



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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THE MUSCOVITE STATE IN MID-
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM
WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: HUMANITIES

WP BRP 186/HUM/2020

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TAVERN REVENUES AND ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION IN THE MUSCOVITE STATE IN MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY²

The level of alcohol consumption and the role of alcohol taxes as a source of state revenue in pre-Petrine Russia have been the subject of much scholarly interest and political speculation, yet reliable data on the magnitude of trade in “grain wine” is still lacking. This article draws on the records of central government agencies from the 1620s - early 1650s to partially fill this gap. In the decades immediately following the Times of Trouble tavern revenues nearly doubled in absolute numbers and accounted for about a quarter of the total state revenues of Muscovy. The growth rate of tavern revenues was on par with the rate of population growth (between the 1620s and 1640s, urban population increased by 60 percent). The article discusses different methods of running the state alcohol monopoly and estimates the profitability of alcohol trade and the overall levels of alcohol consumption during the period under study.

Keywords: alcohol, pre-Petrine Russia, alcohol monopoly, alcohol taxes

JEL Classification: Z

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² Work on this article has been supported by the Basic Research Program at National Research University Higher School of Economics in 2019. I wish to express my gratitude to Nikita Lychakov for translating it into English.

State capacity to tax has been crucial for the emergence and development of modern nation-states.³ Among the various revenue streams, the tax on alcohol has played a particularly vital role in state formation and economic expansion. To give just a few examples, the Dutch Republic was able to break away from Spanish rule thanks, among other things, to the revenues from beer taxes.⁴ Britain's ability to pay for the ever-growing government expenditures in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was due in no small part to the revenues derived from alcohol taxes and duties.⁵

In Russia, alcohol taxes have also historically been the key source of state revenue. At the end of Peter I's reign, on the eve of the introduction of poll tax, receipts from the sale of alcoholic beverages contributed about 33 percent to state revenues. In 1773, they made up 28 percent of state revenues; in 1805, it was 25 percent; in 1863, it was 46 percent; and in 1913, it was 26 percent.⁶ Scholars have long suggested that the tavern taxes were among the main sources of state revenues even before the reign of Peter I.⁷ Already at the end of the nineteenth century historian I. I. Ditiatin wrote that "the '[tax] profits' from taverns were nearly the most important source of revenue for the Muscovite state."⁸

However, historical scholarship still lacks reliable data on the actual magnitude of the contribution that the revenues from the sale of alcohol made to the Muscovite treasury. This article draws on the records of central government agencies from the 1620s - early 1650s to partially fill this gap.

The data we have collected also allow us to estimate, even if approximately, the profit margin of the alcohol trade and, after making some assumptions, the level of alcohol consumption. The latter topic has, of course, been the subject of much political speculation. V. P. Medinskii, Russia's Minister of Culture, in one of his oeuvres sets the task of debunking "the black myth of Russian drunkenness." He explains, paradoxically, that the Russian people were prone to getting drunk precisely because they were unaccustomed to alcoholic

³ See, most notably, Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, A.D. 990 - 1992* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1990).

⁴ Between 1566 and 1648, the Dutch Republic got 15 to 22 per cent of its revenues from the tax on beer. K. Deconinck and J. Swinnen, "How beer created Belgium (and the Netherlands): the contribution of beer taxes to war finance during the Dutch Revolt," *Business History* 58/5 (2016): 694-724.

⁵ Between 1788 and 1792, Britain derived 39.5 per cent of its state revenues from the taxes on alcohol beverages. J. Nye, *War, Wine, and Taxes: The Political Economy of Anglo-French Trade, 1689-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 72-73. In the 19th century, alcohol import duties and excise taxes contributed 30 to 40 per cent to British government revenues. H. Yeomans, "Regulating drinking through alcohol taxation and minimum unit pricing: A historical perspective on alcohol pricing interventions," *Regulation & Governance* 13/1(2019): 3-17.

⁶ V. O. Kliuchevskii, *Russkaia istoriia. Polnyi kurs lektsii*, kn. 2 (Moscow: Mysl', 1995), 576; N. V. Pronina, *Khroniki gosudarstvennoi piteinoi politiki v Rossii (XVII - pervaiia polovina XIX vv.)* (Nizhnii Novgorod: Dekom, 2017), 272-74, 278; Iu. A. Petrov, "Gosudarstvennyi biudzhet," accessed August 15, 2019, <http://istmat.info/node/197>.

⁷ S. M. Solov'ev, *Sochineniia. Kniga VII. Istoriia Rossii s drevneishikh vremen*, vol. 13-14. (Moscow: Mysl', 1991), 84-88; Kliuchevskii, *Russkaia istoriia*, kn. 2, 320.

⁸ I. I. Ditiatin, "Tsarskii kabak Moskovskogo gosudarstva," *Russkaia mysl'* 9 (1883): 41.

beverages. Drinking on a daily basis was prohibited and “the drunks lying on the streets of Moscow ... were most likely foreigners.” He comes to the conclusion that “in reality, the Russian people were true non-drinkers, as compared to foreigners. After all, they were allowed to drink alcohol only a few days a year ... While the foreigners drank daily and without restraint.” Curiously, just several years earlier, the same author had spoken in a completely different way about this problem in the seventeenth century Russia where, allegedly, “drunkenness was then widespread; people were withdrawing from drinking beer and mead and becoming addicted to vodka ... A sad conclusion, but what can you do? The beginning of alcoholism in Russia was laid by the government’s policy.”⁹

Alcohol sales and tavern taxes

The sale of alcoholic beverages in the seventeenth century Russia was organized as a state monopoly. The trade in “wine,”¹⁰ beer, and mead (*medovukha*) could be carried out legally only in state-run taverns. In this respect, the Muscovite state was unique: European states did not monopolize the sale of alcohol at that time. Note that we are talking about a monopoly on the sale of alcohol and not on its production. The distilling of alcohol was not always carried out right at the taverns. Often, wine was delivered there by private distillers (*ugovorshhiki*), who had entered into a contract with the tavern’s management to supply a certain amount of liquor at a fixed price. Sometimes these *ugovorshhiki* produced large quantities of alcohol. For example, in the city of Pskov, in 1631/32,¹¹ the tavern managers bought 14,280 buckets of wine from the *ugovorshhiki* for the distribution among the city’s population. In 1652, one Gregory Kuvaldin from the town of Gorokhovets committed to produce 10,000 buckets of alcohol at the distilleries in the city of Nizhny Novgorod for the needs of the capital.¹²

In addition, certain categories of the population were allowed to produce wine for their own needs and not for sale. These included the clergy, certain categories of servitors,¹³ and the top members of the merchant class.¹⁴ When certain events took place, such as weddings,

⁹ V. R. Medinskii, *O russkom p'ianstve, leni i zhestokosti* (Moscow: OLMA Media Grupp, 2007), 138.

¹⁰ In the seventeenth century Russia, *vino* (“wine”) referred to *polugar*, or “grain wine,” a distillate roughly similar to modern vodka in strength. In line with the language of that period, I use “wine” throughout this paper.

¹¹ As the New Year did not begin on January 1 in pre-Petrine Russia, fiscal years in our sources do not correspond precisely to our modern years.

¹² RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40772, l. 86; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 64, ll. 28–28 ob. On average, a bucket was equal to 12 liters.

¹³ T.V. Zhibrova, “Neiavlennogo pit'ia i zapovednykh tovarov ne vozit': kormchestvo i kontrabanda na iuge Rossii v XVII v.,” in *Rus', Rossiia: Srednevekov'e i Novoe vremia. Vypusk 4: Chetvertye chteniia pamiati akademika RAN L.V. Milova. Materialy k mezhdunarodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii. Moskva, 26 oktiabria – 1 noiabria 2015 g.* (Moscow: MGU, 2015), 436.

¹⁴ RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 7, ll. 55 ob., 110 ob., 298; kn. 43, ll. 874 ob., 939 ob.

commemorations, baptisms, or the need to perform certain services to the state, townsmen and some peasants were allowed to distil small amounts of wine, beer, or *braga* for their own needs. To do so, they had to come to a nearby tavern and legalize their privately-produced alcohol by paying a fee (“the turnout”). For instance, in 1615/16, in the town of Yelets, over the period of a single month, the streltsy, the Cossacks, the gunners, and the peasants legalized 25 buckets of wine and 12 buckets of beer.¹⁵ Assuming that the general population on average legalized 20 buckets per month, we can estimate that Yelets’ residents produced and consumed about 240 buckets of wine per year, while the town’s taverns sold about 400 buckets to the population.¹⁶ However, the proceeds obtained from these fees were small. In the early 1630s, even in a large city such as Pskov, the “turnout” paid by the local population totaled merely about 11 rubles per year, while the six city taverns together yielded annually about 4,600 rubles of revenue for the treasury.¹⁷ Note that in most districts the right to produce alcohol extended only to mead and beer; the right to distill wine for personal use was reserved for the privileged segments of the population only. However, the state could effectively oversee taverns only in cities, as these were the places where people lived close to each other and to the voivods, the representatives of the central government (and even there the voivods did not always keep a close eye on how the state monopoly was enforced, often for corrupt reasons). As for the countryside, controlling the liquor trade there was nearly impossible for the government. Because of this, the state wine monopoly was aimed mostly at the urban population, which was the main consumer of the legally-sold alcohol.

