GILBERT ROZMAN

Urban Networks in Russia, 1750-1800, and Pre-modern Periodization

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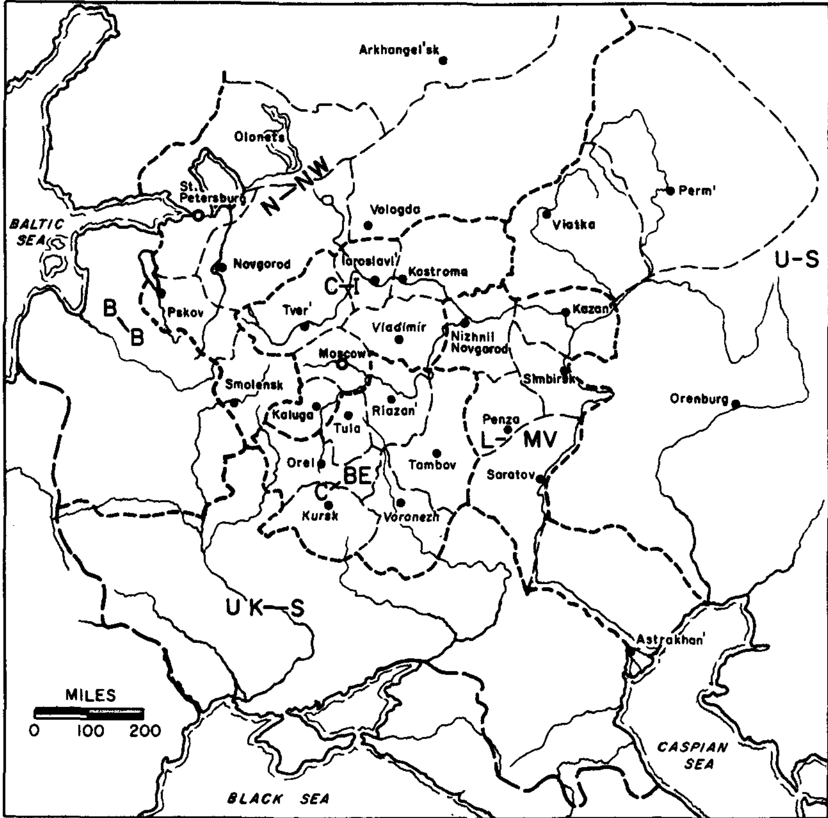
URBAN NETWORKS IN RUSSIA, 1750–1800, AND PREMODERN PERIODIZATION



MAP 1.
Regions and Guberniia of the Russian Empire

GILBERT ROZMAN

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Conceived as a second step in a large comparative project, this book responds to the need for information on Russian urban history in the light of earlier findings on the history of cities in China and Japan and to the opportunity for reinterpreting stages of history on the basis of assembled urban data for five countries. It is based on research carried out in the United States and the Soviet Union, generously assisted by specialists on Russian history and by others with competencies relevant to the comparative contents of the book.

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INTRODUCTION

This book is about the development of cities in Russia and of premodern societies in general. It is a continuation of a longer project that began with my book, *Urban Networks in Ch'ing China and Tokugawa Japan*. It employs the same general methodology and explores the same themes in the history of the Russian Empire and, in a much more condensed fashion, in the histories of England and France. A number of refinements in the interpretation of data on urban history including an effort to designate common stages of premodern history serve as a basis for new generalizations. In addition, expanding the scope of comparisons of networks of central places (systems of administrative and marketing settlements) from two countries to five broadens our attempt to identify universal characteristics of social change prior to the nineteenth century or to initial modernization.

Two objectives guide the analysis and presentation of data on urban networks. The lesser objective is to examine the validity of the recurrent theme of Russia's historic backwardness. To accomplish this aim it is necessary not only to trace the development of central places over a period of almost 1,000 years and then to focus specifically on the state of the Russian urban network at a time prior to the creation of extensive contacts with modernizing societies, but also to compare these characteristics with urban data from other societies. At the same time, determination of the extent of Russian backwardness in urban development serves a broader and more important objective. Above all, the Russian case sheds light on the general processes of development in premodern societies. The study of Russian urban networks contributes additional evidence for gen-

eralizing about the periodization or common stages of history of premodern societies and for devising an improved framework to reinterpret the development of all countries before their modernization.

What appears to be a book about Russia, thus, turns out, in fact, to be an attempt to generalize about stages of premodern history, using information about the development of cities and smaller marketing centers in the Russian Empire. Chapter 1 develops the framework for this comparative analysis, showing how it relates to other approaches to periodization. Chapter 2 places the information on the evolution of Russia's urban network in comparative perspective through short sections on similar developments in other countries. Chapters 3 and 4 give details on spatial aspects of social structure and on regional variations in cities within late eighteenth-century Russia. Finally in Chapter 5 the focus shifts exclusively to comparisons of societies. Concentration on Russia in Chapters 2 to 4, with the addition of information on England and France in Chapter 5, sets up a scaffolding that, together with the foundation established in the earlier study of China and Japan, provides a much needed environment for constructing hypotheses about general features of premodern development.

