An Empire of Others: Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR ed. by Roland Cvetkovski and Alexis Hofmeister (review)

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пока спрос на подобную идеологическую литературу остается по обе стороны границы, издательства "Мануций" будут издавать все новые тома серии "Изида без покрывал".

Популяризация истории Крыма – дело нужное и важное, потому появление новых изданий можно только приветствовать. Однако чрезмерная увлеченность обеих рецензируемых книг политико-идеологическими вопросами, на наш взгляд, делает их интересными в первую очередь специалистам по созданию национальных нарративов. Надеемся, нам удалось показать, что эти издания, при всей противоположности идеологических установок, имеют ряд сходных черт. Печально, что в эту авантюру были втянуты коллеги, продемонстрировавшие свой профессионализм в написании ряда разделов, выделяющихся на общем фоне. Но в целом антикварный подход в изложении фактов и одиозные штампы в их оценках значительно снижают ценность рецензируемых изданий. Крыму остается ждать своего Питера Акройда, популярные сочинения которого сочетают великолепный язык и увлекательность с тонким пониманием предмета.[32]

[32] Питер Акройд. Лондон. Биография. Москва, 2009; Он же. Венеция. Прекрасный город. Москва, 2012.

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Roland Cvetkovski and Alexis Hofmeister (Eds.), *An Empire of Others: Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2014). 407 pp., ills. Index. ISBN: 978-615-5225-76-5.

Over the past two decades, the study of the power-knowledge nexus in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union has come to the fore of Anglophone scholarship. Specifically, scholars are looking into the broader social and political ramifications of the development of disciplines such as anthropology and ethnography, history and archaeology, Oriental studies and linguistics. This approach relativizes otherwise academically clear disciplinary boundaries, and thus the recent collected volume *An Empire of Others: Creating Ethnographic Knowledge in Imperial Russia and the USSR* is not restricted to the history of ethnography. The volume includes a variety of case studies using different methodological frameworks. This disciplinary pluralism notwithstanding, the contributors pursue a similar approach toward the study of knowledge and nationalism, marked with regular references to Edward Said and Benedict Anderson. The editors formulate their overall goal as an attempt to

"address ethnographic knowledge as a prism through which to look at Russian history" (P. 6). To this end, the volume bridges the divide of 1917 in tracing the evolution of scholarship and the changing ways it interacted with politics. More specifically, the editors wanted to analyze the language of ethnographic knowledge in historical perspective with an emphasis on "the different epistemic conditions in which the ethnic categories appeared" (P. 7). Rather than narrowing the focus on the direct involvement of ethnography with servicing the interests of the state, the editors are interested in reconstructing specific contexts and elaborated modes of producing implicitly politicized knowledge about the empire's population. In practical terms, they distinguish three planes of analysis that inform the tripartite structure of the volume: Part 1, "Paradigms," reviews theoretical debates about what constituted the essence of ethnography; part 2, "Representations," analyzes the formats and models for making sense of the study of the empire's diverse population; part 3, "Peoples," discusses the role of ethnography in "creating" and cataloging the groups recognized as ethnographic entities.

In the "paradigmatic" part, Alexis Hofmeister compares Russian and British approaches to ethnography and makes the important observation that one should "carefully differentiate between the sometimes anti-imperial purpose of Russian ethnography and its obvious imperial function" (P. 37). To substantiate this argument, Hofmeister turns to a very important practice of imperial scholarship – academic expeditions – a phenomenon mentioned in passing in several chapters of the volume, but never conceptualized specifically as an influential practice of imperial scholarship. This is a remarkable oversight, given that expeditions certainly functioned as a vehicle for cultural interaction between scholars and the objects of their study. Stressing the impressive amount of data collected during those expeditions and formidable resources spent on them, Hofmeister concludes that "quantity" did not transform into "quality" in Russia: ethnographers did not put as much effort into conceptualization of their findings, even though they were aware of theoretical approaches employed by their Western colleagues (P. 43). On the other hand, even the "exiled intellectuals" (such as von Strahlenberg), despite their oppositional political views, eventually served the interests of imperial elites, because they had to work in the imperial setting.

Several subsequent articles deal with the discursive field that proved formative for the very definition of ethnographic knowledge. Alexei Elfimov analyzes a contradiction

between ethnographers' claims to represent social science and the prevalence of descriptive approaches in their work. On the example of Nikolai Nadezhdin, Elfimov demonstrates the centrality of geography and language in the imperial ethnographers' efforts to classify and systematize. He argues that the debates over *ethnos* as a central scientific category of Soviet ethnography were driven by its claim for the status of social science, which ultimately failed (P. 78).