The two main ways of running the wine monopoly were farming a tavern out (*otkup*) and delegating the management of a tavern. In the first case, the government entered into a contractual agreement with a private person or a group of individuals, called *otkupshhiki*. These farmers undertook to pay a predetermined amount of money to the treasury at the year’s end. Any profit earned over this predefined amount went to these farmers. If for some reason a farmer failed to collect the amount due, then he or his guarantors were required to cover the shortfall with their own money. The appeal of this method for the government was the relative reliability and predictability of cash receipts.¹⁸ In addition, a typical lease

¹⁵ S. I. Kotkov and N. S. Kotkova, *Pamiatniki iuzhnovelikorusskogo narechiia. Tamozhennye knigi* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 45–64.

¹⁶ Kotkov and Kotkova, *Pamiatniki iuzhnovelikorusskogo narechiia*, 66–70.

¹⁷ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 22, ll. 46 ob., 47; kn. 23, l. 339 ob.

¹⁸ There were cases when the lessee did not collect the required amount and disappeared without a trace. For instance, this happened in the case of Stepan Matiugin in the town of Zubtsov. Matiugin had been leasing a tavern in 1642/43, then failed to pay the required amount to the treasury at the end of the year. Three years later, we learn that “he is not found in Moscow; it was said about him that he has not appeared in Moscow, it is unknown where he is; and he does not own any property” (RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 43, l. 16). Note that we are talking about a relatively small fee, about 32 rubles. These kinds of occasions occurred quite rarely, however.

stipulated a yearly “add-on” increase in the amounts due. This guaranteed the government that cash receipts would grow annually. At the same time, the farmer had to cover costs of operating the tavern, such as the purchase and the production of drinks, repairs, the purchase of firewood, candles, and so forth. These expenditures could consume anywhere from 1 to 20 percent of the total tavern revenues. In most cases, in the first half of the seventeenth century, the well-off merchants from the capital’s *posad* became farmers. In many other cases, in violation of the law,¹⁹ the lessees were the serfs who belonged to the powerful dignitaries, such as boyars I. N. Romanov and Prince I. B. Cherkasskii, or even Patriarch Filaret himself.

Another way of organizing the state wine monopoly was to delegate the operation of a tavern. In this case, the drinking establishment came under the control of a “tavern head” (*kabatskii golova*). In large cities with significant sale volume (Nizhnii Novgorod, Arkhangel'sk, Iaroslavl, Kostroma, Velikii Ustiug, Sol' Vychegodskaia), the prominent members of the privileged merchant guilds from Moscow, such as the so-called *gosti*, were appointed as tavern heads. Since the 1620s, in provincial towns, it was common to appoint merchants from one town as tavern heads in another (for example, the merchants from Kostroma, Rostov, and Iaroslavl became tavern heads in Vologda; those from Vladimir, Suzdal, Novgorod and Iaroslavl became tavern heads in Pskov; and merchants from Ustyuzhna relocated to Tot'ma). This arrangement was supposed to prevent tavern heads from concealing true profits (such cases were discovered in the early 1620s in Velikii Ustiug and Sol' Vychegodskaia)²⁰. Furthermore, in order to prevent abuses on the part of newly appointed tavern heads, local residents elected as their deputies so-called “*tseloval'niki*,” or sworn overseers, chosen from among the local population. When tavern revenues were small, the tavern heads and the overseers were typically elected from the local residents.

When the tavern was delegated, its entire revenue went to the treasury. No doubt, this was a profitable arrangement for the crown when the city’s or region’s economy was going strong. When the local economy took a dive, however, the treasury could face a large shortfall in revenue. When it was possible to prove that the reason for the shortfall was either negligence or “theft” on the part of the tavern head or the overseers, then the shortfall was levied on them or on their guarantors. When the shortfall was due to external causes, such as crop failure, the government had no other choice but to put up with the losses. Typically, the wealthier merchants were appointed as tavern heads in large cities precisely because tavern

¹⁹ S. N. Kisterev, “K istorii zakonodatel'stva ob otkupakh v pervoi polovine XVII veka,” in *Ocherki feodal'noi Rossii*, vyp. 19, ed. S. N. Kisterev (Moscow, St. Petersburg: AI'ians-Arkheo, 2016), 289–90.

²⁰ D. V. Liseitsev, ““Privezli v posulekh ustiuzhane sto rublev deneg...”: zemskie miry i tsentral'naia vlast' v Moskovskom gosudarstve 1610–1620-kh gg.,” *Rossiiskaia istoriia* 4 (2018): 90–110.

heads were responsible with their own capital for any shortfall in revenues. Another disadvantage of this method was that any expenses related to the operation of the tavern had to be subtracted from the total profit earned. These expenses occasionally amounted to quite large sums. For example, in the town of Kolomna, operating expenses made up 153 rubles out of the total revenue of 1,530 ruble, or one tenth; in Rostov, the overseers spent on running the tavern 157 rubles out of the 1,316 rubles. For this reason, authorities were sometimes willing to farm a tavern out even if that meant a very low “add-on,” or none at all, as “in the towns where taverns are delegated to tavern heads and overseers, the taverns expenses are large.”²¹

We are faced with several obstacles when calculating the revenues received by the Muscovite state from the sale of alcohol. First, the collection of tavern revenues was decentralized – the money was collected by several *prikazes*, or agencies, in Moscow. At the turn of the seventeenth century, the majority of tavern revenues were collected by five *prikazes*, or “quarters” (*prikazy-chetverti*), those of Novgorod, Ustiug, Kostroma, Galich, and Vladimir. A specialized government agency appeared at the end of the Time of Troubles, the Taverns *Prikaz*, otherwise known as the New Quarter (*Novaia Chetvert*). It accumulated tavern revenues in the nstow and districts that operated under the jurisdiction of the Kostroma, Galich, and Vladimir Quarters. The Novgorod and Ustiug Quarters continued collecting tavern revenues on their own. The proceeds from the sale of alcohol in the Volga region and in Siberia were collected by the Kazan *Prikaz*; those from the towns along the southern border, by the *Razriad Prikaz*, a military agency. Finally, the revenues from the taverns located on the lands that belonged to the tsar were collected by the “Grand Palace” (*Bol'shoi Dvorets*) *Prikaz*. This decentralized collection complicates the calculation of the aggregate revenues.

The reconstruction of the budget of the Muscovite state is also complicated by gaps in the data. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate revenue data from the sixteenth century, making comparisons to earlier period imposible. Nevertheless, the fragmentary data that we do possess suggests that the overall organization of the state alcohol monopoly in the sixteenth century did not differ much from the way it was run in the seventeenth century. In fact, the practice of farming out taverns existed back in the sixteenth century.²² However, we are not able to arrive at a comprehensive picture of how the taverns functioned, let alone to

²¹ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40479, l. 163.

²² For example, see the 1587 complaint about the abuses of a tavern farmer in the town of Suzdal. A. V. Mashtafarov, “Iavochnye chelobitnye 1568–1612 godov iz arkhiva Suzdal'skogo Pokrovskogo devich'ego monastyria,” in *Russkii diplomatarii*, vyp. 9, vol. 35 (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2003), 304–5.

calculate their revenues. This is because a substantial part of the archival material pertaining to the sixteenth century has been destroyed. The archival documents covering the first two decades of the seventeenth century have been poorly preserved too, as the great Moscow fire of 1626 destroyed the lion's share of the documents produced by the central government. And even for the period after 1626, we still have to deal with significant gaps in the archival materials. In particular, the records of the Kazan and "Grand Palace" *Prikazes*, as well as those of the New Quarter are considered to be lost completely.²³ The records of the Novgorod *Prikaz* have been preserved only partially. The records of the Ustyug *Prikaz*, on the other hand, have been preserved rather well, so we have data on the tavern revenues from its towns for nearly every year beginning from the 1620s.

