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Muscovy in European Cosmographies, 1504-1544

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What I have not seen myself, and indeed this is much, I will take from the writings left behind by learned and experienced men.

Sebastian Münster, 1544¹

As European contact with Muscovy increased in the first half of the sixteenth century and knowledge of Muscovy spread, printed descriptions of the distant northern kingdom began to appear in the Europe. The best known early account of Muscovy is Sigmund von Herberstein’s *Rerum moscoviticarum commentarii* (Vienna, 1549), written largely on the basis of information gathered during missions to Moscow in 1517 and 1526. Herberstein’s book was the most popular and complete description of Muscovy issued to date: *Rerum moscoviticarum* was widely printed and was many times longer than its nearest rival. As a result of the book’s influence, Herberstein’s image of Muscovy as a realm ruled by despots controlling the lives and property of their servile subjects became the basis of the European stereotype of Russia.² Herberstein’s tome, however, was hardly the first printed description of Muscovy. It was in fact preceded by over twenty printed accounts of Russia.³ This essay will explore European views of Muscovy as reflected in a particular species of pre-Herbersteinian *Moscovitica* — cosmographies. As understood in the sixteenth century, cosmographies were collections of descriptions of regions throughout the world. They are to be distinguished from original monographs such as Herberstein’s on the one hand and from compendia of existing accounts such as Richard Hakluyt’s *Principall navigations* (London, 1589) on the other. The authors of cosmographies treated many countries, and they themselves wrote the entries, albeit on the basis of information gathered from other accounts. Though references to cosmographies can be found in the relevant scholarly literature, in general they have been neglected as sources. This inattention is particularly unfortunate in studies of the early development of the European image of Russia because cosmographies make up a good portion of printed sources prior to Herberstein.⁴ In what follows we will review the information provided in cosmographies about Muscovy, with special consideration given to characterizations of Muscovite government. We will

¹Sebastian Münster, *Cosmographia. Beschreibung aller Lender durch Sebastianum Munsterum in welcher begriffen Aller völker Herrschafften, Stetten, und namhafftiger flecken herkommen*, ed. Ruthardt Oehme (Basel, 1550; reprint Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1963), Vorrede.

²On Herberstein’s influence, see Samuel H. Baron, “Herberstein’s Image of Russia and Its Transmission through Later Writers,” in Gerhard Pferschy, ed., *Sigismund von Herberstein, Kaiserliche Gesandter und Begründer der Russlandkunde und die europäische Diplomatie* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagstalt, 1989), 245-72 and Marshall T. Poe, “Russian Despotism: The Origins and Dissemination of an Early Modern Commonplace” (Ph.D. diss. University of California, Berkeley, 1993).

³For a catalogue of items printed before 1549, see Marshall T. Poe, *Foreign Descriptions of Muscovy. A Modern Bibliography of Secondary and Primary Sources* (Columbus, Oh: Slavica, 1996).

⁴A few cosmographies are discussed in Friedrich von Adelung, *Kritisch-literarische Übersicht der Reisenden in Russland bis 1700*, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Eggers, 1846); Andreus Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyj im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften seiner Zeit* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1972), 23-26; Erich Donnert, “Bemerkungen zur ausländischen Russlandkunde am Beginn der Neuzeit,” *Zeitschrift für Slavistik* 14 (1969): 37-44; and H. Michow, “Das Bekanntwerden Russlands in vor-Herberstein’scher Zeit, ein Kampf zwischen Autorität und Wahrheit,” *Verhandlungen des Fünften Deutschen Geographentages zu Hamburg* (1885): 119-30.

see that though much of the Herbersteinian view of Muscovy was related in the cosmographies, we actually find considerable variation among known cosmographical texts. Some of this variance can be attributed to the politics of the author, however much of it is due simply to borrowing.

Muscovy in Early Cosmographies, 1517-44

The first early cosmographer to describe Muscovy was the Pole Maciej Miechowa. His *Tractatus de duabus sarmatiis asiatica et europiana et contentis in eis* (Cracow, 1517) set the standard for cartographic and ethnographic depictions of Muscovy in cosmographical works for decades to come.⁵ Miechowa was a geographer, medical doctor, and historian who made his career as professor, rector, and vice chancellor at the University of Cracow.⁶ He was a very well-informed figure and would have been fully aware of the threat that Muscovy posed to Polish interests. He no doubt shared much of the anti-Muscovite bias common among Polish elites in the early sixteenth century. Yet Miechowa's point of departure in *Tractatus* is not publicistic. His aim is plainly the eradication of geographical error.⁷ This he does primarily by destroying several claims of the Ptolemaic cartography popular in his day. As this concerns Muscovy, which he — following Ptolemy — locates in European Sarmatia, his chief corrective is that there are no “Ryphei” or “Hyperborei” mountains in the interior of the country and thus that the rivers of Sarmatia cannot have their origins in them.⁸ European Sarmatia is a vast plain, and the Don and Volga flow out of it.⁹ But Miechowa is not exclusively interested in cartography. He wishes as well to render correct ethnographic depictions of the peoples he places on the map. And, he claims, there have been problems here as well. He is especially distressed by the idea, inherited from the ancients and propagated by modern geographers, that there live a happy race of “Hyperbornians” inhabiting a paradise in the far north.¹⁰ This is a myth: people live there and they are under Muscovite rule, but they suffer the most primitive and extreme conditions.¹¹

Miechowa's description of Muscovy also aims at revision. The majority of his account is unsurprising: the Muscovites all speak one language; they practice one “Greek” faith; their church hierarchs are subordinate to the Patriarch of Constantinople; the Kazan' Tatars neither speak Russian nor are they Christians, though they are ruled by the Muscovites; to the north and east there are primitive tribes that are non-Russian speaking and pagan. He describes Muscovite government in the following, harsh terms:

⁵On Miechowa and his description of Muscovy, see Sergei A. Anninskii, ed. and trans., *Traktat o dvukh Sarmatiakh* (Moscow and Leningrad: Izd. Akademii nauk SSSR, 1936); Konstanty Zantuan, “The Discovery of Modern Russia: *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis*,” *The Russian Review* 27 (1968): 327-37; Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyi*, 24; Michow, “Das Bekanntwerden Russlands” 123; Leo Bagrow, *A History of Cartography of Russia up to 1600*, ed. Henry W. Castner (Wolfe Island, Ontario: Walker Press, 1975), 48; Adelung, *Kritisch-literarische Übersicht*, 179-80; and Donnert, “Bemerkungen zur ausländischen Russlandkunde,” 42-43.

⁶For Miechowa's biography, see Anninskii, *Traktat o dvukh Sarmatiakh*, 1-44.

⁷Maciej Miechowa, *Traktat o dvukh Sarmatiakh*, 45.

⁸Interestingly, Miechowa seems to have been unaware (or perhaps dismissive) of the movement afoot in Poland and elsewhere to place Muscovy in Scythia, “*antemurale christianitatis*.” See Ekkehard Klug, “Das ‘Asiatische’ Rußland. Über die Entstehung eines europäischen Vorurteils,” *Historische Zeitschrift* 245 (1987): 275-76.

⁹Miechowa, *Traktat o dvukh Sarmatiakh*, 115-16.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 45-46.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 117-18.

Third, be aware that in the Muscovite state, as in the lands of the Turks, people are thrown from place to place and from province to province for colonization, and to replace [those who have departed] they send and settle others.¹²

Miechowa suggests that the Muscovite grand prince exercises a sort of control over his subjects which is unlike that exercised by princes in the Europe. Though the exact tropes of the Herbersteinian image — royal control of life and property — are absent, the reference to the Turks would certainly remind contemporary readers of the idea of despotic authority. And there is further evidence that this is what Miechowa himself had in mind. He notes the existence of slavery in the region:

There is also in these three countries — Lithuania, Moscovia and Tartaria — the native habit of selling people: slaves are sold by lords like cattle, and with them their wives and children; more than that, poor people born free but not having food, sell their sons and daughters, and sometimes themselves, in order to obtain from the lord any kind, albeit gross, food.¹³

And he cites a prohibition on free exit from Muscovy:

There are guards everywhere so that not only slaves and prisoners, but freemen and visitors will not depart without an edict from the prince.¹⁴

Two conclusions would seem to be warranted here. First, Miechowa probably had the Turks in mind when he described Muscovite rule. Second, Miechowa, like many of his countrymen, saw Muscovy as a threat and this colored his depiction.

The next cosmographical work to touch on Muscovy was Albert Krantz's *Wandalia* (Cologne, 1519). Krantz was educated in the Hansa town of Rostock, and later went on to be Rector of the University there. After 1586 he served the Hansa in various cities, holding one post or another in the league for the rest of his active life.¹⁵ Over the period 1500-04 he devoted himself to the study of northern, central, and eastern European history, one of the products of which was *Wandalia*. He completed the work before 1504, but it was not published until 1519.¹⁶ *Wandalia* is a cosmography and history of the “Wends” or Slavs. Krantz, who had served in Livonia, paid special attention to the Baltic littoral. It is in this connection that we find several brief relations about Muscovy, all focused on Muscovite aggression in the region. Krantz recalls that Ivan III had plundered Novgorod in 1487, exiling and killing many of its citizens. Since then Russian-Hansa relations had been going badly: Ivan had imprisoned Hansa merchants, stolen their goods, and invaded Livonia.¹⁷ The picture is brief but clear: Ivan is a tyrant and a danger to both the League and the Livonian Order.

¹²Ibid., 116.

¹³Ibid., 112.

¹⁴Ibid., 115.

¹⁵“Krantz, Albert,” *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 12 (Berlin, 1980): 673-74.

¹⁶On *Wandalia*, see Manfred Grobecker, *Studien zur Geschichtsschreibung des Albert Krantz* (Hamburg, 1964) and V. A. Nordman, “Die Wandalia des Albert Krantz -- eine Untersuchung,” *Annales Academiae scientiarum Fennicae* 29 (1934): 1-294.

¹⁷Albert Krantz, *Wandalia in qua de wandalorum populis* (Cologne, 1519), bk. 1, chapt. 2; bk. 13, chapt. 15; bk. 14, chapt. 22.

Johann Boemus followed Krantz. Boemus was born in Aub and studied in Leipzig, Frankfurt am Oder, and Tübingen. He entered the German Order and was ordained a priest. He was known as a Latin scholar in humanist circles in Ulm, Augsburg, and Nuremberg. Little else is known about him, other than he had a rather progressive penchant for cosmography.¹⁸ His *Omnium gentium mores leges et ritus ex multis clarissimis rerum scriptoribus* (Augsburg, 1520) was groundbreaking: he gathered out of many books information about a host of peoples and reduced said data to pithy vignettes. *Omnium gentium* has rightly been called the first in a long line of ethnographic encyclopedias.¹⁹ Boemus remained true to his role as an editor: his brief section on Muscovy is almost entirely derivative of Miechowa.²⁰ As a member of the German Order he certainly would have been sympathetic to Miechowa's view of what he undoubtedly saw as the "schismatic Muscovite."