Conversely, in her chapter on the interplay of ethnography and physical anthropology in imperial Russia, Marina Mogilner finds a commonality between Western and Russian scholarly approaches by telling a story of "coexistence and interaction of racial-biological and cultural models of groupness" (P. 82). Far from overemphasizing the Russian descriptiveness, Mogilner problematizes the difference between two scholarly approaches. The first is represented by the Moscow-based "liberal anthropology" centered on the study of imperial diversity of physical types in the whole country. The second is the "colonial anthropology" of St. Petersburg that advanced an elitist discourse on the study of "uncultured peoples" (Pp. 92–101). Curiously enough, ethnography became an important tool of Ukrainian nationalists at St. Petersburg University. Another two university centers of ethnography promoted Russian nationalism (Kiev) and the idea of the Russian civilizing mission (Kazan).

Sergei Alimov contributes a study of the impact Soviet ideology on ethnographic knowledge, and attempts to "assume the perspective of ethnographers themselves" in order to reconstruct "people's motives, their intellectual and moral aspirations" (P. 122). This goal is problematical in principle: no matter how sympathetic a scholar's attitude toward his or her objects of study, one can be never sure about the actual motivations of the people of the bygone epoch. Alimov emphasizes the interdisciplinary character of early Soviet ethnography borrowing from linguistics, history, archaeology, and sociology, as demonstrated on the powerful examples of Nikolay Marr and Sergei Tolstov. This was a period when scholarship was most closely integrated with the interests of the state: it recognized historical materialism as the only legitimate theoretical framework, and provided practical expertise for the government's mass-scale social engineering projects (P. 127), such as defining cultural traits of entire peoples, or elaborating their historical canons.

Part 1 of the collection concludes with Sergei Abashin's chapter on a series of "national" histories written for the republics created by the

national delimitation in Central Asia. Abashin warns against reducing the complex process of creating "national histories" (heavily relying on ethnographic expertise) to the essentialized tropes of "Orientalism" and "colonialism." One reason is that it is difficult to draw a clear line between the colonizer and the colonized. Abashin suggests treating "the history of Soviet ethnography as a process of continuous institutional and discursive redefinition of what makes up ethnography" (Pp. 147–148). This is the case with the Soviet debates on Uzbek history books. The biographies of prominent Central Asian Orientalists-ethnographers Aleksandr Semenov, Aleksandr Iakubovksii, and Sergei Tolstov testify to the existence of a shared discursive field sustaining debates of the main terms of Uzbek *ethnogenesis.* One cannot but agree that such debates were essential for Soviet ethnography in Central Asia.

Part 2 of the volume opens with an article by Maike Sach on cartography and illustrations. She rightfully states that the development of ethnography is closely linked with expeditions to Siberia and the mapping of new territories. It is a pity though that the author does not mention the first Siberian cartographer, Semen Remezov, whose approach to representing Siberia would be a good topic of postcolonial study. Drawings of native peoples included in expedition reports became a popular genre in the ethnographic literature of the eighteenth century. These drawings seem to have much in common with later Orientalist paintings in their persistent references to the tropes of "wildness" and "savageness" (P. 207). Pictorial language was used to demonstrate imperial diversity with many of the stereotyped symbols borrowed from the West.

Roland Cvetkovski writes about knowledge representation in the Russian Museum. He makes an effort to differentiate imperial and ethnographic knowledge. By examining the structures, ideas, and practices of museum expositions, Cvetkovski argues that even if imperial diversity was mirrored in museum objects, the Russian Empire was "equally deprived of the possibility of being *re*presented", since the concepts of representation were not ideologically linked with empire (P. 241). The accepted "Stockholm system" of classifying artifacts according to collections was equally suitable for different modes of representation, whether national, imperial, or colonial.

Catriona Kelly brings the field of child ethnography into the discussion. Even though children were rarely seen as subjects of ethnographic knowledge, museums regarded children as an important audience for dissemination of visual

representation of national culture, especially in Soviet times. Kelly argues that this representation focused mainly on the Russians (P. 275).

In Part 3, in his chapter Sergey Glebov uses four case studies of the history of ethnographic exploration of Siberia to prove that the Russian case poorly fits into the classical scheme of Orientalism, but also leaves no grounds for claims of Russian exceptionalism (P. 284). Together with other contributors to the volume, Glebov calls for a more complicated approach. German scholars, who traveled to Siberia and contributed much to the "conceptual conquest" of the region in the eighteenth century, identified the Russian heartland's lack of civilization in much the same way that they wrote about the natives of Siberia. Political exiles, who did a lot for the production of ethnographic knowledge about Siberia in the course of the nineteenth century, despite their opposition to the regime, in fact reinforced the imperial layout. When viewed from this vantage point, it becomes difficult to clearly differentiate between the center and periphery of the distribution of power.