The two themes of Russian backwardness and premodern development closely interlock, and each stands in need of an infusion of some stimulant to counteract wearied thinking. The general picture of Russian backwardness before 1800 is misleading. As was true of assessments of Tokugawa Japan (1600–1868) prior to reevaluations of the past 25 years, so the level of development attained by Russia as a premodern society has been repeatedly minimized. Indicative of this general misperception, Russian cities have been credited with just 3–4 percent of the late eighteenth-century national population rather than the correct figure of 8–9 percent.[1]

Recent treatments of evolutionary approaches to social change are also, in my opinion, characterized by a misplaced consensus generally disparaging in its assessment. While opinions differ on the utility of past efforts to divide history into stages of development, no voices proclaim this area of historical sociology as having high priority on the agenda for future studies of social change. Nevertheless, after previously devising an evolutionary framework for comparing stages

of urban networks, I became convinced that, inherent in both the Marxist and the prevailing Western European and American approaches to periodization, there exists a common urban-oriented conception of social change. Even if this focus does not lie at the heart of these ostensibly quite divergent camps, I believe that a basis exists for a remarkable convergence of treatments of periodization with special emphasis on urban change. In Chapter 1, I explore the relationship of various approaches to periodization, culminating with a concise statement of a new, empirically rooted approach to stages of history.

The theme of Russian backwardness

The notion that Russia was perpetually backward has been widely propagated, but almost never does one ask: how, when, to what extent, and in comparison to which countries was Russia backward? We read that Russia was a backward frontier for the Varangians and the Byzantines; an isolated sacrifice to the Tatar yoke severed from the ongoing processes of development so noticeable elsewhere in Europe; an emerging centralized state frustrated in its economic development by the twin forces of autocracy and serfdom; and, more recently, a latecomer to modernization encumbered with crude Stalinist measures that are increasingly incapable of sustaining rapid development. At each historical turn, a paramount task is said to have stood between the enormous potential of the peoples somewhat loosely known as Russia and their persistent ambitions to overtake one or more rivals. It has been taken for granted that Russia has remained backward under the great burden of these successive overriding tasks.

For the early centuries of Russian history, the obstacles to catching up to more advanced countries have generally been identified in military or territorial terms, including the requirements of the long struggles to overthrow the Mongols and later to open windows on the Baltic and Black Seas. Yet, it is usually agreed that, even before boundaries were secure, a new set of elusive motivational barriers was primarily responsible for retarded development. According to such views, in the eighteenth century the main cause was the absence of self-government by the commercial population; the nineteenth

century was plagued by the lack of personal reward for the agricultural population; unattained goals in agricultural production throughout the Soviet period, and in other sectors of the economy after 1960, resulted from the sacrifice of private initiative to collective responsibility. These recurrent explanations for the presumed Russian backwardness are espoused by both Soviet and non-Soviet writers for the pre-Revolutionary periods and by non-Soviet writers for the contemporary period.[2]

At the root of these explanations of Russian backwardness can often be found certain assumptions about the nature of positive and negative forces in social development. If the negative forces are repeatedly associated with efforts to secure national borders, to maximize the centralization of power, and to utilize labor without providing a wide range of opportunities for consumption or mobility, the positive forces are commonly identified with the great geographical expanse, the large population, and the vast natural resources of the country or to waves of intensive borrowing from abroad. In some instances the very elements listed among the negative forces are said to have served temporarily as factors contributing to increased production, but in the long run the priorities given to collective responsibility over individual initiative and to military preparedness over consumer satisfaction are presumed to have blocked the path of success in the development of production.

While there are common elements in the treatment of the balance of positive and negative forces in the development of Russia right up to the present, it is important to distinguish between analyses of Russian history before 1800 and after 1800. To the extent that assumptions about Russian backwardness after roughly 1800 refer to an international context in which national development can, in some sense, be equated with modernization, these assumptions are at least based on a considerable body of evidence concerning the complicated but unavoidable transformation that has everywhere been set in motion by contacts with modernizing peoples. The process of modernization has been the subject of wide study, in the light of which data on Russia can be interpreted.[3] In this comparative setting, Russia merits classification as one of the few latecomers to rapid modernization; yet it is also clear that Russia started this process slowly and her

development has been uneven, with certain sectors lagging conspicuously by contrast with the firstcomers and even with a few latecomers. Despite inadequacies in the state of scholarship concerning the factors that have contributed to or hindered the modernization of Russia, we can conclude that the notion of Russian backwardness in a modernizing world from the early nineteenth century to after World War II is a useful and generally clearly understood comparative statement.