Tavern revenues in the early 1620s

The beginning of the 1620s is the earliest period for which we can attempt to assess the total volume of tavern revenues. This period is all the more interesting because both the fiscal system and the economy of the Muscovite state were just beginning to recover from the Time of Troubles. We do not have any comprehensive data on the magnitude of economic decline associated with it, but the data available for certain regions present a depressing picture. By 1613/14, the Vladimir *Prikaz* collected between two and two and a half times less in various taxes from its territories; by 1617/18, its collections declined by another third. In Pskov, the taxes collected declined three and a half times between the beginning of the Time of Troubles and its end. In many towns and districts, the taverns revenues became pretty much the only source of income for the government.²⁴

For the early 1620s, we have the accounts of the Ustyug and Novgorod Quarters and the *Razriad Prikaz*. The earliest of these financial statements have been published.²⁵ Unpublished books of the Ustyug Quarter for 1622/23 and of the *Razriad Prikaz* for 1620/21 and 1621/22 can be used to fill in the blanks.²⁶

²³ I. P. Ermolaev, "Territorial'no-administrativnaia sfera deiatel'nosti prikaza Kazanskogo dvortsa (K postanovke voprosa)," in *Klasy i sosloviia Rossii v period absolutizma. Mezhvuzovskii sbornik statei* (Kuibyshev: Kuibyshevskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1989), 5, 6; A. I. Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup. Ocherki iz istorii tamozhennogo i kabatskogo dela na iuge i zapade evropeiskoi Rossii v XVII veke (po materialam prikhodo-raskhodnykh knig moskovskikh prikazov i gorodovykh tamozhennykh i kabatskikh knig)* (Moscow: Staraiia Basmannaia, 2017), 11.

²⁴ *Prikhodo-raskhodnye knigi moskovskikh prikazov 1619–1621 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 16–22; *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, izdavaemaia Arkheograficheskoiu komissieiu*, vol. XXVIII (Moscow: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1912), 128–44; D. V. Liseitsev, "Ekonomicheskoe sostoianie Moskovskogo gosudarstva v pervye gody tsarstvovaniia Mikhaila Fedorovicha (po materialam prikaza Vladimirskoi chetverti)," *Rossiiskaia istoriia* 4 (2017): 33–34.

²⁵ The books of the Novgorod *Quarter* for 1619-20 and 1620-21; those of the Ustyug Quarter for 1620-21; and those of the *Razriad Prikaz* for 1619-20. *Prikhodo-raskhodnye knigi moskovskikh prikazov*, 7–142, 167–392.

²⁶ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Ustyug, kn. 6; f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 77; kn. 276.

In particular, the accounts of the Novgorod Quarter list the revenues collected from the taverns in the towns and districts that were under its jurisdiction. In the 1620s, the largest receipts were recorded in Nizhny Novgorod (11,257 rubles), Pskov (5,017 rubles), Arkhangelsk (4,188 rubles), Novgorod (2,962 rubles), Viatka (2,507 rubles), Vologda (2,359 rubles), and in Sol' Kamskaia (1,844 rubles).²⁷ These seven cities together delivered over 30,000 rubles, or about 80 percent of the total tavern revenue collected by the Novgorod Quarter. In 1620/21, it received about 38,000 rubles from the taverns,²⁸ which accounted for around 32 percent of the total revenues collected by this agency that year.

The accounts books of the Ustiug Quarter for 1620/21 show that about three fourth of the tavern revenues collected, or 8,736 rubles, came from the towns of Ustiug (5,048 rubles), Sol' Vyehgodskaya (2,451 rubles), and Tot'ma (1,236 rubles).²⁹ Overall, the taverns of the Ustyug Quarter contributed about 11,700 rubles to the tsar's treasury,³⁰ the sum that made up approximately 32 percent of the total revenues received by this *prikaz* in 1620/21.

The accounts of the *Razriad Prikaz* for 1620/21 and 1621/22 provide us with the data on the tavern and customs revenues collected from the towns along the southern border. The largest sources of revenue were the towns of Voronezh (1,034 rubles), Belgorod (1,002 rubles), Yelets (770 rubles), and Kursk (577 rubles).³¹ In total, the towns under the jurisdiction of the *Razriad Prikaz* collected about 3,500 rubles of tavern and customs revenues. In later periods, the tavern revenues in Belgorod surpassed the customs collections by 3.4 times, and in Kursk by 2 to 2.6 times.³² If we suppose that this region collected 3 rubles of tavern revenues for every 1 ruble of customs revenues, then a reasonable assumption would be that in 1620/21 the taverns of the southern borderland supplied around 2,600 rubles to the central government.

So far, we have established that in the early 1620s, about fifty towns and districts under the jurisdiction of the Novgorod and Ustyug Quarters and the *Razriad Prikaz*, located mostly on the periphery of the Muscovite state collected slightly over 50,000 rubles in tavern

²⁷ *Prikhodo-raskhodnye knigi moskovskikh prikazov*, 9–12, 19–21, 25, 28, 33, 130, 243–45, 254, 255, 260, 267, 268, 271, 275, 277, 280, 282, 284, 285, 287, 291, 299–301, 310, 312–14, 318, 322; RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 4, l. 418; kn. 5, l. 75 ob.; f. 141, op. 1, d. 4 (1621 g.), l. 106; f. 396, op. 1, d. 40274, l. 377.

²⁸ It is not possible to calculate an exact amount of tavern revenues in this case. Financial statements do not separate the tavern revenues from the customs revenues for Arzamas and its district as well as for a number of villages located in Nizhnii Novgorod, Novgorod, and Pskov districts.

²⁹ *Prikhodo-raskhodnye knigi moskovskikh prikazov*, 329, 336, 357, 358, 376, 379–83; RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 4, l. 91; kn. 5, l. 72–72 ob.; f. 137, op. 1, Ustiug, kn. 6, ll. 11, 18–30, 59, 62, 343.

³⁰ The exact amount cannot be calculated in this case as there is no separation of tavern and customs revenues for Kliiazmenski Gorodok, Mozhaisk, and Charonda. According to the data available for other years, the ratio of customs to tavern revenues was about 1 to 2 in Charonda, 1 to 4 in Mozhaisk, and 1 to 8 in Kliiazmenskii gorodok (RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Tot'ma, kn. 1, l. 24–25; Ustiug, kn. 72, ll. 155–155 ob.; Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 192).

³¹ RGADA, f. 233, op. 6-zh, kn. 77, ll. 10, 40; kn. 276, ll. 2, 7, 12, 34 ob., 37–37 ob., 42, 95, 102 ob.

³² Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 159, 163, 167, 171.

revenues. Our task is complicated by the fact that some records of the New Quarter which covered 56 districts, are missing. Fortunately, some fragments of these records have survived. These include the summaries of revenues collected by this *prikaz* in the early 1620s. In 1621/22, this agency collected 33,971 rubles. In the next year, it collected slightly less, or 33,412 rubles. In 1623/24, it expected to collect about 35,000 rubles.³³

The revenues collected in the city of Moscow deserve a separate discussion. Moscow and its districts were administered by the so-called *Zemskii Dvor* (“Yard of the Land”), whose records have been lost. However, I have been able to locate a fragment of a draft which summed up the amount of wine sold in Moscow in 1622/23. The draft reveals that 3,189.25 buckets of wine were sold at *Gostinyi Dvor* and about 2,000 buckets were sold in the taverns across the city. Overall, in 1622/23, the central government collected 6,219 rubles from the sale of wine in the capital. In the first half of the 1620s, wine was delivered to Moscow from Murom, Vladimir, and Pereslavl’-Zalessky (to the tune of 5,000 to 6,000 buckets per year) at the price of 30 kopecks per bucket. In Moscow, the retail price of the same bucket was 1 ruble and 20 kopecks.³⁴ In the 1620s, Moscow taverns made 4,700 rubles on a yearly basis in net profit from the sale of wine. Considering that beer and mead were also sold at these establishments and accounted for about 20 percent of the total revenues, we can assume that the total revenues collected from the Moscow taverns was about 6,000 rubles.

Finally, some other government agencies also collected tavern revenues. For example, the taverns in the town of Kasimov were under the jurisdiction of the Ambassadorial *Prikaz*. In the early 1620s, these taverns yielded 1,150 rubles in revenue. Nor have we discussed so far the tavern revenues collected by the “Grand Palace” and Kazan *Prikaz*. We will refer to them later in the article.

