THE RUSSIAN ORIENT: IMPERIAL BORDERLANDS AND PEOPLES, 1750-1917. Executive Summaries

AUTHOR: Edited by: DANIEL R. BROWER, University of California, Davis; and EDWARD J. LAZZERINI, University of New Orleans

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CONTRACTOR: University of California, Davis
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Daniel R. Brower & Edward J. Lazzerini
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The Council has received the pre-publication full text of a volume with the same title as this Report. The Report is an Executive Summary of that volume and consists of:
The Title Page;
The Table of Contents; and
Executive Summaries of the Introductions, and of the individual papers composing Parts I, II, and III of the volume.
The Report does not contain the Bibliography, Contributors, or Index.

The full text of the volume (477 pages, double spaced), or the texts, individually, of any parts of it listed in the Contents (except the Bibliography, Contributors and Index) are available upon request to the National Council by mail or telephone (202) 387-0168.

The purpose of the study, and of the volume, is captured in the following passage from the Introduction:

Our essays of peoples and borderlands speak to conditions of a very different age, yet which prepared the way for the Soviet project of national territorial divisions and, ultimately, the independence of the republics. Our essays do not demonize the imperial past. They seek to throw light on the little known past of those peoples under imperial rule and to help make understandable the history of this new, post-imperial age of the empire’s borderlands.

The Council has added to the above, the Summary of an earlier paper by Daniel Brower, Images of the Russian Orient: Vasily Vereshchagin and Russian Turkestan. The full text of that paper is also available from the Council by request.
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Executive Summaries
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Introduction

The collapse of the USSR and the attendant growth in access to its former regions (and their local archives) have opened up exciting opportunities for scholars long accustomed to reliance on published materials and, at best, glimpses of places to which they may have devoted years of study from afar. While they have not been the sole beneficiaries of these developments, those who have staked a claim to recovering the multiethnic character of the tsarist empire, if they have not just begun their careers, can be especially excused for feeling that they have been reborn as scholars. Being able, as seldom in a long while, to visit the erstwhile borderlands, see the material remnants of local history, trod paths that one previously had to conjure from the travels of others, and experience what only being there can provide may be likened to a smorgasbord for the famished. Events have made the possibility of “revisioning imperial Russia,” as the title of a recent article proclaimed, real indeed.  

But not events alone. Later in this introduction we will suggest some of the fresh approaches, research methodologies, and conceptual modeling, often from disciplines other than history, that not only have helped shape the thinking of all who have contributed to this volume but also have fostered an exhilarating ferment in Clio’s domain generally. Much of this has been late in coming to pursuers of Russian history, for diverse reasons that need not detain us here. But the turn to different kinds of analysis, the most recent and challenging fruits of which can be found later in these pages, was emerging long before the demise of the Soviet Union and was establishing a foundation for what could be done under the changing circumstances of the past decade.

Commensurate with anything that French, English, or German scholars have produced, oriental studies (востоковедение) in the Russian academy has a long and justifiably proud history of sound research, superb textual analysis, and substantial contribution to the archive of

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1Jane Burbank, “Revisioning Imperial Russia,” Slavic Review, 52:3 (Fall, 1993), 555-567.
information about the peoples and cultures along the empire's southern and eastern borderlands. Whatever their involvement, direct or indirect, in the generation of a Russian orientalism, in the sense captured by Edward Said's critique, the likes of B.A. Dorn, A.E. Krymskii, V.R. Rozen, and V.V. Bartol'd, among many other old-regime specialists, made vostokovedenie a pursuit in the best European intellectual and scholarly traditions. The collapse of the tsarist system and birth of the Soviet did little to undermine interest in vostokovedenie or the skillful training of succeeding generations of researchers and teachers. The political purposes to which the effort was put may have been more blatant, and the state certainly shaped it in ways tsarist bureaucrats could only have dreamed of, yet work of good and even great quality continued to emerge from the labors of many scholars.

Elsewhere, outside of the USSR or its predecessor, interest in Russia's Orient has been understandably less pronounced and compelling, except in so far as concern for Great Power politics drew attention to the region and those who controlled it. A few small centers of activity, often energized by Soviet or East European emigres, cropped up in Paris, Munich, London, and New York, and an equally small number of academic institutions (Harvard, Columbia, Indiana, Washington) offered hospitable settings for scholars to pursue what most believed an arcane,

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3 The legacy of Russian/Soviet vostokovedenie has been the subject of extensive writing within its native setting but has received little attention outside of it. In fact, even among those, like Edward Said, who have attended to the ideological dimension of "Orientalism" in something of a comparative perspective (at least within the European community), the Russian variant might just as well have never existed. The marginalization of this legacy by the dominant Euro-American academic discourse is testimony to both the linguistic handicaps of non-Russianists (very much like that affecting Americanists who seek to contribute to the historiography of the Cold War) and, contrarily, the indifference of Russianists, though with important exceptions. The most significant publications of the latter may be found listed in the bibliography accompanying this volume.
exotic, and impractical field of study.⁴ The commitment to area studies, especially in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, certainly bolstered the modest expansion of these activities, but the critical development that ultimately transformed the study of Russia’s Orient was generated in Paris through the efforts of Alexandre Bennigsen and his small cadre of colleagues and students.⁵

The major contributions of the Bennigsen group were several fold: first, it discovered and recovered published materials, especially of the regional periodical press, that unlocked previously unheard voices and unexamined insights from among indigenous peoples themselves; second, it tapped into archival documents in Turkey and, to a lesser extent, Iran, that added another dimension to the study of parts of Russia’s Orient, particularly before the Soviet period; third, it drew attention away from the center of the Russian/Soviet empires to the southern and eastern peripheries, helping thereby to broaden the range of perspectives about events and developments that helped shape the borderlands and the heartland; fourth, it began weaning scholarship on the subject from its fruitful, but limiting, philological and literary roots to a broader-based enterprise that drew increasingly upon the social sciences and their evolving methodologies, even as those working in the social sciences were made to appreciate more than before the importance of the local languages to their research. An integral part of what became the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Frances’s most esteemed research-oriented institution of higher education, and

⁴In this context, the careers of Edward Allworth, Michael Rywkin, Alan Fisher, Omeijan Pritsak, Filil Inalcik, and Kemal H. Karpat stand out, as does Serge A. Zenkovsky’s pioneering study of Pan-Turkism and Islam in Russia (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁵Bennigsen published more than two hundred articles and at least a dozen books during his career, but of them two that he wrote with his longtime collaborator, Chantal Quelquejay, stand out in our minds as most reflective of the character of his accomplishments: Les Mouvements nationaux chez les musulmans de Russie: Le “Sultangahevisme” au Tatarstan (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1960), and La Presse et le mouvement national chez les musulmans de Russie avant 1920 (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1964). Perhaps more than any other book, the former awakened attention to an aspect of Bolshevik history and the October Revolution that had been unappreciated in its significance because it involved bringing in the margins of those subjects, while the latter served to expose the virtually unknown yet extraordinary array of published material—periodical and non-periodical—often produced in the borderlands themselves.
housed on its “campus” along the Boulevard Raspail, Bennigsen’s “Centre Russe,” as it was popularly called, eventually served not only as an extraordinary research collection, but as a mecca for scholars young and old from across the world, where they found an eminently congenial setting to pursue their work, imbibe in afternoon café turque, and contribute in separate and collective ways to the development of a fuller study of Russia in the West. The conscious expansion of France’s premier specialized journal in the field, Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique, to include scholarship on the Russian Orient, was one more reflection of Bennigsen’s influence.

To his French base, Bennigsen added other European but especially American colleagues and students, some who worked directly with him at the University of Chicago where he held a joint appointment in the 1970s and early 1980s, others who made the pilgrimage to Paris, and still others who either heard him lecture or read his publications. We do not need to exaggerate his influence to note that from under it emerged a small but innovative and productive generation of scholars who in turn have helped shape some of the best of the newest. We like to think of Bennigsen as a pioneer of sorts whose vision for vostokovedenie in the West included, above all, a fundamental respect for the viewpoint from the borderlands and the development of an ability to interpret it effectively, a sensitivity to the realities of interaction among peoples and cultures as a formative force itself, and a willingness to wrestle with the social as well as the political, the local as well as the imperial or international. Directly or indirectly, echoes of that vision reverberate in our own volume of essays, the authors of whom are all beneficiaries of Gorbachev’s political gambit and Bennigsen’s intellectual opening.

The Russian Empire appears well-defined and clearly delimited on maps and in general histories. Our approach to this subject has sought intentionally to put in doubt the apparent clarity of those images of the imperial past. Our rethinking of the empire’s history is not the product of one conceptual paradigm; diversity of views appears throughout this volume’s essays. Still, our project is grounded in general agreement among the participants, who collaborated first in a working conference then in the preparation of this volume, on the benefit of placing that history in
a new perspective. Simply put, our essays ask the reader to put aside the clear categories of analysis that defined the parameters of traditional imperial history.

Instead of studying imperial subjects, we explore the place of peoples within the empire, where identities and behavior were constructed and perceived differently in various places and times. Instead of adhering to administrative borders, we proceed through imperial borderlands, where authorities and peoples mingled in on-going encounters that gave rise to new conceptions and misconceptions of the proper responsibilities and rights of non-Russian subjects. Without discounting the power of the tsarist regime emanating through laws and decrees, we pay attention as well to the practices of daily life that transformed official acts into a dynamic process of domination, resistance, and adaptation. In a word, the essays in this volume propose an imperial history in which key categories of analysis are ambiguous, not self-evident. Because of these ambiguities, it is useful to identify here certain conceptual issues highlighted by our approach.

