

Artículo de investigación

Tsar and his people: power and society in Moscow state during the second half of the 16th century

El Zar y su gente: poder y sociedad en el estado de Moscú durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVI
Czar e seu povo: poder e sociedade no estado de Moscou durante a segunda metade do século XVI

Recibido: 26 de abril de 2019. Aceptado: 20 de mayo de 2019

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Abstract

The article raises the issue about the nature of the relationship between the supreme power and society of the early Russian state. The article proceeded from the well-known phrase of the imperial diplomat S. Herberstein, who wrote about the "slave essence" of Russians in the middle of the XVIth century. The authors of the article argue that this erroneous opinion was based on incorrect and wrongly interpreted official relations, which constituted one of the cornerstones of the Moscow political system and which was quite clear. Meanwhile, according to the authors, there was also a different, "internal" level of interrelations, based on unwritten "contract" between the supreme power and society, involving mutual obligations between the "contract" parties. The authors of the article show that this unwritten contract, which was well understood by both parties, who participated in it, functioned well in Russia during the 16th — 17th centuries, and its existence refutes convincingly the Herberstein's passage, who failed to understand the Russian political realities of the early Modern Age.

Keywords: Early New Time, political regime, "composite" state, Russian state, autocracy, Ivan the Terrible

Resumen

El artículo plantea el problema sobre la naturaleza de la relación entre el poder supremo y la sociedad del estado ruso primitivo. El artículo procede de la conocida frase del diplomático imperial S. Herberstein, quien escribió sobre la "esencia de esclavo" de los rusos a mediados del siglo XVI. Los autores del artículo argumentan que esta opinión errónea se basaba en relaciones oficiales incorrectas e interpretadas erróneamente, que constituían una de las piedras angulares del sistema político de Moscú y que era bastante clara. Mientras tanto, según los autores, también hubo un nivel diferente, "interno" de interrelaciones, basado en el "contrato" no escrito entre el poder supremo y la sociedad, que involucra obligaciones mutuas entre las partes del "contrato". Los autores del artículo muestran que este contrato no escrito, que fue bien comprendido por ambas partes, que participaron en él, funcionó bien en Rusia durante los siglos XVI a XVII, y su existencia refuta convincentemente el pasaje de Herberstein, que no entendió el ruso. Realidades políticas de la temprana Edad Moderna.

Palabras claves: Early New Time, régimen político, estado "compuesto", estado ruso, autocracia, Ivan el Terrible.

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Resumo

O artigo levanta a questão sobre a natureza da relação entre o poder supremo e a sociedade do estado russo primitivo. O artigo procede da conhecida frase do diplomata imperial S. Herberstein, que escreveu sobre a “essência escrava” dos russos em meados do século XVI. Os autores do artigo argumentam que essa opinião errônea foi baseada em relações oficiais incorretas e mal interpretadas, o que constituiu uma das pedras angulares do sistema político de Moscou e que ficou bastante claro. Enquanto isso, segundo os autores, havia também um nível de inter-relações “interno” diferente, baseado em “contrato” não escrito entre o poder supremo e a sociedade, envolvendo obrigações mútuas entre as partes “contratuais”. Os autores do artigo mostram que este contrato não escrito, que foi bem compreendido pelos dois partidos, que nele participaram, funcionou bem na Rússia durante os séculos XVI e XVII, e sua existência refuta convincentemente a passagem de Herberstein, que não conseguiu entender o russo. realidades políticas do início da Idade Moderna.

Palavras-chave: Early New Time, regime político, estado "composto", estado russo, autocracia, Ivan, o Terrível.

Introduction

The imperial diplomat and memoirist S. Herberstein in his “Notes upon Russia”, describing the customs of the Muscovites, noted as something extraordinary that “all confess themselves to be Chlopos, that is, serfs of the prince” and that “this people enjoy slavery more than freedom” (Major, 2017). This statement, uncritically perceived by the later European voyager-creators of Rossica, and through them - by the historians of New and Newest times, was firmly established in the historiographic tradition and especially in public opinion of Europe and Russia. Although the appeal not to narrative monuments, but to assembly materials and to Russian legislation, the main body of which became available after the considerable publication of archival materials in the 19th century, should have led historians to the idea that the notorious “Russian slavery” is a curious phenomenon far enough separated from “slavery” in the usual sense (Poe, 2002).