In contrast to other contributions in the book, Angela Rustemeyer switches attention from a biographical approach to the study of concepts, with a special focus on the early Soviet Ukrainian journal *Ethnographic Bulletin* (Etnohrafichnyi visnyk). Perfectly aware that "folklore studies were not ideologically neutral" (P. 311), she links this subfield of ethnographic knowledge with the process of identity-building. Rustemeyer looks at the ways in which the concepts of time, class, and space in Ukrainian folklore were interpreted at the time of transition from late Imperial Russia to the Soviet Union. Demonology appears to be central to this analysis. In the course of the nineteenth century, demonology was closely linked with the national character of Ukrainians and interpreted as an element of their cultural legacy, while scholars of the early Soviet period tended to censor some parts of folklore that were incompatible with a progressive vision of nation, thus creating an officially approved version of national culture (P. 337).

The only case study from the Caucasus in the collection brings in yet another perspective. Christian Dettmering reverses the main question of the volume by asking how much ethnography was actually influential in political matters. Imperial ethnographers encountered the clan system among the Ingush and Chechen people and regarded it as an obstacle to their integration into the larger society. Resettlement of clans within the empire (as opposed to migration to Turkey) was recommended, which turned out to be a miscalculation. The measure

did not improve relations with them. Another policy was more effective: from quite early times, ethnographers recognized the Arabic language and Islam (including Islamic law) as dangerous to Russian rule, hence their encouragement of vernacular languages and experiments with creating their alphabets and dictionaries. This imperial experimentation with linguistic policies in the Caucasus can be compared with successful Soviet combating of the Arabic script and Muslim literacy across the entire country. Dettmering shows that the Islamization of Ingushes in the 1870s led Russian ethnographers to increasingly view the Chechens and the Ingush as one people.

The last chapter in the collection is penned by Mikhail Kizilov, who writes about imperial attempts to separate the Crimean Karaites from Jewishness. It took the Karaites about 150 years to prove their detachment from the Jews and establish themselves as the oldest indigenous population in Crimea. This happened in response to pressure from the Russian authorities, who wanted to revoke the privileges enjoyed by the Karaites. In contrast to concern with the implicit or explicit political subtext of ethnographic scholarship demonstrated by other contributors to the volume, at some point Kizilov employs the "pure scholarship" argument by claiming:

> Studying the history and ethnography of most of the Crimean peoples in imperial times was normally a purely academic matter. There was no ideological background, say, the study of the ethnography and folklore of the Crimean Greeks and Tatars, or behind the archaeological excavations of the Scythian barrows in Kerch. (P. 372)

Kizilov calls the period between the Crimean War and 1917 the time of "professional study of the Crimea" and "establishment of *Tavricheskaia uchenaia arkhivnaia komissiia* [the Scientific Archival Commission in Taurida]" (P. 371). The very establishment of this commission under the auspices of the authorities testifies to the reality of political interests that might be present behind its purely professional activities. It is especially true in regard to Crimean Muslims, whose historical presence on the peninsula and whose culture were put into question after the Crimean war. To clarify the imperial function of Crimean studies we still lack thorough research on Orientalist studies in Crimea, and a detailed discussion of the political significance of highly professional work by Russian Orientalists such as Aleksandr Samoilovich (1880–1938) and Vasilii Smirnov (1846–1922).

In sum, this fine collection of articles brings fresh insights into the

political aspects of Russia's *Volkskunde*. The authors' positions range from attempts to complicate the picture and go beyond established views on the colonial character of knowledge production to defending *Sonderweg* conceptions of Russian history. The authors of the chapters are known for prior studies on the history of ethnography and anthropology in Russia, come from different academic traditions, and differ in their takes on the methodological framework suggested by the editors. And here we encounter a differentiation between "insiders" and "outsiders" of the discipline. Many scholars, especially "insiders" of ethnography and anthropology, still regard the debates around Orientalism and political ramifications of knowledge production as superficial. Some even see these debates as aiming to question the professionalism of their predecessors in the field. Sometimes the reader can detect attempts to "defend" certain fields of knowledge or personalities from perceived "accusations" of being involved in political matters. This overly personal take on the problem seems to miss the point. The goal of the editors is by far not to accuse anyone, but rather to put under scrutiny almost three centuries of describing, mapping, and representing imperial peoples in Russia.

Артем КОСМАРСКИЙ

Paolo Sartori (Ed.). *Explorations in the Social History of Modern Central Asia (19th – Early 20th Century)* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2013). xiv, 334 pp. Index. ISBN: 978-90-04-24843-4.

Сборник "Исследования в области социальной истории современной Центральной Азии (XIX – начало XX века)" представляет собой редкий в историографии региона опыт теоретически осмысленной микроистории. Авторы статей попытались посмотреть на важные сдвиги в общественной и экономической жизни региона сквозь призму текстов. Иными словами, они реконструировали социальные отношения и ментальные структуры (в понимании Школы анналов) простых людей, анализируя главным образом юридические документы, где отразились их "голоса".

Составитель сборника, Паоло Сартори (*Paolo Sartori*) из венского Института иранских исследований, предваряет книгу концептуальным предисловием ("О социальном в истории Центральной Азии: заметки на полях правовых документов"). Начинает он с критической оценки лингвистического поворота в историографии, который обычно