Edward Said’s ill-judged exclusion of the Russian Empire from his study of the unequal intellectual relationship between Europe and Asia has proved both a blessing and a curse for historians of Russian imperialism. On the one hand, it has contributed to the very late development of a postcolonial sensibility in this field, as some scholars have persisted with the Soviet-era line that an assimilationist Russia was not a colonial power. On the other hand, the absence of any canonical text to be either worshipped or refuted has allowed historians of Russia to develop their own, more subtle models for examining cultural imperialism, which may one day turn out to be more useful than Said’s, not just for Russia, but also for the other European empires. Whilst there have been a number of excellent articles on the subject (some of them earlier versions of chapters here), Russian Orientalism is the best general book-length contribution to this debate to have appeared so far. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye is venturing into territory often characterized by incomprehensible jargon and bad-tempered polemic, and thankfully eschews both. This elegantly-written, even-handed study instead seeks to give an empirical account of Russia’s intellectual relationship with Asia since the late seventeenth century. Pulled towards Europe by her Christian faith, and towards Asia by the legacy of the Mongol conquest, ‘Russia looked at the East through many lenses. This book focuses on two of them, Orientology (vostokovedenie) and culture’ (p. 10)

Whilst the first of these two ‘lenses’ is manageable and well-defined, it is also located within the latter, which is vast, amorphous and altogether too gigantic a subject for a volume of this relatively modest size. The best sections of the book are accordingly those which look at the work of academic Orientalists (I understand Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s desire to eschew this term, thanks to the pejorative connotations it has acquired, but I still believe that it can be rehabilitated) and the development of the discipline of Oriental Studies in Russia. The chapters on the ‘Kazan School’, ‘Missionary Orientology’ and the flowering of the Oriental Faculty of St Petersburg University in the late nineteenth century are outstanding intellectual history, rigorous and carefully researched, but also animated by a keen eye for human detail and a gently humorous tone. Some characters leap off the page, notably the merry Chuvash missionary, Iakinf Bichurin, the founder of Russian Sinology, and the Russified Pole Osip Senkovskii, the first Professor of Arabic at St Petersburg University, whose acid pen outraged both high society and his academic colleagues elsewhere in Europe. Alongside these figures, more staid but equally distinguished scholars such as Baron Viktor Rosen and Sergei Oldenburg also receive detailed attention, and the book provides a valuable account of the institutional development of Russian Orientalism within the academy, first at Kazan’ University and then in St Petersburg.

Regrettably, but understandably, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye is unable to bring the same level of detail to his examination of all the other various cultural ramifications of Russia’s complex relationship with the Orient. The
sections on the Romantic response of writers such as Pushkin and Lermontov to the landscape and people of the Caucasus, on the obsession of the poets and writers of St Petersburg’s Silver Age with Russia’s supposed ‘Mongol’ identity, and on the fantasies of the émigré ‘Eurasianists’ have little new to add to the vast quantity of earlier work on the subject. Some of the individual cameos, in particular his description of the career and paintings of Vasilii Vereshchagin (pp. 74–91) and of the life and works of the composer Alexander Borodin (pp. 204–10) are much more detailed, but overall the coverage is inevitably somewhat imbalanced. However, it suffices to give some general background to the book’s main aim of charting the development of Orientalism as a discipline, so this does not detract too greatly from its value.

The entertaining narrative, character descriptions and analysis of paintings, literary works and scholarship inform an argument about the nature of Russian Orientalism that is developed from chapter to chapter. Whilst many Russian writers and thinkers (particularly missionaries) were hostile to Asians and to non-Christians and considered the ‘Orient’ to be separate from Russian civilization, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye argues that this never developed into a consistent ideology of ‘othering’. This was partly because a high proportion of early Russian orientalists were themselves of ‘Oriental’ origin, notably Mirza Alexander Kazem-Bek, a Persian from Resht who was converted to Christianity by Scottish missionaries in Astrakhan and eventually became a Professor at Kazan´ University. It was also because of the complex identity of outwardly Russian figures such as Borodin, the illegitimate son of a Georgian prince who also had Tatar ancestors. Whilst his In the Steppes of Central Asia, with its classically Orientalist phrasing and underlying narrative of Russian imperial conquest, might seem to be a textbook example of the exoticization and subjugation of the Orient, the composer’s own mixed heritage complicates this somewhat, although perhaps not as much as Schimmelpenninck van der Oye suggests (p. 200).

