

Introduction

Readers may legitimately wonder what the value is in posting as a pdf file portions of a thirty-five-year-old dissertation. While what follows here may not fully justify the decision, I hope that these comments will place in context “The Muscovite Kuranty,” Chapter II of my dissertation on Muscovite *turcica*. I reproduce it from a xerox copy of the original typescript along with the table of contents and the first and third appendices, the one containing a discussion of terminology and the other the contract of the first Muscovite postmaster.¹

American and European traditions of Ph.D. dissertation publication have tended to differ. Today, here in Uppsala where I write, dissertations must appear as formally published books before they can be defended. The result is generally valuable, but some of the ones I have seen would have been improved by substantial editing, which might readily have been accomplished even in a few months’ work beyond the rigid deadlines that are imposed here for the completion of the Ph.D.²

At least at the time when I wrote mine in the 1960s, and to a considerable degree this is still the case, there was a clear understanding in the United States that dissertation and first published book are rather different things, often separated by a number of years, additional research and substantial rewriting. Dissertation prose alone should relegate most of those unpublished theses to oblivion, although unfortunately first academic books (and even second and third ones) do not always represent an improvement in readability. More importantly, the interval between dissertation and book generally has been understood to promise work of greater depth and breadth when it eventually appears.

Of course increasingly over the years, given the availability through University Microfilms of copies of American dissertations as soon as they had been defended, the dissertation has come to be treated as a published work. Today one can place an order, pay on-line and have a pdf file delivered electronically. The one exception to this immediate access was the dissertations produced at Harvard, which did not participate in the University Microfilms project and required that potential users of the work secure permission from the author before Harvard would make a copy. Thus many Harvard

¹ The material of the first appendix is cited in Stepan Shamin’s forthcoming, exhaustive review of the issue, “Slovo ‘kuranty’ v russkom iazyke XVII-nachala XVIII v.,” although there is little in his article which fundamentally changes my conclusions regarding usage in the 17th century. Note also that Elena Kobzareva wrote on the question of terminology in Ch. 2 of her dissertation, although some of her conclusions there need to be modified. My appendix IIc should be superseded by republication of the same text in the forthcoming Vol. VI of the *kuranty*.

² I might note here that my dissertation, the main part of which which was typed in Cambridge, Mass., while I was still in Leningrad in 1972, was never properly proofread before it was submitted in my absence. Thus the chapter reproduced here contains some mistakes, as a few handwritten corrections indicate. Other parts of the dissertation involving long quotations in multiple languages have much more serious problems, which I corrected by hand in the copies deposited at the Harvard Russian Research Center and sent to the Academy of Sciences Library. The Harvard archival copy lacks those corrections. Marina Tolmacheva did a very careful job of typing the Russian part of the appendices in Leningrad where I could check the result. By some miracle, they all made it through the diplomatic mails safely. If I recall correctly, I personally typed while in Leningrad the final version of the Dutch texts of Appendix IIb.

dissertations—perhaps this is a blessing—never saw the light of day; often they were not cited where they might well have deserved to be. Far from all of them ever were published in whole or in part as books.

My current undertaking is a rather belated effort to make available work which only partially appeared in print after the dissertation was submitted. At very least this will place the work in a now substantially enriched historiographic context. I have shared the unpublished material when others requested it, but such requests have been rare. In view of recent interest in some aspects of my subject, the dissertation is now being cited, even in Russia. But it is notably absent in some earlier Russian work to which it was relevant, even though I had deposited a copy of the completed work in the Academy of Sciences Library in Leningrad back in the early 1970s. Presumably few Russian scholars ever knew it was there, or, if they knew, American dissertation prose (I like to think it is English) defeated them. Moreover, even where some of the material has appeared in print, it is in journals or Festschriften which may be difficult to locate. The only way to make such work properly accessible is to place it on the Internet with open access, which I shall attempt to do in separate postings.