The 1530s witnessed a new wave of cosmographical writing on Muscovy that arrived, strangely, by way of German pride. Early in the sixteenth-century German scholars began to show interest in the historical geography of the Empire.²¹ Ancient texts containing less than flattering pictures of the Germans were printed and the image of the "barbaric" Germans spread throughout learned Europe. In what can only be described as a sort of defensive national gesture, German geographers attempted to demonstrate the nobility of their ancestors. The first effort in this direction was Enea Silvio's *Germania* of 1457.²² It was followed by many attempts to recapture (or refashion) the Germanic past and ennoble the Germanic present, not the least of which was Konrad Celtis's project to produce a *Germania illustrata* on the plan of Biondo's famous *Italia illustrata*. Celtis had as his aim a comprehensive, collaborative work that would render a complete description of his native land.²³ Though Celtis's project was never completed, it inspired many to write cosmographies of central Europe, and it is in their work that we find several descriptions of Muscovy. Krantz provides an early example. The German geographers included Muscovy for both geographic and political reasons. Germans — especially Prussians and Livonians — plainly occupied "European Sarmatia" and, as we have seen in Miechowa, the Muscovites found themselves there as well. Thus it was almost inevitable that a cosmography of German regions constructed according to Ptolemaic geography would touch on Muscovy. Perhaps more important, the struggle between the Livonian Order and the grand prince of Muscovy was a topic of discussion all over the Empire in the first half of the sixteenth century. A depiction of Germany was in this sense an opportunity to orient the Baltic conflict and to vilify the Muscovites. The same two considerations — geographic and political — brought Turkey into what were ostensibly German chorographies.

¹⁸Early on Boemus' was apparently confused with his contemporary Joham Behaim, a noteworthy Hebraist. This conflation is reflected in "Boemus, Johann B." (see *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 3: 30) though it has earlier origins. Margaret Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), 131 repeats the error, as does J. Lebeau, "Novus Orbus: Les Cosmographes Allemands du XVIe Siècle et les Grandes Decouvertes," *Revue d'Allemagne* 13 (1981): 201-02. The latter case is surprising because the author cites both the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* article, which conflates the two, and M. Huber, "Boemus (Böhm), Joannes (Hans), Aubanus," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 3: 403, which does not.

¹⁹Miechowa, *Traktat o dwukh Sarmatiakch*, 131-43.

²⁰Johann Boemus, *Requeil de diverses histoires* (Paris, 1539), 157-59.

²¹See Gerald Strauss, *Sixteenth-Century Germany. Its Topography and Topographers* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959).

²²Ibid., 17.

²³On Celtis and the *Germania Illustrata*, see *ibid.*, 19-26.

One of the Germans moved by Celtus to print a cosmographical description of his homeland was Sebastian Münster. The details of Münster's life are well known.²⁴ In 1505, at the age of seventeen, Münster traveled to Heidelberg to study; there he entered the Franciscan Order and in 1509 began to learn Hebrew; in 1512 he was ordained; from 1515-29 he occupied various teaching positions in Tübingen, Basel, Heidelberg; in 1529 he accepted a professorship of Hebrew at University of Basel, where he remained until his death in 1552. Though he accepted Protestantism in 1529, he lived his life primarily as a scholar and not as a publicist, so we should not expect and in fact do not find much partisanship in his work. Münster first began to plan geographical endeavors in the mid-1520s, and the first fruits of his efforts are represented by the description of German regions.²⁵ His *Germaniae descriptio* (Basel, 1530) was a rather long commentary on the old map of Nicolas Cusanus.²⁶ As we might expect, Münster mentions the battle against the grand prince, but his actual rendering of Muscovy is brief and neutral in tone.²⁷ This is interesting, because the Muscovy section in *Germaniae descriptio* is essentially an abridgment of Miechowa and Paulo Giovio's short account of 1525.²⁸ Münster chose to reflect neither the former's subtle criticism of Muscovy nor Giovio's sanguine view of Muscovite government. The reasons may have had to do with the neutrality of Münster's science, but it seems just as likely that he selected only what he found interesting in the two texts with little regard for neutrality.

Much more interesting is the description of Muscovy found in Willibald Pirckheimer's *Germania ex variis scriptoribus perbrevis explicatio* (Nuremberg, 1530). Pirckheimer's career was typical of the circle of northern humanists who became so important in the era of the Reformation: in his youth he traveled to Italy, where he spent seven years and studied jurisprudence; he returned to Germany in 1497, where he became *Rat* to the city of Nuremberg, a position his father had held; in this capacity he was sometimes ambassador and Imperial councilor, serving both Emperors Maximilian and Charles; he was a patron of the arts (friend of Dürer) and a publicist as well, publishing widely.²⁹ As concerns his geographical writings, Pirckheimer's inspiration was Celtis's *Germania illustrata*.³⁰

Pirckheimer comes to the Muscovites by way of descriptions of the German *Ostruum*.³¹ In a section of *Germania* devoted to the Germans beyond the Vistula in European Sarmatia, Pirckheimer relates that long ago many Teutonic tribes — Goths, Alans, Vandals, etc. — invaded the area. After them came a multitude of Slavs (“*Schlevin?*”) who occupied the lands of the Germans and sometimes forced them out completely. Among the Slavs he identifies “Russians

²⁴See Karl H. Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster. Versuch eines biographischen Gesamtbildes* (Basel and Stuttgart: Herbling & Lichtenhahn, 1963) and idem, *Neue Forschungen zu Sebastian Münster*. Beiträge zur Ingelheimer Geschichte, vol. 21. (Ingelheim, 1971).

²⁵Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster*, 111.

