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**Author's Subject:** new book: Bogdanov, Stikh torzhestva

**Date Written:** Fri, 2 Aug 2013 10:28:51 -0700

**Date Posted:** Sat, 02 Aug 2013 13:28:51 -0400

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A[leksei] P[etrovich] Bogdanov. *Stikh torzhestva. Rozhdenie russkoi ody posledniaia chetvert' XVII-nachalo XVIII veka*. 2 pts. Moskva: Institut rossiiskoi istorii Rossiiskoi akademii nauk, 2012. 676 pp. ISBN 978-5-8055-0235-5.

Anyone who has picked his or her way through the frozen swamps of late Muscovite history will inevitably have come across the footsteps left by the *valenki* of the prolific A. P. Bogdanov. For several decades he has been analyzing and publishing important writers and texts of the last third of the 17th century, his particular interest being political polemic (in its various forms) and the development of historical writing. We are in his debt for his attention to authors such as Ignatii Rimskii-Korsakov, Andrei Lyzlov and Silvestr Medvedev. There is a great deal to be learned from Bogdanov's substantial monographs that include *Ot letopisaniia k issledovaniiu: Russkie istoriki poslednei chetverty XVII veka* (M., 1995) and *Moskovskaia publitsistika poslednei chetverti XVII veka* (M., 2001). He is especially concerned with filling what he sees as a gap in the attention given to the late 17th century by historians or philologists who, he argues, have tended to undervalue the intellectual and literary accomplishments of that period in their haste to get on to Peter the Great and his heirs. Yet the thrust of Bogdanov's work is very much to reinforce traditional scholarship that emphasizes the processes of "modernization" or "westernization" even as he is making the case that much of the literature he analyzes should in the first instance be viewed as emerging from Russian (or more broadly East Slavic) roots rather than being the product merely of borrowings from abroad. Unfortunately, all too often Bogdanov's work has appeared in the limited print-run in-house editions of his Institute; either by necessity or choice, he has even produced some of the camera-ready copy (an experience not unfamiliar to this writer) and seems to have done a certain amount of what we might term self-publishing.

In the book under review, he makes provocative claims, at least some of which are not likely to withstand scrutiny. He asserts that the prevailing wisdom about the emergence of modern Russian poetry begins the story with Simeon Polotskii's introduction of Polish syllabic verse in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In this telling, the artificial imposition of a system based on Polish phonetics led to a dead end; a new beginning, again imitating foreign models, finally made possible the development of Russian poetry in the second quarter of the 18th century, thanks to Kantemir, Trediakovskii, and Lomonosov. The problem with this scenario, according to Bogdanov, is that it ignores the ways in which Russian versification was rooted in earlier East Slavic traditions, to which even Polotskii adapted. And in the compositions of Polotskii's immediate followers, Silvestr Medvedev and especially Karion Istomin, one can find the direct link to the classical "ode" in the 18th century. If previous scholarship thus leapt from "syllabic verse" to "syllabo-tonic" verse, Bogdanov feels he has discovered yet

another major category between them, "syllabo-rythmic" verse. Its most neglected exponent was Karion Istomin, who is the focus here.

Unfortunately, the only way Bogdanov can sustain this argument is by a very limited and often distortingly selective citation of the work of literary scholars, for whom he seems to have little but contempt: "filolog" and "stikhoved" are largely terms of opprobrium in his vocabulary. He claims they have so distorted the history of the origins of modern Russian verse that he has to wonder whether they have even read what they purport to be analyzing. And specifically in the case of Istomin, they have not bothered to check his original manuscripts, remarkably almost completely preserved. They have failed to appreciate the fact that the celebratory verses which are the focus here were intended to be read aloud; by reading them aloud and paying attention to the author's own accent marks, one can then appreciate the rythmic structures, which clearly show that this was not just slavish imitation of Polish versification.

Now much of this is but a caricature of what has been written for a long time on the Russian literature of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. One need but look closely at the work of the late A. M. Panchenko, whom Bogdanov but selectively cites, and that of the pre-eminent scholar of the Muscovite Baroque, L. I. Sazonova, whose important volume *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii: Rannee novoe vremia* (M. 2006) is not mentioned here. What the philologists need, Bogdanov claims, is the guidance of a historian, who will analyze the verses in a chronological sequence that contextualizes them. After his opening chapter on versification, which he then largely forgets, this what Bogdanov does in the rest of his book.

