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REFERENCES

Matthew P. ROMANIELLO, *The Elusive Empire. Kazan and the Creation of Russia, 1552-1671*. Madison : The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, 297 p.

- 1 The Volga River is now widely perceived as one of Russia's symbols; it has even come into the Russian folklore in the capacity of a great "Russian river". This is, however, rather recent development: in the middle of the 16-th century, which forms a starting point of Matthew P. Romaniello's book, the major part of the Volga basin was populated by non-Russians (Tatars, Mordvins, Chuvashes, Udmurts, and Maris) and controlled by two Muslim khanates, those of Kazan' and Astrakhan'. In his book Romaniello traces the process of integration of the Middle Volga Region into the Muscovite realm in the course of more than a century, from the conquest of Kazan' (1552) to Razin's revolt (1671).
- 2 Unlike his predecessors, Matthew Romaniello does not pay much attention to the conquest itself, i.e., to the Muscovite military success of 1552, which (in his view) was primarily of symbolic importance: "The conquest was swift in 1552", he contends, "but the construction of the most rudimentary structures of control over the new territory took a century" (p. 5). The crucial question is this: How could a poor state with very limited economic and administrative resources integrate a vast frontier area with alien multiethnic population? A comprehensive answer to this question constitutes the main substance of the book and, to my mind, makes a valuable contribution to the history of the Russian empire in its early formative period.
- 3 First of all, the author points out the advantage of Muscovy's geopolitical position on the eastern frontier where no strong enemy could challenge its hegemony in the region (p. 14). So Muscovite rulers had enough time for their administrative experiments on

the newly-acquired territory of the former Kazan' Khanate. Besides almost unlimited resource of time, the state also possessed different instruments of colonial rule ranging from building outposts and fortified lines to the integration of local elites into the tsar's service.

- 4 Defensive lines (*zasechnye cherty*), described in chapters 1 and 2, played a decisive role in pacifying the steppe frontier and turning it into a province of the stardom. It was only after the construction of the Arzamas line (1578) that the conquest of Kazan', as Romaniello rightfully observes, was really complete (p. 45). Later, in the middle of the 17-th century, another line, the Simbirsk one, was built, further to the south.
- 5 Chapter 2 provides a detailed account of the administrative system imposed upon the conquered land, from the Chancellery of Kazan' Palace (*Prikaz Kazanskogo dvortsa*) in Moscow down to local governors (*voevody*) and clerks (*d'iaki*). The author also enumerates monasteries and convents established in the Volga Region: the church institutions formed a parallel system of authority in the countryside.
- 6 Cooperation between the state and the Russian Orthodox Church in the process of colonization constitutes one of the leading themes of the book. While discussing the building of defensive lines, Romaniello mentions a contribution of monasteries, which shared the financial burden of construction in the frontier zone and whose walls became an integral part of the system of fortifications (p. 40-41). From chapter 3, which deals with foreign trade along the Volga River, we learn that the Muscovite government tasked local monasteries with construction of storage facilities for merchants and with collecting taxes from them (p. 93, 95). Interestingly, the church institutions could restrain their religious zeal when their interests as landowners were affected: as shown in chapter 5, the Russian Church often ignored its mission to convert local animist peasants to Christianity because, in case of conversion, the governor might reclassify and reassign those monastic peasants to an Orthodox military servitor (p. 148, 155).
- 7 In the long run, the success of integration of the Volga Region into the Muscovite realm depended upon collaboration of the local population. This issue is addressed in the last three chapters of the book. In chapter 4 Romaniello shows the ways of recruiting local elites (mostly Muslim) into the tsar's military service, while the next chapter traces the fate of different categories of non-Russian peasantry in the age of enserfment. The final chapter interprets the dramatic events of Razin's revolt (1670-1671) as a test of loyalty of the province towards the Muscovite state. Although several *voevody* and other resident administrators, personally involved in such unpopular measures as runaway peasants' investigations and resettlements of Mordvins, had been victimized by the rebels, the Muscovite order in the region as a whole stood this test. The revolt of 1670-1671, Romaniello concludes, "was proof of the success of Muscovite policies in the former khanate" (p. 195).
- 8 All these findings are based on archival research and seem well-grounded and convincing. However, some of the author's passing remarks and, partly, the terminology used in the book can be contested. For instance, Romaniello applies the term "composite monarchy" coined by J.H. Elliott, the famous historian of the Spanish empire,¹ to the late-fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Muscovy (p. 9, 17, 24). But, unlike Spanish or French kings, Muscovite rulers never tolerated any kind of local autonomy in the sense of self-government, representative bodies, etc. All the conquered lands, be it Great Novgorod or Kazan', found themselves under the direct rule of the tsar whose