Tavern revenues in the late 1620s, the early 1630s, and 1644/45

Next, we turn to the time period from the late 1620s to the early 1630s. This allows us to access the tavern revenues during a relatively prosperous and peaceful period, which followed the Time of Troubles. My reference year is 1629/30. In the cases when the data are not available, I use the closest available year. By the early 1630s, the tavern revenues received by the Novgorod Quarter were about 52,000 rubles,³⁵ those collected by the Ustiug Quarter

³³ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40020, ll. 1–48; d. 50124, ll. 1, 2, 4.

³⁴ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 39987, l. 53 ob.; d. 40016, ll. 98, 108, 117.

³⁵ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 18, ll. 21, 347, 538–41, 962, 1036 ob., 1048 ob., 1060 ob., 1139, 1146, 1175 ob.–1176, 1328–1329, 1325–1328; kn. 23, ll. 6–7, 113 ob.; f. 141, op. 1, d. 61 (1628 r.), ll. 12–15, 32–35; f. 233, kn. 11, ll. 108 ob., 282, 352; kn. 15, l. 37 ob.; f. 396, op. 1, d. 40631, ll. 26, 27, 88, 154, 167, 172, 229, 234, 236, 237, 266, 284, 285; d. 40672, l. 51.

were approximately 20,000 rubles³⁶ and those that went to the *Razriad Prikaz* were about 4,200 rubles.³⁷ It is easy to reconstruct the revenues collected by these agencies based on their account books. It is harder, however, to calculate the profits collected by the New Quarter because its records for this and later periods have not been preserved. Instead, I use the records of the *Prikaz* of the Seal that listed, among other things, the registration fees paid by the farmers when they leased taverns. They also include the name of the lessee, the name of the tavern, the duration and the price of the lease. Thanks to this information, we can use the data on the fees for the 1630s-1640s from the *Prikaz* of the Seal to partially compensate for the loss of the records of the New Quarter and to calculate that in 1629/30 the tavern revenues it collected must have been around 45,000 rubles.³⁸ Compared to the 1620s, the tavern revenues of the Novgorod Quarter increased by the factor of 1.4; those of the Ustiug Quarter, by the factor of 1.7; those of the New Quarter, by the factor of 1.3; and those of the *Razriad Prikaz*, by the factor of 1.6. The total revenue from the sale of alcohol in the towns under the jurisdiction of these agencies grew by the factor of 1.4 over the decade.

The surviving materials allow us also to calculate the revenues received by the treasury of the Muscovite state in the mid-1630s. In particular, let's examine 1635/36. For this year, we lack accounts books for the Novgorod Quarter, so we have to rely on data on duties paid by the tavern farmers to the *Prikaz* of the Seal. Based on these data, we calculate that the towns and districts of the Novgorod Quarter yielded 65,000 rubles in tavern revenues.³⁹ The accounts of the Ustyug Quarter for 1635/36 allow us to calculate its tavern revenues quite reliably. We estimate them to be about 21,000 rubles.⁴⁰ The New Quarter collected about 55,000 rubles.⁴¹ Finally, the *Razriad Prikaz* got about 7,400 rubles of tavern and customs

³⁶ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Ustiug, kn. 9, l. 245 ob.; kn. 14, l. 150 ob.; kn. 16, ll. 153–53 ob., 371 ob.; kn. 17, ll. 27, 31 ob., 34–63, 83 ob.–90, 109, 109 ob., 330, 351 ob., 353, 357 ob., 358, 360 ob., 364, 365 ob., 367, 380 ob., 383, 389, 391, 393 ob., 394, 404, 412 ob., 414, 418; Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 176, 192.

³⁷ RGADA, f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 86, ll. 2-2 ob.; kn. 282, ll. 55, 71, 72 ob., 125, 127, 170, 179; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 11, ll. 315, 325; Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 117.

³⁸ RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 11, ll. 138, 209, 279, 293, 296 ob., 298, 315, 316 ob., 321, 321 ob., 332 ob., 335 ob., 338, 339, 341 ob.–42, 347, 348–49, 349 ob., 357 ob., 378, 383–83 ob., 385 ob., 403 ob.; kn. 13, ll. 13 ob.–14, 105, 196, 207, 256; kn. 15, ll. 184, 211, 254 ob., 259, 265 ob., 271 ob., 273 ob., 276 ob.–77, 281–81 ob., 291, 292; kn. 16, l. 62 ob.; kn. 19, ll. 226, 237 ob.; kn. 20, ll. 176 ob.–77; f. 396, op. 1, d. 40479, ll. 32, 47, 49, 111–14, 116, 145–47, 149–52, 157–60, 164, 201–3, 207, 217–19, 224–27, 231–33, 244–46, 251, 252, 267, 292–95, 313, 316, 317, 322, 323, 326–31.

³⁹ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 22, ll. 161, 161 ob.; kn. 23, ll. 35 ob., 36 ob., 38 ob., 108, 108 ob., 167–68, 282 ob., 283, 313–14 ob., 341–43, 369–70, 437–38; kn. 24, ll. 154–55 ob., 337 ob.–38 ob., 404–5; kn. 25, l. 191; kn. 28, ll. 690, 691, 703; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 25, l. 158; kn. 26, l. 165 ob.

⁴⁰ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Ustiug, kn. 28, ll. 74–99, 188, 261–74 ob., 381–85, 409 ob., 415, 421, 423 ob., 431, 432 ob., 435, 442 ob., 448, 450 ob., 458, 460, 462, 463, 481, 483; f. 233, kn. 25, ll. 149 ob.–50; Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 177, 192, 193.

⁴¹ RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 19, ll. 166, 247 ob., 251; kn. 20, l. 176 ob.; kn. 22, l. 193; kn. 23, l. 218 ob.; kn. 24, l. 146 ob.; kn. 25, ll. 52, 94 ob., 101, 122, 130 ob., 133–33 ob., 135, 136, 137, 137 ob., 139 ob., 140 ob.–41 ob., 144, 147 ob., 148 ob., 152 ob., 155, 157 ob., 166 ob.–67 ob., 169, 171–72 ob., 174 ob.–75 ob., 177 – 77 ob., 182, 191 ob., 200–200 ob., 215, 215 ob., 223 ob., 226, 228 ob., 229, 236; kn. 26, ll. 10, 15 ob., 19 ob., 50 ob., 178; kn. 29, ll. 148 ob., 163, 207, 208 ob.–9, 211, 212 ob.; kn. 30, ll. 102 ob.–3, 219 ob.–20.

revenues, among which the taverns accounted for 5,500 rubles.⁴² Now let's compare the revenues in 1635/36 to the revenues collected in the first five years of the 1630s. The revenues of the Novgorod Quarter grew by 25 percent; those of the Ustyug Quarter, by 5 percent; of the New Quarter, by 22 percent; and of the *Razriad Prikaz*, by 31 percent. Overall, tavern revenues increased by 20.5 percent. Lastly, let's compare the revenues in 1635/36 to the revenues collected in the beginning of the 1620s. At the Novgorod Quarter, the liquor revenues grew by the factor of 1.7; at the Ustyug Quarter, by the factor of 1.8; and at the New Quarter, by the factor of 1.6. The largest increase of tavern revenue took place in the towns in the South of Russia under the authority of the *Razriad Prikaz*, where the receipts grew twofold. The average rate of tavern revenue growth across the entire country was 68 percent.

Lastly, let's estimate the tavern revenues for 1644/45, the last year of Mikhail Fedorovich's reign. The Novgorod Quarter contributed approximately 70,000 rubles⁴³; the Ustyug Quarter, 20,000 rubles⁴⁴; the New Quarter, about 70,000 rubles.⁴⁵ The lowest proceeds (about 5,800 rubles), were from the cities administered by the *Razriad Prikaz*.⁴⁶ In aggregate, these agencies collected about 166,000 rubles in tavern revenues. Compared to the early 1620s, tavern revenues increased nearly twofold (1.9 times, to be precise). In particular, the revenues collected by the Novgorod Quarter grew by the factor of 1.8; those collected by the new Quarter, by the factor of 2; and those collected by the Ustyug Quarter, increased by the factor of 1.7. However, if we compare the revenues in 1644/45 to those in 1635/36, we see a somewhat different trend. The revenues collected by the New Quarter increased by 27 percent over this decade, those at the Novgorod Quarter grew by less than 8 percent, and those at the *Razriad Prikaz* grew by merely 5.5 percent. Those at the Ustyug Quarter actually decreased by 5 percent.⁴⁷ The average growth of tavern revenues was 13.5 percent between 1636 and 1645 – a noticeable slowdown when compared to the change from the previous decade.

⁴² RGADA, f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 91, ll. 1 ob., 21, 59–59 ob., 61, 112, 144, 145, 161, 168–69 ob., 172–73; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 22, l. 86 ob.; kn. 25, l. 101 ob.; kn. 26, l. 138.