Our history recognizes in different ways the presence of many peoples living in the empire's southern and eastern regions. It builds on the insight of cultural anthropologists and ethnographers to the concept of ethnic identity. Out of these discussions has emerged an understanding of the importance of ethnicity as an essential, yet socially constructed bond of group identification. We find particularly persuasive the social interaction model of ethnic identity proposed by Frederic Barth. He directs our attention to the importance of culturally created boundaries to exclude the "other" and unite a particular ethnic group. In this theoretical construct, ethnic boundaries are permeable, for groups do not possess a primordial, unchangeable essence. Their defining qualities are provisional, not permanent, since the group's key markers evolve over time. As important, individuals pass from one group to another, transferring their loyalty and identity to another ethnic group. In Manning Nash's terms, the "building blocks" of ethnic identity, such as language, shared history, and religious practice, are the same among societies, but

their composition in each case is historically specific and unique.\textsuperscript{7}

Recognition of the interactive character of ethnicity points to the importance of the colonial experience, which produced new social and political conditions for ethnic interaction and altering or introducing markers of ethnic identity. To cite one example, the naming of peoples became a major project of nineteenth-century ethnographers. Their definitions of ethnic groups has in recent literature come under close examination. Their own criteria of ethnic identity strongly influenced their observation and selection of data. Their work, presented with all the hallmarks of contemporary science, shaped the policies of colonial administrations who codified ethnicity in activities such as census taking, map making.\textsuperscript{8}

This interest in the history of anthropology and ethnography encouraged us to focus our inquiry on the impact of the empire on its peoples. Our approach falls between the institutional history of imperial policies and administration, and the national histories of colonial peoples. The interactive model of ethnicity, to the extent we have been able to integrate it into our study, directs our attention to the study of the empire’s discursive and political practices of governing colonial peoples. To emphasize the importance of the colonial experience points to the need to explore points of contact or “encounters,” imagined or lived, among the empire’s peoples and between the tsarist regime and its subject peoples. It underlines the need to understand the response of these peoples to colonial rule. These peoples play an active and central part in our story of the empire; their accommodation with and resistance to the empire constitutes in many respects the real imperial history of Russia. In turn, their response entailed the refining, redefining, and codifying of their own markers of identity and, in the process shaped their own history as communities.

At the very core of the colonial enterprise of nineteenth-century Western empires, including

\textsuperscript{7}Manning Nash, \textit{The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World} (Chicago, 1989), 5-6.

\textsuperscript{8}This colonial undertaking appears prominently in the revised edition of one of the most influential recent studies of the emergence of nationalism: Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism} (New York, 1991), esp. ch. 10.
the Russian Empire, lay a set of demeaning images of their peoples. The descriptive terms of
"primitive" and "savage" were the simplest and arguably the most powerful labels of cultural
inferiority. They appeared in popular literature, and as well in the works of social anthropologists.
They emerged out of a theory of primitive society which, as one recent scholar argues, "is about
something which does not and never has existed." This fantasy exercised a powerful hold over
scholars and the public of the time. The manner in which this idea worked its way, explicitly and
implicitly, into the actions and language of a particular colonial empire reveals the character of
imperial rule and the ethnographic project that accompanied that rule. When empires recognized
ethnic differences, they also constructed their own cultural scales from savage to civilized. This
hierarchy tells us a great deal, as in a mirror, about the self-image of the colonizers themselves,
whose own defining qualities were the subject of extensive debate. In other words, the new
history of Russians as a people emerges through this cultural approach to the empire.

Studies of imperial histories in recent years have benefitted from insights yielded by literary
criticism. The latter has enlarged its field of vision to reveal how Western texts, official and
popular, literary and scientific, represented colonial peoples and cultures. Its approach is rooted in
concepts of discourse, language, and power, that draw on theoretical studies in linguistics. Taken
to its extreme, this textual representation of the imperial past has at times obliterated the world of
political practices and cultural interaction to which the empires gave rise. Still, we are convinced
that the methods encouraged by the "linguistic turn" in history are appropriate to any critical
reevaluation of the history of the Russian Empire.

Their usefulness is amply demonstrated by the many valuable studies of Western empires to
which they have given rise. Investigation of what one author calls the "rhetoric of empire" seeks to
uncover modes of colonial domination that previously were ignored by administrative and military

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histories of empire. It examines the emergence and use of particular literary devices, shared by Western empires and peculiar to individual empires, that characterized the representations of colonial peoples. Its subject matter encompasses the textual and visual manner of classifying the hierarchy of peoples from savage to civilized. Scholars have found evidence of these devices in travel literature, popular newspapers, art, and even exhibits at world's fairs. In sum, this approach expands the study of the history of colonialism to include modes of representation as well as ways of acting.

Probably the most influential of these literary inquiries into Western imperialism is Edward Said's study of Western literary images of the "Orient." It has become a point of reference for numerous studies of Western empires whose colonial lands included Muslim peoples and Middle Eastern territories. It emphasizes the pervasiveness and power of a "system of knowledge" that he chooses to term "Orientalism." Said's approach is oppositional in the sense that, as James Clifford has pointed out, it "writes back" from the position of an oriental whose actuality has been distorted and denied. Said describes a Western point of view or "discourse" that he draws from English and French literary sources. He makes the problematical assumption that these sources confirm the presence of a collective entity variously referred to as "the West" or "Europe," which imagined and dreamed of exotic places and peoples he labels the "Orient." To Clifford, Said's method is seriously flawed for lack of a conceptual position from which to evaluate "the ways in which distinct groups of humanity imagine, describe, and comprehend each other." This observation is a timely warning. The success of the literary contribution to imperial history must depend on allowing a multiplicity of voices to be heard—Westerners and non-Westerners, colonizers and colonized.

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10See David Spurr, The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse in Journalism, Travel Writing, and Imperial Administration (Durham, NC, 1993), esp. ch 4 ("Classification: The Order of Nature").

The parallels are numerous between French and British images of Muslim lands and Russian cultural representations of the peoples inhabiting the empire's southern and eastern borderlands. The "Russian Orient" referred to in our title alludes to both a non-Russian borderland extending from Crimea to Sakhalin and the various textual portraits and stories of the colonial experience which that borderland produced. Acknowledgement of a border dividing "West" and "Orient" emerged repeatedly throughout the long period of imperial rule, yet it fluctuated from place to place, and from one period to the next. Just as no one geographical place could claim to be the Russian Orient, no simple line on a map separated Western from Oriental peoples within the empire. Some Russians discussed in this volume even used oriental imagery to express their distaste at political or cultural aspects of their own country, placed outside the civilized West. Our title, like our categories of analysis, is ambivalent.

Ethnohistorians have pointed out that boundaries separating peoples are also points of contact between them. These encounters, real and imagined, solitary and collective, official and spontaneous, constitute another important theme in our history of empire. The colonizers and colonized are both key actors in our new history of the empire, whose activities brought them in close, persistent contact.

The terms of the encounter were inherently unequal, with power concentrated in the hands of the Russian intruders. The cultural semiotician, Yuri Lotman, suggests that these areas of contact between different cultures should be considered "zones of cultural bilingualism." In the imperial context any exchange occurs in conditions of what he terms "semiotic inequality." Power, social as well as political, lies in the hands of the colonizers. That condition only complicates and distorts exchange among all those engaged in the encounter. Yet the possibilities for interaction remain persistent. One careful study of peoples on the edges of North American empires in the eighteenth century argues persuasively that a "middle ground" emerged for a time.

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when interaction on roughly equal terms occurred among colonizers and colonizers. Oppression and resistance have their place in our history, but only as one part of a larger story of colonial relations.

From our perspective the range of important actors in the dynamics of imperial history has expanded to include all those peoples on Russia’s borderlands. Out of these contacts emerged new forms of collective resistance, and also new modes of adapting to and incorporating elements of the other culture. Warring and trading, as Tom Barrett points out in his essay, were two parts to the same process of colonial interaction. In these terms, our displacement of the empire’s history to the borderlands makes it possible to understand the abiding impact of the imperial experience on the peoples involved.

The boundaries that divide peoples in that ambiguous zone are also the places from which scholars have to extract their evidence of the encounter. The ethnohistorian Greg Dening found that beaches became arenas of exchange and border crossing when Western sailing ships approached Polynesian islands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. He found convincing evidence that beachcombers, both figuratively and literally, were key actors establishing communication across these cultural barriers. Their records were indispensable to his search to uncover the disappeared culture of the Marquesas islanders. Though they brought with them the prejudices of their own culture, he became persuaded that “one can see beyond the frontier only through the eyes of those who stood on the frontier and looked out. To know the native one must know the intruder.”

This judgment is relevant to our inquiry into the imperial borderlands. It stresses the importance of a close reading of the documents left by the colonizers, for their records remain the principal account of the process of interaction of peoples that occurred under imperial rule. They

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13 Richard White, *The Middle Ground*

viewed the colonial world through blinders created by ethnic and historical stereotypes and cliches built of their own sense of ethnic and national identity and convictions of imperial superiority. Their records are a story of Russian self-representation, official and popular, through the centuries when Russians became increasingly engaged in encounters with non-Russians. At the same time, the information derived from a critical analysis of their observations is a key ingredient in our revised history of the empire.

By the same token, however, the records and writings of the colonized present the colonial experience from a vantage point that is important to our story. Those who sought to "cross the beach" to collaborate in one manner or other with the colonizers have as much to tell us of the encounter as officials whose imperial mission included learning native languages and studying native cultures. This "bilingual zone" became the location, more than any other imperial site, where elements of tolerance and mutual understanding were likely to emerge alongside the intolerance and domination that imperial rule cultivated. Historical hindsight suggests that these moments may have an important lesson for our post-colonial age of ethnic conflict.

In many ways our manner of writing the history of the empire is a study in comparative history. The borders of the Russian Empire set the context for our inquiry, but our attention is directed to the periphery itself. There the pattern of interethnic relations varied from one region to another, each with its own peculiar mixture of languages, religious practices, and cultural traditions. The comparative view of distinct regional developments directs attention to those historical processes common to some or all of the subject peoples. On a broader scale, the Russian Empire evolved in ways that are comparable to other Western empires. The experience of these empires passed into Russian policies and practices of imperial rule beginning with the reign of Peter I, and figured in Russian imperial history for the next two centuries. Yet the Muscovite origins of the Russian Empire continued to influence imperial practices, both at the center and on the borderlands. The Empire remained a single territory, enlarged yet (with the exception of Alaska) never separated between metropole and colonies. Its historical tradition and geopolitical
context, thus, set it apart from the other Western empires. To keep in mind these comparative perspectives, enriched by the abundant post-colonial studies of Western empires, is to widen the range of relevant issues and conceptual approaches, and to deepen the significance of the imperial experience in Russian history.