²⁶On *Germaniae descriptio*, see *ibid.*, 113-14. On Cusanus's map, see Bagrow, *A History of Cartography of Russia*, 42-44.

²⁷Sebastian Münster, *Germaniae descriptio* (Basel, 1530), 39-40. Both Miechowa and Giovio are mentioned by name. The substance of the account is overwhelmingly reliant on the former; Giovio is recommended on the subject of Orthodoxy.

²⁸Paolo Giovio, *Pauli Iovii Novocomensis libellus de legatione Basilij magni principis Moscoviae ad Clementem VII* (Rome, 1525).

²⁹On Pirckheimer, see “Pirckheimer, Willibald,” *Allgemeine deutsche Biographie* 26, 810-19; Karl Glock and Inge Meidinger-Geise, eds., *Willibald Pirckheimer. Dokumente, Studien, Perspektiven* (Nuremberg: Glock und Lutz, 1970); Willehad P. Eckert and Christoph von Imhoff, eds., *Willibald Pirckheimer: Durers Freund im Spiegel seines Lebens, seiner Werke und seiner Umwelt* (Cologne: Wienand, 1971).

³⁰On *Germania*, see M. Weyrauther, *Konrad Peutinger und Willibald Pirckheimer in ihren Beziehungen zur Geographie*. Münchner Geographische Studien, Heft 21. (Munich, 1907).

³¹The section in question, and the one that follows on Muscovy, are in Willibald Pirckheimer, *Opera politica, historica, philologica et epistolica* (Frankfurt, 1610; reprint, New York, 1969), 104-05.

or Muscovites,” and explains that their empire spreads to the Don and beyond. Indeed there is nothing unusual here, and Pirckheimer momentarily forgets the Muscovites and moves on to a description of Prussia and Livonia. This section, however, suddenly breaks off and Pirckheimer abruptly launches into a brief description of Muscovy. He writes that the realm of the grand prince is enormous, extending from the Baltic to the Volga and into Asiatic Scythia. Ivan III greatly expanded the realm, adding Perm, Correlia, and “Tuhra.” The people inhabiting the latter region are the ancestors of the Hungarians, and to this day are very primitive, living without bread, money, and offering tribute to the grand prince in pelts. Other conquests included Novgorod, Pskov, and Smolensk. Moscow is the capital and it is entirely built of wood, except for the fortress and palace of the grand prince. About Muscovite civic culture, Pirckheimer relates the following:

This nation, however, is rude and completely barbarous, and moreover they are subject to extreme servitude, such that, as among the Turks, all property is accounted as belonging to the rulers. And the prince of Moscovia holds everything to be his property: he relinquishes only profit and use [of his property] to his subjects, and not for longer than he desires.³²

This position bears one of the definite signs of Livonian anti-Muscovite propaganda: the Turkish analogy. For example, the Livonian propagandist Christian Bomhover had spread the notion that the Muscovites were in league with the Turks and Tatars to bring down Christendom.³³ Pirckheimer takes this a step further. Not only are the Muscovites in league with the Turks, they are — save their Greek faith — culturally Turkish.

It is possible that Pirckheimer received this interpretation from Herberstein. In writing *Germania* Pirckheimer solicited information from a wide circle of correspondents. One of these was the well-known humanist, poet, and reformer, Ulrich von Hutten.³⁴ Pirckheimer asked Hutten whether it was true that the river the Russians called the “Volga” was the ancient “Rha,” as he had read in “a book about the two Sarmatias” (Miechowa).³⁵ In a letter to Pirckheimer dated October 25, 1518, Hutten responded that he too had read Miechowa and wondered about the “Volga” and the “Rha.” As Hutten explains:

As I researched this question with the care it deserved, it luckily happened that I became acquainted with the knight Sigismund von Herberstein, an advisor of the Emperor. In the past winter he served as the Emperor’s ambassador to the prince of Moscow, and he traveled over much of Scythia and made his way into barbarian Asia.³⁶

³²Ibid., 105.

³³Christian Bomhover, *Eynne schonne hystorie van vnderlyken gescheffthen der heren tho byfflantb myth den Riissen unde tataren* (Cologne?, 1508).

³⁴On Hutten, see Hajo Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten and the German Reformation*, trans. Roland H. Bainton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937).

³⁵The text of the letter is available in Eckert and Imhoff, *Willibald Pirckheimer*, 336-49. Hereafter cited as “Hutten.” Eckert wrongly identifies the author of the “book about the two Sarmatias” as Ptolemy. See *ibid.*, 336.

³⁶Hutten, 348.

It seems that Hutten met Herberstein at the Diet of Augsburg, which both attended in the summer of 1518.³⁷ Herberstein informed Hutten that Miechowa was correct in writing that the “Rhyphai” and “Hyperborei” Mountains existed only in the imaginations of ancient geographers, however he had made a serious mistake concerning the Volga: it is called the “Rha” in Ptolemy, but it flows “into the Black and not the Caspian sea.”³⁸ Pirckheimer indeed incorporated Herberstein’s geographical corrective into his account of Muscovy.³⁹ Whether Herberstein also provided Pirckheimer *via* Hutten with the master-slave metaphor for Russian government is another question. There is no compelling evidence of this, however the descriptions in *Rerum moscoviticarum* and *Germania* are similar in spirit: both place the grand prince’s absolute control over the “property and life” of his subjects at the center of their account of Muscovite society.⁴⁰

