizer or Slavophile, the overwhelming majority of the 19th-century Russian intelligentsia maintained that Russia’s expansion avoided the violence associated with European empires and that the Russian empire was fundamentally benevolent towards its non-Christian subjects. Such line of thought continued throughout the 20th century,
except for two distinct periods: the 1920s and 30s, when official Soviet historiography condemned imperial Russia as an oppressive colonial empire, and the early 1990s, when, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the regional historiographies, suddenly liberated from Moscow’s censorship, exploded in an outburst of anti-Russian and anti-imperial literature. The main question remains - why, in contrast to other colonial powers, did Russia refuse to consider itself a colonial empire? In Asian parts of the empire the frontiers were as unclearly defined as they were fast moving. Drawing a distinction between metropolis and periphery was no easier task. The absence of a colonial consciousness seems to explain the quasi non-existence of a historiography among the non-Christian peoples of the empire.