By and large, new studies (notably those by Stepan Shamin and Ingrid Maier) are rendering my old one obsolete, as should properly be the case in scholarship. The immediate stimulus to post the dissertation chapter is my project to write with Professor Maier a new and up-to-date study of the Muscovite *kuranty*, but it is safe to assume that completion of that project is still a year or two off. With a certain amount of diligence (facilitated by the fact that where possible she places her work on the Internet, accessible from her personal web page), a reader can access her contributions, which for specific texts have gone well beyond what I was able to accomplish in my research back in the 1960s.³ Hers are important contributions to the history of communications and the book; they also emphasize her major expertise as a linguist. Shamin's articles, which derive from and extend the work in his history dissertation, can also be obtained with a little diligence. I personally have benefitted by receiving copies directly from him. A selected bibliography including much of their work is appended below.

Of course my subject in graduate school was not just the *kuranty*, the Muscovite translations of foreign newspapers and newsletters. I was attempting to assess very broadly Muscovite writings about Islam and the Ottoman Turks, many of which were precisely the kind of pamphlet literature the translators of the Diplomatic Chancery rendered into Russian as part of their work on the imported news. Thus some of my *turcica* were to be found in the *kuranty* files, and others likely had originated in that milieu. Although it was a survey of rather disparate texts, the dissertation had a guiding theme and a broadly European comparative perspective, even if my interpretive framework today would seem to be a quite retrograde. The word "orientalism" never appears, although I was careful to note how the texts were biased and generally were intended as anti-Muslim or anti-Turkish propaganda. Remember, I was writing well before Edward Said's *Orientalism* appeared. Post-colonial studies, subaltern studies and all the rest were still in the future. Apart from such interpretive issues, I would note

³ Her web page is at: <http://www.slaviska.uu.se/ingrid/ingrid.htm>.

regarding the Russian historiographic context that my study was very much part of the rather stodgy interpretations of Russian cultural history which emphasized a dichotomy between “the West” and “Russia.” I saw my task to be filling in another of the gaps in the story of Russia’s “westernization” prior to Peter the Great, the arguments concerning which were first laid out in extended form by S. M. Solov’ev. I suppose then that, somewhat uncharitably, we might characterize the dissertation as a curious antique, more in the spirit of the late nineteenth century than the mid-twentieth, even though with considerable justification that old interpretive framework lives on into the twenty-first century.⁴ Of course, apart from how we interpret their significance, we still need to undertake the rather traditional tasks of editing texts, establishing provenance, date, circulation, readership or the like. What was missing in my account and is still often lacking in scholarship on early modern Russia is an attempt to contextualize such material with reference to other aspects of Muscovite culture. In fact one can argue that, even as they still merit our attention, the *kuranty* are practically invisible on the cultural landscape of 17th-century Russia.

While the works I discussed in my dissertation all dealt with the Turks or more broadly Islam, my treatment of them to a degree resembles a collection of short essays, loosely grouped under some thematic chapter headings. One of what I consider to be the virtues of the work was to bring together in the extensive appendices a wide range of previously unpublished texts. Unfortunately, so long as the dissertation itself remained unpublished and inaccessible, that exercise hardly made them more readily available to scholars. Fortunately, the publication of the *kuranty* and their sources for the 1660s is finally at hand, which means that there is little point in reproducing on-line my long appendix IIB containing a selection of those texts and an rather lengthy set of excerpts from the Dutch newspaper, the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant*, where my selection in the first instance focussed on the articles with news about the false messiah, Shabbetai Zvi. The point of that appendix was to make available for the reader texts which could be compared with the Russian translations, at least some of which were based on that newspaper.⁵ Most of

⁴ For some thoughts relevant to this issue, see my “We Have Never Been Modern: Approaches to the Study of Russia in the Age of Peter the Great,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 49 (2001): 321-345.