As in the case of Miechowa, Pirckheimer’s rendering of Muscovy inspired followers. The German theologian Sebastian Franck published a cosmography in 1534 that contained *Moscovitica* borrowed from both Miechowa and Pirckheimer.⁴¹ Franck studied at Heidelberg in the Dominican college from 1517-24. He took vows and assumed various clerical duties through 1527, when he began to have trouble with the church. He moved to Strassburg, where he became a writer and began to develop the spiritualist theology that eventually made him famous. Franck was, in a word, a universalist. He believed in the equality of confessions and toleration. Naturally he ran afoul of both Catholic and Protestant authorities. In 1531 he managed to publish his encyclopedic history of the world *Chronica, Zeitbuch und Geschichtsbibel von Anbegyn biss in diss gegenwärtig MDXXXI jar* (Strassburg, 1531). The book was to conclude with a cosmography, but Franck was forced to flee Strassburg before he could issue it. He migrated to Esslingen and then to Ulm, where he managed to publish the final section of *Chronica* as a separate volume — *Weltbuch: spiegel und bildnisz des gantzen Erdbodens*.⁴²

Franck’s cosmography would seem to be modeled on Beomus, for it is heavy with ethnography and light on mathematical geography. And like Beomus, Franck makes no effort to hide the fact that he is merely compiling the work of others into a more convenient form. Thus Franck includes Boemus’s section on Muscovy, itself drawn from Miechowa, and Pirckheimer’s *Moscovitica* from his *Germania*. The former is a more or less *verbatim* translation, however in the latter we see some interesting variations. The most important of these is found in Franck’s re-working of Pirckheimer’s passage on Muscovite civic culture. It reads:

³⁷See Holborn, *Ulrich von Hutten*, 103-5. For Herberstein, see Berthold Picard, *Das Gesandtschaftswesen Ostmitteleuropas in der frühen Neuzeit. Beitrag zur Geschichte der Diplomatie in der ersten Hälfte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts nach den Aufzeichnungen des Freiherrn Sigmund von Herberstein*. Wiener Archiv für Geschichte des Slaventums und Osteuropas, bd. 6. (Graz: Bohlau, 1967), 168. Also see Theodor G. von Karajan, “Selbstbiographie Sigmunds Freiherrn von Herberstein, 1486-1553,” *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum*, pt. 1, vol. 1 (1855): 135f.

³⁸Hutten, 348.

³⁹Pirckheimer, *Opera politica*, 104-05.

⁴⁰Compare Herberstein, *Moscovia der Hauptstadt* [1557], ed. F. Berger (Weimar, 1975), 46 and Pirckheimer (1530), 105.

⁴¹On Franck’s historical and geographic writings see Strauss, *Sixteenth-Century Germany*, 112-21; Philip L. Kintner, “Studies in the Historical Writings of Sebastian Franck (1499-1542)” (Ph.D. diss. Yale University, 1958); Hermann Bischof, *Sebastian Franck and deutsche Geschichtschreibung* (Tübingen: E. Reicker, 1857).

⁴²“Franck, Sebastian,” *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 5: 320-21; Will-Erich Peuckert, *Sebastian Franck. Ein deutscher Sucher* (Munich: Piper & Co., 1943) and Patrick M. Hayden-Roy, “The Inner Word and the Outer World: A Biography of Sebastian Frank” (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1988).

In sum, the people of the Muscovite are rude, and furthermore they are subject to great servitude and tyranny, such that, as is the case among the Turks, anything anyone has is considered to be the king's own, and the king holds everything as his property. As a master allows his slaves the profit and use [of his property], so he allows his subjects, and not longer than he desires, and on the condition that they give him what, when and however much he wants, including themselves, their wives and children.⁴³

This is a significant elaboration of Pirckheimer's statement. Pirckheimer describes a regime of property rights not dissimilar to what he might have understood as feudalism: all lands are legally granted by the king and held of him. Only temporary use is transferred. Such was the case under Charlemagne and partial remnants of this system remained in the law of France, England, and the Empire. Living examples of despotic feudalism, he seems to say, may be found only in Turkey and Muscovy. Significantly, Franck adds the notion of slavery to this analysis. The Muscovite grand duke is a *dominus* in his realm. He rules both the lives and property of his subjects, who are here figured as slaves.

Why he chose this interpretive route is difficult to guess. He may have felt some animosity toward the Muscovites, but there is nothing in his biography to indicate this, save the fact he was a subject of the Empire. In reality the opposite case seems more likely: the whole point of *Weltbuch* was to display the wonder and variety of God's creation and thus to promote toleration. His alteration of Pirckheimer's text would seem to have been motivated by empirical considerations. First, he had translated and published a late fifteenth-century description of Turkey in 1530.⁴⁴ The account of Turkish government may have provided him with material for the elaboration of Pirckheimer.⁴⁵ In addition, we can see the influence of Miechowa *via* Boemus. Recall that Miechowa/Boemus drew attention to the practice of slavery, and especially self-sale in Muscovy. Franck of course reproduced these passages, and so they were readily at hand when he translated and emended Pirckheimer.⁴⁶ This would seem to be the source of his interpolation into Pirckheimer regarding the surrendering of self and family to the grand prince.

Following Franck, Münster again enters the picture. Since his *Germanae* of 1530, he had expanded his horizons somewhat, and in 1536 he made bold to issue what pretended to be an all-European description — *Mappa Europae* (Frankfurt, 1536).⁴⁷ This book was not a mere commentary on a map. It was instead an independent ethnographic description of all European countries. The influence of Boemus and Franck is apparent, and Münster cites and borrows from them. The vast majority of the material in *Mappa Europae* is drawn from *Germanae*, and most experts agree that the former should really be seen as a popular version of the latter.⁴⁸ The section on Muscovy however is different from that in *Germanae*, though the information is ultimately derived from the same sources, Boemus or Franck. It is impossible to

⁴³Sebastian Franck, *Weltbuch: spiegel und bildnisz . . . von Sebastiano Franco Wordensi* (Tübingen, 1530), 30 verso.