The Russian Empire and its successor empire, the Soviet Union, have vanished, leaving behind political borders drawn to isolate ethnically distinct populations once thrown together indiscriminately in imperial borderlands. One heritage of this imperial history is ethnicity made the supreme principle of nation-states. Our essays of peoples and borderlands speak to conditions of a very different age, yet which prepared the way for the Soviet project of national territorial divisions and, ultimately, the independence of the republics. Our essays do not demonize that imperial past. They seek to throw light on the little known past of those peoples under imperial rule and to help make understandable the history of this new, post-imperial age of the empire's borderlands.
Part I

Rethinking Empire

Introduction

In his vastly entertaining and provocative novel, *The Name of the Rose*, Umberto Eco draws the reader through a masterfully orchestrated mystery, where, in the end, meaning is found without being sought. Along the way the appropriately Franciscan protagonist, William of Baskerville, is doubly confounded when his enormous gift for observation is rendered irrelevant and his belief that signs can be used to acquire knowledge is sorely challenged. Part of the novel’s charm and certainly one of its “meanings” is that it is a mystery in which very little is discovered and the detective is defeated. Neither is supposed to happen, especially in an age and place (fourteenth-century Europe) wherein major intellectual steps were being taken to make the world more intelligible and graspable.

William is an early, albeit fictional product of Roger Bacon’s theorizing about knowledge and science that became a critical part of the European trajectory into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries whose cultural, political, economic, and social influence is still with us and that generated a seemingly boundless inclination to order the natural and human, to name so as to give and not find meaning. Out of this came anthropology, sociology, statistics, and positivist thinking habits as well as the extraordinary data gathering and record keeping that so engaged the modern imperial states in their belief that knowledge was power. The mystery of administering vast empires and diverse peoples was to be dispelled by making meaning out of the archive of information available out there, by reading cultures through imperial eyes. William of Baskerville’s experiences can be dismissed as a fiction that the real world would never confront, yet the real world of empire produced its own fictions, the meaning of knowledge being one of them.

Discovering who was out there consumed the attention of Russians concerned with their own empire as much as it did others across Europe. Until the eighteenth century, as Michael
Khodarkovsky shows in his essay, steppe neighbors falling under Russian gaze and/or control were provided various identities, not necessarily consistent, and mostly inaccurate, but reflecting separate political, economic, linguistic, and, above all, religious concerns. Their construction began after the mid-sixteenth century, and though it drew upon the steppe context with which Russians had had a long interactivity, in the result we can find clear evidence of fantasies about self and other. Khodarkovsky amply reveals the fictive and self-serving quality of Russian definition of empire and peoples by highlighting the countervailing perceptions and interpretations held by those inhabiting the borderland.

By the second half of the eighteenth century, as part of a larger European development ushered in by the deceptively modest classificatory system that the Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus proposed, Russian thought about empire began turning away from an emphasis on religion to one on culture. In his essay Yuri Slezkine lays out in weighty and convincing detail how natural history as a knowledge-structuring paradigm offered the emerging Russian scholarly community (yet heavy with foreigners, to be sure) a means for confronting the empire’s ethnic diversity. The ethnographic research that resulted was more interested in the mundane aspects of culture (food, sex, clothing and dwelling styles, economic activity), though there was still room for religion in an increasingly secular perspective. At the same time, as Dov Yaroshevsky tells us in his contribution, the eighteenth century produced the beginnings of theorizing about citizenship, a polysemic term he stresses, that nevertheless held out the possibility of turning borderland subjects (“rebellious natives”) into loyal citizens whose differences from Russians would be minimized by a kind of cultural revolution. Law and order, with the latter flowing from the former, for some (beginning with Catherine II) held out the best hope for a conscious and active citizenry devoted to the public interest of the empire.

In the final essay in this part, Susan Layton turns our attention to the relationship between literature, specifically Romantic literature, and the dynamics of meaning-making. For its part, Russian Romanticism was as important in constructing identities for borderland peoples as was the
Enlightenment. In their portrayal of regional natives, Romantic writers may have remained torn between contrasting judgments of their subjects' fundamental character (Are they noble or ignoble?), but they revealed a penchant to adopt an anti-conquest stance commensurate with their alienation from the state. In this respect, the Russian Romantic perspective stands in contrast to European literature's more typical support for imperialism. Romantic innocence vis-à-vis the empire's power game, for all its passion however, may have disguised an inability to disavow fully Russian hegemony over peoples in out-of-the-way places.

Going out among native peoples, imaginatively or literally, became a major activity for Russians after the middle of the eighteenth century. The papers in this first part of our volume are testimony to the "traveling" that became so fashionable, but they also remind us of the emergence and evolution of Russian self-consciousness highlighted by vigorous and passionate debates over humanity, reason, and civilization. We can also sense, pace William of Baskerville, how confounding the empire became despite all the observation, and how illusive its meaning remained.
"Ignoble Savages and Unfaithful Subjects": Constructions of Non-Christian Identities

Michael Khodarkovsky

By the late eighteenth century Russia emerged as one of the largest empires in the world. The numerous vanquished peoples included Orthodox and Catholic Christians in the west and Muslims, Buddhists, and pagans in the south and east. All the non-Christian peoples were referred to by the generic term *inorodtsy*.

This essay examines the process of the construction of non-Russian, non-Christian identities in Russia. As the Muscovite state continued to expand from the fifteenth century onward, it increasingly came into contact with other peoples in the east and south. These were distinctly different from the Russians and none of them spoke the language or shared the religious beliefs of their new rulers. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Russian officials in charge of the oriental borderlands frequently referred to the neighboring nomadic peoples, the Kazakhs, Kalmyks, and Bashkirs, as “wild, untamed horses,” wild animals,” “wild, unruly and disloyal peoples,” whose khans practice “savage customs.” They described the nomadic peoples as the “wind,” while the Russian empire was proudly portrayed as a “pillar of stability and the world’s respected and glorious state.”

Revealing more about Russia’s self-image than about its neighbors, this description of the “other” reflected the government’s newly developed realization of its civilizing mission among the non-Christians. To become Russia’s subjects, the non-Christians were to be made “better,” they were to become Russians. How was Russia to tame, civilize, and otherwise turn its unruly neighbors into faithful subjects?

The process of encounter, contact, and incorporation of the non-Christian peoples into Muscovy and later into the Russian empire can be examined as a three-stage development. First, their identity as “the other,” the stranger and the alien, was constructed, as they were seen and
described as distinctly different from the Russians. Then, the non-Christians had to undergo transitional rites of swearing political allegiance and assuming a separate economic status. By classifying the non-Christian peoples and by creating a special status for them, whether preferential or discriminatory, the government set them apart from others and affirmed their separate identity. Finally, religious conversion served as the ultimate rite of incorporation leading to a change of customs as well as legal and economic integration.
Citizenship is an ambiguous notion. Despite its ambiguity, however, throughout Western history it has served as a crucial and indispensable frame of reference. Going back to Aristotle and the Greek polis, citizenship represented citizens devoted to the civic ideal. Laden with universal meaning, the notion contributed to the development of a discourse on public and individual concerns, self-interest, and the public good. It spoke about altruism and purposeful service, as well as promoting and buttressing the interests of groups. In modern times citizenship has been seen, through liberal historical experience, as the assertion of individual rights, the allocation of entitlements, and the expansion of social positions of various groups previously excluded or marginalized in society.

But there has always been another important kind of citizenship, namely republican citizenship. It places in the foreground the value-oriented activity in joint endeavors of citizens striving for the good of each one and contributing to the good of others, and through this participation aiming at the well-being of the whole. It emphasizes a community of values shared by associations of citizens. One of its basic principles is that private ends should be subjected to the public interest (res publica). Historians of Imperial Russia have never considered the citizenship paradigm to be a fruitful terrain. In this essay, however, the author attempts to theorize about republican citizenship in the Russian imperial milieu, and particularly to investigate how it was imagined, discussed, and enforced in the eastern borderlands. In Russia, the idea of citizenship (grazhdanstvennost') developed in the century between 1767 and 1867. Historically this development coincided with the end of the eastward territorial expansion of the empire. For over a century it held great appeal for many officials and publicists who, unimpressed with the effects of military repression, turned to grazhdanstvennost' as an ideal around which to sustain the empire. Republican citizenship spoke of a universal empire and extended the promise of a moral
community to all who were excellent in virtue, responsibility, and longing for public good.
Naturalists Versus Nations: Eighteenth-Century Scholars Confront Ethnic Diversity

Yuri Slezkine

This essay examines the eighteenth-century introduction of language and development as principal criteria for the classification of the peoples of the Russian empire and analyzes the theoretical and administrative consequences of this shift. Under the impact of Peter the Great's demand to see rare birds, animals, stones, "all sorts of antiquities," foreign idols "that are a marvel to men," and foreign people who engaged in strange behaviors, his leading subjects were ordered to bring order out of chaos, "find out everything that has scientific interest," and classify all "noteworthy" men and minerals according to an intelligible "system of nature."

Behind all this activity was curiosity and entertainment, brand new Russian virtues seen as an important prerequisite to enlightenment. Yet in the new world of St. Petersburg curiosity and entertainment were always accompanied by "profit" (benefit, practical use), which implied a certain educational utility and was ultimately based on natural law. In particular, the professional academics of the eighteenth century searched for historical and philological connections among the peoples that they discovered, arguing that the true basis of ethnic classification was "not mores and customs, not food and economic pursuits, and not religion, for all these may be the same in peoples of different tribes and different in peoples of the same tribe." The only foolproof standard was language: as one of the academics argued, "where languages are similar, there are no differences among peoples." Indeed, "just as Linnaeus divides animals according to their teeth, and plants according to their stamens, the historian must classify peoples according to language."

Having done this, the historian or government official proceeded to describe his subjects as fully as possible, to create portraits of nations, in an effort to render them totally and permanently transparent. All nations were to be comparable and all belonged to a single hierarchy, within which the lowest stage was represented by the "crude and warlike... Peoples who wander without..."
any laws, live off hunting and fishing, and war only animal skins and bird feathers;" the middle one, by the pastoralists; and the third, by the "agricultural estate," which stretches "from early cultivation to complete perfection."