However, this did not happen, and the forms of serfdom, characteristic of the 2nd half of the XVIIIth - the 1st half of the XIXth century, were automatically transferred to earlier times, including the early New Age with the simultaneous development of the corresponding political, legal and socio-cultural models. The dynamics of dependence relation development, the changes of the legal and social status among the lower categories of population, although monitored, but was interpreted within the framework of the “slave discourse” set by Herberstein and his followers.

The main problem here was that the notorious “discourse” set a very rigid framework within which the researcher could and should act,

prevented the expansion of historical search field and the formation of a more adequate view concerning the political, legal and social structure of Russian state and society of the early New time. “There is no history without a historian,” and if a historian “establishes” it, interpreting the source (especially if this source is narrative, deeply subjective by definition) at a certain angle and arranging the accents accordingly in the framework of the dominant “discourse” (in our case - “slavish” one), then the result was the picture that could be very different sometimes from the past reality. What happens if you try to look at the sources from a different angle, perform their analysis, with a different “questionnaire” in hand, and thus “re-establish” the history, answering the following question: were the Muscovites of the early New Age the “people” born for slavery? Is it possible? In our opinion, it is possible!

Methods

Starting our small research, we decided to analyze a very important aspect of its development, significant for understanding the essence of the political and legal processes that took place in the early modern Russian state and society, namely the evolution of the relationship between the supreme power and society elite, “best people”, “political nation”, capable of putting pressure on the government and forcing it to listen to their opinion.

Starting the research, we proceeded from a number of fundamental ideas expressed by a number of researchers in recent decades. First of all, we proceeded from the fact that, according to M. Mann, the supreme power of early-modern

Russia, as well as of other modern states existed in two hypostasis - "despotic" and "infrastructural". The researcher wrote the following: «The first sense concerns what we might term the despotic power of the state elite, the range of actions which the elite is empowered to undertake without routine, institutionalized the negotiation with civil society groups». However, he continued, there is also "a second sense", "infrastructural power," and this infrastructural power was weak during the period under review (Mann, 1984). Having modernized the provisions expressed by M. Mann, we will further proceed from the fact that by "despotic power" we mean the declared power, in the spirit of the well-known saying "L'etat c'est moi" and its Russian analogue "I am free with my servants - I execute or please them if I want". We will regard "Infrastructural power," as a real power exercised in practice, not in words and not in declarations.

The concept of "sinews of power" (J. Brewer), which can also be translated as "the musculature of power" and as "the infrastructure of power" is directly connected with infrastructure power (Brewer, 2002). This infrastructure consisted of the structure, the support frame around which the entire state machine was built, as well as its drive belts, through which its individual elements rotated and its functioning as a whole was ensured. According to N. Kollmann, these "sinews of power" represented not only «new taxes and bureaucratic institutions to administer territory, collect revenues and mobilize human and material resources», but also a kind of "superstructure" in the form of the appropriate legislative and legitimizing reinforcements represented by the "new codifications of the law and new centralized judicial systems", confessional politics and closely related to the latest and based on its appropriate political ideology (which acquired religious coloring during the period under review) (Kollmann, 2012).

The creation of this power infrastructure and building up the appropriate "musculature", which was to guarantee the fulfillment of those potencies that were declared in "despotic power" over time, as the experience of studying the features of state and legal construction during the early New Age shows, is a complex, ambiguous and non-linear process. The late medieval societies that embarked on this path were, in one way or another, agrarian, conservative, "cold" societies, focused on the reproduction of the usual forms of life: political, administrative, legal, social, cultural and other. These "cold" societies were suspicious of any kind of

innovations that could only be incorporated into the existing order of things, if they appealed to the good old tradition, to the "old days". The latter was the highest authority and the last instance, which gave the desired absolute legitimacy of innovation in any field. Hence, a distinct evolutionary "trend" in the development of that very "infrastructure of power", the gradual development of "muscles" by power, the veiling of innovations behind a kind of "veil" in the form of "antiquities" reproduction (however, this gradualness and evolutionary nature excluded abrupt, intermittent development associated with large-scale political and social upheavals by no means).

The supreme power, acting within this system, was bound entirely by the necessity of this "antiquity" observation (external, in words). This constraint, connectedness was conditioned by its internal weakness, its lack of due, capable of forcing the society (by which we mean primarily the "political nation") to obey, the administrative resource, the developed infrastructure of power. Here is the time to recall the concept of the "composite state", which was introduced into scientific circulation by G. Koenigsberger and improved by J. Elliott (Elliott, 1992; Koenigsberger, 1978). For our small research, the most interesting idea is the idea expressed in the framework of this concept by J. Elliott. He noted that "sixteenth-century Europe is one of the states of civil union, co-existing with its territorial status and jurisdictional units jealously guarding their independent status." The supreme power in the early-modern states, seeking to stop local discontent caused by the change in political and administrative status, and to guarantee the loyalty of local elites and the population, «promise to observe traditional laws, customs and practices could mitigate the pains of these dynastic transactions, and help reconcile elites to the change of masters». At the same time, seeking to maintain supreme control over the development of events on the ground, it "superstructured" its own traditional political, administrative and legal institutions, acting as the supreme arbiter (Elliott, 1992).