Whilst overall the argument that the Russian view of Asia was ambivalent and almost never consistently hostile is convincing, the same could also be said of British, French or German Orientalism. One of the major failings of Said’s original work, apart from his failure to consider either Germany or Russia, was his view of Occidental Culture as a monolith, always sure of itself and certain of what it was not. This was never true for any part of Europe. Equally it is rare for scholars to devote their lives to the study of subjects they dislike and despise, and there are clear parallels between (for instance) the critical attitude of the Indologist Sergei Oldenburg towards European colonial arrogance and the persecution of Russia’s ethnic and religious minorities (p. 194), and that of the British Persianist Edward Granville Browne. Some more comparisons would have given a clearer impression of just what is distinctive about the Russian case. Furthermore, whilst he skilfully shows how many Russian intellectuals and scholars felt that the ‘Orient’ was somehow a part of their own make-up, and did not consider it to be a separate sphere, official attitudes were generally very different. At various points (pp. 120, 197) Schimmelpenninck van der Oye acknowledges that the development of Oriental Studies in Russia was closely linked to the needs of the Russian state,
with its rapidly expanding empire in Asia, something which does chime with key elements of Said’s original arguments. The personal hostility or indifference of individual scholars to the imperial enterprise is less important than the use which the state can make of the knowledge they produce and the people they train in its colonial enterprises, and in this respect Russia would appear not only to conform to the Saidian paradigm, but — given the much greater role played by the state in intellectual life than in Western Europe — to do so more thoroughly than either Britain or France. It is probably true that less exalted institutions such as Moscow’s Lazarevskii Institute played a more important role than the Oriental faculties at Kazan’ and St Petersburg, but this is something that could have been explored further.

Those seeking a comprehensive theoretical contribution on the place of Russia in the debates surrounding Said’s *Orientalism* and postcolonial studies may be disappointed by this book, but it successfully avoids both tired clichés about Russian exceptionalism (of the kind provided by Orlando Figes in *Natasha’s Dance*, London, 2002) and the unquestioning application of Said’s ideas to the Russian case (as seen in Kalpana Sahni’s polemical *Crucifying the Orient*, Bangkok, 1997). Instead, Schimmelpennink van der Oye has given us a volume which provides by far the most comprehensive history in English of the academic discipline of Orientalism in Russia, with an overall thesis on Russia’s relationship with Asia which, despite some limitations, is reasonable and convincing. *Russian Orientalism* is also very well-written, accessible and entertaining, and ought to appeal to a wider reading public beyond academia.

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**Alexander Morrison**

Review by: Jeff Sahadeo

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ety as a whole” took place in order to “master the Russian national past for the purposes of the present” (p. 193). The infamous Short Course in the History of the USSR, first published in 1937, reinvented Peter as the first Russian modernizer. It also presented a view of Ivan as the initiator of state consolidation, imperial expansion, modernization, and enlightenment, all policies that Peter continued. Although the Short Course did not entirely ignore Ivan’s or Peter’s violence, it did overwhelmingly present the two as great rulers. The culmination of this Stalin-era rehabilitation, as Platt notes, came in Sergei Eisenstein’s uncompleted film trilogy Ivan the Terrible, which was significant because, in the author’s innovative interpretation, the films brought “the affective foundations of greatness in the disavowal of terror” that had developed over a century to light (p. 233). Eisenstein grasped the myth of Ivan that had developed over time and made films that went “beyond historical allegory to offer an allegory of historical allegory” (p. 246).

This brilliant book is packed full of rich insights and important ideas. Platt’s conclusion explains how Ivan and Peter continue to be important in post-Soviet culture. While historians such as Maureen Perrie and Nicholas V. Riasanovsky have written about Ivan’s and Peter’s individual impacts on Russian memory, Platt tackles them together in order to demonstrate how they have served as central symbols in the evolving construction of collective identity in Russia.