The aim of this essay is to explore the conflicting requirements of "development" and "family affiliation" and see the administrative and rhetorical implications of the new approach—particularly for the Russians themselves, whose development needs did not always coincide with their kinship obligations.
The development of national consciousness in Russia entailed a massive amount of literature, travelogues, and ethnography about various regions of the empire. These writings clearly participated in a dynamic well-defined by Hans Rogger: Russians avidly sought to define their distinctive national principle via “contact with the other, the foreign, the non-national.” The technique of self-definition by negation is, of course, generally prevalent in European literature stimulated by imperialism, as Edward Said and his followers have analyzed. In Russia’s case, however, a cultural, historical overlap with the East markedly complicated the imposition of oriental alterity on the Asian borderlands.

Given their own semi-Asian status, Russian writers of the romantic era made a double demand on “their own,” extremely varied orient. On the one hand, much of the pertinent literature replicated a European discourse of rightful hegemony over “savage,” “backward,” and “lazy” natives. Indeed, the male contingent of most peoples on the tsarist empire’s southern and eastern peripheries were subject to such treatment at one time or another. But on the other hand, to judge by the admiration showered on the Caucasian mountaineers in the nineteenth-century writings, Russian national *amour-propre* apparently also required accrediting Asia as part of the self.

The mountaineers’ extraordinary career as Russia’s singularly favored Asian surrogates began in young Pushkin’s “Prisoner of the Caucasus” (1822). In a major deviation from its nearest literary antecedent (Zhukovskii’s “To Voiekov,” 1814), Pushkin’s captivity tale endowed the Circassians with a passion for freedom, dashing machismo, engagingly simple *moeurs*, emotional authenticity, and an aura of primitive song. The poem’s chauvinistic epilogue foresaw tsarist domination over these “wild” peoples. But precisely the construct of noble savagery rather than the anthem to imperial Russian might was taken up by subsequent authors of the 1820s.
While repeatedly noted in literary criticism, this production of noble Caucasian savagery bears further probing as a manifestation of Russia's national stake in Asia. This can be appreciated by mapping the divergence between two related but distinct discursive networks—the one about "wildness" and the other about Islam. Particularly instructive in this regard is the contrast between "The Prisoner of the Caucasus" and Alexander Shishkov's "Captive Woman of Dagestan" (1824). Although having important features in common (such as untamed terrain), these two early contributions to literary Caucasia offer significantly different perspectives on the mountaineers: Pushkin's enormously ambivalent "wild" profile (in which Islam is largely relegated to a few authorial footnotes); and Shishkov's lurid realm of insistently Muslim fanaticism, bloodlust, and the degradation of women in harems. During this period (before the Caucasian tribes declared Holy War against Russia), the discourse of noble savagery eclipsed the discourse of orientalism, as shown in the ascendancy of the Pushkinian rather than Shishkovian tribesman in other writings of the decade.

Made at once exotic and kindred to the semi-europeanized readership, the Caucasian mountaineer fathered by Pushkin had a "wildness" which illuminated Russian pride in difference from the West, as famously articulated by Fonvizin. Such criteria as simplicity, emotional generosity, disdain for luxury, and a spiritually vital, extra-legal sense of freedom all figured in a Russian complex of superiority to Europe which reverberated in romantic literary Caucasus (and helped assuage the coexistent complex of intellectual, cultural inferiority to the capitals of western enlightenment). Keenly conscious of their homeland's lag behind European civilization, writers and readers in Orthodox Russia converted the predominantly Muslim mountaineers into self-satisfying meaning about their own cultural, historical roots in Asia.
Part II

Frontier Encounters

Introduction

The eastern and southern frontiers of the Russian Empire were as diverse as the peoples inhabiting it and as disparate as the assorted images they held up of each other. It is no wonder that the encounters discussed in the essays included in this section reveal an imperial borderland of great social and cultural richness and complexity. In chronological terms, the authors center their attention on the nineteenth century, though Thomas Barrett's essay reminds us that Cossacks and Caucasian mountain tribes had a long previous history of border crossing as well as fighting. Geographically, the essays encompass a territory stretching from Crimea to Sakhalin, from the middle Volga to Bukhara. The imperial metropole is at best a distant presence in their stories. Their gaze is focused on the experience of tsarist dominion among those who lived the daily reality of colonial rule. They ask the reader to conceive of the empire in human terms, not in terms of policy and administration. The encounters, real and imagined, among these peoples and with the emissaries of the state constituted in many respects the real history of the empire.

The colonial context is a central feature to all these experiences and images of empire. The peoples of the borderlands experienced the Russian presence as conquered subjects. The conquest itself caused its own anguish and critical judgments of ingrained truths. Jo-Ann Gross provides us with a unique portrait of one Bukharan intellectual's struggle to reconcile his faith in the World of Islam with the tsarist conquest of Central Asia. The rule by Russians posed a challenge so profound that some among the new generations of Muslim subjects accepted the necessity of a fundamental rethinking of their social and political ideals. Edward Lazzerini makes clear the remarkable daring of one Crimean *intelligent*, Ismail Bey Gasprinskii, in accepting a vision of modernity (jadidism) drawn out of Russian practices and institutions. He also raises questions about the ambiguity of accommodation and resistance in relation to colonial authority and power,
and offers a glimpse of those who, like Gregory Dening's Marquesas beachcombers, strove to communicate across cultural barriers. The jadidists, whose activities in Turkestan Adeeb Khalid discusses, carried forward this new and very controversial agenda for reform of a Muslim community to which they were attached but whose feeble response to colonial rule they condemned.

The encounter of frontier peoples and imperial emissaries evolved in a context set only partly by the empire's institutions and policies. The power exercised by the empire was in theory autocratic and thorough. The realities of everyday life and local culture repeatedly altered and even subverted the plans laid in St. Petersburg. This capacity for resistance on the part of the non-Christian, non-Russian peoples of the eastern territories took as many forms as there were local encounters. Agnès Kefeli reveals the determination of Tatars of the Volga region, where Russian rule dated to the sixteenth century, to retain their traditional Muslim faith. Christian conversion appeared to have made major inroads among these Tatars. Yet Kefeli makes clear, through her study of one village, that Muslim practices remained strong and probably were undergoing a revival among the Tatars in the nineteenth century. What to the Russian Orthodox missionaries and provincial administrators constituted a grave case of apostasy, that is, abandonment of Christianity, meant to the villagers the return to their own faith within their own social and spiritual community.

A very different form of local resistance appeared among the steppe nomads, whose encounter with tsarist legal practices is discussed by Virginia Martin. Customary rules among the Kazakhs, as among other conquered peoples, came into conflict with the laws of the empire. What to Kazakhs was heroic defense of clan honor was in the imperial law code the crime of robbery. These laws disrupted the practices of customary law, at the same time as imperial administrative practices undermined the authority of traditional clan elders. This encounter brought about profound changes in Kazakh behavior. Martin's study reveals that Kazakhs continued to hold firmly to what they believed customary standards of honor and justice. Ironically, though, the
adjustments through which they reconciled their customs with their status as tsarist subjects produced new forms of heroic conduct far different from those that had earlier reigned among their clans.

The slow evolution of these borderlands peoples under imperial rule brought increasingly frequent encounters among these peoples and an awareness of the differences that divided them. The new science of ethnography thrived on the classification of the various customs, material artifacts, languages, and physical types that Russians believed they had identified on the empire’s borderland. But Bruce Grant shows to what extent their discoveries depended upon expectations they brought with them. The classification of “primitive” was the strongest marker of difference that these ethnographers possessed, but in their zeal to uncover authentic savagery they imagined far more than was there.

And in the daily life of the borderlands, differences faded as peoples pursued their everyday needs. Thomas Barrett’s study of the Terek Cossacks brings to light the complex web of human relations that brought enemies to trade, to share a style of life, and to evolve a similar pattern of living. In this exchange, Cossacks learned much from mountain tribes. “God and the tsar are far away,” stated the old Russian proverb. The real history of the empire lay in these places of frontier encounter. Though the empire has long since fallen, its traces are still visible in those lands today.
In 1868, following his military defeat, Emir Muzaffar al-Din (r. 1860-85), ruler of the Bukharan Emirate, concluded a treaty with the Russians that effectively made Bukhara a protectorate of the Russian Empire. It left him and his successors with nominal sovereignty and a significant degree of control over internal affairs. For the Muslims of Central Asia this event marked the beginning of a dual crisis of imperial rule and modernity. Russian rule in Central Asia introduced cultural, social, political, and economic challenges that ruptured an entire system of thinking and ushered in a series of transformations that would result in the creation of new economic relationships, a new cultural elite, and in time, a new political order. The study of the indigenous responses to the Russian conquest of Central Asia, although still limited, has focused on two forms, that of religious and/or tribal based opposition in the form of revolts, and that of progressive reform embodied in the jadid movement. The purpose of this essay is to explore an alternative response to crisis and change through an analysis of one historical source, the Ta’rikh-I Salatin-I Mangitiya, by ’Abd al-’Aziz Sami Bustani. The historiographical form of Bustani’s response conforms to traditional Perso-Islamic literary models; his perspective is one rooted in an historical memory of a glorious past of political and cultural strength as epitomized by the Timurid period; and his value system is one predicated upon Islamic notions of justice and propriety.

Unlike the jadids, technology, communications, and the reform of social institutions (especially education) are not Sami’s primary concerns, despite the glaring reality that the technological and organizational superiority of the Russian army is a critical factor in the Bukharan defeat. In contrast, Sami’s unofficial history represents a worldview firmly rooted in the memory of a shared historical past that reveals an often neglected perspective of the status of the Bukharan
state in the late nineteenth century. Viewed in the context of the historiography of the period, this
text is a distinctive, local source for its candor, its emotionality, and its pessimism. Although it
conforms to a classical style, Sami wrote it not for his former patrons, but seemingly for his fellow
dissatisfied members of the literati. He provides no prescription for change; rather, the history
itself is a form of complaint and perhaps a plea for a return to a more perfect past.
In 1822 the Russian government promulgated the Ustav o Sibirskikh Kirgizakh (Regulations on the Siberian Kirghiz), which for the first time erected an administrative framework for colonial control over the Kazakh nomads of the Middle Horde. Although the tsarist regime had endeavored to use laws to control its steppe frontier since Kazakh clans first began submitting to Russian rule in 1731, the 1822 Regulations represent Russia’s first effort systematically to enforce its imperial goals. These goals included bringing and preserving “order” in the remote frontier region; introducing the Middle Horde nomads to the Russian, settled way of life; protecting the Russian population; and promoting trade. The Regulations also involved the introduction of Russian legal sensibilities to the native inhabitants of the steppe, with a recognition of the need to respect the distinct culture of the Kazakh nomads. This philosophy, sown by Empress Catherine the Great through her policies promoting Islamic religion and education among the nomads, was further nurtured by Siberia’s Governor-General, Mikhail Speranskii, as he drafted laws for administrative incorporation of all of Siberia into the empire in 1822. Speranskii’s laws allowed the natives to judge internal affairs according to their own customs, as long as these did not infringe upon the goals of the imperial regime and the rights of the Russian population. Thus, according to the 1822 Regulations, Kazakhs could try all civil and criminal cases according to customary law (adat), with the exception of particularly harsh crimes, which were prosecuted within Russian legal jurisdictions. Aside from murder and treason, the most important new Kazakh “crime” was barymta.