No similarly clear comparative perspective exists for presumptions of Russian backwardness prior to 1800. There is no satisfactory theory of the stages of premodern development against which to evaluate these conclusions. Assumptions concerning an implicit struggle between what are regarded as positive and negative forces have been made against a background of hazy comparative information; indeed, even the concept of development in premodern societies has rarely been defined. Data on aspects of social history have been ignored because scholars were unaware of their significance in a comparative context. In particular, little attention has been given to data on eighteenth-century Russian cities by historians who have assumed that the positive force for development is self-government, and that this was clearly absent in Russian cities.[4]

The presumed balance of forces affecting urban characteristics during the eighteenth century is clearly set forth in writings about Peter I and Catherine II (both called "the Great"), the dynamic leaders of the first and final quarters of the century. Biographers and others who concentrate on the periods of these reigns describe their efforts to introduce such advances from Western Europe as urban self-government, but minimize the results of their efforts because urban areas were not granted adequate freedoms. In the final analysis, urban population data are assumed to have been much lower than was in fact the case, the relative strengths of positive and negative forces are never quantified, and we are left with the vague formulation that one barrier after another obstructed the path of the normal, and presumably rapid, growth that would have resulted had the positive forces been allowed unrestricted development.

Given the glaringly imprecise character of comparative statements about premodern societies in general, it is not surprising that explana-

tions of Russian backwardness before 1800 lack specificity and support. Both to improve the comparative perspective on other premodern societies and to expose elements of myth in the notion of Russian backwardness, it is necessary to draw up a new balance sheet of development before 1800. In it I will discard assumptions that positive forces emerged primarily from geographical conditions or were externally generated, and will reexamine some of the forces that are typically placed in the negative category. In place of unsubstantiated and inexplicit assumptions, a systematic comparative approach will be applied to the history of Russia before she began to experience the heavy fallout from the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe. The year 1800 is chosen as a terminal date because, soon after, improvements in transportation introduced from abroad produced, albeit slowly at first, patterns of long-distance trade indicative of a society with a mixture of nonmodernized and modernized elements.

The conclusion advanced in this book is that by the end of the eighteenth century the Russian Empire had reached an advanced stage of premodern development. The following chapters will show that in important respects the Russian Empire resembled other advanced countries in Western Europe and East Asia. Its urban network had already entered a mature stage with seven distinct levels of central places present, and the percentage of its population living in cities was well above the world average. As periodic marketing started to decline in certain areas of the Russian Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century, evidence accumulated that Russia's urban network was no more than a century behind those of advanced Western European countries and had pulled roughly even with that of Japan. Similar to these other advanced premodern societies, the Russian Empire had moved ahead of China in the development of a hierarchy of central places.

The theme of premodern development

Comparisons of societies require not only statements of similarities and differences but also methods of classifying those statements. Generally sets of interrelated propositions about aspects of social structure are grouped together in typologies of societies. The dominant typology in Western sociology is "modernized" and "nonmodernized"

(also labeled "industrialized" and "nonindustrialized" or "developed" and "less developed"). Relatively nonmodernized societies can be divided further into transitional and premodern examples. Our attention in this volume will be directed at general comparisons of social structure in premodern societies.

Some typologies of premodern societies are based on factors that presumably could arise at any point in history; for instance, Russia before 1800 has been variously classified as a centralized bureaucratic empire and as an oriental, despotic society.[5] Examples of each of these types are alleged to have appeared over thousands of years. Similarly the application of the designation "feudal" has included societies such as China in the first millennium B.C. and Japan immediately before the Meiji Restoration in A.D. 1868.[6] Other typologies are based on the hypothesis that social change, even in premodern societies, is cumulative. While a society may not "advance" in terms of designated criteria over a specified period, the general pattern is one of increasing differentiation of function and specialization. Starting with this notion of the growing complexity of societies, we can designate types of societies with varying degrees of complexity.

There are essentially two, contrasting approaches to what George H. Nadel has identified as the problem of importing "significance to the passage of time in history by identifying and ordering chronological sequences (periods)."[7] On the one hand, there is what Nadel labels the pedagogic approach, in which varying criteria for and configurations of periods are selected to suit the convenience of a particular study. While giving unity to a body of information, the approach is not designed to develop theories of societies. On the other hand, there is a lawlike approach to periodization, differing in respect to determinism. According to this approach, successive stages in history are attributed to the manifestation of underlying forces, for instance to the growing complexity of social relations. It is tempting to follow Nadel's example in contrasting the two major systems of periodization in use today, treating as pedagogic the widely encountered tripartite division of history into ancient, medieval, and modern (early modern if we confine our interests to periods before 1800), and as lawlike the Marxist division of history into primitive communalism, slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and the post-nineteenth-century forms

of socialism and communism. In fact, both of these systems have been applied with varying degrees of theoretical sophistication. While the Marxist framework has the advantage of being more explicitly theoretical and the disadvantage of being canonized without the customary verification, both frameworks have contributed to the careful classification of information concerning the growing complexity of societies.