⁴³ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 22, l. 15 ob.; kn. 28, ll. 17 ob.–48 ob., 64, 65, 68, 71, 73, 76 ob., 78 ob., 79, 83, 86, 88–89, 90, 98, 106, 116, 123, 123 ob., 213, 214–15, 217, 339–45, 403, 404, 413, 447, 490, 509, 516, 522, ob., 540, 549, 570, 572, 581, 617, 630, 711, 731, 732, 738, 740, 746, 757, 762, 764; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 39, ll. 1132 ob.–1133, 1155 ob.; kn. 40, ll. 15 ob., 1063 ob., 1135 ob.–1136; kn. 41, ll. 79, 57 ob.–58, 428; kn. 671, ll. 10 ob., 255–256, 304 ob.

⁴⁴ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Ustyug, kn. 72, ll. 22, 29, 30, 33, 36, 39, 42, 69, 69 ob., 73–74 ob., 76, 78, 80, 99, 99 ob., 105–8, 109, 120–20 ob., 134–34 ob., 136–37 ob., 140–40 ob., 144, 145–46, 150, 151, 155–55 ob., 475, 477, 530; Suzdal', kn. 2, ll. 382, 391, 407; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 43, l. 39; Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 178, 193.

⁴⁵ RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 38, ll. 295–95 ob., 328 ob.–29; kn. 39, ll. 461 ob., 822, 864 ob., 865, 1180 ob., 1198 ob., 1202 ob.; kn. 40, ll. 26 ob., 27, 27 ob., 35 ob., 36 ob.–37, 42, 46, 46 ob., 55, 84 ob., 85, 256 ob., 297, 382–82 ob.; kn. 41, ll. 57–58 ob., 61 ob.–63, 81–81 ob., 91–91 ob., 92, 97–98 ob., 100 ob., 103, 103 ob., 223 ob., 271–71 ob.; kn. 43, ll. 12, 18 ob., 19, 41 ob., 60 ob., 78 ob., 162, 379 ob., 390, 392, 399, 977 ob.–78, 983 ob.–85, 994–94 ob., 996 ob.; kn. 44, ll. 38, 39 ob., 51 ob., 201; kn. 45, l. 324 ob.; kn. 671, l. 14 ob.

⁴⁶ RGADA, f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 304, ll. 3–6 ob., 74–76, 84–84 ob., 113–14, 124, 130, 142 ob.; kn. 305, ll. 58, 64; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 39, l. 843; kn. 40, ll. 130 ob.–31, 143, 448; kn. 43, l. 642 ob.; Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 158, 166.

⁴⁷ At first glance, it appears that the growth of tavern revenues was most notable at the districts administered by the *Razriad Prikaz*. We estimate that in the early 1620s the tavern revenues there reached 2,600 rubles, while in 1644/45, they were about 5,800 rubles, or 2.2 times higher. However, the second half of the 1630s and the first half of the 1640s were

The tavern revenues of the Kazan and “Grand Palace” *Prikazes*

The records of the Kazan *Prikaz* that collected revenues from the tavern farmers in the cities of the Volga region have been lost almost entirely: we have only few pieces of data for select towns and select years. Some data are also available from the registers of duties paid at the *Prikaz* of the Seal, but these are also rather fragmentary as far as this region is concerned. In short, our estimates of tavern revenues collected by the Kazan *Prikaz* are rather approximate, as they require making extensive assumptions and extrapolating.⁴⁸ Be it as it may, we estimate that in 1644/45 the towns of the Kazan *Prikaz* collected about 27,000 rubles in tavern revenues.

However, these estimates do not include Kazan and Astrakhan, two major cities of the Volga region, as for them we do not have any data whatsoever. So, here we are reduced to making informed guesses. Kazan’s *posad* was one of the largest in the country and was on par even with Moscow. Taking into consideration the size of Kazan’s population (both the townsmen and the servitors stationed there), we can presume that Kazan’s taverns yielded no less than 8,000 rubles (similar to the tavern revenues in Yaroslavl). Astrakhan had a significantly smaller *posad* (no more than 200 homesteads), but boasted a record number of *streltsy* stationed there (2,500).⁴⁹ Given that, we assume that the tavern revenues in Astrakhan were unlikely to be less than 4,000 rubles.

So, by the mid-1640s, the total volume of tavern revenues collected from the territories administered by the Kazan *Prikaz* was about 40,000 rubles. Assuming that the scale of the tavern revenues in the Volga region grew more or less in step with the trend in revenues across the rest of the country, we estimate that by the early 1620s Kazan collected about 21,000 rubles; by the beginning of the 1630, it collected about 29,000 rubles; and by the mid-1630s, it raised about 35,000 rubles. As discussed above, in the early 1620s, tavern revenues accounted for one third of the total revenues of the Novgorod and Ustiug Quarters, but by the mid-1640s, only for one fourth. Extrapolating from this, we calculate that by the end of the

associated with the construction of a number of fortresses along the southern border. The concentration of troops and workmen there certainly drove up the receipts at the taverns located near these fortresses, which then passed their revenues on to the *Razriad Prikaz*. In the “old” towns of the *Razriad Prikaz*, however, the the tavern revenues in 1644/45 were about 4,900 rubles, or 1.9 times greater than in the early 1620s, the rate of growth which is more in line with the overall trend across the country.

⁴⁸ Based on: RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 39, ll. 134 ob., 261, 879–79 ob., 964, 1104–1105, 1110–1110 ob., 1141 ob.; kn. 43, ll. 7 ob., 293, 323, 859; kn. 45, l. 218; kn. 62, l. 8 ob.; kn. 20, l. 133; kn. 25, ll. 80 ob., 122 ob., 158–158 ob., 210; kn. 26, ll. 57–57 ob.; kn. 29, ll. 76, 82, 130 ob.–31; kn. 4, l. 88 ob.; kn. 38, l. 310; kn. 40, ll. 6 ob., 204 ob.–5, 914, 1138–1138 ob.; kn. 43, ll. 4, 5, 5 ob., 10, 10 ob., 12 ob., 14, 156 ob., 807 ob., 838; kn. 44, ll. 1 ob.–2, 5 ob., 190 ob.–91; kn. 671, l. 15; kn. 672, ll. 115–15 ob., 1347 ob.; kn. 18, ll. 283 ob.–284; kn. 30, l. 112.

⁴⁹ P. P. Smirnov, *Goroda Moskovskogo gosudarstva v pervoi polovine XVII veka, t. 1, vyp. 2, Kolichestvo i dvizhenie naseleniia* (Kiev: Tipografiia Universiteta Sv. Vladimira, 1919), 166, 173, 174; RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 671, ll. 320 ob.–21.

Time of Troubles, the *Kazan Prikaz* raised up to 60,000 rubles and by the end of Mikhail Fedorovich's reign, it raised about 100,000 rubles.

While the data about the *Kazan Prikaz* allow us to calculate, however approximately, its tavern revenues, even such calculations are impossible to make for the “Grand Palace” *Prikaz*, its records have been lost almost entirely; nor do the records of the duties paid by the tavern farmers under its jurisdiction at the *Prikaz* of the Seal survived. As a result, we can only make the most general observations in regard to the “Grand Palace.” Recalling that in the mid-1630s the total revenue of the “Grand Palace” was about 160,000 rubles,⁵⁰ and assuming that the share of tavern revenues in the overall budget of the “Grand Palace” was similar to that of the Novgorod and Ustiug Quarters, or about one third, we can estimate that in the mid-1630s the tavern revenues of the “Grand Palace” were about 53,000 rubles. Taking these estimates and our observations regarding the dynamics of tavern revenues elsewhere as the point of departure, we can extrapolate also the volume of tavern revenues at the “Grand Palace” for other periods, although, of course we should never forget the extremely tenuous nature of the figures we arrive at.

Tavern revenues in the 1620s-1640s

Having made all these calculations, we can now trace the overall trends in the tavern revenues in the European part of the Muscovite state (west of the Ural Mountains) over a quarter of the century, which had passed after the end of the Time of Troubles. The following table presents the results of our analysis.

Table 1. Tavern revenues in the European part of the Muscovite state in the early 1620s-mid 1640s

Prikaz	Early 1632s	Early 1630s	Mid-1630s	Mid-1640s
Novgorod Quarter	38,000 rubles	52,000	65,000	70,000
Ustyug Quarter	12,000	20,000	21,000	20,000
New Quarter	34,000	45,000	55,000	70,000
Kazan Prikaz	21,000	29,000	35,000	40,000
“Grand Palace”	32,000	45,000	53,000	60,000
Other	10,000	14,000	17,000	19,000
Total:	147,000	205,000	246,000	279,000

⁵⁰ D. V. Liseitsev, “Gosudarstvennyi biudzhnet Moskovskogo tsarstva rubezha 1630 – 1640-kh gg.: Opyt rekonstruktsii,” *Rossiiskaia istoriia* 5 (2015) Лисейцев Д.В. Государственный бюджет... С. : 17–18.