⁴⁴Sebastian Franck, *Chronica und beschreibung der Türckey . . . mit eyner vorred D. Martini Lutheri* (Nuremberg, 1530). On the original, see Carl Göllner, "Der 'Tractatus de ritu et moribus Turcorum' des Ungenannten Mühlbächers," *Deutsche Forschung im Südosten* 2 (1943): 600-34; Julian A. B. Palmer, "Fr. Georgia de Hungaria, O. P. and the Tractatus de moribus conditionibus et nequitia Turcorum," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 34 (1951-52): 44-68.

⁴⁵Franck's description of Turkish government is in Franck, *Chronica*, chapt. 7.

⁴⁶Franck, *Weltbuch: spiegel und bildnisz*, 57.

⁴⁷On this work see Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster*, 115-16.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 115.

tell because Franck repeats Boemus *verbatim*. And as we pointed out above, Boemus is reliant on Miechowa. Thus the source for the Muscovy sections in *Germanea* and *Mappa Europae* is ultimately Miechowa.

Knowing that Miechowa, Boemus, Pirckheimer, and Franck were in all likelihood available to Münster at the time he wrote *Mappa Europae*, it is interesting to ask why he chose one description over another. The substitution of Boemus/Franck for his summary of Miechowa in *Germanae* is really the replacement of one selection of items in Miechowa's text with another. The Boemus/Franck selection differs primarily in that it includes Miechowa's comment on Russian slavery, thus we might speculate that in making the substitution Münster was attempting to make some political statement about Muscovy. I think this very unlikely: there were more damning things in both Miechowa and Pirckheimer that he could have included had he wished to demonize the Russians. More likely, he simply had Franck at hand when he wrote *Mappa Europae*.

Three years after Münster published his new cosmography, another geographical text bearing a brief description of Muscovy entered the stream of European Moscovitica. This was Olaus Magnus's *Carta marina et descriptio septentrionalium terrarum diligentissimo elaborata anno Domini 1539* (Venice, 1539).⁴⁹ Magnus's father insisted that he and his brother, Johannes, pursue ecclesiastical careers. Both were educated within the Swedish church and went on to the University of Rostock. They then entered the circle of servitors at the court of Sten Sture and worked in a variety of clerical and diplomatic offices. In both capacities they were disposed to mistrust the Muscovites. As Papal officials, they were privy to the Church's opinion that the Orthodox were apostate at best and, in any case, in need of conversion. As Swedish statesmen, they were enlisted in the effort to find allies to fight Muscovite aggression in the Baltic. The anti-Muscovite attitudes they imbibed in service of Pope and king colored all their writings.⁵⁰

The promising careers of the Magnus brothers took rather bad turns with the acceptance of the Reform by Gustav Vasa in the late 1520s. The two were essentially exiled to Danzig in 1517, where they spent ten years. They then moved to Italy where they lived out their remaining days. Olaus apparently began the map shortly after his arrival in Danzig, and there is interesting evidence that the brothers were then thinking about the geography of the North.⁵¹ In 1517, while a legate in Rome, Johannes read and was upset by Miechowa's *Tractatus de duabus Sarmatiis*. He issued a blistering response to it, claiming that the Goths who invaded the Roman empire were of Scandinavian origin. Characteristically, the letter suggested a Swedish-Polish alliance against the Muscovites. Miechowa printed the missive, with a rebuttal, in the next edition of *Tractatus*.⁵²

⁴⁹The map is also available in Elena A. Savel'eva, *Olaus Magnus i ego "Istoriia severnykh narodov"* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1983), however the commentary is not legibly reproduced there. On the *Carta marina*, see Savel'eva and Elfriede R. Knauer, *Die Carta Marina des Olaus Magnus von 1539*. Gratia. Bamberger Schriften zur Renaissanceforschung, vol. 1. (Göttingen: Gratia-Verlag, 1981).

⁵⁰See Kurt Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths in Sixteenth-Century Sweden. Johannes and Olaus Magnus as Politicians and Historian*, trans. James Larson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). On diplomatic activity against the Muscovites, see *ibid.*, 5-6, 24, 115-16, 128, 131. On papal policy toward Muscovy, see *ibid.*, 11-12.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 175. Also see Savel'eva, *Olaus Magnus*, 30-31.

⁵²On this episode, see Johannesson, *The Renaissance of the Goths*, 5-6.

The map and commentary were finally published in Venice in 1539. In it Magnus pursues many agendas, one of which is definitely directed against Muscovite aggression in the Baltic.⁵³ *Carta* is primarily a description of Scandinavia, however it includes Muscovite territories along the Baltic littoral north of Ivangorod and slightly to the east of the Baltic lordships. Specifically, the three most easterly quadrants of the map (C, F, and I) show parts of Muscovy. In the commentary appended to the map, Muscovy is mentioned eight times (C.d, C. f, C.o, C.p, F.f, F.n, I.a, I.e). Topics include geographical curiosities, Muscovite pirates, fishing and hunting rights, trade, shipbuilding and rivers. *Carta* contains no analysis of Muscovite society, but it reflects the attitudes of the Swedes toward what they perceived as Muscovite aggression. In three sections of the commentary, corresponding to three icons on the map, the conflict between Muscovy and Sweden, Livonia, and Lithuania is discussed. In section F.f., the map shows Swedish fortifications being built “against the Muscovites.” In describing a depiction of Muscovite and Swedish forces attacking one another, the commentary F.n. reads:

Here are the Swedish knights fighting the Muscovites on the ice; around the same water and on other rivers they defeated them in the summer. The origin of the war is the anger of both sides that part of the land is under the Greek [religion] and the other part under the Latin.