This kind of strategy, based on the preservation of the old times (in any case, at first), allowed the supreme power to rely reasonably on the loyalty of local elites and the fulfillment of their obligations to their new sovereign. In exchange, the latter guaranteed the elites and local communities to preserve their privileged (in the first case) and/or customary (in the second case) status. The foundation of this political and legal system, as was noted by J. Brewer and E. Hellmuth, was negotiations, not violence

(however, these negotiations did not exclude the use of violence) (Ogilvie et al, 1999).

However, such a balance assumed both a significant share of society participation, and above all, a “political nation” (central and local) in government, and certain mechanisms for the coordination of the supreme power and local elite interests. And it’s hard not to agree with V. Kivelson’s opinion when she pointed to the fact that in early-modern Russia, just as in other modern states, the supreme power needed support from various groups of population, while the latter relied on “reciprocity” by the monarch and on the protection of their social and legal status by him (Kivelson, 1996). And in the XVIth century, when the young Russian state was still developing, this support was needed to a greater extent from society than in the XVIIth century, because the efficiency and the effectiveness of state administration largely depended on it. Describing this aspect of the early-stage states, N. Kollmann noted the following: «in all these states, legitimacy was grounded not only in the measured deployment of state-sanctioned violence, but also in the state’s fulfillment, to a greater or lesser degree, of expectations that the ruler would respond to his people, respect tradition and provide security» (Kollmann, 2012; Alekseev, 1991). Denying the supreme power of legitimacy, the society thereby put insurmountable obstacles in the way of the “sovereign’s cause”.

Discussion and Results

So, it can be argued that early-moderated Russia is characterized by interaction, or, moreover, by partnership (to a certain extent), the supreme power and society of which was the cornerstone of the entire political and administrative system. And this relation worked in both directions. Society could rely on power, but power, in its turn, relied on the loyalty of society and its support when it needed this. N. Kollmann analyzed the experience of urban uprisings in Moscow during 1648 and 1662 in one of her last works, as well as the marksman rebellion of 1682, showing this connection between the king and his people (Kollmann, 2012), however this relation worked a century earlier, and, we emphasize it once again, in both directions. And in the middle of the XVIth century, as well as a century later, the people considered it right to apply directly to the tsar with a request to punish those whom he considered guilty of the great Moscow fires of spring and especially in June 1547 (and the script of the Moscow revolt of 1547 almost fits the descriptions of the revolt of

1648 except of some details, known as the “Salt Riot” and fits perfectly into the scheme of the people’s appeal to the supreme power, described by V. Kivelson as “advice, petition, discontent, rebellion”, and the actions of rebels suggest that they acted within the traditional judicial procedures of criminal investigation legalized from the “top” and their subsequent public punishment) (Chronicle collection, referred to as the Patriarch or Nikon chronicle, 2000).

One more detail is noteworthy in the revolt of June 1547 - the noble family Glinsky, the closest royal relatives, suffered from the hands of the insurgent Moscow townspeople, and in the later chronicle, edited by the king himself, it was agreed that Glinskys and their people, using their proximity to the sovereign, broke bad and committed many crimes and clearly abused the trust of the young sovereign. The editor of the “Royal Book” (Ivan IV himself?) did not spare the memory of the royal uncle killed by Muscovites. And another moment that also deserves mentioning - as during the next century in a similar case, the direct instigators of the riot and the riots that swept through Moscow were punished, while the majority of the rebels were not. De facto, the government thereby recognized the right of an uprising to the people if its voice, the people’s voice, was not heard by the supreme authority.

Of course, we are far from trying to idealize this system, but still let’s note that although there are separate actors in this historical drama (it does not matter whether they are individuals or groups) pursued their own particular interests, nevertheless, this system acted and imposed certain restrictions on the supreme power competence. And, perhaps, the discrepancy between the very “despotic”, declarative power and real power, “infrastructural” one was very clear during that time. Of course, Ivan the Terrible, and his weaker successors, could declare their claims to absolute power in the spirit of the unforgettable Louis XIV, but in reality this absolute power was asserted as the result of a kind of consensus, the result of a long process of interest coordination among various political actors, groups and forces.