Systematic analysis of evolutionary changes in social structure dates from the nineteenth century. The usefulness of dividing history into stages was discovered more than 2,000 years ago in relatively literate societies such as Greece and China.[8] More recent is the identification of new stages in terms of changing levels of economic development rather than by dramatic events affecting the ruling house such as military conquests and rebellions.

Only as some countries began to experience modernization did the problems of periodization acquire a new focus more applicable to comparisons of societies. To determine which countries would be quickly receptive to the currents of change, attention increasingly centered on existing levels of economic development and related characteristics of social structure. Because societies were not identical, it was also deemed necessary to analyze historical processes to discover whether one society resembled another society in a previous period of its existence. Comparing societies by locating them on a continuum of development became an important part of modern scholarship.

The two major traditions associated with the development of what Nadel labels lawlike periodization have been Marxism in particular and sociology in general. Indeed, with sociologists claiming Marx as one of the outstanding early representatives of their discipline and with Soviet Marxist-Leninists attracted to sociology as a means of bridging the gap between narrow historical specialization and the high-level generalizations of historical materialism, the differences between the two traditions are not always clear. Yet, for more than a century the main currents of these traditions have diverged. Marxists have elaborated on but have not seriously revised a single model of periodization, while the majority of sociologists who have not been Marxists have proposed numerous typologies of societies but have

seldom found substantial historical support for their ideas.[9] Increasingly the centers of these respective traditions have become the world's two contrasting major powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, which accounts in part for the lack of cross-fertilization despite the considerable impact of Marxism on the academic milieu of the United States and Western Europe.

During the twentieth century, three interesting parallels continued to refine these two traditions. First, in the early part of the century, V. I. Lenin and Max Weber carried out historical studies that were instrumental in providing new research foci for their respective followers. Assuming the leadership of a dictatorial state, Lenin had a great impact in directing attention toward the study of Russian history through the application of Marx's stages of development. Weber acquired unusual familiarity with the history of many regions of the world, revitalizing detailed cross-societal historical studies. While both men were limited by distinctly inferior resources on social history in contrast to those available today, their ideas remain at the center of attention some fifty years after their deaths.

Despite the intentions of Lenin and Weber and probably to a certain extent because of the shortcomings of their research efforts, the craft of periodization stagnated during the second quarter of this century. This is the second similarity between the two traditions. Under Stalin the extreme was approached whereby the Marxist tenets of periodization were repeated with historical facts presented primarily as illustrations. Meanwhile in the West a reaction set in against grandiose classifications of historical societies; sociologists became absorbed in problems of methodology applied to contemporary local studies.

Finally, during the 1950s and 1960s, historians and social scientists in the United States and the Soviet Union initiated a reexamination of comparative studies and historical methods for treating types of societies. Within roughly a ten-year span in each country, a rash of articles and books appeared with such titles as "Sociology and History" and "History and Sociology."[10] Large studies and collections were devoted to types of societies, including the sociologist S. Eisenstadt's *The Political Systems of Empires: The Rise and Fall of the Historical Bureaucratic Societies*; the earlier *Feudalism in History*,

edited by R. Coulborn; and closely corresponding Soviet collections entitled, *Problems of the Appearance of Feudalism among the Peoples of the USSR* and *Paths of the Development of Feudalism.*[11] The third noteworthy parallel between the two traditions is the present agreement that the sociological study of societal types in history merits renewed interest.

In short, after making disappointingly little progress in solving problems of periodization during nearly half a century of partially severed communications both between representatives of these two traditions and between specialists in history and the social sciences within each tradition (the suppressive measures that resulted in the disappearance of sociology in the Soviet Union were especially severe), both sides have now rediscovered interdisciplinary historical studies aimed at developing generalizations about types of societies. At the same time, these interests have not led to attempts to devise new formulations of the stages of premodern history. It is time to draw from the best of both traditions in an effort to identify stages of history.