Finally, the commentary A.i., indicating Livonia on the map, relates:

In this final section under the small letter “A” [is] Livonia (*Leifland*), which has been placed under the German Order of our Lady for the purpose of defending and protecting daily the Christian religion against the Russians and Muscovites.

In Magnus’s map we see a rather late echo of the campaign against the Muscovites first initiated by the Livonians and Poles. Magnus indicates the two key elements in the Baltic position on the Muscovites: they are schismatics and they are bent on seizing the Baltic rim from its rightful Christian lords. In Magnus’s major work, *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (Rome, 1555), the Muscovites and their defenders receive even harsher treatment, but this work falls out of the range of our present concerns.

The final pre-Herbersteinian cosmography to include a description of Muscovy is Sebastian Münster’s enormously influential *Cosmographia* of 1544. In terms of its organization and purpose, this work is an almost grotesque elaboration of Boemus’ modest *Omnium gentium*.⁵⁴ It also represents the fruition of Münster’s dream of an encyclopedic cosmography. Unlike his previous publications, *Cosmographia* was ostensibly universal, presenting the reader with the entire panoply of human culture.⁵⁵ The entries in *Mappa Europae* provided Münster with a base for the European section of *Cosmographia*. His basic technique seems to have been to take the pertinent section from *Mappa*, increase the volume of material from

⁵³For an analysis of the *Carta*, see *ibid.*, 179-87; Savel’eva, *Olaus Magnus*, 29-57; and Bagrow, *A History of Cartography of Russia*, 76-78.

⁵⁴On the similarities between the two books, see Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, 148-52.

⁵⁵Secondary treatments of the *Cosmographia* include: Strauss, *Sixteenth-Century Germany*, chapt. 6; *idem*, “A Sixteenth-Century Encyclopedia: Sebastian Münster’s *Cosmography* and its Editions,” in Charles H. Carter, ed., *From Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation. Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly* (New York: Cape, 1965), 145-63; Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster*, chapt. 3; Bagrow, *A History of Cartography of Russia*, 48-51. Specifically on Muscovy in it, see Bagrow, *A History of Cartography of Russia*, 48-51; Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyy in Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften*, 26.

the old source and add new data, producing an expanded, improved vignette. This is precisely what we find in the case of his description of Muscovy.⁵⁶ The new account is quite long in comparison to those found in *Europae descriptio* and *Mappa Europae*, running a full six pages with accompanying woodcuts and a map. It is for the most part based on Miechowa and Giovio, both of whom are named in the account. To these sources Münster adds two more: Ivan Liatskii (“Johannes Latzki”), a Muscovite *okol’nichii* who had fled the court after the death of Vasilii II; and Anton Weid (“Anthonius Weid”), a Lithuanian artist in Polish service. Actually the two sources are in a sense one: Liatskii provided Weid with information he needed to draft a map of Muscovy, which in turn Münster reproduced in *Cosmographia*.⁵⁷ Though Münster expanded both his entry on Muscovy and the circle of sources for it, we find nothing new about Muscovite civic culture. All we learn is that there are many principalities in Muscovy, each under the rule of the grand prince.⁵⁸ Interestingly, the passage regarding self-slavery in *Mappa Europae* was removed for *Cosmographia*. The account is neutral in tone and content, and this is apparently precisely the way Münster meant it.⁵⁹

Politics and Borrowing in Early Cosmographies

It is clear that there is no consensus about the nature of Muscovite government among the early cosmographies. Two of the texts (Pirckheimer and Franck) plainly describe Muscovy as a place of universal despotism, foreshadowing Herberstein. Five of them (Miechowa, Krantz, Boemus, Münster’s *Mappa*, and Magnus) contain elements of this view such as tyranny and self-slavery. Finally, Münster’s *Germaniae* and *Cosmographia* paint a neutral to positive picture. Politics explains part of this variation. The Polish Catholic Miechowa surely had no love for the Muscovites, and the same could perhaps be said of Krantz and Pirckheimer. Anti-Muscovite bias, however, will not account for all the interpretive choices represented in the texts. Franck was dedicated to universal tolerance and probably did not share any anti-Orthodox animus. Yet he describes Muscovy in very dark tones. Similarly, Münster’s text of 1530 includes the Muscovite propensity for self-slavery, whereas his books of 1534 and 1544 do not. There is little in Münster’s political biography which would explain such a shift. It stands to reason that something other than political bias was behind the discord among the texts.

That something is borrowing — the appropriation of text from previously printed items. The following schema summarizes the course of borrowing by early cosmographers describing Muscovy.

Table 1: Borrowing in Cosmographies, 1504-44

<i>Text</i>		<i>Source</i>
Krantz	>>	unknown
Boemus	>>	Miechowa
Pirckheimer	>>	Miechowa (and Herberstein?)
Münster 1530	>>	Miechowa and Giovio

⁵⁶Münster, *Cosmographiei*, 1029-34.

⁵⁷On Liaskii and Weid, see Bagrow, *A History of Cartography of Russia*, 64-70; Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster*, 157; Kappeler, *Ivan Groznyi im Spiegel der ausländischen Druckschriften*, 26. Münster solicited other sources. He commissioned the Viennese doctor and historian Wolfgang Lazius (1514-65), who was to travel to Muscovy in the late 1540s to write a description of Muscovy for him. But the journey never took place. See Burmeister, *Sebastian Münster*, 146 (citing the Latin edition of *Cosmographia* (Basel, 1550), 792).