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Even as studies of Russia’s Asian expansion have proliferated over the last decade, the field remains in its conceptual infancy. Important empirical contributions, including these works by Vera Tolz and David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, continue to fixate on Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) and its applicability to Russia. Tolz and Schimmelpenninck van der Oye highlight the importance of Russia’s eastern periphery and Asia more broadly to imperial Russian culture and politics. Concepts of and relationships with the “East” emerged as critical measuring sticks for tsarist elites, uncertain of their place in a modern world. Both authors offer unabashedly sympathetic portrayals of scholars and writers characterized as “Orientalists,” a term Tolz coined due to her belief that Said’s work has unfairly tarred the term “Orientalist.” Orientalists, for Tolz and Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, sought to elevate Asia’s status in Russia’s imagination and politics and uplift its peoples and cultures to a place of respect not only in St. Petersburg, but also across the Western world. Their efforts, the authors argue, were unique in imperial Europe and foreshadowed the national rights that eastern minorities enjoyed in the Soviet Union.

Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s work proceeds as a series of vignettes of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century authors, missionaries, linguists, and intellectuals whose careers were intimately bound with “Asia,” stretching here from the Ottoman Empire to the Caucasus to China. Tolz focuses more specifically on the late nineteenth-century Faculty of Oriental Studies at St. Petersburg University. Both authors argue that this faculty’s prestige symbolized Asia’s importance to the tsarist state as well as the educated public; Schimmelpenninck van der Oye notes that of St. Petersburg University’s fifty-eight full professors, nine were housed in Oriental Studies. Both highlight these and other Orientalists of non-Russian ethnicity. Viktor Romanovich Rozen, the faculty’s dean, was a Baltic German; his disciples, many of whom were raised on the empire’s periphery, had mixed backgrounds that included French and Scottish blood. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye notes that of St. Petersburg University’s fifty-eight full professors, nine were housed in Oriental Studies. Both highlight these and other Orientalists of non-Russian ethnicity. Viktor Romanovich Rozen, the faculty’s dean, was a Baltic German; his disciples, many of whom were raised on the empire’s periphery, had mixed backgrounds that included French and Scottish blood. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye notes that of St. Petersburg University’s fifty-eight full professors, nine were housed in Oriental Studies. Both highlight these and other Orientalists of non-Russian ethnicity. Vikto

This non-Russian presence is striking, though the authors highlight it primarily as proof in itself of the uniqueness of Russian Orientalism. Rozen, Kazim-Bek, and others ostensibly brought sensitive views of Asia to Russians. One Orthodox priest in Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s work spent years in China ministering to a small group of Cossacks who served the Qing dynasty and wrote prolifically on the country with “relative sympathy” (p. 150). Tolz’s Orientalists not only studied languages and manuscripts but also brought Buddhist Buryats and other minority peoples of tsarist Asia to St. Petersburg as “research assistants” in a two-way learning process. Others, including N. Ia. Marr, worked with small Caucasus minorities to assert national rights. Tolz sees a “particular kind of political and cultural space where there was no boundary between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’” (p. 5). Both highlight the fluid physical borders between Europe and Asia in the tsarist empire, where Russian and Tatar peoples coexisted in cities like Kazan.

Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s stories highlight Asia’s importance to obscure scholars and leading politicians and authors alike. Catherine the Great’s seven-month tour of Crimea, accompanied by Western dignitaries, presented Russia’s newly conquered territory as evidence of its status as a European empire over exotic Asian peoples in what the author characterizes as a typical Orientalist endeavor. By the nineteenth century, however, Western and Russian views of the East diverged. Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin, who followed in Lord Byron’s footsteps with his portrayals of
an exoticized east, increasingly viewed his “Asian” subjects, primarily Caucasus mountain peoples, as a symbiosis of European self and other and praised warrior honesty and bravery untainted by tsarist corruption and oppression. Pushkin, unlike Western authors, maintained a “deep respect for Asian civilization” (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, p. 227).

Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s and Tolz’s most effective arguments for Russian Orientology’s uniqueness lies in the extent to which Asia became implicated in the relationship between the tsarist empire and the rest of Europe. To counteract national feelings of inferiority, Tolz’s scholars strained to present Russian interaction with Asian peoples in a favorable light, contrasting with the cruelty of ostensibly more advanced Western states. Such a discourse presaged a late nineteenth-century movement to present Russia as a “unique symbiosis” of western and eastern peoples (Tolz, p. 58). Tolz argues that this language conditioned the actions of St. Petersburg’s Orientologists, who became advocates for Asian minorities’ political and cultural inclusion within the empire. Orientologists’ guidance conditioned proto-nationalist movements across the empire. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye highlights a more complicated relationship after Russia’s defeat by Japan in 1905, when Asia appeared to lurk everywhere for Silver Age authors and poets, primarily but not always as a threat. As Russia’s place in the modern world grew ever less certain, the dangers of having mixed Europe and Asia became apparent. Andrei Bely facetiously credited continued cross-continental contact as having produced a “Mongol state” led by Romanov tsars (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, p. 218). Alexander Blok saw contemporary Asia as a creeping threat to Russia’s urban, European civilization but, as he steeped himself in Hindu and Buddhist thought, also as a path for an impotent regime and unstable country to reinvent itself. Other authors argued that Russians needed to awaken their Scythian blood, linking themselves to a fabled nomadic tribe who roamed the Eurasian steppe millennia ago.