The 1822 Regulations defined barymta as robbery or plunder (grabezh), an act which the Russian government believed to be destabilizing, making it hard to administer and control the steppe, and making trade through the region problematic. It was viewed as an uncivilized act, and its perpetrators were barbarous criminals. By criminalizing barymta, the Russian administration
hoped to bring about its eventual disappearance. But to the nomads, barymta was not a crime; rather, it was a legitimate judicial custom reflecting the Kazakh cultural understanding of wrongdoing, honor and revenge. Although usually undertaken as the driving away of another nomad’s livestock, barymta was not simply stealing, for the livestock was eventually returned. It was considered an act of self-reprisal, which forced the review of a case that had not been justly settled, or not settled at all, and when it was practiced properly, it was viewed as an honorable, even heroic deed. To the Russians, the cultural significance of barymta held no legal weight; to the Kazakhs, the legal implication of barymta as crime had no meaning. For the Russian government, the successful colonization of the steppe could not proceed while the natives acted as criminals. Terms of deviant behavior had been defined: Kazakhs who committed barymta were criminals. At the same time, Kazakhs continued to practice barymta as custom. Over the course of the nineteenth century, this apparent standoff of Kazakh and Russian legal and cultural understandings forced the redefinition of barymta: while barymta survived to mean both criminal threat to the Russians and heroic restitution to the Kazakhs, in practice it became nothing more than theft of livestock, with legal sanction by neither Russian nor Kazakh.

This paper will trace the changes in meaning of the word barymta as it was used in mostly Russian-language court records, ethnographic reports, and in the national and provincial press, and then will argue that in practice barymta survived as a Kazakh custom, unpunishable and heroized, within the historical context of legal pluralism in the steppe colony in the nineteenth century. The colonial framework served paradoxically to elevate barymta to a new level of permissibility in popular nomadic culture. Barymta became permissible as theft in the context of a breakdown of the authority of the traditional nomadic judge, the biy; the inaccessibility of justice within the Russian system; and the Kazakhs’ cultural propensity to demonstrate heroism and honor through acts of revenge. An examination of the Kazakh nomadic custom of barymta demonstrates that the encounter of Russian and Kazakh on the steppe brought significant structural changes to nomadic life, but did not necessarily change the cultural values that shaped understandings of justice and
wrongdoing on either side. Rather than leading to the legal assimilation (Russification) of the steppe in the nineteenth century, colonization presented the Kazakhs a new context within which to renegotiate their cultural identity and allow it to survive.

In this analysis of barymta, semantics plays a key role. When we ask: "what was barymta?" we must know who was defining it, Russian or Kazakh, tsarist official, ethnographer or nomadic judge. When we ask: "why did barymta survive?" we must be clear as to what it was that survived: the crime, the custom, both? Multiple layers of meaning become blurred, as the historian is forced to confront the complexities of constructing a history of the colonized using texts prepared by the colonizers. An analysis of the semantics of barymta will help us to grasp the realities of the frontier encounter. By teasing the changing meanings of barymta out of the mostly Russian-language documents, we can begin to understand the subtle ways that Russia wielded power as colonizer, and the ways that the nomads struggled for existence in spite of colonial impositions.
Constructing an Islamic Identity:  
the Case of Elyshevo Village in the Nineteenth Century

Agnès Kefeli

From the conquest of Kazan in 1552, the Russian state and the Orthodox Church sought to wrest the Tatars from their own Islamic culture through a policy of Christianization. As a result, a small number of them became Orthodox Christians (Kriashen). According to Russian law, once an individual had converted to Orthodoxy, neither he nor his descendants could convert back to Islam. Threatened by this policy, the Muslim Tatars counter-attacked by trying to keep the converts in their community in spite of legal prohibitions on Muslim proselytism. They spread Muslim literacy through clandestine schools and Sufi books while Russian missionaries enrolled children in parish schools and instructed them in Russian and Slavonic. Consequently zones of competition between two possible identities, two types of knowledge, emerged.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the descendants of the baptized Tatars began to apostatize en masse from Orthodoxy as they embraced Islam. These collective apostasies followed one another in 1802-3, 1827-30, 1865-70, and 1905. They raise an important dilemma: why did the baptized Tatars choose Islam, the religion of a dominated people and not remain members of the dominant faith? Eastern Orthodox missionaries, such as the Kriashen Vasilii Timofeev (1836-1895) from Nikiforova (Mamadysh district), and the Russians Nikolai Il'minskii (1822-1891), Evfimii Malov (1835-1918), and Mikhail Mashanov (1852-1924) generally attributed these mass conversions to two factors. First, most of the baptized Tatars were already Muslim; their "conversion" to Islam was simply an effort to force the Russian authorities to recognize their true faith. Secondly, Christian proselytism was weak and poorly organized. Although these two interpretations contain some truth, they are reductivist and deterministic as if individuals had no control over their identity. Such an approach fails to recognize that the Kriashens faced a real choice between Islam and Christianity. It also fails to explain their choice.
The concept of identity in recent studies of psychologists and sociologists such as Joseph Kastersztein and Isabelle Taboada-Leonetti provides a useful corrective to the traditional historiography of Russian policy towards the Kriashens. For these scholars, identity is a continuous process that is conditioned by a relational conception of the world and not a fixed, stabilized, or idealized entity whose boundaries are defined by history or national heritage. In their approach, identity is not considered as a generic concept that explains collective or individual behaviors. Groups and individuals do not blindly follow the dictates of their so-called national or ancestral identity, but adopt specific strategies to change and develop themselves for specific ends.

Thousands of Kriashens were not attracted to Islam just because they spoke Tatar and most of their ancestors were Muslim. Until the reign of Catherine II, Tatars who converted to Eastern Orthodoxy were excluded from their original community. According to Muslim law, a murtadd (renegade) is considered legally dead. Some Kriashens left their native villages to found new ones close by, while others migrated to other Kriashen villages to escape from their Muslim brethren’s wrath. Nevertheless, at the end of the eighteenth century, when Catherine II put an end to Orthodox proselytism among the Muslims, mullahs and Sufis encouraged Christian Tatars to become familiar with Islamic teaching and writings. The Kriashen response was not uniform. Some remained Christians (though according to missionaries, many of these retained strong ties with pre-Christian animism), while others chose Islam.

This study of the village of Elyshevo will show how Islamicized Kriashens created and maintained cultural and economic networks with the Muslim world, once they perceived themselves as religiously distinct from the Orthodox Church. Furthermore, it will examine how the Kriashens used their Qur’anic and Christian knowledge to define themselves, and how they adapted to the Russian law and resisted colonial imposition.
In the mid-19th century, the Greben Cossacks of the North Caucasus told a story about the origin of Cossack-Chechen enmity two centuries earlier. According to this account, in the early days after the Grebentsy had resettled from the mountains south of the Terek River to the Russian side on the left bank, a specialization of economic functions developed between the Chechens of the mountains and the Cossacks, recently of the valley. The Chechens continued to live off of plunder, attacking villages and travelers as they always had, but now they exchanged their booty with a rich Cossack, Batyrev, who then sold it at Astrakhan for a nice profit. In one plunder exchange Batyrev received an expensive gun, which he decided to keep for himself. When the original owner, a Chechen, spotted the gun and tried to buy it back, Batyrev refused to part with his keepsake; some time later he and his brothers were attacked by the same Chechen and his comrades, the gun was stolen, and all the Batyrevs were killed. Thus began, the story goes, the centuries of hatred, raiding, and killing between Chechen and Cossack across the Terek River and from then on, the Cossacks obtained their booty by attacking their erstwhile colleagues.

It was a popular type of story in the North Caucasus—a successful bandit enterprise falling out over stolen goods, violence, and vendetta. Like most folk memories, there was a fair element of truth and also considerable distortion in this summation of Cossack-Chechen relations. The Cossacks of the North Caucasus did take part in the economy of plunder, but this by no means came to an end in the 18th century. The resettling of the Greben Cossacks to the Russian side in 1711-12 was an important turning point, but as much because of their new difficulties with the Russian state as any developing animosity towards their old neighbors to the south. And the trade relations between the Cossacks of the Terek and the peoples of the Caucasus mountains did not diminish, but were vital to the Cossack economy into the 19th century, even during the period of
the most intense warfare of Russian against Chechen. Trade was as important a frontier encounter as was war, and at times war was indirectly dependent upon trade.

Like the Cossack folk tale, the Western historiography of the North Caucasus has focused on the chasms between Russia and the native peoples, representing the frontier as a fault line of war, conflict, and religious division where Cossacks and gortsy stand on opposite sides of the divide, glaring at each other with hostile intent. The defining moment for the North Caucasus in this history is the systematic Russian military conquest of the 19th century and the Islamic resistance, centered in Chechnia and Dagestan, and culminating in the imamate of Shamil (1834-59). Earlier treatments of the conquest, such as Baddeley's *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* and Allen and Muratoff's *Caucasian Battlefields* fixed on the Russian advance; the most recent works—Moshe Gammer's *Muslim Resistance to the Tsar: Shamil and the Conquest of Chechnia and Daghestan* and the collection of articles edited by Marie Bennigsen Broxup, *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*—portray the mountain peoples’ resistance.