Some preliminary conclusions are due here. In the second half of the 1630s, there is a noticeable divergence in the growth rates of tavern revenues in the north (where these were collected by the Novgorod and Ustyug Quarters) versus those in the central and southern towns of the country (administered by the New Quarter). In the north, tavern revenues grew very slowly or even shrank, suppressed as they were by additional taxes levied on these regions, including the *streltsy* tax and others. For example, in the town of Pskov, in 1636/37, the taverns were farmed out for 5,240 rubles. By 1644/45, the amount due grew only slightly to 5,397 rubles, an increase of merely 157 rubles and 50 kopecks. Over the same time period, the tavern revenues in the city of Novgorod increased by meager 52 rubles and 50 kopecks, while in Velikii Ustyug they actually fell by nearly 3,000 rubles, and in Nizhnii Novgorod by 1,364 rubles.⁵¹

In the meantime, there is an increase in the tavern revenues in the towns where large military units were stationed. In 1636/37, in the town of Tula, taverns were leased out for 2,350 rubles. In 1643/44, they were leased for 4,680 rubles, or for twice as much. In 1636/37, in the town of Odoev, the tavern farmer was expected to pay 119 rubles, while in 1641/42, the amount was 3.5 times greater, or 425 rubles. In the town of Venev, tavern revenues increased more than threefold (from 79 rubles in 1636/37 to 258 rubles in 1642/43).⁵²

Put differently, as the government was expecting a major war at the late 1630s-early 1640s, it increased the fiscal burden on the general population in order to provide salaries for the troops amassed at the southern border.⁵³ The soldiers then spent their salaries on drinking, in effect boosting tavern revenues in the southern towns where they were stationed. In the north, on the contrary, heavier tax burden cut into the disposal incomes that the populace could spend on drinking, thereby depressing the tavern revenues.

Alcohol sales and profitability of taverns

Remember that the revenues collected by the government from a tavern were equal to the net income earned by the tavern (that is, the gross profit minus the cost of producing and/or purchasing the alcohol and other operating costs). The difference between a tavern's gross profit and net income could be quite large. Let's examine how taverns functioned in the

⁵¹ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 29, ll. 157 ob.–58; Ustyug, kn. 43, ll. 45, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60, 62, 63, 65, 67, 70, 72, 73; kn. 51, ll. 27, 27 ob., 31, 33, 35, 37; kn. 72, ll. 22, 29, 30, 33, 36, 39, 42; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 19, l. 239; kn. 25, ll. 223 ob.–24; kn. 41, l. 428; kn. 671, ll. 10 ob., 255 ob.–56.

⁵² RGADA, f. 233, op. 1, kn. 26. l. 50 ob.; kn. 29. ll. 170, 176–76 ob.; kn. 38. ll. 328 ob.–29; kn. 40. ll. 26 ob.–27; kn. 41. l. 19 ob.

⁵³ During these years, the Muscovite state was on the verge of a war with the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate, the crisis that was precipitated by the capture of the Turkish fortress of Azov in the mouth of the river Don by Don Cossacks.

town of Vologda in 1626/27. These taverns were delegated to tavern heads. The tavern head was a person from the nearby town of Rostov, while the “sworn overseers” were the locals. Wine distilleries were located right in the taverns. The tavern heads and the overseers kept records of the amount of wine distilled, beer brewed, and mead prepared. The expenses related to the salaries of tavern employees and the cost of raw materials were recorded in considerable detail. The records also included the amount of alcohol sold and its price, as well as the total monthly profit from the sale of liquor.

The sales of mead was rather small – only 445 buckets were sold over the course of the entire year at the steady price of 25 kopecks per bucket (including the periods when the cost of raw materials rose substantially). The honey that went in the production of mead was not cheap, the prices ranging from 10 to 12.5 kopecks per bucket. The taverns in Vologda spent 52 rubles to produce mead. Their profit was 111 rubles, and the net income was 59 rubles. This means that the profitability was 113 percent. Beer was the most popular drink because it was also the cheapest. Throughout the year, a bucket of beer cost 8 kopecks, while the cost of its production stayed at 2.5 kopecks all year round. The taverns in Vologda sold 12,547.5 buckets of beer, implying that the locals drank over 1,000 buckets of beer each month on average. The return on beer was the highest among all alcoholic drinks – up to 2 rubles and 23 kopecks per each ruble invested in its production.

Because beer was a cheap drink, the majority of profits did not come from the sale of beer, but from the sale of wine. In 1626/27, 658 buckets of wine were sold on a monthly basis in Vologda. Over the course of the year the taverns in Vologda sold 7,903 buckets of wine (not including 2,042 buckets sold, on the tsar’s order, to the Dvina’s region at close the production cost). Unlike the price of beer and mead, the price of wine fluctuated quite significantly in 1626/27. In the second half of the year, the price of wine declined from 80 to 50 kopecks per bucket, while the production costs increased from 26 to 34 kopecks. The reason for this was that the tavern heads and overseers were trying to “fulfill the plan,” so to say, to collect the required amount of tavern revenues. By boosting the price of wine, they increased sales. As a result, the taverns spent 2,200 rubles and 54 kopecks to produce wine and made 5,542 rubles in profit on its sale. The net income on the sale of wine was 3,199 rubles (profitability of 145 percent). In 1626/27, the cumulative net income of the taverns in Vologda from the sale of all types of drinks was 3,952 rubles.⁵⁴

The data about 1629/30 confirm the trends we have seen in 1626/27. Between 1626/27 and 1629/30, the sales of alcohol drinks in Vologda increased significantly. The net income

⁵⁴ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40208, ll. 1–53.

from the sale of alcohol grew by 30 percent to 5,232 rubles. The consumption of wine grew noticeably by 28.5 percent (to 10,115 buckets) and of beer by 21 percent (to 15,236.5 buckets). The consumption of mead grew even more, by 86.5 percent (to 830 buckets). The taverns earned 4,304 rubles, or 82 percent of the total revenues, from the sale of wine; 812 rubles, or 16 percent of the total, from the sale of beer; and 116 rubles, or 2 percent of the total, from the sale of mead. Similar to the year 1626/27, the net income from the sale of alcohol was about 59 percent of the gross profit. This level of profitability was probably typical for those years because the profitability of the taverns in Kargopol was also 59 percent and those in Turchasov (a small town on the Onega river) was 61 percent.⁵⁵

Assuming that this level of profitability was common across all the taverns in the Muscovite state, then it becomes evident that the tavern revenues we have calculated are not equal to the amount spent on alcohol by the general population. The latter must be at least 1.7 times higher so as to cover the costs of alcohol production and the maintenance of taverns. According to our estimations, by the end of Mikhail Fedorovich's reign, the annual tavern revenues collected by the Moscow state were about 280,000 rubles, in which case the tsar's subjects must have spent no less than 475,000 rubles on alcohol purchases. Out of this amount, 380,000 rubles, or 80 percent of the total, must have been spent on wine; about 85,500 rubles, or 18 percent of the total, on beer; and about 9,500 rubles, or 2 percent of the total, on mead.⁵⁶

Furthermore, when calculating taverns' profitability, we based our estimates on the records of tavern heads. The profits they made went entirely to the government. The tavern head and the overseers were interested only in meeting their targets, as theirs was a service obligation with – at least, officially - no room for making money for personal gain. However, many taverns in the Muscovite state were farmed out. According to our calculations, in the last year of Mikhail Fedorovich's reign, the total value of the tavern farms in the districts under the jurisdiction of the New, Novgorod, and Ustiug Quarters and *Razriad Prikaz* was no less than 68,000 rubles.⁵⁷ Unlike tavern heads and overseers, a tavern farmer made every attempt to earn as much money on top of whatever revenue he was required to deliver to the

⁵⁵ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40274, ll. 408–19, 449–88.

⁵⁶ This ratio was far from universal, though. For example, in 1641/42, in Belgorod, 93 percent of tavern revenues came from the sale of wine, and the remaining 7 percent came from the sale of mead. In the same year, in Kursk, the sale of wine yielded 89 percent and mead yielded 11 percent of overall revenue. Beer was not sold in either Belgorod or Kursk (RGADA, f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 94, ll. 2 ob.–107 ob., 128–31). In 1628/29, the profitability of wine sales was 95 percent in both Kargopol and Turchasov. Mead was not sold in these cities (RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40274, ll. 408–19).