Scholars of the Orient maintained a complicated relationship with the state, which supported their intellectual efforts but demanded “useful knowledge” to facilitate imperial rule. Implicitly drawing analogies to the post-9/11 era, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Tolz detail their protagonists’ struggles to further their own scholarship independent of government priorities that focused on modern language and imperial administration. Scholars nonetheless grew upset when their work was ignored by the state, and some moved between the two worlds. Nikolai Il’minskii went from the “anti-Islam” section of Kazan University to a chair in mathematics before assuming a position with the tsarist borderlands commission, where he formulated an educational system for steppe Kazakhs that would precipitate assimilation (Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, p. 137). The Society of Russian “Orientalists” (Orientalistov) declared itself “free from political goals” but readily participated in government expeditions (Tolz, p. 74). Tolz might have further pursued the complex relationship between tsarist state and society, but prefers to highlight scholars’ positions as relatively autonomous actors seeking to destroy boundaries between East and West.

Both authors’ engagement of Said draws them away from the nuances of their own work. In large part this is due to their characterization of Orientalism and subsequent postcolonial scholarship in their crudest forms. For Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “Said’s darker vision of Occidental contempt and fear of the Orient dominates thinking about the subject today” (p. 7). Both authors content themselves with arguing that their Orientalists’ empathy and fascination with Asia at once renders them unique among Orientalists of their time and upsets the Saidian paradigm. Such arguments ignore Said’s nuanced discussion of scholars of the East such as Gustave Flaubert in Orientalism. Neither systematically engages postcolonial scholarship. Tolz finds it sufficient to state that, “because the specific context of South Asia has so strongly shaped academic understanding of the issue, contemporary scholars have come to believe that, given the inherent inequality between colonizers and colonized, the two could not be genuine partners in the production of knowledge” (p. 132). Schimmelpenninck van der Oye represents eighteenth-century Moldavian Prince Dmitri Cantemir’s account of Constantinople’s fall in 1453 and nineteenth-century artist Vasily Vasilyevich Vereshchagin’s painting The Opium Eaters, among other works, as objective portrayals of the east, seemingly because they appear to the author not to condemn every aspect of Asian civilization.

To their credit, both authors offer counter-evidence to their views on Said and the uniqueness of Russian Orientology. Tolz notes that Vasily Vladimirovich Bartold, whom she lauds for his respect for Islam and collaboration with Central Asian Muslims for national recognition, “never wavered from the proclamation of the superiority of European epistemology over ‘native’ forms of knowledge” (p. 29). As he lauds Vereshchagin for seeing in the horror of war “no fundamental Saidian distinction between the European ‘self’ and Asian ‘other’” (p. 91), Schimmelpenninck van der Oye quotes the artist’s own view: “my main purpose was to describe the barbarism with which until now the entire way of life and order of Central Asia has been saturated” (p. 87). Even as Tolz seeks to correct Said through the Russian case, she proudly argues that the Palestinian scholar’s ideas stemmed from critiques of Western imperialism and the arbitrary nature of boundaries between East and West that Rozen and others made decades earlier. Arab scholars, including Anwar Abdel-Malik, who inspired Said, absorbed Russian Orientological thinking during their studies in Soviet Moscow.

It would nonetheless be a shame if the focus on Said obscures these works’ overall value. Both make important cases for Asia as a central component of Russian culture, national identity, and political power. Russia’s relationship with the “Orient” was complicated, to be

The second serfdom of Eastern Europe was little burdened with the manorial traditions of the medieval West. On the Voshchazhnikovo estate in Yaroslavl' province, legal subjugation proved to be a flexible institution, responsive to the entrepreneurial energies of the serfs. Only ten percent lived solely from agriculture. Rather, they were millers, traders, smiths, cloggers, glaziers, apprentices, servants, day laborers, and even factory owners employing their fellow serfs. Some lived off the estate year-round, while others were on seasonal contracts. Many were landowners, renting both their own land and communal allotments to each other and to residents of other villages. These serfs took in servants and hired laborers from the estate. They lent money to each other and borrowed from local merchants and landlords. Remarkably, a few serfs even owned serfs.