Among Western sociologists a recent revival of interest in classifying theories of social change has provoked discussion of what approaches are most useful for comparing societies. At one extreme, Robert A. Nisbet rejects all forms of developmentalism, which are alleged to provide generalizations drawn from metaphor instead of historical data.[12] Nisbet assumes that studies that regard social change as continuous, cumulative and directional (i.e. as immanent in existing social conditions) are incompatible with empirically derived generalizations. This book will demonstrate that his assumptions are incorrect. A large number of sociologists classify the search for stages of development under the headings of evolutionary theory, social evolution, or neo-evolutionism.[13] Singling out this category as one of several types of sociological theories of change, they generally point to various flaws in these attempts to identify a process of increasing complexity over time; e.g. these theories are unilinear when they should be multilinear, they cannot be tested, or they are incomplete without being merged with other types of theories. In contrast to these cautious commitments to the study of societal development, this

book is an attempt to identify a unilinear process that provides a basis for designating successive stages of premodern development; I argue that the stages so delineated are explicitly rooted in historical data.

This approach derives from central place theory, a framework to which representatives of several social science disciplines have contributed. Central place studies seek a general explanation for the sizes, number, and distribution of cities.[14] Identifying hierarchies of cities, they consider how cities at each level perform functions that are not available in cities at lower levels and how cities at each level have a fixed number of satellite cities at the next lower level. Study of spatial patterns has focused on hexagonal trading zones around each central place. Study of population patterns has drawn attention to the similarities in the number of people in cities that are at the same level in the marketing hierarchy and correspondingly have hinterlands of similar size. From these studies emerges the notion of a rank-size ordering of the population of cities within an area. According to this ordering principle, a consistent relationship must exist between the populations of cities at various levels within a given area. Central place theorists have introduced the concept of networks of cities, have pointed to the cities of a country as constituting a self-contained network and have considered relations between spatial, demographic, and temporal patterns as they pertain to the urban network.

Although no systematic application of the central place approach to the study of stages of development exists apart from my own introduction of the urban networks approach, a number of relevant interpretations of central place theory can be identified. G. W. Skinner has traced the history of central places in China over a period of roughly two centuries, pointing to the existence of an intensification cycle relating the ratio of villages to periodic markets to the level of economic development of an area.[15] Skinner's formulation has been widely cited for a variety of contributions; among these it suggests a framework for studying history in terms of changing interrelationships between settlements of varying sizes and functions. J. C. Russell, C. T. Smith, and E. A. J. Johnson also have written about the pattern of central places at various periods in history, associating a specific network of cities with a certain stage of societal development.[16] Their

writings create the impression that successive hierarchies of urban size and function reveal not only transformations of networks of cities but also stages in the development of societies.

The urban networks approach, which will be explained in detail in the final section of Chapter 1, is a revised version of central place theory designed to apply to an unadulterated nonmodernized setting. Central place theory has been criticized for failing to deal with industrial activities, while applying best to the location of tertiary activities, such as commerce.[17] In the premodern setting with little specialized industry for long-distance markets, one might assume that there would be less interference from manufacturing functions in the distribution of cities. Rank-size systems have been found to require a high degree of closure in a society. Again the premodern setting, with less advanced transportation technology and more highly self-contained units, should improve the applicability of an important element of the central place approach. However, while the urban networks approach incorporates the notion that there are regularities within each network in the distribution of cities at distinct population levels, the original rank-size approach that assumes that the population of a city multiplied by its rank in size equals the population of the largest city has been discarded as incorrect. No attempt is made here to examine J. C. Russell's revised formulation of rank-size distributions or G. William Skinner's elaborate treatment of shapes and sizes of hinterlands, both of which deserve further study in a broadly comparative context. Without applying all of the themes of central place theory, the urban networks approach focuses attention on the *relationship between city-size distributions and stages of development* in premodern societies.

It is frequently stated that Russia was between East and West. An examination of China and Japan in the East and England and France in the West enables us to consider the accuracy of that statement with respect to urban development. In 1800 these five countries together contained more than two-fifths of the total world population and at least one-half of the total urban population. If we compare these countries (England before 1750; France before 1790; Russia before 1800; and China and Japan before 1850), on the eve of early mod-

ernization or extensive contacts with modernizing states, they provide a convenient, well-documented historical juxtaposition—our laboratory for comparative study. Data on and analysis of the networks of central places in these five countries should establish a foundation for generalizing about the stages of premodern development.

☼ 1 ☼

APPROACHES TO PERIODIZATION

The search for standard stages of premodern development invariably shifts back and forth among: 1) single-country studies, 2) direct comparisons between societies, and 3) general statements of uniformities among large numbers of societies. The raw materials from all three of these fields of inquiry must be in ample supply before a satisfactory theory of the stages of history can be produced. In the absence of findings from any one of these fields, the explorations of the other two cannot realize their full value. It is only when various signs of development observed in one country are explicitly and systematically compared with similar signs in one or more other countries and simultaneously a general framework is developed for interpreting the relationships between indicators of social change that generalizations carefully rooted in empirical data become possible.