⁵ Even though my review of Vol. I of the *Vesti-kuranty* series in 1973 (“The Publication of the Muscovite Kuranty”) had pointed out the value of publishing the foreign originals along with the Muscovite translations, it is only with the forthcoming Vol. VI of the series that this idea is being realized properly, thanks to the work of Prof. Maier. Vol. VI will be in two parts, the second of which contains all the foreign originals she has been able to identify. When we will see this edition is uncertain, as the process of actually getting it to the printer is ongoing. At least some of the news reports in the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* were collected in a typescript by Jaap Meijer which I have not seen: “Soo wort men van dromen wacker. Nederlandse Bijdrage tot de geschiedenis van Sabbatai Tswi—drie eeuwen na diens optreden. 1666-1966” (Haarlem, April 1967). My citation is from the forthcoming article by Maier and Schumacher, “Ein Medien-Hype.” Also, the unpublished dissertation by Jetteke van Wijk contains translations of many of these accounts into English (Maier and Schumacher note they are not entirely accurate). See van Wijk, “The Rise and Fall of Shabbetai Zevi as Reflected in Contemporary Press Reports,” *Studia Rosenthaliana* 33/1 (1999): 7-27. My own transcriptions of the Dutch texts from microfilms provided me by the Museum Enschedé in Haarlem undoubtedly also contain some errors. I published the *kuranty* translations on Shabbetai Zvi in “News of the False Messiah” (1979), but they are appearing again, in a more precise transcription, in Prof. Maier’s articles and in the forthcoming volume of the *kuranty*. Her several articles and other recent publications go well beyond my material in discussing the European pamphlets about

the other texts in my appendices await proper scholarly editions, which would now require further manuscript study.

When confronted with the publish-or-perish decision about producing a manageable first book from this sprawling (nearly 800-page) dissertation, I decided that it made most sense to expand my Chapter III devoted to the apocryphal letters of the Sultan.⁶ In theory, its substance was worth perhaps one good article. However, when I presented a summary of my results to the scholars in the Section of Old Russian Literature at Pushkinskii dom in 1972, I sensed that Russian scholars were little inclined to be swayed by my arguments about the translated nature of the correspondence of the Sultan. Thus it seemed to make sense to spell out the textual analysis in what to some may seem to be painful detail. The book indeed is a substantial revision of and totally supersedes what I wrote in the dissertation about the letters. It is not clear, despite rather extensive distribution of the book to libraries and individuals in Russia, that my arguments are yet widely known or accepted there even a quarter of a century after its appearance. I have been told that were it in Russian, the audience would have been substantially larger. Other parts of the dissertation have also appeared: a short essay on the translations from Guagnini's chronicle⁷; an article on Galiatovskiy's writings on the Turks⁸; an article on the pamphlets about Shabbetai Zvi⁹; an article and publication of the Russian text of Gerasimos Vlachos' *Thriambos*¹⁰; an article including the textual analysis of the account about the signs in the heavens over Hungary in 1672.¹¹

My plan was then to write a second book, an overview of Muscovite acquisition of foreign news in the 17th century. The starting point for the monograph was to have been Chapter II of the dissertation, the one reproduced here. The new research involved taking a broader look at sources of foreign news in Muscovy as well as reading comparative history of the European press and the development of postal networks in Europe. After completing about half of this new project I shelved it in the early 1980s and only recently have returned to it, given the stimulating opportunity to work with Prof. Maier. Elena Kobzareva's 1988 dissertation (which also remains unpublished) in part overlaps with the

Shabbetai although my 1979 article, in its time a valuable contribution to the subject, has not been rendered entirely obsolete.

⁶ *The Great Turkes Defiance*. Ingrid Maier has now found the exact original for the Russian text of the 1621 apocryphal letter of the Sultan (see her "'Ontsegh-brief van den Turckschen Keyser...'" and likewise both the source and the original archival copy of the translation of the Sultan's letter of 1664 (see the forthcoming article by Maier and Shamin). She has as well been uncovering additional versions of the letters in European publications. Undoubtedly there are many more copies to be discovered.

⁷ Published as Appendix Ic to Edward L. Keenan, *The Kurbskii-Groznyi Apochrypha: The Seventeenth-Century Genesis of the "Correspondence" Attributed to Prince A. M. Kurbskii and Tsar Ivan IV* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971).

⁸ "Ioannikii Galiatovskiy's Polemics against Islam."

⁹ "News of the False Messiah". By the time I published this article, I had been able to use Scholem's monograph on Shabbetai Zvi, which is still the basic resource for the Shabbetaian movement, and to consult a number of other sources I learned about from his bibliography. His book, originally published in Hebrew, had not yet appeared in English when I wrote the dissertation. Thus my information on the false messiah there was based on a very limited range of the quite inadequate older literature.

¹⁰ "'Odolenie na Turskoe tsarstvo'."