But local and St. Petersburg estate managers proved no less resourceful in generating income for the Sheremetev family. In addition to quitrents, communal dues, and traditional levies, many of the serfs of Voshchazhnikovo paid an annual income tax and a progressive annual asset tax. In turn, given the virtual absence of state authority in rural Russia, the Sheremetevs provided an extralegal framework for enforcing contracts and property rights to underpin the economic activities of their serfs.

Generalizations about Russian serfdom abound, and thoughtful analyses revealing the subtlety and variability of these tiny servile communities are few. The greatest strengths of Tracy Dennison's fine study are its description of the role of tolerably efficient credit, land, and labor markets in the local and regional economy and its examination of the nature of lord and serf interactions and negotiations. Drawing upon the interpretive framework, but not the methodologies, of Philip T. Hoffman and Jan de Vries, Dennison admirably demonstrates that serfdom on Voshchazhnikovo was not embedded in an immobile agricultural economy. Markets made it possible for the serfs to develop different resource allocation and risk-management strategies than have been observed elsewhere in Russia. Communal land mechanisms were far less important. Serfs here were not subsistence-oriented or unduly risk averse, and landlords did not seek to impose attitudes of self-sufficiency. Serfs allocated their labor and capital and used credit reasonably well, reflecting a rationality well-described by economic theory. Therefore, Dennison concludes that it was primarily the lack of a formal legal framework supporting entrepreneurial activity—and not anything inherent in the practices of serfdom itself—that inhibited investment and constrained economic development.

With case studies, scholars often struggle to place their findings in a larger context. In attempting to provide this context, Dennison takes on a polemical tone that readers may find disconcerting. She imagines that a "peasant myth" persists in all studies of the Russian peasantry from Aleksandr Ivanovich Herzen and August von Haxthausen through Alexander V. Chayanov and Alexander Gerschenkron to contemporary scholars. But first, the serfs of Voshchazhnikovo were not peasants, in spite of their legal status, as Dennison herself repeatedly notes. Thus, her critique of Chayanov's work on a peasant economy rings hollow, as Chayanov expressly limited his analysis to peasant family farms in agriculture, and he readily admitted the albeit limited role of markets. How else could so many serfs have paid cash dues roughly the value of three-days of labor per week? Second, Dennison is not sensitive to the difference between a rural economy and the practices of serfdom, ascribing too much significance to serf owners' policies. Her attempt to "explain as much as possible . . . without reference to culture or geography" was ill-advised (p. 17). Climate and geography, disease and demography weighed heavily on the rural economies of pre-emancipation Russia, best evidenced by the fact that state peasants, subject to little or no manorial authority, had similar social and demographic characteristics as serfs.

The author's discussion of the rural commune reinforces much that is known. Communal governance, the redistribution of land, and conscription were all sources of conflict. The church was weak, assistance to the poor limited, and village solidarity rarely evident. Her analysis of household structures and the family economy, however, is less successful, as it relies heavily on tax censuses. The 1815–1816 and 1856 censuses were conducted in order to take into consideration the demographic impact of the Napoleonic and Crimean wars. The tax censuses of 1833–1836 and 1850–1851 were preceded by cholera epidemics and crop failures. In fact, all six of her observations reflect a substantial underregistration of the population under the age of twenty, even beyond what might be expected from war and disease. Dennison does not apply standard methods to correct this undercount, thereby undermining many of her demographic findings and calling into question her conclusions that servile social structures were to a great extent a function of landlord policies.

This study is well researched and thought provoking. The four chapters on market forces are outstanding. Ignore the notion of a "peasant myth" and take con-
BOOK REVIEW
Russia's tug-of-war with its Asian soul

"Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration" by David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye

Reviewed by Dmitry Shlapentokh

The study of Orientalism, a description of the West's approach to the study of Asia, has re-emerged as an important subject of research. The launching pad could well have been Edward Said's "Orientalism" (1978), a seminal book that placed the study of Asia, or in this case, the Middle East, in a political context. Said followed the general line of the prevailing post-modernists of that time - mostly leftists - that knowledge is directly linked with power.