⁵⁷ These data are incomplete, as our sources do not cover a number of taverns that are known to have operated in 1644/45. Still, as the total alcohol revenues collected by these *prikazes* in 1644/45 were about 166,000 rubles, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that about half of the tavern revenues collected by the Muscovite state came from the taverns that were leased out.

authorities (plus operating costs), as any such extra revenue became his personal income. Unfortunately, we do not have at our disposal any financial records of such farmers, so we are unable to calculate the volume of alcohol consumed in these taverns. We know that the farmers sometimes failed to meet their revenue targets, and it often took them or their guarantors several years to cover this shortfall.⁵⁸ However, we also know that many entrepreneurs were quite persistent in seeking to obtain such leases, indicating that these taverns were in fact quite profitable.⁵⁹

How exactly were the farmers able to extract the additional profits for themselves? Did they, as monopolists, choose to increase the prices; or on the contrary, did they seek to increase their sales by lowering prices; or did they economize on the quality of their product? Archival documents suggest that the farmers often resorted to dumping alcohol at greatly reduced prices. According to the tavern head who in 1644/45 managed the taverns in the town of Perm, the farmers who had previously run this tavern sold wine at 50-60 kopecks per bucket, while he had to sell it for 1 ruble and 20-50 kopecks, or two to three times more expensive. A tavern farmer typically sold a bucket of beer for 5-6 kopecks, while a tavern head sold the same bucket for 8 kopecks. As for the mead, the prices were 15-18 kopecks and 24 kopecks, respectively.⁶⁰ Given that the farmer sold alcohol at a price that was, on average, half of what the tavern head charged, the former had to sell twice as much alcohol as the tavern head just to make even with the treasury. It should not be too far-fetched to suggest that in order to make a profit, a tavern that was farmed out might have had to sell three times as much alcohol as a tavern that was delegated.

This was possible because at the taverns that were delegated the selling price of alcohol was usually set well above the production price. For example, in 1626 in Vologda, a tavern head sold wine for 80 kopecks per bucket, while it cost him 27 kopecks to produce it. Beer was for sold for 8 kopecks, while its production cost was 2 kopecks and 1 *denga*. Mead was sold for 25 kopecks, while its production cost was 11 kopecks.⁶¹ A farmer, therefore, could sell drinks at half that price and still make a profit of 50 percent. His profit could have been even greater if he could find a way to reduce production costs by purchasing cheaper raw inputs or by paying less to the distillery workers. It was even easier for tavern farmers to compete with the tavern heads who did not distil wine on their own, but bought it from private

⁵⁸ See, for example, RGADA, f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 304, l. 2; kn. 305, l. 2; kn. 306, l. 1.

⁵⁹ See the case of Ivan Tugin, a serf of boyar Prince D.M. Pozharskii. RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 23, ll. 230-31, 287 ob.-89; kn. 24, ll. 134 ob.-36, 259-60 ob., 339 ob.-40 ob., 349-51 ob.; kn. 28, ll. 3, 12 ob., 98, 139, 189 ob., 199-99 ob., 214-14 ob., 455-62, 690, 691, 703; f. 233, op. 1, kn. 671, l. 12 ob.

⁶⁰ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 30, ll. 187-88.

⁶¹ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40208, ll. 1-3.

winemakers (whose wholesale selling price could be from 1.5 to 2 times higher than the production costs). Given the fact that in the first half of the seventeenth century alcohol sales increased dramatically at the taverns that were farmed out and that the practice of farming taverns out became more popular, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that the real volume of alcohol sales in those decades could have substantially exceeded our estimates (up to 1.5 times).

A suggestive case in that regards is a 1629/30 fight over control of the tavern in Vokshera Iam in the Yaroslavl district. A year earlier, this tavern was farmed out for 67 rubles. In 1629/30, the right to lease it was auctioned among six bidders with the starting price of 70 rubles. In the end, it was farmed out for 153 rubles, or 2.3 times as much as what have been charged the previous year. Interestingly, the person who won the auction was the incumbent holder of the lease.⁶² Apparently, this person was certain that the tavern would remain profitable even he pays substantially more for the right to run it. In another case, a decade earlier, in 1619/20, a tavern in the town of Povenets in the Novgorod district was leased out for 59 rubles. The following year, however, the overseers collected 5.5 times more in revenues from that tavern, or 237 rubles.⁶³ This suggests that the tavern farmers concealed the real level of revenues from the government, something that the tavern heads and overseers, of course, also did. In 1627/28, in Povenets, the overseers collected about 462 rubles for the state treasury. It soon became evident that the amount they concealed from the government was even greater (750 rubles).⁶⁴ Similarly, at the turn of the 1630s, the tavern and customs heads in the cities of Velikii Ustiug and Sol' Vychegodskaia sent about 5,000 rubles to the treasury, while keeping about 8,000 rubles for themselves.⁶⁵

Alcohol consumption

Let's attempt to calculate the volume of alcohol consumed annually by the population in Muscovy. For that, we need to know the price at which it was sold. No doubt, prices varied from region to region and from one year to another, so we will have to use rough averages. For example, in 1644/45, in Mozhaisk, a bucket of wine was sold at 1 ruble and 20 kopecks; in 1642/43, in Velikiie Luki, it was sold at 1 ruble and 30 kopecks; in Nizhny Novgorod, at 1 ruble. In the 1640s, in Voronezh, Livny, Oskol, Velikii Ustiug, Novgorod, and Velikiie Luki, the production price of a bucket of wine ranged between 46 and 80 kopecks. Considering that

⁶² RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 40479, ll. 255–62.

⁶³ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 13-b, l. 25 ob.

⁶⁴ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, kn. 18, ll. 10–12.

⁶⁵ Liseitsev, “‘Privezli v posulekh ustiuzhane sto rublev deneg...’,” 107.

it was common to sell alcohol to customers at twice its production cost, let's take 1 ruble and 20 kopecks as the average retail price. In 1646/47, in Livny, the production cost of a bucket of beer was 4 kopecks; in 1655/45, in Mozhaisk, its retail price was 10 kopecks. Let's take the latter as an average retail price of beer. Lastly, in 1646/47, in Livny and Oskol, it cost 6 to 12 kopecks to produce a bucket of mead. In 1644/45, in Mozhaisk, its retail was 20 kopecks. Let's take the latter cost as an average retail price of mead across the country.⁶⁶

Taking these prices as our point of departure, we calculate that about 316,670 buckets of wine (or 3,800,000 liters, considering that a typical bucket contained 12 liters), 855,000 buckets of beer (or 10,260,000 liters), and 47,500 buckets of mead (or 570,000 liters) were legally sold and consumed per year in the Muscovite state. Next, let's attempt to calculate alcohol consumption per capita. The main consumers of alcohol were urban residents, that is, the *posad* and the military population (*streltsy*, Cossacks, and gunners). According to I.E. Vodarskii, in 1646, Russia's *posad* population numbered about 82,000, but that added up to 31.7 percent of the country's urban population only. The remaining 68.3 were the various categories of servitors and peasants. The total urban population was, therefore, about 260,000-270,000 people.⁶⁷ Of course, not every urban resident drank at taverns. We need to exclude minors and the larger part of the female population from our calculations. Let's assume that half of the urban population went to taverns, or about 130,000 people. If Medinskii is correct in arguing that the good Russian people partook of alcohol on "four church holidays in a year" only, the picture that emerges before our eyes is truly terrifying. In order to consume all this booze each person must have had to drink 7 liters of wine, 19 liters of beer, and 1 liter of mead in each of the four days.

In reality, in the first half of the seventeenth century, every tavern customer consumed on average 29.3 liters of wine, 79 liters of beer and 4.4 liters of mead per year.⁶⁸ Was this a lot? These amounts were equivalent to approximately 16.28 liters of ethanol per person, which is more than what we drink in the early twenty first century.⁶⁹ Note, however, that two thirds of this volume ethanol came on the form of hard liquor, as opposed to about half nowadays.⁷⁰ "Grain wine" accounted for the lion's share of the money expended by the

⁶⁶ RGADA, f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 305, ll. 63, 115, 158; kn. 306, l. 10; f. 137, op. 1, Ustiug, kn. 51, l. 29; kn. 72, l. 150 ob.; Suzdal', kn. 2, l. 86; Novgorod, kn. 28, ll. 3-3 ob.; f. 141, op. 2, d. 38 (1642 r.), l. 366.