Previous studies of periodization have not incorporated a proper balance between these three types of inquiry. The liveliest phase of evolutionary studies during the nineteenth century approached an extreme—one-sided statements of uniformities in historical stages with scant attention to careful historical documentation. Optimistic assessments of rational man's potential for discerning universal sequences of large-scale social change led to bold statements and imaginative interpretations, yet these attempts at ordering history occurred at a time when, in comparison to today, the historical records of many major countries were poorly understood. Later, under the onslaught of contradictory historical findings and criticisms of methodological shortcomings, social scientists turned away from this task of generalization although sporadic efforts to substitute a new theory of historical stages continued to draw attention, and the best of the

early formulations survived with modest revisions, occupying what would otherwise have been a vacuum. That state of affairs continues to this day. As the introduction pointed out, single-country studies are guided primarily by the Marxist and tripartite taxonomies of history.

So far the twentieth century has witnessed a vast outpouring of single-country studies. Historical writings on most major countries have become voluminous, adding immeasurably to our knowledge of only a few decades past. There is still little awareness that efforts to specify patterns of development in a single country are limited by the absence of knowledge of corresponding patterns elsewhere. The ordering of historical data requires a framework for determining what is of importance, and that framework must develop in a comparative context. The issue of periodization raised for the history of a single country with, at most, vague references to patterns elsewhere quickly leads to an impasse in interpretation accompanied by either a hesitancy to generalize or a propensity to write non sequiturs.

Of the three essential steps in the study of periodization, least attention has been given to direct comparisons of societies. This necessary link between generalizations about uniformities and detailed study of a single country has been persistently ignored. Without it, the empiricists can correctly regard the generalizations as vague and unsupported, and the generalists can with equally smug aplomb reject detailed studies as leading nowhere. What is vitally needed in the field of historical sociology and related disciplines is systematic comparisons of societies, incorporating the findings of single-country studies and directed at generalizing about standard stages of development.

Russian history has two main attractions for the student of periodization. First, more so than the historians of any other country, historians writing about Russia have assiduously applied general schemes of periodization. Beginning with the writings of Karl Marx, undoubtedly the dominant figure among all who have sought to establish a universal taxonomy of societies, the historians and social scientists of the Soviet Union have been organized under a system that permits only one perspective in print. Without challenging that perspective, they have produced a vast literature recently filled with lively debate.[1] By turning to these numerous materials on the periodization

of Russian history, we can benefit from the intensive cultivation of the seeds planted by Marx.

Second, one cannot but be aware of the oft-noted paradox of modern Russian history. In Marxist terminology, Russia is a country that passed through the capitalist stage of development in only a little more than half a century. From a tradition of serfs and state peasants, whose obligations in many respects resembled those of serfs, Russia quickly emerged as one of the most rapidly modernizing nations. One of the few similar examples of a successful latecomer to modernization is Japan. In both countries, the essential ingredients for moving swiftly ahead to the next stage of development can be traced back to the last stable period before the onslaught of modernizing influences. The failure of current schemes of periodization is nowhere better seen than in their inability to account for the modernization of these two countries.

In the past half-century, Russian history has been the focus of intensive efforts to determine the evidence for stages of development within a single country. In this light, it probably serves as well as any other country the purpose of providing a well-documented record of processes of change within a single country. It also provides the single case examined in greatest detail from the perspective of a general formulation of stages of development. If we agree that Marx was a leading theorist in the field of historical sociology, and that Russia is the principal example studied by those who have applied Marx's theory, then the Russian record takes on added significance. Finally, to the extent that comparisons of societies have been attempted, the Russian case has appeared with unusual frequency. Soviet social scientists have used Russian history as a standard against which to measure other histories and, of course, the recurrent theme of Russian backwardness is premised on at least an implicit comparative approach. We should begin our treatment of approaches to periodization by considering how Soviets have interpreted Russian history.

Soviet Periodization of Russian History

Since Soviet social scientists have considerable experience in the use of periodization as a method of comparing societies and since most studies of Russian history are carried out in terms of Soviet periodiza-

tion, it will be helpful to recapitulate the Soviet treatment of the premodern stages of Russian history. Marx described three precapitalist forms of societies: primitive communal, slaveholding, and feudal. Although a possible fourth variant has been discussed, i.e. Asiatic despotic societies, this can be set aside here because it has not been seriously applied to the specific study of Russian history.[2] After some initial disagreement, a consensus was achieved under Stalin that Russia had not experienced a slaveholding stage.[3] At the time that the primitive communal formation was beginning to be replaced by a class society, the productive forces available were already sufficiently advanced to permit the direct establishment of a feudal society. Thus the entire span of Russian history until the middle of the nineteenth century is divided into two periods: 1) an almost totally undocumented, vaguely understood, primitive communal period; and 2) an approximately 900–1,000 year-long feudal period. The same problem of a long, unwieldy feudal period plagues Marxist studies of China, but at least in China many records exist of the preceding period before the more than 2,000 years of "feudalism" began. The great length of the feudal era in Russia as in China means that the task of establishing the general characteristics of the period can be only a preliminary step in specifying its major subdivisions.