¹¹ "Tekst o nebesnom znamenii 1672 g."

approach I was taking, but she was unaware of the material I had written a decade or more earlier either in the dissertation or in subsequent conference papers.¹² While Stepan Shamin's 2003 dissertation about Muscovite acquisition of foreign news focussed on the relatively narrow period of the reign of Tsar Fedor Alekseevich, he is now expanding his purview into what should be a very broad treatment of the *kuranty* in late Muscovy. In the process he is taking into account the full range of relevant literature; the result should be a first-rate book.

A few additional comments will help place in context my old Chapter II. At the time I did the work (the manuscript was essentially complete by the end of summer 1971), the first volume of the publication of Muscovite *kuranty* texts had not yet appeared. It was published in the year I submitted the dissertation. So to a considerable degree I was forced to work from a few published fragments of *kuranty* and the manuscript texts, access to which was limited by the relatively short amount of time I could spend in RGADA (then TsGADA) in Moscow where the main collection of those texts is housed in *fond* 155. I elected to focus on *kuranty* for the 1660s, on the assumption that I might be able to discern changes wrought by the creation of Muscovy's foreign postal service in 1665, a service that was explicitly intended to ensure the regular acquisition of foreign newspapers. Given the somewhat fragmentary preservation of the *kuranty* for that period and, again, the limits of time, it was difficult to examine a long enough sequence of texts to be certain of changes over time and the impact of the post. Furthermore, even though I had explicitly asked to see any of the original western sources that might be in the archive for the same period, I had been given only two or three manuscript newsletters (the handwriting of which, the German *Fraktur*, was at that time practically unreadable for me) and, if I recall correctly, one or two printed newspapers which had no correlation with the translations I was examining. This, despite the fact that I was certain the archive had to contain more. Well back in the nineteenth century, Bulgakov had compiled a rather long list of foreign newspapers received in Muscovy and still extant in the archive. One or two examples would be published as appendices to volumes of the new *kuranty* series. However, it was only the publication of the inventory by Smirnov which revealed the full extent of the large and important 17th-century German newspaper holdings in RGADA. Subsequent to that, Ingrid Maier performed the same invaluable service for the Dutch newspapers, which also are to be found there in large numbers. Somewhat surprisingly, even where the translators wrote on the originals notations indicating they had been translated, we cannot always match up those originals with their translations. Preservation was uneven.

As Prof. Maier's work and my dissertation chapter demonstrate, matching the *kuranty* with their foreign sources is far from an easy task. Part of the challenge is that often the same news was reported with little verbal change in more than one newspaper or newsletter. Determining the sources is made the more difficult where the translations are still in manuscript in Moscow and one generally obtains from them only notes or partial copies. Thus, if copies of the foreign sources are not in Moscow where they can be placed alongside the *kuranty* manuscripts, searching them out across Europe is a huge challenge.

¹² In particular, compare Ch. 1 of her dissertation with my paper "Diplomatic Channels as a Source for Foreign News in Muscovy."

With certain important exceptions, newspaper holdings are scattered and incomplete. My decision to focus on the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* was based on my knowledge (from Bulgakov) that the newspaper was definitely received in Moscow and from my learning that a nearly complete set of this important newspaper, which enjoyed a European-wide reputation, was still to be found in the museum of the publishing firm in Haarlem where it had appeared in unbroken succession between the mid-17th century and the Nazi closure of the paper in 1941. I spent a very fruitful, long day in that collection (the Museum Enschedé), selecting materials to be microfilmed. The task of matching the *kuranty* with their sources is a staggering one even now, when the resources that can be brought to bear are much more extensive than what I could access back in the 1960s.

My focus on a very small part of the *kuranty* corpus for the 1660s seems very modest in light of all the work which has been done since I wrote. Understandably, some of my identifications of sources have had to be corrected, since the range of what I consulted was so limited. Professor Maier has been able to identify exact sources, where I may have had a parallel text that was slightly different from the one used by the Muscovite translators. Generally I was quite cautious when it came to identifying sources, in a number of cases indicating clearly that what I had in hand was probably not the exact source. By limiting myself primarily to the *Oprechte Haerlemse Courant* for the 1660s, I missed other options.¹³ Prof. Maier's forthcoming companion volume of source texts for the 1660s *kuranty* (which includes a long introductory analytical essay) is bound to be the authoritative statement on the subject for the foreseeable future even though she continues to uncover new sources.