If we oppose the reduction of this frontier to a line of battles, it is not to lessen the importance of the military conquest or to accept the Soviet generalities of *druzhba narodov* ("friendship of peoples") and *sblizheme* ("drawing together"), but to add nuance to a history and a region of great complexity. The Russian settlement and building of new communities in the North Caucasus created powerful economic demands and opportunities; an examination of local trade reveals not just that there were many peddlars and merchants crisscrossing the border at all times, but that the goods flowing north from the mountains were essential to the Cossack communities and structured their material culture in many ways. And no matter how many barriers of customs control were erected, and how many disruptions of war, this trade had to continue, and it always did.

Such a history of society, economy, and transcultural contact in one borderland region of Russia, helps to “ground” our understanding of the empire, an understanding that is all too often
portrayed from the perspective of the center, and only in terms of policies, institutions, and cultural representations. What has been missing and what is essential to understand how the borderlands fit into the Russian empire is a history of those who moved there and lived at the edge of empire, how diverse people interacted there, their cultural exchanges, and the new landscapes, economies, and societies that they created. The following examination of frontier trade suggests that the Russian incorporation of the North Caucasus was a more uncertain and ambivalent process than the one usually depicted—colonization occurred, but so did nativization; military power came up against economic dependency. It also shows that the boundaries between colonist and native, between Cossack and “enemy”, indeed between Russia and “the Orient” could be rather loose and at times nonexistent. And I hope it proves the need to reconceptualize the empire “from the outside in” and “the bottom up”, since life at the edge was often quite different from what policy makers in St. Petersburg imagined or desired.
Local Accommodation and Resistance to Colonialism in Nineteenth-Century Crimea

Edward J. Lazzerini

The incorporation of the Crimean peninsula into the Russian Empire in 1783 established both a Russian outpost on the Black Sea, with all its Mediterranean-like potential, and colonial relations between the imperially dominant Great Russians and the newly subject local inhabitants of richly varied ethnicity. These relations would evolve over the next one hundred and thirty years in response to many factors, including the following: (1) the alterations in mental universes engendered by elite commitments to various ideologies but also by the unintended effects of socioeconomic experience locally and in the Empire as a whole that touched subalterns as well as elites; (2) the often conflicting, but at times harmonious, interplay of ethnic aspirations and expectations, both locally and along lines of communications to/with/from St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Kazan; (3) tensions between imperial sites of authority—political, religious, educational, and cultural—and the complex of local interests (e.g., bureaucratic/administrative, zemstva, ethnic); and (4) the synchronicity between colonial and modernist discourses that inevitably encouraged collusion between natives and Russians.

This essay uses Crimea as a context within which to pursue the seemingly contradictory issues of “relations of cooperation” across ethnic lines and resistance to colonialism, as well as the nuanced connections between these two phenomenon. By doing so, the author proposes a rethinking of colonialism in this one part of Imperial Russia’s borderland over the course of the long nineteenth century. More specifically, he seeks to complicate the usual analysis of this borderland in two ways: first, by momentarily shifting attention from conflict across ethnic lines to the evidence of cooperation; and second, by uncovering sources of resistance to Russian colonial rule that do not privilege forms most associated with revolutionary behavior and do not fit a requirement to affirm 1917. The author’s purpose is not to diminish the importance of ethnic
relations and their painful consequences in this or any other specific region, but to expand the context within which they are discussed so as better to understand the extent of their impact on events and lives, their greater complexity, and the circumstances in which they are less rather than more significant. Ethnicity counts, but not always, simply, or inevitably. Likewise, Lazzerini endeavors not to deny the significance of radical impulses and behavior that contributed to an evolving revolutionary situation by early twentieth-century Russia, but to show that these were not the only means by which to intervene in what some believed to be an oppressive sociopolitical and colonial situation.

The author begins with several assumptions that help shape his subsequent discussion: that we need to respect the synchronicity of colonial and modernist discourses more than we have because together they encouraged as much accommodation as hostility between natives and outlanders, and not just among educated elites; second, that with some modification (specifically the interjection of the notion of “nesting subalterns”), we can fruitfully apply to members of ethnic minorities in the Russian Empire the theoretical construct, derived from South Asian studies, of subalternity as a social category; third, that dominant elites (rulers and their agents) were far from being a united force but more typically redefined affinities in response to local conditions and indigenous pressures; and fourth, that borderlands are not just arenas of civilizational struggles, of semiotic inequality that produce and reflect relations of power where the colonizer seeks to define and program the borderland as “other” and “same,” but are sites subject to peculiar social contradictions and interactivity that spawn, by a kind of local magic, the possibility of a new community and a subtle, not always conscious, but genuine resistance to colonial situations.
Representations of Russia in Central Asian Jadid Discourse

Adeeb Khalid

In this essay, the author proposes to examine the many ways in which the themes of “Russia” and “Russians” were represented in the modernist discourse of Muslim intellectuals of Central Asia in the last two decades of the tsarist regime. This was the period in which a nascent group of modern intellectuals known as Jadids elaborated a new cultural discourse that revolved around the tropes of progress and reform. For the Jadids, reform was needed to raise Central Asian Muslim society from the grave economic, social, and moral crises that they espied.

Working in the space allowed by the colonial regime, the Jadids created a print-based civic discourse that represented a new kind of knowledge in their society. Russia and the Russians were ever present in this discourse, but the actual articulation of these themes depended on context and was therefore forever shifting. On the one hand, Jadid discourse internalized several categories of imperial thought, such as the Oriental/Occidental dichotomy (with the Russians firmly in the “occidental” camp). During World War I, for instance, Jadid activists staged “Oriental Evenings” to benefit the Russian war effort. In the same way, the Jadid espousal of a communal identity articulated in religious terms had its roots in the discourse of Russian officialdom for whom religion served as a major source of classification of its subjects. Russians also appear in Jadid writing as exemplars of progress and rationality, as models to be followed. At the same time, Russia and the Russians were the ultimate antagonists, the Other against whom the Jadids defined their community.

A close reading of selected Central Asian texts allows the author to map the various ways in which Russia (and Russians) were represented in Jadid discourse. Although his primary focus is on the “native,” he also examines how native strategies were shaped in part by possibilities opened up by vacillations and contradictions of Russian policies, for as others have rightly pointed out, tensions within an imperial camp are often crucial to native resistance, while the idea of an
indigenous response or resistance to an imperialist initiative no longer captures the dynamics of either side of the encounter. Khalid thus strives to elucidate the manner in which colonized elites produced new knowledge in conditions of empire on the Russian eastern borderland.
Scholars have long considered imperial Russian society a standard of authoritarian empire, a land where the imperial court took the definitive role in brokering knowledge and bodies. It was not unexpected, then, that when Jeremy Bentham formulated his nineteenth century utopian state on the principle of the panopticon—the circular prison where inmates were under constant supervision by an unseen warden—he credited his travels through Russia as inspiration. Yet by dint of sheer expanse alone, we know that the reach of the empire often diminished at its many borders, distant zones where officials relied on missionaries, emissaries, and ethnographers to report on the affairs of social governance.

By examining one example of an imperial borderland history here—the production of accounts regarding the small population of indigenous Giliaks on Sakhalin Island—the author explores the negotiation of historical knowledge through competing descriptive accounts. What is indeed so striking about these accounts in the first place is their wide divergence. As with a good amount of ethnographic research in the late imperial period, we find not so much a tightly regimented corps of investigators in the service of the empire as a remarkably heterogeneous collection of writers and explorers, each with variously politically inspired agendas. And yet, in the end, only one interpretation of Giliak life would come to reign over others at the close of the tsarist period—the fledgling socialist reading of what it meant to be primitive in the wake of developments in evolutionary thought. To this end, the author begins with one of Russia’s most prominent ethnographers of the last century, Lev Shternberg (1861-1927), and explores his work in the context of a handful of contrasting reports on the Siberia of the day.

Much folklore surrounds the work of Shternberg, the idealist revolutionary who was arrested in 1886 for his participation in the populist movement, Narodnaia Volia, and who went on
to spend eight years among the native Giliaks of Russia’s distant penal colony, Sakhalin Island.

Through the publication of one of his earliest articles, Shternberg’s description of Giliak kinship rites caught the attention of Frederick Engels, who saw in the Giliak system of levirate—the shared access of wives among designated brothers—proof that group marriage was alive and well in the Siberian hinterlands. Engels’ endorsement not only raised Shternberg’s stock in socialist circles, but it linked the latter’s work, in what went on to become an almost legendary way, to the belief that primitive life revealed communism as mankind’s originary state. A reluctant Marxist but ardent materialist, Shternberg’s political credentials contributed to his rise as the eventual dean of Soviet ethnography in the new order, and his early death in 1927 left him with a relatively clean slate for Soviet hagiographers.

The lengthy field stays prompted by Shternberg’s involuntary journey to Sakhalin and the simultaneous exile to Chukotka of his Narodnaia Volia (People’s Will) colleague, Vladimir Bogoraz, set new standards for protracted cultural immersion in ethnographic study. Indeed, exile defined the fledgling discipline of Russian ethnography in ways that set it apart from its counterparts in Western Europe, at least preempting the better known banishing of anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski from Australia to the Trobriand Islands by some thirty years. Yet what is so intriguing about Shternberg’s work is that, despite the very Asian setting in which he found himself, where he was as likely to be addressed by Giliaks in Japanese or Chinese as in their own language, the Giliaks of his accounts emerge as remarkable exemplars of European evolutionary theory and Russian populist values. By taking a closer look at Shternberg’s work and Giliak life at the turn of the last century, the author considers here the kind of variation on early materialist theory that can be found, and how this speaks to our understanding of late imperial ethnography as a whole.
Introduction

If, as Thomas Richards has written recently, "an empire is by definition and default a nation in overreach," we can appreciate some of the difficulties Russian imperial authorities experienced in trying to hold on to territories—albeit contiguous and not overseas—and control peoples with very different socioeconomic and cultural characteristics. The administrative challenge was seemingly eternal and is well-known to students of Russian history, but less attention has been devoted to the ways Russians have tried over the centuries to merge national and imperial identities in both theory and practice. It was relatively easy to make the empire seem national by adding titles to those long claimed by the tsar, by setting up branches of Russian institutions in colonial settings, and by extending use of the Russian language far and wide. The result, however, was another of those imperial fictions—unity. Through its symbolic play the "evidence" of unity may have comforted Russians, but it also helped generate a historiographic tradition that typically has meant viewing Russian imperial history through a Russian lens, from a Russian center, and by a Russian agency.

