

Marsh's specialized papers for the Royal Society and even an old classic on Marsh and his contemporaries by Newport J. D. White (Dublin, 1927). Finally, the credit on the volume's back cover for the edition's handsome cover image is incomplete as it fails to identify Marsh's portraitist.

In due course, a large-scale biography of Narcissus Marsh will doubtless be written, owing to the valuable spadework of McCarthy, Gillespie, and others. What we presently have in their collective good efforts is a solid, working foundation.

Michael Khodarkovsky. *Russia's Steppe Frontier. The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002. Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies. xiv + 290 pp. Includes b & w illustrations and 10 maps. \$39.95. Review by JAKUB BASISTA, JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY, KRAKÓW.

If we compare the political map of Asia in 1500 with a map of the same territory three-hundred years later, the most striking difference will appear in the northern part of the continent. The rule of the Russian Tsars, not reaching far beyond the Ob River in the east and beyond the Oka River in the southeast, spreads over the next three centuries to areas touching on the Chinese border and the coasts of the Pacific Ocean. It is the growth of the Russia's expansion to these territories, along with its mechanisms, that Michael Khodarkovsky analyzes in his work *Russia's Steppe Frontier*.

After reading the book and looking at its title, I am convinced that it is 'steppe' and next 'frontier' that are the most important notions in this undertaking. Rather than follow on the paths of earlier historians, who wrote on the Russian expansion before him, Khodarkovsky sets out first to discuss the steppe people living on the Empire's frontiers and beyond. Only later does he concentrate on the expansion itself. The nomadic tribes, in majority Muslim and organized in loose and changing confederations, faced a well-organized, strong, and Christian Muscovite state. But those peoples

were there, and the Russian expansion was not—as the Author argues—a political takeover of the vacant no-man’s land waiting to be settled. It was a history of mutual probing and learning, followed by military conquest and finalized with an attempt to settle, colonize, civilize, and convert to Christianity the conquered territories.

In the first two chapters the author discusses the most important differences between the cultural, religious, and social structures of the two sides involved in the border conflict. He stresses the essential structural incompatibilities between the two. In particular, Khodarkovsky presents a very thorough analysis of the social and political structure of such steppe peoples, such as the Nogays, Kazakhs, Kalmias, as well as those living in the Crimea, Kaman, and North Caucasus. Presentation of their social organization, religion, trade, and economy helps us understand how different these people were in all aspects of their lives from the Russian and European states. We begin to see how their principles and goals differed from those of the Russian Empire. Moreover, Khodarkovsky skillfully stressed the importance of the different understanding of political and diplomatic terms used on both sides of the frontier and what confusion and problems they led to.

In the second chapter the author presents Moscow’s political concept of settling their conflicts with the steppe people. Moscow, he argues, considered all the people on these territories to be the Tsar’s subjects, while they themselves understood Russia to be one of the several political powers encircling their steppe homelands. For the steppe people Russia was a state with which they could and should sign a peace treaty, deliver hostages and in return gather some benefits (e.g., presents, money). Finally it was Russia which succeeded in imposing their will and thus their concept on the peoples of the region. The steppe people did become the Tsar’s subjects.

It is the imposing of Russia’s rule on the steppe people in a chronological order that is presented in the following two chapters. Chapter Three discusses Russia’s expansion into the territories

inhabited by the successors of the Golden Horde. We learn how the Russian empire slowly gained control over what was the Golden Horde, later on the Crimea, Kazan, Astrakhan, and finally the Nogays. By the end of the sixteenth century Moscow controls the former city-states of Kazan and Astrakhan, which grew on the ashes of the Golden Horde. The Nogays are subdued and Crimea is at peace. What was once a very uncertain and troublesome frontier became in the sixteenth century Moscow's borderlands. The Russian Tsar and his administration could begin to transform these vast territories into Empire's provinces.

The Empire's expansion and encounters with the new peoples of the Volga basin, the North Caspian steppe people, the North Caucasus and the Kazakhs in the following two centuries are presented in the fourth chapter. Having presented the expansion of the Russian Empire into the vast, "wild" Asian territories, the author explains the tactics and policies applied by the Empire in the conquered territories. First of all, the new situation called for a redefinition of the state's policy in the new lands. This happened in the eighteenth century, when Moscow developed the concept of converting the steppe people into Christianity into the cornerstone of their policy. The native population was not only pushed to convert to Christianity but also removed from their traditional homeland and resettled deep into the Russian territories, while borderlands were settled with people brought over from central Russia. This policy on the one hand made sure that the frontiers of military expansion were becoming the real borders of the Russian Empire—secure and under the Russian governance, but on the other resulted in great damage done to the indigenous population.

Russia's Steppe Frontier presents the expansion of the Russian Empire south and southeastward in the early modern period. The author claims that it was both "defensive and opportunistic" (221). It brought an end to the threat and menace of the steppe peoples' raids on the Russian territory, but it also brought new rule, new customs, and new religion to the conquered territories. And the

conquest, which can be set against the European conquests on the New World (especially in the eighteenth century), differed from the colonial endeavors of other European countries as the state and its government carried it out, not by individuals or special institutions.

Khodarkovsky's book of the Russia's expansion in the early modern period is an excellent and extremely important work. The author managed to present the story from both sides of the frontier, showing us how complex the process was. We learn not only about the military campaigns but also about the struggle to retain self-identity and customs by the conquered peoples and the concepts and politics applied by the imperial government. Better understanding of the ways of the steppe peoples allows the reader to learn more about the actions of the Russian government. Last but not least, the book is very well written and is a fascinating read.

Marc Fumaroli. *The Poet and the King: Jean de La Fontaine and his Century*. Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002. vii + 536 pp. \$49.95. Review by E. JOE JOHNSON, GEORGIA SOUTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY.

A former student of mine, solid enough in my language class and a rather brilliant pianist, once angrily criticized one of my colleagues for thinking he was "all that." Although wondering how much of my student's own pride was involved, I diplomatically advised him to strive to respect my colleague's credentials and to remember the necessity of passing one's core classes. The discord between the artist and authority is certainly a Romantic trope, yet that trope is grounded in the reality of disparity of power, regardless of the given artist's articulate expression of his dissent. That trope is at the center of Marc Fumaroli's detailed, erudite account of the conflict between one of France's greatest lyric poets, La Fontaine, and its grandest monarch, the Sun King. Louis XIV, "the last prince of the Renaissance and the first modern head of state" (469), had