powers in the region were delegated to a governor (*voevoda*). It is true that Muscovite administration could not properly function without cooperation with the tsar's subjects, and Romaniello is absolutely right when stressing the "elusive" character of the nascent Russian empire, which "was continually conditioned by compromises and accommodations with local interests" (p. 11). But while petitioning the tsar or local authorities, a servitor from Kazan' or Alatyry' pursued his own interests and not those of his social group or the whole region. Being absorbed by the Muscovite realm, the former Kazan' Khanate lost its individuality: Muscovite provinces as administrative units had no voice in negotiating with the imperial center. Therefore the term "composite monarchy" in the Muscovite context is misleading.

- 9 While comparing Muscovy to other European early modern states throughout the book (p. 9, 12, 17, 24, 53, 96, 103, 182, 213, 220), Romaniello also shares an opinion that Muscovite realm as a successor of the Qipchaq Khanate inherited most of the Mongol military and administrative structures (p. 3, 26). He goes even further to assert that "the Mongol legacy was more than enough reason to plan the annexation of the Khanates of Kazan', Astrakhan', and Sibir', reunifying the western Mongol Empire" (p. 22).
- 10 To begin with, this attempt to reconcile different scholarly traditions and to unite different patterns of state-building seems to me highly contradictory. What particularly "modern" was there in Kazan', Astrakhan', and other khanates that emerged on the ruins of the Golden Horde? Did these Muslim polities belong to the same type of state that took shape in early modern Europe? Any straightforward answers to these questions will be premature before the issue is thoroughly researched.
- 11 As for the Mongol legacy, there is no authentic evidence, as Charles Halperin convincingly showed, that Ivan IV or any other Muscovite ruler has ever claimed the legacy of Chinggis Khan; the tsar claimed entirely different descent, from Prus, the "brother" of Augustus Caesar, via Riurik.² So there is no reason to ascribe an ambitious plan of "reunifying the western Mongol Empire" to Ivan IV.
- 12 The origins of Muscovite political institutions, whether they were Byzantine, Mongol or local, is a very complicated issue and, despite a long-waged debate,³ remains still far from clarity. The hypothesis of their Mongol roots, put forward in particular by Donald Ostrowski,⁴ requires more solid substantiation. To be sure, Muscovites were well familiar with the steppe diplomacy and military tactics. But their chancellery system that evolved in the course of 16th and 17th centuries had little in common with administrative apparatus of Kazan' or Crimean khanates. And Muscovite tax system, as recent research suggests, in fact owed nothing to Mongols.⁵
- 13 But whatever objections might be made to the theoretical frame or historiographical ideas that underlie Matthew Romaniello's interesting book, they do not affect his main argument, which is coherent, well grounded in the sources, and persuasive. His *Elusive Empire* is a real achievement casting a new light on the periphery of the expanding early modern Russian state.

NOTES

1. J.H. Elliott, "A Europe of Composite Monarchies," *Past and Present* 137, 1 (November 1992): 48-71.
2. Charles J. Halperin, "Ivan IV and Chinggis Khan," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 51, 4 (2003): 481-497.
3. Matthew Romaniello provides a useful bibliographical introduction to this debate, see p. 218, notes 15 and 17.
4. Donald Ostrowski, "The Mongol Origins of Muscovite Political Institutions," *Slavic Review* 46 (1987): 525-542; idem, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304-1589* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).
5. See M.Iu. Zenchenko, "...Khotiat tatarove tamgi i desiatory (po povodu spornosti besspornykh mnenii o "tatarskom nasledii" na Rusi)," *Odissei: chelovek v istorii*, 2010/11 (M.: Nauka, 2012), 488-503.