Of course, the first, leading roles were played by the elite in this play — the boyars, the supreme stratum of Moscow and partly the provincial one, nobility, the “princes” of the church (the episcopate and the superior of the largest monasteries), as well as the city elite (to a lesser extent than previous social groups). However, the “black people”, the common people, did not

stand aside. Their opinion was also meant something and was taken into account in the political scenario and the most important decisions, as well as by the supreme authority, and by other actors of this "performance". And the supreme power used it in its own interests, when appealed to the "opinion of the people, making certain decisions that could seriously change the situation in the country and the balance of power" (A.S. Pushkin), in which it saw that supreme force capable of giving final sanction, the necessary legitimacy and the legitimacy to the actions taken by the monarch. In the history of Ivan the Terrible reign one can count at least three such appeals to this very "popular opinion" as the most important source of legitimacy. In this case, we are talking about the events of the beginning of 1565, related to the establishment of the notorious "oprichnina", the convocation of the "Zemsky Sobor" of 1566 on the issue of the continuation of the next Russian-Lithuanian war and the Moscow executions in July 1570 within the case about Novgorod "treason".

In the first case, Ivan IV, having confronted with the growing opposition to his actions among the ruling elite, "laid his anger" on the "princes of the church", the boyars, the officials and nobility, accusing them of engaging in all sorts of abuse and oppressing the common people, that they were not engaged in state service, but were thinking more and more about their profits, and the clergy also covered thieves and traitors, using their old right to "grieve" (Krom, 2010). Obviously, the disgrace announced by Ivan in January 1565 was related to the fact that the tacit agreement concluded at the "conciliation council" in February 1549 between the king and his entourage regarding the forgetting of all previous mutual claims and discontent was repeatedly violated by the representatives of the ruling elite (De Madariaga, 2005). However, in order to punish the violators of this unofficial "contract" Ivan the Terrible just lacked that very "infrastructural" power (despite the fact that the king publicly expressed his opinion about his "despotic" power and its limits repeatedly (Skriennikov, 1992). The king did not yet have the necessary administrative resources to suppress opposition resistance, acting within the framework of the traditional system of relations and the ruling elite. And then the king, trying to deal with those whom he considered traitors, resorted to the last measure - he appealed to the "population opinion", to the ordinary Muscovite-townspeople.

This appeal was a complete success - the Moscow people of all ranks "beat their heads" to Metropolitan Athanasius, so that he, along with the whole church council, petitioned the sovereign for holding the throne. Otherwise, the citizens threatened that they will deal with those whom the sovereign accused of treason by themselves, so as not to experience those abuses and fraud again on the part of those in power, as was the case during Ivan's early childhood. The specter of a popular uprising, similar to the June 1547 revolt, led to the success of the plan conceived by Ivan the Terrible - the ruling elite agreed with his plan to establish the oprichnina and the persecute those whom the sovereign suspected of treason. And although in a certain sense it was the violation of the old political tradition, the sanction given by the "people's opinion" made this change quite legitimate, empowering the king with the powers he did not have if he tried to resolve the conflict, acting in the framework of "old times".

The following year (1566), Ivan the Terrible turned to the "people's opinion" again when he and his advisers were asked whether to continue the war with Lithuania or to conclude a truce with it under conditions that were clearly unprofitable for Moscow, which had the initiative during the war. The issue is if Ivan the Terrible possessed that same "despotic power" about which he wrote, for example, in his epistles to Prince A.M. Kurbsky, then, why would he convene the notorious "Zemsky Sobor" and bring up for discussion the assembled representatives of the main "ranks" of the Russian state, church, service and trade? This issue seemed to be in the sphere of state affair as if it was in the exclusive competence of the king and his proxies. The final act of the cathedral, the conciliar charter, said that all three "orders" were in favor of the war and did not want reconciliation with Lithuania on its terms, which deprived the Russian state of a significant part of the results achieved during the successful winter of 1562/63 (Polotsk campaign). Now, after the support from the three "ranks", Ivan was free to resume the war.

