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## ОБЗОРЫ И РЕЦЕНЗИИ

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### HISTORIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH ON RUSSIAN HISTORY: A VIEW FROM CENTRAL EUROPE (Szvák Gyula. *Opyt Mikroistoriografii*. Moscow, Akvilon, 2019. 288 p.)

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**Abstract.** The review presents the analysis of Gyula Szvák's essays and studies written on Russian historiography over more than thirty years. His main field of research, the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, and their importance in the course of Russian History stand in the focus of the collected works. His method, called by him "historical microphilology", is reminiscent of the approaches used by some scholars of conceptual history. He argues that by using this method some paradigms can be revealed which can help us better understand the flow of Russian History.

**Key words:** Russian History, "historical microphilology", statism, conceptual history, autocracy, Ivan the Terrible, Peter the Great, Gyula Szvák.

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### ИСТОРИОГРАФИЧЕСКИЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ИСТОРИИ РОССИИ: ВЗГЛЯД ИЗ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ ЕВРОПЫ (Рец. на кн.: Свак, Д. *Опыт микроисториографии* / Д. Свак. – М. : Аквилон, 2019. – 288 с.)

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**Аннотация.** В обзоре представлен анализ очерков и исследований Дьюлы Свака, написанных по русской историографии за более чем 30 лет. Основные направления его исследований – царствования Ивана IV Грозного и Петра Великого и их значение в русской истории – находятся в центре внимания собрания сочинений. Его метод, названный им «исторической микрофилологией», напоминает подходы, используемые некоторыми исследователями концептуальной истории. Он утверждает, что с помощью этого метода можно выявить некоторые парадигмы, которые могут помочь нам лучше понять течение русской истории.

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**Ключевые слова:** история России, «историческая микрофилология», этатизм, концептуальная история, самодержавие, Иван Грозный, Петр Великий, Дьюла Свак.

**Цитирование.** Сашалми Э. Историографические исследования истории России: взгляд из Центральной Европы (Рец. на кн.: Свак, Д. Опыт микроисториографии / Д. Свак. – М. : Аквилон, 2019. – 288 с.) // Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 4, История. Регионоведение. Международные отношения. – 2020. – Т. 25, № 5. – С. 244–246. – (На англ. яз.). – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2020.5.19>

**Introduction.** The name of Gyula Szvák has been inextricably linked with the development of Russian Historical Studies in Hungary, and it is no exaggeration to say that through the founding of the Centre of Russian Studies at Eötvös Loránd University (Budapest), and through the biennial international conferences held there continuously from 1998 on, he has created an institutionalized integration of Russian Studies in Hungary into the international scholarly network.

**Materials.** The present volume of *Gyula Szvák «Opyt mikroistoriografii»* provides an overview of his research, reflecting his changing scholarly interests while documenting that historiography has remained the continuing golden thread throughout his work [2].

The essays themselves fall into two categories, the historiography of important themes in Early Modern Russian studies and the work of individual historians, preceded by an introduction contextualizing these studies and followed by a piece perhaps best described as culturology.

**Analysis.** The first section entitled *Historiographical Studies (Istoriograficheskie ocherki)*, includes an analysis of the works of Ivan Peresvetov, a sixteenth-century adventurer (written in 1978), followed by two highly detailed critical surveys of Soviet literature on the mid-sixteenth-century reforms of Ivan the Terrible (1985 and 1987), and an examination of work on the *oprichnina* (1987). This section also presents two English-language studies of a historiographical nature, which differ from the previous selections as they are lectures delivered by the author. One, given at the University of Hawaii (1987), focuses on the parallels between images of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great in Russian historical thought, while the other (1988) served in a Russian translation as the author's keynote lecture for a discussion of the problem of feudalism in Russia at the Institute of Russian History in Moscow (1997).

The second part, entitled *Personality in Historiography (Lichnost' v istoriografii)*,

includes two closely related studies dedicated to Professor Szvák's Hungarian and Russian mentors, József Perényi and Ruslan Grigorevich Skrynnikov respectively. The first presents what I would call the historiographical biography of Skrynnikov (2012), while the second compares the careers of the two mentors, offering a unique opportunity to observe how the different, and from time to time changing, political atmosphere in two communist countries affected the study of Russian History: it is a study providing an insight into the *Zeitgeist* of Hungarian and the Soviet history-writing.

In the present review, I will concentrate predominantly on the methodological experiences of the author, an approach which arises from the title itself, *An Attempt at Microhistoriography*. In creating this title Szvák united two approaches: one, which he calls “historical microphilology” in the introduction, characterizes the studies in the first part of the book (especially the Russian language pieces); “microhistoriography”, as a kind of subdivision of “historical microphilology”, is the main focus in the second part.

The author had a dual aim in these studies: to grasp and trace the main, one can even say persistent, trend of Russian historiography over time and to show the contextually conditioned variations within the mainstream. As for the latter, he emphasizes that the main characteristic of Russian historiography is its imperial perspective, which means that “Soviet (and within this, Stalinist) historiography has a continuity with pre-1917” Russian history-writing.

“Historical microphilology” was/is used mainly as a tool of what the so-called Cambridge School of conceptual history calls contextuality. Szvák tries to show how the trend persisting over the *longue durée* was modified by authors using different discursive languages (nationalist, Marxist, etc). To pinpoint the nuances of this challenge would require a much more extensive analysis than is possible here. Rather, as stated before, I spotlight the methodology of the author,

and “historical microphilology” as Szvák applied it in the case studies in the first part of the book reminds me of the method proposed by David Armitage for the study of conceptual history, which he calls *serial contextualism* [1].

The similarities are all the more important and intelligible when we consider that historiography cannot be separated from conceptual history. For this it is sufficient to recall that the main trend of Russian historiography is *statism* (*gosudarstvennost'*), beginning with Karamzin's *History of the Russian State* (if we remain within the realm of scientific history writing). In Karamzin's case, his statist approach was strongly influenced by the importance that Hegel attributed to the concept of the state. Through identifying the long-term features of Russian historiography, some conclusions (which Szvák calls “macroanswers”) can be drawn concerning the course of Russian history. And it is here that Szvák finds the justification for comparing Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great:

the common base is the autocratic political structure. The second part of Ivan's reign revealed the extremities of an autocratic polity while Peter created the paradigm of the “reformer tsar”.

**Results.** The closing study of the book elevates this kind of comparison to the level of historical consciousness by analysing the results of public opinion polls on such questions as “Who is the most important figure in Russian History?”, “What are the primary objects of Russian pride today?”, etc. These questions clearly cannot be understood without some of the “macroanswers” presented here.

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