In the essays that follow, the colonial strategies articulated and implemented from around the 1860s to the end of the Old Regime are revealed to have been more complex and variegated than previously presumed. How to control the empire's peoples and cultures was hotly contested, the more so as the empire was increasingly buffeted by modernizing forces that disrupted what seemed to be organic and normal, whether in social relations, economic activity, cultural creativity, or politics. While each of the five essays in this section differs from the others in its particular subject matter, they are all concerned with the deeper question of the empire's character. How one defines the empire influences how one defines its peoples, helps determine what one can expect of them, and justifies strategies to achieve intended results.
Daniel Brower focuses on the frontier policy in Turkestan under the administration of Governor-General Konstantin von Kaufman. He reads that policy as an “ethnographic project,” that is, as a rekindling of the enlightened perspective regarding non-Russians and their place in the empire first officially enunciated by Catherine II in the latter eighteenth century but suffering from criticism in government, military, and church circles by the middle of the nineteenth. For Kaufman, governance of non-Russians required knowing (scientifically) who they were, so that ethnicity became a primary instrument of colonial rule. Knowledge derived from rigorous investigation by cadres of trained observers was coupled with a presumption of the social invention of ethnicity, so that in Kaufman’s view the “vestiges of backwardness” afflicting the peoples of Turkestan could be eliminated and they could become full and productive subjects, of a Russian empire.

Austin Jersild underscores the growing importance of notions of citizenship (grazhdanstvennost’) and civil society in redefining the Empire and its peoples. These appear as logical extensions of the Catherinian commitment to toleration, designed to include non-Russians as equals within an empire struggling to use better its natural and human resources, and to avoid “militaristic solutions” to ethnic relations as much as possible. Jersild encourages us to recognize that citizenship is, however, a concept subject to multiple definitions, and that part of the complication derives from non-Russians taking Russian liberality at its word. His examination of the career of the Azerbaijani intellectual and social activist, Hasan Bey Zardobi, is particularly valuable in picking up on this point and drawing a link with essays by Khalid and Lazzerini elsewhere in this volume that highlight the unintended subversive aspect of the inclusive colonial strategy.

Subversion is a major theme of Robert Geraci’s essay that uses a conference convened in St. Petersburg early in 1910 to reveal the thinking underlying a countervailing view of what the empire should be. That gathering of government administrators, orientalists, and Orthodox missionaries, sponsored by Prime Minister Peter A. Stolypin, was redolent of fear that Russia’s
Muslims, epitomized by the Tatars, were taking advantage of what "liberal" Russia had been offering (allowing), to satisfy agenda inimical to imperial interests. A contentious spirit animated the conference, whose subtext was shaped by the kind of "orientalism" to which Edward Said did so much to draw our attention.

Attitudes toward the empire were increasingly nuanced during its last decades, and evidence is accumulating to reveal not just trends in thought but dichotomous and inconsistent positions within groups and individuals that we have tended to define narrowly for so long. Seymour Becker's analysis of the thought of Mikhail Veniukov, exemplifying "the complex attitudes of Russian liberals towards empire-building" is revealing on a number of counts. At times Veniukov can sound like the typical imperialist in relationship to the borderlands, at others more benign and accommodating.

With the essay by David Wolff, we are drawn to a different part of Russia's borderlands, that portion neighboring the other great Asian empire—China. The setting may be furthest along Russia's imperial reach, but the issues he raises recall some we can find in other essays, in particular Brower's, where the relationship between power and ethnographic knowledge, or as Wolff expresses it, "knowledge in the service of the empire," figures prominently. What Kaufman attempted in Turkestan found even fuller expression in Kharbin, where the Society of Russian Orientalists proved most active in strengthening the Russian presence and merging "the objects of study and the needs of daily life."
Ethnicity became a handmaiden of modern colonialism when European empires conquered peoples of Asia and Africa. Studies of the British and French expansion have told the story of the efforts by Western travelers and scientists to describe and classify these peoples according to the criteria of nineteenth-century ethnography. Benedict Anderson has pointed to the importance of ethnic naming in European colonies, and to the impact of ethnic classifications of subject peoples on the emergence of national identity among these peoples. Ethnicity in this perspective is a social invention with vast cultural and political consequences.

It became an instrument of Russian rule in Turkestan after tsarist forces conquered the region in the 1860s and 1870s. The new administration, under the leadership of Governor-General Konstantin von Kaufman, confronted a population whose differences from, as well as its resemblances to, other borderlands peoples of the empire was cause for deep concern. The Turkestan inhabitants were largely settled townspeople and farmers; they formed a compact society with a total population of over three million ruled by but in no way integrated into the tsarist imperial state. By religion, these new subjects were almost entirely Muslim, as were the Caucasian mountaineers who had fought Russian troops for nearly a half-century under the leadership of a Muslim imam, Shamil. By language, they were predominantly Turkic, with linguistic ties to the Volga Tatars who remained, despite two centuries of strenuous tsarist efforts, a largely unassimilated people. Governing Turkestan posed daunting social and political problems to the victorious empire.

This was not the first time the tsarist regime confronted difficult policy decisions created by the presence of eastern peoples within the empire. Frontier rule had occupied a distinct place in Russian government since Muscovite times. It seems clear that by the mid-nineteenth century two very different approaches to rule of frontier peoples had emerged in tsarist practice. One was
summed up in the time-honored formula of conquest, subjugation, and administrative integration (*sliiane*). It had set borderlands policy in the early eighteenth century among Bashkirs and Kalmyk (and the Maloruss). It reappeared in the Caucasian wars a century later.

But such means appeared undesirable to those Russians influenced by Enlightenment theories. Writers such as Montesquieu and Voltaire found in human history an array of peoples whose human qualities appeared in national character, folkways, and custom. Barbarism was a stage of history, not a mark of the devil or souls to be saved; all peoples would ultimately rise to the level of civilized peoples if given the proper guidance (by Western rulers). This new conception of barbarism inspired a group of imperial administrators, supported by Catherine II herself, to define a new, progressive mission of enlightened rule over subject peoples. They were to be accorded tolerance of ethnic differences and encouragement for social development. The tradition of toleration and secular rule that began in the later eighteenth century did not supplant the militaristic approach, but it remained a meaningful part of tsarist frontier rule. It reemerged in the 1840s in Caucasia under the governor-generalship of Michael Vorontsov.

Ultimately, it formed the core of the Kaufman administration’s policy toward its Turkestan subjects. One Western scholar recently concluded that the expertise of anthropologists was “trivial” in the “grand process of imperial power” in Western empires. If so, the importance Kaufman attached to his own form of ethnopolitics is all the more remarkable. This essay explores the factors leading to the reemergence in Turkestan of the Enlightenment frontier policy and assesses its influence on Russian rule during and after Kaufman’s fifteen years as governor-general.
The old regime in Russia lasted until 1917, but Imperial officials and members of educated society tested its cultural boundaries well before the revolution. Their imagination of a society without estates included integrative notions such as the development of “citizenship” (grazhdanstvennost’), which the state was to promote among the lower orders previously unexposed to such an idea. In applying the notion of citizenship to borderland peoples as well, Russian officials hinted at that new social space which was one of the central preoccupations of Enlightenment thought, a civil sphere or society inhabited by citizens rather than subjects. Many other officials and members of educated society, however, used the term in a manner quite compatible with the assumptions of an old regime society.

In the borderlands this amounted to a new form of colonialism. Before the middle of the nineteenth century, officials of the expanding Russian state were not interested in the ideas, rights, or ethnic background of their new subjects, but the historical privileges held by the nobility in lands such as those partitioned from Poland. The Russians attempted similar measures in the first half of the century in the Caucasus, and rewarded Georgian nobles, beks and khans from Azerbaijan and Dagestan, and ruling families such as the Dadeshkilians from Svanetia with the recognition of historic privileges, positions in Russian service, and money. Respect for the privileges built into the estate structure had a powerful hold on Russian officials throughout the nineteenth century. Thus when it finally became time to find a place for Abduragim, Shamil’s son-in-law, in Russian society, Ministry of War officials referred to the 1859 military statute that offered rank in the Russian service to those mountaineers who could prove that they “genuinely” were the “sons of respected elders” in mountaineer society. Abduragim had the right to exercise the privileges accorded to his social standing. Yet the reason this son-in-law of Shamil was of such interest to Russian officials in Kaluga in the first place stemmed from a different sort of criterion. The
Russian police official assigned to the family was taken by Abduragim's youth and interest in Russian society, and his lack of interest in religious scholarship and what he called "fanaticism." Ministry of War officials referred to his general "inclination to the European way of life." By the middle nineteenth century Russian officials in the borderlands began to imagine their realm in a new way.

This new version of the colonial process and the Empire was prompted by the effort by Russians to reevaluate the historical tradition of conquest and exile that accompanied the expansion of the Russian state into the southern borderlands. Exile meant exclusion, expulsion from the body politic, a recognition that some belonged while others did not. An extensive population movement took place as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea in the eighteenth century, when as many as 300,000 Muslims left the lands of the former khanate for Ottoman Turkey. Eighteenth century figures such as Catherine the Great and Potemkin felt little need to justify or explain the massive population transfers that accompanied the state's southern expansion. Faith was an important part of Imperial identity, and Muslim mountaineers might naturally seek refuge among those of similar faith in the lands of the Ottoman Sultan, the spiritual head of Islam. Religion seemed to Russians to distinguish one Imperial community from the other, in particular in a region that bordered the great Empires of historic Islam. Russians also traditionally associated Muslim and mountaineer traditions with "savagery" (дикость), which provided another contrast to the promise of inclusion into the Imperial order suggested by the notion of citizenship. While savagery in the Romantic tradition was sometimes accompanied by a primitive nobility, free of the artifice acquired by civilized people, it was most commonly used by administrators and educated Russians to imply something less than human, fit for either exile or military destruction.
M. I. Veniukov wrote extensively first in Russia and then in emigration about the nature of the Russian state and the place of its borderlands in that state. His beliefs exemplify the complex attitudes of Russian liberals towards empire-building under the last three tsars.

