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Karnaukhov on Renaissance Polish authors about Muscovy

by Daniel Waugh

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D[mitrii] V[ladimirovich] Karnaukhov. “*Russkie*” i “*moskovskie*” *izvestiia v trudakh pol’skikh istorikov vtoroi poloviny XV-nachala XVII vv. (istoriograficheskii aspekt)*. Novosibirsk: Izd-vo Novosibirskogo gosudarstvennogo pedgogicheskogo universiteta, 2014.209 pp. ISBN 978-5-00023-388-7.

This slim volume complements (and might well have introduced?) the author’s *Kontsepsiia istorii srednevekovoi Rusi v pol’skoi khronografii epokhi Vozrozhdeniia* (Novosibirsk: Izd-vo NGPU, 2010), which I have not seen. The author has obviously benefitted from several Polish grants to be able to work in Polish libraries; he relies in the first instance on careful examination and comparison of the early Polish and Latin editions.

The material here is organized into three chapters, the first providing a succinct introduction to his main authors and the history of the publication of their texts and then a review of modern scholarship about them. The main sources are Długosz, Mechovius, Wapowski, Kromer, Marcin and Joachim Bielski, Strykowski and Guagnini. Karnaukhov is well aware of the confusion regarding the role of Joachim Bielski in composing parts of the work attributed to his father. And he is also well versed about the questions raised concerning the Italian mercenary Guagnini’s evident plagiarism from Strykowski.

The long Chapter 2 traces systematically their treatment of the information pertaining to Rus, and is particularly valuable for its indication of the relationship amongst the various texts (where one can be documented) and other indications of the sources upon which the authors drew (Herberstein looms large in all the later works). This is not, however, an attempt to discuss all aspects regarding the accuracy of the texts. Even those which present little in the way of really new information are of interest for the way they organize and contextualize it—one can trace here a significant advance in the writing of history in Poland as the 16th century proceeded. In the first instance, the explanation for the degree to which the Polish authors paid attention to Rus and Muscovy is to be found in aspirations for territorial control and the fluctuating successes or failures in Polish relations with its eastern neighbors. That said, Renaissance “Sarmatian” ideas were important too in the treatment of the culturally different territories to the east.

The final chapter deals with Polish and Russian historiography relating to these texts, where naturally the closest attention to the “Russian” information they contain has come from Russian scholars. There are, of course, some rather substantial analyses by A. I. Rogov, B. N. Floria, N. I. Shchhaveleva, and others, all duly cited. However, what has been done to date is uneven in its focus; hence Karnaukhov’s attempt at a much more systematic analysis. The important thing to keep in mind is how influential some of the Polish authors were in the work of later historians. He makes little attempt to contextualize the Polish material on the larger canvas of foreign

accounts about Russia and thus does not cite possibly relevant Western scholarship. However, one has to admit that by and large that scholarship has paid too little attention to the Polish texts. Karnaukhov's work certainly provides a useful entry point for those who might be interested in filling that gap.

Even though O. N. Kashionov is indicated as the "nauchnyi redactor" on the title page, the book is "v avtorskoi redaktsii" and was formatted by the author. He writes well and should be read by anyone who studies Muscovy and is interested in the images of it created by early published narratives.