According to Marx, the salient features of any society are the forces of production and the relations of production, the latter involving ownership and conditions of employment.[4] The forces of production of a feudal society are distinguished, on the one hand, from the primitive technology of the preceding stage of society and, on the other hand, from the widespread presence of manufacturing in the succeeding capitalist period. The application of varied animate sources of power in agriculture, small-scale crafts, and transport and even some limited use of inanimate power such as windmills are apparently typical of feudal societies. Relations of production in these societies reflect the principal reliance on agriculture. Engaging in farming, most of the population produce primarily for their own consumption and secondarily for a minority who specialize in crafts, trade, religious activities, and administrative or military pursuits. The property system, the system of rents, and the system of taxes all promote the concentration of wealth among individuals removed from

production and create a potential, on the one hand, for the accumulation of capital, and, on the other hand, for large-scale rebellions. Yet, for the most part, a self-sufficient local economy prevails; most goods are consumed within the village or local area in which they are produced, and marketing is weakly developed. Merchants, craftsmen, and other urban residents compose a small proportion of the total population.

This general description of a feudal society is static, noting the common features of countless societies and of numerous points in the development of a single society hundreds or even as many as two thousand years apart. Marxists have also portrayed feudal development as a generally linear process: technology gradually improves, new craft specialties provide signs of a widening division of labor, increasing numbers of people become involved in commercial transactions.[5] These dynamic characteristics of feudalism are particularly interesting because they provide a basis both for specifying subdivisions within the rubric of the feudal period and for demonstrating different paths through feudalism. It is the former task that has especially absorbed the energies of Soviet scholars.

There is agreement in the Soviet Union on the criteria for subdividing feudalism, but not on either the names or the dates of these subdivisions. Reviewing the historiography of Russia during the ninth to fourteenth centuries, L. V. Cherepnin found at least nine names being used for subdivisions, including pre-feudal, proto-feudal, early feudal, and the period of the genesis of feudalism.[6] Similar differences in terminology are evident in Soviet writings on the later phases of Russian feudalism from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.[7] Disagreements in terminology are frequently related to differences of opinion regarding the timing of the major landmarks in development. For the earlier period, the dispute concentrates on the extent to which remnants of the primitive communal phase were present; for the final centuries of feudalism, the debate centers on the timing of the appearance and the rate of growth of the roots of capitalism.

Rephrasing this debate on the stages of Russian history in idealized, quantitative terms, we can say that at one point 100 percent of the

basic features of Russian society could be accounted for by the presence of primitive communalism, but over many centuries that percentage dropped to zero as a corresponding rise in feudal phenomena occurred, and subsequently an inverse relationship between feudalism and capitalism began to become apparent, although until 1800 an overwhelming percentage of the characteristics of Russian society could still be attributed to feudalism. In these idealized terms, a society that was 100 percent primitive communal was steadily replaced by one that was 100 percent feudal, which in turn was giving way to a capitalist society. This is the framework of stages of history through which Soviets categorize aspects of social structure during each century.

Actually, debate in the Soviet Union never achieves this degree of precision. First, there is little consensus about the meaning of many of the principal historical terms. Second, Soviet authors disagree about the degree of development achieved at a particular time. We can speak in general terms about a consensus regarding the percentages given here for successive points in time, but there is no unanimity and, of course, the Soviets have never presented their views in terms of this explicitly quantified form.[8]

For clarity, I have schematized the conclusions based on this idealized presentation, trying to represent accurately the most frequently expressed opinions pertaining to the extent of feudalism, century by century, in Russian society. Of course, there should be no doubt that for individual authors the figures would be altered in one direction or the other by 10 percent or 20 percent, but a sufficient consensus does exist within the Soviet Union to argue that the variation from the figures in Table 1 is not large.

We can divide this period into four phases according to the balance of the primary and secondary societal types present: 1) P/F (9th–10th centuries); 2) F/P (11th–13th centuries); 3) F (14th–16th centuries); and 4) F/C (17th–18th centuries). During the first phase, when the primitive communal (P) social structure prevailed, Russian society had a tribal appearance; scattered rural settlements were weakly integrated into larger territorial entities, and there was little specialization of labor. Nonetheless, the growing weight of feudal

TABLE 1

Idealized Consensus of Soviet Historians on the Stages of Russian History (as expressed by the percentage of basic features of the society accounted for by the presence of each stage of development)

Century	*Primitive Communalism*	*Feudalism*	*Capitalism*
9th	80	20	
10th	60	40	
11th	40	60	
12th	20	80	
13th	10	90	
14th	5	95	
15th	0	100	
16th		95	5
17th		90	10
18th		80	20

(F) characteristics was visible both in the emergence of cities and in the appearance of princes demanding tribute from an increasingly agricultural rural population.