A career military man and a patriotic Russian, he called for the expansion of Russia’s colonial empire in Central Asia to her “natural frontiers” and feared English and German designs on Russia’s borderlands. His patriotism was in fact accompanied by a spiteful hatred, not only of the English and the Germans, but, among others, especially of Jews and Armenians. A member of nineteenth-century Russia’s Westernized elite, Veniukov believed in Europe’s civilizing mission in Asia and in the justice of denying to uncivilized peoples the right to determine their own fate. A man of liberal views on many questions, however, he criticized some of the prevailing notions as to how best Russia could execute her civilizing mission. An opponent of autocracy, he envisioned a Russia governed by popularly chosen representatives—but a Russia in which the indigenous peoples of the borderlands would embrace over time the civic identity of Russian.

Veniukov’s ultimate goal was the transformation of the multinational Russian Empire into a Russian nation-state, on the model of the Swiss, French, British, and German nation-states. Perhaps for this reason he did not share the enthusiasm of some reformers for the creation of imperial citizenship (grachdnost’), a term which he never employed. A Russian nation-state on the European model was also the goal of many of Veniukov’s most prominent Russian contemporaries. They compared Russia’s extensive but contiguous territories to continental Germany and France, to the British Isles, and to the United States, not to the overseas empires of the Western powers. The metropole’s proximity to the borderlands, the centuries-old contacts between them, and the absence of both geographic and racial barriers between Russians and natives (inorodtsy) were used to justify Russia’s resemblance to her European neighbors rather than to the
latter’s colonial empires.

This comparison and the conclusions drawn from it were essentially another aspect of Russia’s striving, since the beginning of the eighteenth century, to become a full-fledged member of the European state system. By the last third of the nineteenth century the only members of the system that were not nation-states were Austria-Hungary and Russia. Russians who pondered the nature of the Russian state held in contempt the dynastic and national Habsburg model, which was to be avoided at all cost. For Veniukov, as for many of his contemporaries, the road from multinational empire to Russian nation-state was marked by Russian colonization of the borderlands, intermarriage with the indigenous peoples, and European education for the latter (as well as for Russians)—abetted, when possible, by voluntary conversion to Christianity.

Veniukov was very much a man of his time. His ideas on Russia’s role in her borderlands and the relations of the latter to the metropole were entirely within the mainstream of nineteenth-century Russian thinking, official and non-official, although he was critical of particular governmental policies. Only his advocacy of parliamentary government (perhaps resulting from, certainly facilitated by, his life in emigration) placed him in the minority. Given the prevailing climate of opinion, in the West as well as in Russia, his belief in parliamentary government was not incompatible with his devotion to the idea of empire. Russia was to become a large and powerful state in which the “Great Russian people (plem'ia), i.e., the basis of the [political] nation (natsiya),” are politically and culturally dominant, and the inorodtsy eventually come to think of themselves as Russians.
As Russia expanded into Central Asia and Northeast Asia in the second half of the nineteenth century, new ideas about the administration of the new domains circulated. The belief that better knowledge of the "naïves" would facilitate control harmonized with the ethnographic urge bequeathed by populism. The result was a policy to foster studies of the East. After Witte's arrival at the helm of government, these tendencies accelerated. Economic penetration and cultural influence, it was claimed, would attain peacefully and less expensively the desired degree of domination.

Because of its special interest in the Chinese Eastern Railway and Far Eastern policy in general, Russia's Finance Ministry made special efforts there to promote this particular strategy. The traditions of the "practical" school of Orientology, with its emphasis on the living language, applied area studies and respect for Chinese potential streamlined the training of a young specialist cohort prepared to fulfill the cultural tasks dictated by Russian Imperial interests in the Far East. In the Russo-Chinese borderlands, particularly at the Russian colony of Harbin where the literary elite was small in number, Orientological influence extended not only to the Chinese, but to the Russian colonists as well.

The beginnings of this process can be traced to 1896, when the expanded Russian presence in Manchuria brought the acute need for qualified Orientological support staff to the forefront of official and academic attention. In the past, the very limited opportunities available to those with such training had favored a laborious, decade-long process, which emphasized the elimination or attrition of would-be scholars rather than their production and placement. Suddenly, new Russian commitments in the military, administrative, transportation, and commercial spheres could only be met effectively by generating a new cohort with linguistic and area-studies credentials sufficient to handle immediate and wide-ranging tasks in Manchuria and China as well as potential missions.
both further east and further west. During the Russian conflict with China in 1900, well-publicized reports of the dangerous, though occasionally amusing, consequences of unreliable translation brought the dearth of Orientological expertise to public attention making a speedy solution even more imperative.

The 1899 founding of the Oriental Institute in Vladivostok was the most important measure undertaken by the Tsarist government to satisfy military, official and private demand for cadres in this area. Between 1903 and 1916, over 300 students and 200 officers completed the four-year course. Many of these became teachers in newly opened public and private courses, especially in the Far East, bringing the number of Russians with at least a rudimentary knowledge of an oriental language into the thousands. These numbers represent a quantum leap from the 26 students who graduated between 1887 and 1900 from the only institution in Russia offering a higher education in Orientology at that time, the Chinese-Manchurian section (razriad) of St. Petersburg University’s Oriental Department. Most of the Oriental Institute’s alumni took up entry-level positions, both at home and abroad, in Russian institutions requiring their knowledge of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Mongolian, Manchurian and Tibetan. Additionally, many auditors and short-term visitors received some exposure to the newly-developed “practical” curriculum, that would have a profound impact on the future development of Russian and Soviet Orientology.
Russian Orientalism at an Impasse:  
Tsarist Education Policy and the 1910 Conference on Islam

Robert Geraci

This paper is part of a larger project that examines the relationships between theoretical ideas about ethnicity and practical attempts to expand the Russian nation. Here the focus is on the years following 1905, which represented a turning point in ethnic relations within the Russian empire.

Fearful of the growing self-consciousness of Muslims, Prime Minister Petr A. Stolypin in 1909 organized an inter-ministry meeting of Russian specialists on the Volga Tatars and their influence. The Tatars had been in the forefront of an emerging “Islamic” consciousness and had led the opposition to the Ministry of Education’s attempts to attract Muslims to Russian schools since the 1870s. In the last years of the nineteenth century, the so-called “new method” or jadid movement had emerged in Volga Tatar society. It began as a controversial approach to Islamic pedagogy and blossomed into a general secularizing trend that gained considerable support and influenced Tatar culture significantly. In many ways it represented the adoption by Tatars of European and Russian cultures as a strategy for social uplift. This development presented a challenge to Russian clergy, scholars, educators, and administrators concerned with Russian-Muslim relations. A culture nearly universally thought to be strait-jacketed by fundamentalist theology and fanatical clergy, stagnant and incapable of participating in intellectual and scientific progress, now seemed to be undergoing a degree of modernization from within. Rather than simply acknowledging the novelty of the jadid movement, however, Russian “orientalists” described them as strategies for preserving the old status quo, for reinforcing the essential features of Islamic society.

Stolypin’s conference was a manifestation of this intellectual dilemma. Held in St. Petersburg in January 1910, it was attended by governors, bishops, and educational officials from Kazan and its neighboring provinces, and by officials of the Holy Synod and the Ministries of
Interior and Education. While the “Muslim menace” was discussed broadly, the issue of Muslim
educational institutions quickly took center stage. Participants in the conference were especially
alarmed by the growing presence of secular learning (including Russian language) in Muslim
confessional schools. Nearly unanimously they proposed to ban non-religious subjects from all
such schools in the Russian empire, a measure that not only abruptly reversed four decades of
educational regulations but also sought to force the Tatars back into the stereotypical parochialism
orientalists had consistently criticized. Instead of using growing Tatar secularism as an avenue of
Russification, the conference decided that Russification was now undesirable and sought to prevent
it by any means.
This essay analyzes the artistic works on Russian Turkestan by the painter Vasily Vereshchagin. It views his drawings and paintings, presented to the Russian public in the mid-1870s, in the light of Russian colonial policy and in terms of evolving popular attitudes toward imperial expansion. It argues that the artist, trained in the French genre of orientalist art, helped the new colonial administration to legitimize Russian occupation of Turkestan.

His works included many portraits of the conquered peoples, drawn in an artistic style similar to contemporary ethnographic realism. His most famous paintings, strongly influenced by French orientalism, presented Russian and Western audiences with scenes of a decadent civilization, once the center of the great empire of Tamurlane. In these terms his works tell, in visual images readily understandable to Russians, an epic story of the triumph of the Russian Empire over its age-old enemies.

My study forms part of a research project that investigates Russian-Turkic inter-ethnic relations from the time of conquest in the 1860s until the division of Turkestan into national territories by the new communist government in the 1920s. Its conceptual approach draws upon recent theories in cultural anthropology and literary criticism that emphasize the manner in which categories of ethnicity emerge out of the textual interpretation of colonial peoples in the nineteenth century. These texts are produced in part to clarify the procedures of colonial administration, deeply committed to establishing firm control over peoples whose ways of life and cultural values appear alien and barbaric. The texts are the product as well of the positivistic curiosity of Western scientists and writers to determine the classification of the
peoples of the non-Western world in an orderly hierarchy from barbaric to civilized. Russian colonization of Turkestan brought into play these very processes, and left an abundance of sources accessible to historical research. Among these are the writings and paintings of Vereshchagin.

The first governor-general (viceroy) of Turkestan began his rule by inviting Russian scholars to prepare detailed studies of the geology, zoology, botany, and ethnography of the Muslim peoples of the region. He also employed Vasily Vereshchagin to produce a visual record of the peoples and of the conquest itself. His objective appears to have been to persuade the public at large of the progressive character of his rule as well as the heroic story of the conquest. Vereshchagin served him well. The artist's major exhibition in 1874 of his Turkestan works was a great success. For this reason the analysis of the message that his paintings conveyed gives us important clues to popular views of the Russian Orient and of the borderlands peoples. These attitudes constitute an important aspect of Russian imperialist ideology as it evolved in the last period of imperial expansion into eastern territories. Vereshchagin's drawings and paintings provide historians with a sort of synopsis of the orientalist preconceptions and stereotypes of the Russian public. These attitudes continued to influence Russian-Turkic relations during the hundred years and more of imperial and Soviet rule in these eastern lands.