That said about the limitations of my material, I think some of my conclusions still hold rather well. Pokrovskii and Shlosberg, the last Russians to have published serious analyses of the *kuranty* (back at the beginning of the 20th century), had differed sharply on the degree to which the translations were complete.¹⁴ My work suggested that we might reasonably see evolution: Early in the 17th-century, the tendency seems to have been to translate in their entirety relatively large sections of individual newspapers at a time when relatively few of them were being received. Roland Schibli's analysis of a focussed group of the *kuranty* for the 1620s-1640s, work done well after my dissertation, reinforced this conclusion of Shlosberg's. However, as the acquisition of news became more regular, the Muscovite government had a surfeit of foreign news, and the translators perforce had to be more selective. Thus they might select only a few items from a broad range of possibilities, and even for those they might not translate literally but merely provide a condensed summary. I should stress that it is not clear whether the institution of the foreign post of itself marks any kind of sharp division in their treatment of the sources. The Dutch papers in particular tended to contain two or three dozen articles in each issue; so translation of all or most of any given issue was hardly to be expected. In

¹³ I made some uneven attempts to obtain German newspapers but with little success in identifying matches for the Russian translations. Now, of course, the researcher immediately would head for the Deutsche Presseforschung in Bremen, which houses the most complete collection of the German material to be found anywhere. The Bremen collection includes copies of the German newspapers from RGADA, most of which filled in gaps in what the Bremen Institute had been able to assemble from other sources.

¹⁴ See my dissertation, pp. 344-345, n. 41.

contrast, as Ingrid Maier points out, the German papers had significantly fewer articles and might be more likely to be translated *in extenso*. The pattern of selectivity which we can document shows that, *pace* Shlosberg, Pokrovskii was also right in his assessment of the translators' work at least for certain periods and circumstances.

Ingrid Maier has carefully documented many instances which show a generally high level of professional skill on the part of the Muscovite translators, evidence which contradicts harsher assessments of their abilities found in some of the older literature. Our forthcoming book will include a summary of her evidence and new material she has written on their careers. There is much more complete information now available on the translating staff of the Diplomatic Chancery than what I had in the 1960s, when I was relying in the first instance on Belokurov's classic if now dated study.

While there is little new to report about scholarship on the Muscovite post since the publication of Kozlovskii's fundamental work back in 1913, there is new work underway on the postmaster and translator Andrei Vinius, which should eventually provide a fuller picture of his activity than what we read in Kozlovskii. One area where we hope to improve on Kozlovskii's study is with regard to the relationship of Muscovite developments to the broader European development of the postal networks, about which there is much new scholarship. Ongoing archival research on the postal networks in the Baltic region should flesh out a somewhat sketchy picture of developments in that region and perhaps require further reconsideration of the Muscovite material. At very least we know that Muscovy came to be networked (to use a modern term) with what some scholars argue provides the key to understanding the emergence of "modern" Europe.

That said, I would be cautious about trying as hard as some scholars have done to identify a single factor which was a *sine qua non* for modernity. Was it printing with moveable type? Newspapers? The postal system? Each has its advocate. In fact, in contrast to my views three decades ago, I am now skeptical about the value of modernization paradigms for the analysis of late Muscovy, although I am as yet uncertain where Prof. Maier and I will come down on this issue when we reach the stage of writing a conclusion.¹⁵ It is even possible that the Muscovite example will encourage some re-thinking of the analytical approaches to studying the corresponding source material for other parts of Europe.

The comparative aspect of our study should take it well beyond what the older literature has contributed on the topic of Muscovite knowledge about the outside world. That said, it is clear that a good deal of the publication in recent years about the European press in the 17th century has little to offer the historian of Muscovy, since the developments in Russia which might be seen most closely to parallel those in the West are not synchronous but emerge with substantial delay. There is at once more to be said about foreign news in Muscovy than is commonly appreciated, at the same time that the impact of that knowledge should not be exaggerated.

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¹⁵ An initial foray into this question may be found in Waugh and Maier, "Did Contemporaneity Emerge."

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