That approach is not without interest, as he presents what in effect is a kind of narrative of Istomin's public career as told through his panegyric verses. The text is structured around long quotations from them, where he interjects explanatory sentences of his own and places each in a the context of the political events surrounding the time when the verse was written. There is little in the discussion of the context to surprise us here—for the most part Bogdanov refers readers to his own work for details (leaving the uninformed reader to wonder whether anyone else has ever written much on the history of those decades). Oddly, despite the opening chapter promising analysis of versification, there is little such analysis of any of the verses once we move on into the chronological treatment of their writing. The main concern here seems to be to show Istomin's attitude toward his subjects and to illustrate the ways in which as an opportunist, he managed always to curry favor in the right places and thus avoid the fate of Medvedev, who was brutally executed for his alleged political proclivities.

Even though he quotes most of the verses almost in their entirety in his main text, Bogdanov also includes them as a welcome long appendix in the second part of his book, presumably for the most part replicating their publication he produced from the manuscripts in a rotaprint edition that can be impossible to find (*Pamiatniki obshchestvenno-politicheskoi mysli v Rossii kontsa XVII v.: literaturnye panegiriki*, 2 vyp., M., 1983). Yet, oddly, when he footnotes the texts he quotes, he refers readers to that edition but never to the relevant pages of the appendix in the current book. He stresses that for the most part he has published the texts from the

draft copies, not the parade versions that were produced for presentation, although he notes variant readings from them. And he insists that only by looking at the drafts in Istomin's own manuscripts (where the verses are interspersed with other materials that help explain their origins and intent) can one understand clearly the history of the texts.

In theory this should give us confidence in his work, but in certain cases (citing Bogdanov's earlier publications), Sazonova has raised doubts as to whether Bogdanov really understands the literary methods of Istomin and his peers (are we dealing with a single text in various redactions or multiple versions of texts where some of the parts overlap?), and she also raises questions about the accuracy of his transcriptions. Indeed, where I have been able to spot check, it seems her quotations from those manuscripts provide the more accurate readings. Apart from accuracy, his modernization of orthography (specifically in replacing the "iat'" with "e") is to her mind problematic, since for Ukrainian or West Russian pronunciation it makes a difference. Aware of her criticisms, Bogdanov dismisses them, but is unwilling to footnote her in the process.

Even if one accepts that Bogdanov's purpose here was a limited one, Sazonova's work has to raise questions about whether the "historical-chronological" approach is all that helpful if we would wish to understand the place of this verse in the court culture of late Muscovy. For, as she so well demonstrates, there is a complexity to that Baroque culture that in a sense requires a multi-disciplinary and thematic approach for us to fathom. One should not, she argues, rely merely on texts, where they were "performed" and where their visual accompaniment (for example, the use of emblems and symbols) may be even more important than the texts themselves. Since he has written, *inter alia*, on political imagery, one would think Bogdanov would have been more attentive to the visual culture than he reveals in this book. Also, given his emphasis that the poetry was intended for oral presentation, one might think there is more to performance than the fact that Istomin declaimed a particular piece when he presented it.

I come away from this book somewhat disappointed then. Quite apart from Bogdanov's having dismissed out of hand much of the relevant literature, the bulk of his exposition hardly supports his assertions about Istomin's importance and the quality of his work. In fact, one gains a much greater appreciation for that quality and interest from what Sazonova has to say in her analysis which places Istomin's opus squarely in the larger context of the late Muscovite Baroque but does not thereby suggest it is anything like a dead end. Excessive consumption of Istomin's panegyrics can lead to indigestion, I think; for in fact so much of this kind of verse written "na sluchai" is little more than doggerel. In reading what Bogdanov has to say about it, I come away thinking I have just read a review by a tone-deaf music critic who attended a concert devoted to the music of Salieri. Istomin may not be a Mozart, but he deserves better.

The culture of court panegyric is hugely important. At very least, Bogdanov's book will be useful for charting a path through some of it, and perhaps it will encourage someone to undertake a proper scholarly edition of Istomin's huge opus, of which the panegyrics and elegies (Bogdanov has separately written on and published some of those in his

\_Stikh i obraz\_ [2005]) form only a part. Certainly we need to look beyond the justly famous illustrated alphabet book which he produced for the education of Aleksei Petrovich. Indeed, that we have a uniquely "complete" personal archive for this important writer and educator opens many possibilities for deepening our understanding of late Muscovite literary culture and the advent of the Enlightenment in Russia.