



Massa's Short History of the Muscovite Wars

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History

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Monografía

The opening decade of the seventeenth century was, for Russia, one of great turmoil. Political unrest was compounded by natural calamity. On the death of Boris Godunov, the Russian throne was seized by a pretender claiming to be the long-dead son of Ivan the Terrible, allegedly murdered at Boris's instigation in 1591. The false Dmitry made triumphal entry into Moscow in June 1605, only to be assassinated less than a year later by the supporters of Vaily Shnisky, who then seized the throne for himself. Rumours soon spread that Dmitry had in fact escaped, and soon another pretender was advancing on Moscow with his Polish supporters. Eyewitness to many of these events was Isaac Massa who came to Moscow from the Netherlands in 1600 as a merchant apprentice and remained for eight years. His history, written after his return home for the benefit of Maurice, Prince of Orange, lay undiscovered until 1859. This is its first English translation. Massa was an astute and observant youth and his account provides a unique description of the famine in Moscow (1601-3), the appearance of the rulers (whom he had apparently known intimately), the entry of the Pretender, and the subsequent exhibition of his mangled corpse on Red Square after his downfall. Massa's dramatic accounts are complemented by a unique topographical sketch of the city of Moscow provided to Massa by an elderly soldier, one of his many Musovite friends. Three portraits of Massa by Frans Hals, an intimate in his homeland, are also reproduced in this fascinating volume

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