

Rakhimzianov is to be commended for presenting a nuanced and colorful picture of Muscovite-Tatar relations in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and he is certainly right to stress that contacts between Muscovy and the Tatar world had much more aspects than conventional historiographical accounts have tended to show (97). He goes too far, however, when he comes to the conclusion that Muscovy was “one of the later Golden Horde states,” although (he admits) “it differed from its Tatar partners and rivals in traditions of state organization and government, as well as in religion, culture, and ruling dynasty” (234). According to Rakhimzianov, what Muscovy had in common with the other later Golden Horde states was its real participation in the struggle for the legacy of the Horde, on par with Tatar polities.

I think the term “a later Golden Horde state,” when applied to Muscovy, is misleading. To begin with, the Muscovite rulers had never claimed the legacy of the Golden Horde. And if the only basis for using the term is an active role in steppe politics, then one can also apply it . . . to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania whose rulers hosted the former khans (like Tokhtamysh in the 1390s or Sheikh-Akhmed in the early sixteenth century), plotted with Crimea against Muscovy in the 1470s, sent “gifts” to the ruling khans and their courtiers, and so on.

Moreover, the term “a later Golden Horde state,” when attributed to Muscovy, is unhappy in yet another respect, as it blurs the difference between two types of state organization: khanates-successors to the Golden Horde, on the one hand, and the Muscovite state, on the other. The former preserved the clan-based structures of power and other archaic features of the steppe empire, while the latter in the second half of the fifteenth century had stepped on the path of early modern state building, with sovereignty claims, (proto)bureaucracy, and military innovation.

Still, in spite of some risky generalizations and vague terminology, Rakhimzianov’s book is a valuable contribution to east European history, as it expands our knowledge of both Muscovy and the Tatar world in the period of their dramatic transformation.

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Russian Peasant Women Who Refused to Marry: Spasovite Old Believers in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. By John Bushnell. Russia and Eastern Europe Series. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017. 339 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Tables. Maps. \$40.00, paper.

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Our field is blessed with a number of excellent studies of Old Believers and sectarians in Russia. Despite the usual reticence of religious dissidents and the consequent limited source base for studying their history, we have informative works on the upheaval in the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century, the history of dissidents, and at least some sectarians in the next three centuries. These works tell us about institutional settings, religious ideas, and geographical dispersal. They do not, however, offer close observation and analysis of village settings and everyday practices. John Bushnell’s new book takes us a very large step in this direction. In painstaking detail he examines nuptial practices and related economic and demographic effects among Old Believers in the upper Volga provinces of central Russia and in so doing has launched a new and deeply-absorbing field of research on the Russian peasantry.

The book begins with a discussion of the moral economy of Russian serf marriage, whose dimensions became measurable in the mid-eighteenth century when noble landlords introduced (and then backed off from) heightened departure fees for peasant women marrying outside the estate. Peasant fathers argued that the higher fees made it difficult for them to marry off their daughters, a circumstance that also impinged on young men's search for brides. Bushnell finds that the increased fees coincided with the emergence in the eighteenth century of a market for serfs. Pressured to maintain an expensive European standard of living, noble landlords had taken new interest in the marriage of serf women, because married couples, which formed work units, and departure fees if women refused marriage, produced needed revenue. It was in this era of increased attention to revenues that landlords discovered an alarming and mounting avoidance of marriage on the part of peasant women. This aversion to marriage, which was most pronounced among the Spasovite covenant of priestless Old Believers but also evident in other dissident covenants, had begun earlier in the century and then grew unevenly into the mid-nineteenth century when it ended, in some cases gradually and in others abruptly, and the communities returned to the customary village pattern of universal marriage.

Bushnell devotes the core of his study to a parish of crown peasants in the Gorokhovets district of Vladimir province, a community in which administrators took no action against marriage avoidance and hence allowed villages to reach the outer limits of the possible. Here for a time few, if any, native-born women married, and the villages continued solely on the basis of the offspring of brides imported from other villages. Then, quite suddenly around 1830, this community reversed course and returned to universal marriage. Despite Bushnell's prodigious research in every available census, household inventory, and administrative correspondence, he is unable to give a definitive explanation for the changes—but not for want of trying. In the effort, he devotes a chapter to the beliefs and history of the Spasovites, their origins in the late seventeenth century, their geographic expansion, and their reforms and schism in the nineteenth century. Bushnell could not find a doctrinal basis for marriage aversion and believes that its slow spread suggests the absence of doctrine and a basis in the existential despair expressed in the writings of the covenant's founder. In contrast, the sudden return to marriage seems closely tied to the reforms and schism among the Spasovites in the nineteenth century. In two further chapters Bushnell works out the demographic and economic consequences of marriage aversion in prosperous and in forest-frontier Spasovite communities.

Despite a few blemishes (spelling errors, unhelpful maps, paragraphs that occasionally resemble household lists), Bushnell's study makes for remarkably interesting and engaging reading. On the one hand, this arises from the altogether original discoveries he is presenting, which are the product of his many years of meticulous combing of difficult source materials. He also has an eye for striking stories that illustrate his analytical points. On the other hand, interest is held by Bushnell's refreshing candor about what his sources can and cannot reveal. He continually alerts the reader to the limits of what his data confirm. When he goes beyond these limits, as he often does, to speculate on what ideas and practices might lie behind his findings, he makes clear that he is presenting merely plausible hypotheses. This candor extends, indeed dominates, his "Inconclusion," where he considers the many questions for which he could not find answers, while at the same time, he discusses with great interest and intelligence the consequences and likely reasons for the behavior of the Spasovites.

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