The third, most difficult case is the July executions of 1570 in Moscow. Unfortunately, our information about the events that took place in Moscow in those days is based on very subjective narrative sources, demanding a very critical attitude to them for this reason. Omitting the details about the events preceding the execution of July 25, 1570, and very picturesque, but, in our opinion, unreliable details in the description of the execution itself, in our opinion, it is worth paying attention to one moment in this

whole story - Ivan the Terrible addressed the audience on the square to Moscow townspeople with the question of whether he is doing the right thing, executing the "traitors" who were exposed "The voice of the people" said that yes, that's right, the sovereign has the right to execute his "traitors" and he did the right thing. You can, of course, view this story as a kind of comedy and consider the approval from the people concerning the execution as "complete fiction", as R.G. Skrynnikov did this, for instance [See: 14. 402], who is regarded as one of the leading experts on the history of the era of Ivan the Terrible. However, in our opinion, this opinion is clearly biased and, in a certain sense, "modernizes" the situation, since it does not take into account, on the one hand, the mentality of that era, and on the other, the psychological characteristics of Ivan the Terrible himself, a person who was extremely responsible to his duties as an Orthodox sovereign, and thus he could hardly play a comedy in such a serious matter. Finally, it is worth mentioning that the same foreigners, for example, G. Staden, reported that Moscow clerks were unclean and bribe-takers. In a word, this event can easily be interpreted differently than is customary if we go beyond the framework of the traditional "tyranny fighting" discourse.

Perhaps these examples alone clearly demonstrate how far the political reality of the Russian state of the XVI-XVII centuries is from the expressed Herberstein idea. But you can continue this series, taking, for example, the history of the great Russian Troubles at the beginning of the 17th century, in which the interweaving of service and contractual relations that united Moscow society, the king and his people, played an extremely important and decisive role in the reign by the dynasty Godunovs, impostors, the exile of Polish prince Vladislav and the assertion of the Romanovs dynasty.

Conclusions

Let's summarize the preliminary results. N.N. Pokrovsky, describing the particularities of the emerging political system of the young Russian state during the early Modern Times, noted that "this power (of the Grand Duke - Auth.) was not so strong, that local characteristics and differences were experienced in a single state for a very long time ... The power system was based not on the only concept of "state", but on two concepts - "state" and "society", on a well-thought-out system of not only direct, but also reverse connections between them ... The central

government of that time could not reach every individual; fulfilling its functions, it had to rely on these primary social communities (peasant and urban "worlds", service corporations-"cities", etc. - Auth.). But this meant the serious rights of such organisms, their considerable role in the political system of the whole country (highlighted by us - Auth.) ..." (Alekseev, 2001; Eivsvandi et al, 2015).

This political system, which was based on a tacit agreement between the government and society (let us recall once more about the thesis by J. Brewer and E. Hellmuth, which we have mentioned above) included the subsystem on service relationships at the same time. These service relations permeated the entire Moscow society from top to bottom and horizontally. "The duty of public service, i.e. the service to the Fatherland, embodied in the sovereign of all Russia, flowed from the whole being of the Russian state and was determined, on the one hand, by the objective need to have a strong, capable state, capable of defending Russia independence and integrity, on the other hand - by paternalism as the main form of relations between the head of the state and his people", - this is how Yu.G. Alekseev described the essence of this "zemsky-servile state" (Alekseev, 2001).

The complex interplay of contractual and service relations based on paternalism constituted the political fabric of the Russian early-modern state. But, since this fabric was not articulated anywhere (we mean, of course, first of all a kind of "charter" or some other kind of document that clearly states the rights and obligations of the parties - the authorities and the society, the king and the four "official strata" of the Russian society - priests, military people, traders and peasants), then it remained an absolute *Terra incognita* for foreign observers. The contractual essence of the Moscow political system, the mutual obligations between the supreme power, personified in the image of the Orthodox sovereign, and his people, eluded them, and it is clear why. After all, they were "strangers", "others", and the Muscovites did not intend to share (or did not consider it was necessary to say that was obvious for them anyway) with them the secrets of their "inner life". The European official observers interpreted the state relations in Russia by the traditional way of "freedom" - "non-freedom", reinterpreted in the Renaissance era, deriving the theories about the certain "slave" essence of the Moscow monarch subjects (Davoodabadi & Shahsavari, 2014; Kanashiro et al, 2014; Lee et al., 2018).

Alas, the difference in mentality played a cruel joke, contributing to the formation of a stable negative stereotype and erecting a powerful obstacle to the deep essence of Russian statehood understanding during the era of the early Modern Age. If we discard the notorious “slave” “discourse” aside and try to analyze the information sources (not only and not so much narrative) from a comparative historical perspective, it is not difficult to draw parallels and analogies between the political structure of the early-modern states of Western Europe and Russia. And, naturally, under these conditions, there can be no certain predisposition of the Moscow sovereign subjects for slavery.

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