⁶⁷ Ia. E. Vodarskii, *Naselenie Rossii za 400 let (XVI – nachalo XX vv.)* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1973), 26, 36; S. M. Kashtanov, "Rossiia," in *Istoria Evropy. T. 3. Ot srednevekov'ia k novomu vremeni (konets XV – pervaiia polovina XVII v.)*, eds. L. T. Mil'skaia and V. I. Rutenburg (Moscow: Nauka, 1993), 129-30.

⁶⁸ Note that these estimates are likely to be understated by as much as one and a half times. The taverns that were farmed out sold drinks at a much lower price and in a much higher volume.

⁶⁹ Assuming "wine" to be 38 percent alcohol by volume, beer 5 percent alcohol by volume, and mead 12 percent alcohol by volume.

⁷⁰ According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2005, in Russia, the annual consumption was 15.76 liters; in 2010, it was 15.1 liters; and in 2017-18, it was 13.9 liters of ethanol per adult (a person older than 15 years of age).

Muscovite subjects on alcohol drinks, or 2 rubles and 93 kopecks; 66 kopecks per year was spent on beer; and 7 kopecks per year on mead. Overall, an average tavern customer spent about 3 rubles and 66 kopecks per year in the mid-seventeenth century. This was comparable to the cost of living.⁷¹

We have based our estimates on the assumption that the alcohol sold at taverns was consumed only by *posad* population, while rural residents consumed alcohol that was illegally produced and purchased outside of taverns. If we account for the possibility that a non-negligible share of the alcohol sold in urban taverns was consumed by rural residents who visited towns and cities on business, then our estimates of consumption per capita would be somewhat lower. On the other hand, we should keep in mind that apart from the state monopoly there was a large illegal market for alcoholic beverages, the so-called *kormchestvo*. *Kormchestvo* was widespread everywhere, as numerous sources cite the petitions of tavern farmers and tavern heads asking the government to suppress illegal alcohol production. Illegal alcohol was cheaper; otherwise, *kormchestvo* would not be able to survive and flourish alongside the taverns. We have no way of estimating, however, how much alcohol was sold illegally, so our estimates about the volume of alcohol consumption are probably understated.

Conclusions

Despite the loss of a significant portion of relevant documents, we are able to assess the overall volume of revenues from the sale of alcohol collected by the Muscovite treasury in the first half of the seventeenth century. Over the period under study, that is the 1620s-1640s, not only the tavern revenues nearly doubled in absolute numbers, but also their share in the total revenues of the crown increased (in the Novgorod and Ustiug, Quarters, from 31-32 to 41-75 percent). In the early 1620s, tavern revenues yielded up to 150,000 rubles per year to the Muscovite state; by the early 1630s, they yielded more than 200,000 rubles; in the mid-1630s, nearly 250,000 rubles, and by the end of Mikhail Fedorovich's reign, the yield was

Keep in mind that when calculating the volume of the alcohol consumed in the first half of the seventeenth century, we took into account only the alcohol that was legally sold. Today, according to WHO, roughly one third to one fourth of the alcohol consumed by Russians today is sold illegally. If we assume similar proportion for the seventeenth century, then we arrive at that 20 liters of ethanol consumed per person. This level of ethanol consumption surpassed modern world records (in 2005, 18.22 liters were consumed per capita in Moldova; in 2010, 17.5 liters were consumed per capita in Belarus).

⁷¹ According to N.V. Ustiugov, the cost of living in Sol' Kamskaia was between 3 rubles and 65 kopecks and 4 rubles and 63 kopecks per annum, with food accounting for anywhere 2 rubles and 15 kopecks and 3 rubles and 13 kopecks. According to L.V. Milov, in the second half of the seventeenth, food alone cost 2 to 2.5 rubles, whereas the annual earnings of an average artisan was between 10.5 and 14 rubles. O.V. Novohatko estimated that the cost of living in the capital ranged between 6 rubles and 20 kopecks and 7 rubles and 87 kopecks per year. Food cost about 5 rubles and 20 kopecks. N. V. Ustiugov, *Solevarenaia promyshlennost' Soli Kamskoi v XVII v. K voprosu o genezise kapitalisticheskikh otoshenii v russkoi promyshlennosti* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1957), 237–38; L.V. Milov, *Velikorusskii pakhar' i osobennosti rossiiskogo istoricheskogo protsessa* (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 1998), 488; O. V. Novokhatko, *Razriad v 185 godu* (Moscow: Pamiatniki istoricheskoi mysli, 2007), 539–40. The *streltsy* received 5 rubles and 25 kopecks in annual salary and food allowance in the first half of the seventeenth century.

roughly 280,000 rubles. This means that tavern revenues accounted for about a quarter of the total state revenues.⁷² The growth rate of tavern revenues was on par with the rate of population growth (between the 1620s and 1640s, urban population increased by 60 percent).⁷³

Naturally, the dynamics of this growth of tavern revenues differed from one region to another, some localities in particular experiencing rapid increase of tavern revenues in the early 1620s. There is little to no evidence, however, that this growth was driven by the growing wealth of the population. Rather, the key factor was that the government had tightened its control over tavern heads and overseers, those who previously had had abundant opportunities to abuse their positions and hide revenues. Overall, during the decade up to the early 1630s, tavern revenues grew on average by the factor of 1.5 across the country.

By the turn of the 1630s, the capacity of the general population to purchase drinks reached its limit. The stagnation, and in some places by the decline, of tavern revenues in a number of major cities indicates as much. Another piece of evidence supporting this conclusion is the increase in the number of taverns that went out of business. In 1628-1630 the government closed two taverns in the Dmitrov district, in Viazma, Rzhveva Vladimirova, and in a number of other locations.⁷⁴ Additionally, it was also at the turn of the 1630s that the government increasingly resorted to farming taverns out pretty much across the entire realm, including such key cities as Vologda, Pskov, Kaluga, Tula, and Kolomna. Even there residents were unable to oppose the farmers who offered increasingly higher prices for the right to manage taverns. The Smolensk war of 1632-34 additionally contributed to this dynamics, as the government imposed extraordinary taxes that further impoverished the general population.

It was because of the impoverishment of the population that in the mid-1630s the farmers took over the sales of alcohol in Kostroma, Sol' Vychegodskaia, Tot'ma, and Nizhnii Novgorod (in the latter, the annual amount paid by the tavern farmers reached close to 8,000 rubles). By the end of the 1630s, the threat of a military confrontation with the Ottoman Empire and the Crimean Khanate led the government to impose new taxes. Not surprisingly, we find a drop in tavern revenues in some localities (mainly in the north) at that time. Still, the tavern revenues continued to grow in the late 1630s, even if at lower. This was due to

⁷² At the turn of the 1640s, total revenues of the Muscovite state were about 1,100,000 rubles (Liseitsev, "Gosudarstvennyi biudzhnet," 25; D. V. Liseitsev, "Reconstructing the Late 16th–17th–Centuries Muscovite State Budget," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 17/1 (2016): 13–18).

⁷³ Kashtanov, "Rossiia," 130.

⁷⁴ RGADA, f. 137, op. 1, Ustiug, kn. 14, ll. 136 ob.–37 ob., 451; kn. 16, ll. 372 ob., 397; kn. 22, ll. 377–77 ob.; f. 396, op. 1, d. 40672, l. 51; f. 210, op. 6-zh, kn. 282, ll. 190, 191; Razdorskii, *Golovstvo i otkup*, 176.

several factors, including the population growth, higher retail prices of alcohol, and the heavier reliance on the method of leasing taverns out.

The policy of Mikhail Romanov's government in regards to alcohol was ambivalent. On the one hand, voivods, tavern heads, and tavern farmers were implored to maintain public order, making sure that at the taverns "various people drink quietly, and there are no murders, whoring, or other crime, and that robbers do not come to taverns, and that stolen goods are not brought there," and that peasants do not drink all their money away.⁷⁵ On the other, of course, taverns remained very much the sites of such activities, and the authorities had to put up with this. Moreover, the government closely monitored tavern revenues in order to guarantee that they increased from year to year, or at least, did not decline. Otherwise, the tavern farmers were required to cover the shortfall in revenues with their own money, and the tavern heads to try to excuse themselves by citing bad weather, crops failure, and so forth. Certainly, it was not the government's intention to turn its subjects into drunkards. Yet, when it came to making choices, the state's fiscal objectives always outweighed any concerns it might have had for the well-being of its citizens.

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⁷⁵ RGADA, f. 396, op. 1, d. 39401, ll. 2–3; f. 137, op. 1, Novgorod, kn. 24, l. 309 ob.