⁵⁸Münster, *Cosmographiei*, 1030-31.

⁵⁹Oehme claims that Münster wrote in an intentionally neutral style. See his introduction to Münster, *Cosmographiei*, x-xi.

Franck	>>	Pirckheimer and Boemus
Münster 1534	>>	Boemus or Franck
Magnus	>>	Miechowa and Giovio
Münster 1544	>>	Miechowa, Giovio, Ivan Liatskii, and Anton Weid

What is most obvious here is the overwhelming importance of Miechowa as a source of Moscovitica among the cosmographers. Every cosmography save Krantz borrowed from him, or, as in the case of Franck and Münster, received Miechowa *via* another work which appropriated material directly from him. Yet not all subsequent cosmographies replicated Miechowa's understanding of Muscovite society. Miechowa, as we pointed out, related three specific characteristics relevant to Muscovite civic culture: forced migration or colonization (A), the prohibition on free exit (B), and self-slavery (C). Table 2 demonstrates that these characteristics were imperfectly transmitted to subsequent cosmographies.

Table 2: Tropes from Miechowa in Cosmographies, 1504-44

<i>Text</i>		<i>Tropes</i>
Boemus	>>	A and B
Pirckheimer	>>	A and C
Münster 1530	>>	none
Franck	>>	A, B and C
Münster 1534	>>	C
Magnus	>>	none
Münster 1544	>>	none

Magnus did not include the relevant items from Miechowa because his purpose was almost completely geographic: it would have been inappropriate to offer a digression on Muscovite civic life in the format of a map commentary.⁶⁰ Boemus, Pirckheimer, and Franck did have the opportunity to describe Muscovite society, but their choice of sources was very limited. Five printed items were potentially available to Boemus: Ambrosio Contarini's account of 1487, Bomhower's history of the Livonian conflict, two pamphlets by the Polish propagandist Jacob Piso, and Miechowa.⁶¹ However, all but Miechowa were forgotten by 1520 when Boemus compiled his work: to my knowledge no early modern description of Muscovy cites Contarini, Bomhovers or Piso. In addition to the five above-mentioned texts, Pirckheimer could conceivably have availed himself of Boemus, as well as accounts by both Paolo Giovio and Johann Fabri.⁶² But the latter two were even shortly after their publication obscure, whereas Boemus was famous. Franck potentially had the entire set of eight texts available to him. Nevertheless only Pirckheimer and Boemus were actually at hand. All this only serves to underline Miechowa's importance. Contarini, Bomhower, Piso, Giovio, and Fabri were forgotten by most cosmographers, whereas Miechowa was apparently well-known among them. Thus by sheer force of notoriety it was Miechowa's rendition of Muscovite civic culture that was transmitted to subsequent cosmographies. Only Münster seems to have intentionally avoided the harsher elements of Miechowa's vision, a significant fact in light of the tremendous popularity of *Cosmographia* over the next century.

⁶⁰Later, when Magnus wrote his long and descriptive *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* (Rome, 1555) he did not hesitate to relate the despotism of Muscovite government. See Savel'eva, *Olaus Magnus*, 64-87.

⁶¹Ambrogio Contarini, *Questo e il Viazo de misier Ambrosio Contarin ambassador de la illustrissima Signoria de Venzia al Signor Uxuncassam Re de Persia* (Venice, 1487); Christian Bomhover, *Eynne schonne hystorie*; Jacob Piso, *Die Schlacht von dem kunig von Poln. und mit dem Moscoviter* (n.d. and n.p.); Jacob Piso, "Epistola Pisonis ad Ioannem Coritium, de conflictu Polonorum et Lituatorum cum Moscovitis," in *Iani Damiani Senensis ad Leonem X. Pont. Max. de expeditione in Turcas Elegia* (Basil, 1515).

⁶²Giovio, *Pauli Iovii Novocomensis libellus*; and Johann Fabri, *Ad Serenissimum principem Ferdinandum Archiducem Austriae, Moscovitarum inxa mare glaciale religio, a D. Iaonne Fabri aedita* (Basel, 1526).

Conclusion

The inclusion of descriptions of Muscovy in early cosmographies was an important moment in the formation of the European image of Russia. In writing brief cosmographical vignettes, authors were compelled to reduce an abundance of information from a variety of sources into a summary statement. This process of condensation is essentially a form of stereotypification: common characteristics are removed and the putatively distinguishing features were maintained. These signature marks eventually come to represent the people as a whole. The early cosmographers could not agree on the proper ethnographic stereotype for Muscovy. Some saw it as a place of cruel despotism while others describe it as a rich, well-governed kingdom. However there was a slight general tendency among all the cosmographies to rehearse tropes indicative of the former interpretation. We commonly read that the Muscovites are ruled by a tyrant, that slavery is widespread, that no one is free to leave or enter the realm without the grand prince's permission. The reason for the slight preponderance of this dark view is found in two phenomena — politics and borrowing. Relations along the Eastern Europe were strained in the first half of the sixteenth century. Many of the cosmographers — Germans, Livonians, Swedes — held grudges against the Muscovites which were born out in their descriptions. More innocently, cosmographers simply appropriated text from their predecessors thereby replicating the view of their sources. Since Miechowa was the text of choice, elements of his critical vision tended to be transcribed with disproportionate frequency. Herberstein's view of Muscovy as a despotism was thus preceded by cosmographical texts which offered, if not the same depiction, one that bore interesting similarities to it. However it was only with the publication of *Rerum moscoviticarum* that the despotic view would be cemented in European consciousness.