The breakdown of the independent rural community became particularly apparent during the F/P phase, when feudal elements were in the majority. Cherepnin identifies the twelfth century with the completion of the genesis of feudalism within the rubric of the previous form of society, and he traces the disappearance of the lingering, so-called "free community" to the following two centuries.[9] According to him, feudalism was secured as large cities emerged, villages increasingly consisted of the landless and the relatively prosperous, and land ownership became sharply fragmented among the prominent subordinates of local princes.

The decelerated decline of primitive communal elements (what some regard as even a temporary reversal of the generally linear process of development) during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is attributed by Soviet authors to the retarding influences of the Mongol invasions and subsequent rule.[10] Nonetheless, they generally argue that Russia continued to progress in many ways and that the

last traces of pre-feudal society disappeared in roughly the fifteenth century.

During the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries, nonfeudal elements were least evident in Russian society. The waning traces of primitive societal forms finally disappeared, and the initial signs of capitalism became visible only gradually. Russia had achieved its most purely feudal form.

According to many Soviet Marxists, the sporadic beginnings of the capitalist means of production originated in Western Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but in Russia not until the sixteenth or seventeenth century.[11] At about this time, monetary and commercial relations were beginning to spread from the city to the countryside, and within cities crafts were being converted from production for orders to production for the market. Yet, these processes were still not sufficiently advanced to signal unambiguously the onset of capitalist elements.[12] Without a precise definition of capitalist elements, Soviets are especially prone to disagreement over the timing of their appearance and early development. Recent scholarly attention has focused on identifying a later point, when the capitalist presence was large enough to exert a substantial impact, what they call the capitalist *uklad*. The authors of a collective conference report entitled *The Transition From Feudalism to Capitalism in Russia* agree that this turning point occurred during the second half of the eighteenth century and, for some, more specifically during the 1760s.[13] Thus, it is probably accurate to quantify the appearance of capitalism in Russia, as seen by Soviet eyes, as a gradual process beginning in the sixteenth century and reaching a noticeable boundary near the end of the eighteenth century. Limited degrees of penetration of commerce, of large-scale craft production, of hired labor, and, in general, of forces disrupting the closed character of the peasant economy were all consistent with a feudal society; however at some time the combined effect of these forces achieved a level where the rise of a new epoch can be observed. The significance of the period 1750–1800 to many Soviets is that this is the time when the roots of capitalism plunged deep into Russian soil.

Before leaving Table 1, we should note that the rate of change in

the stages of history was more rapid before the thirteenth century than afterward. The slow rate of development of Russia after this date is a problem for which Soviet scholars are constantly giving explanations. Blame is assigned not only to the Mongols but also to European states, which intervened in Russia during the seventeenth century. In addition, both the proponents of widespread capitalist features in the sixteenth or seventeenth century and their critics, who observe these changes only in the eighteenth century, agree that the development of capitalism was slowed by special factors of Russian feudalism, two of which were the continued spread of the feudal system to new territory as the boundaries of the empire widened and the relative absence of international trade.[14] Most writers emphasize, however, that the major inhibiting factor was serfdom, a relationship between landowner and cultivator that generally prevented the latter from either freely redividing his holdings or freely leaving the area in which he was registered. The fact that a large part of local production went directly to serfowners is seen as having retarded the differentiation of labor in rural areas. Regardless of the explanation emphasized, the duration of six centuries in which Russia remained overwhelmingly (in my terms at least 80 percent) feudal is viewed as unnecessarily long by Soviet writers.[15]

While Soviet research on Russian history has been consistently guided by these broad interests in periodization, historians have increasingly prided themselves on the careful accumulation and analysis of facts pertaining to a single area during a few decades. The quality of specialized monographs has improved considerably during the past two decades. In addition, the 1960s might properly be labeled the decade of collections of articles (*sborniki*). Volumes such as *Absolutism in Russia, Problems of the Genesis of Capitalism in Russia*, and *Cities of Feudal Russia* as well as the 1959 collection, *Monographs on the Economic History of Russia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, and the 1970 collection entitled *Problems of the Socio-economic History of Russia* have contributed to a collective assessment of the state of historical scholarship. Regrettably, the contents of these joint efforts are too disparately focused to provide much information directly pertaining to the central problems of periodiza-