The subject of this book, "Russian Orientalism", could well tempt the reader to assume that the Russians were increasingly fascinated with Asia and, in a way, identified with this part of the world.

As a matter of fact, Russia's image as a basically Asian country is quite widespread in scholarship and public discourse, at least in the West. The book actually gives quite a different picture of the Russians' interest in the Orient, an approach that was quite different from Westerners' vision of Russia.

Since the beginning of the 19th century, it was quite popular among Western intellectuals, especially the French, to see Russians as Asiatists, as the successors to the Huns, Mongols and Turks, who had created the major threat for Europe for centuries. European Orientalism, thus, was, in a way, shaped by the desire of Europeans to find out about non-Europeans.

Interest in the Orient was also spurred by practical reasons - Europeans were engaged in building empires and needed to know about the people they wanted to conquer and control. This also could be said of the Russians. As one can tell

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from the book’s narrative, the Russian elite engaged in the study of Asians not to affirm their sameness, albeit there were exceptions, but to emphasize their differences. Russian Orientalism, even when the Russian elite adopted a sort of Asiatic garb, was a peculiar form of Europeanism.

The Russian study of Asia was launched by Peter the Great, the Westernizer. The policy was propagated by Peter's successors, especially by Catherine II. Catherine II liked to demonstrate to foreign dignitaries that she had a lot of Asians as subjects; they in no way demonstrated her Oriental nature but emphasized her power and the extent of her empire. Her interest in China was also a peculiar manifestation of Europeanism, for interest in China and a certain idealization of China was quite popular in France.

True academic study of Asia, mostly of Muslim countries, was launched in the early 19th century, and the first school to study the Orient professionally was opened in Kazan in west-central Russia (it was later moved to St Petersburg). The proliferation of Asian studies not only reflected a desire to imitate the West and assure that Russia belonged to European civilization, but was again driven by practical reasons.

Similar to Europeans, Russians had been engaged in building their own empire. By the end of the 19th century, Russia had expanded in Central Asia and in the Far East. This created a demand for people who either knew about the area or could train specialists.

By that time, the Russian elite, similar to other European elites, was quite confident that Russians could easily deal with the Asians and on occasion had developed an ideology of a sort of benign imperialism. Ester Ukhtomski, mentioned in the book, was one of those idealists. He assumed that Russia and China could live in a sort of geopolitical symbiosis, but this did not mean that Russia and China would be equal.

He hardly questioned Russia's dominant role. Still, even in the late 19th century when Russia had no doubt that it could be the dominant force in Asia, most Russian intellectuals looked at Asia with dread. Vladimir Solovoy, the celebrated philosopher, theologian, and poet and son of Sergei Solovoy, an equally well-known historian, had created his famous poem, "Pan Mongolism" (1894), in which he predicted that hordes of Asians would take over Russia. After the 1905-1907 revolution, Asia became identified (at least, this could be seen in Andrei Bely's novel, St Petersburg - 1913, revised 1922) with the senseless destructiveness of the revolutionaries.

The acceptance of Asians as a positive force was just a short period in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution. This could also be said of present-day Eurasianism - the teaching of which emphasizes the Asian aspect of Russian civilization, which enjoyed popularity only in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet regime.

By the middle of Vladimir Putin's term as president, increasing tensions between ethnic Russians and Muslims of various ethnic origins put an end to the idea of a Eurasian symbiosis; or at least its popularity declined sharply.

This doesn't mean, of course, that present-day Russians have lost interest in Asia. They see in the vast region a source of a gas and oil and a market for Russia's goods and, in the case of Iran and China, bargaining chips in dealing with Washington. Still, here, Moscow is not much different from Paris or Berlin. Thus, present-day Russians have returned to the approach to Asia that had dominated the Russian elite from the 18th century to the end of the tsarist regimes. For this reason, the author's meticulous research sheds light not just on Russia's approach to Asia in the past but also on the present.


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Que signifie l’Orient pour la Russie ? C’est précisément à cette question, déjà posée par Dostoïevski en 1881, que répondent ces deux ouvrages. Ceux-ci s’interrogent sur la place et la symbolique de l’Orient dans la culture, le savoir et la politique russes depuis les premières chroniques (D. Schimmelpennick van der Oye) jusqu’à la révolution d’Octobre, avec une insistance très prononcée pour le xixe siècle, « Grand siècle russe » par excellence (L. de Meaux), où conquêtes et expansion militaire coïncident et nourrissent le dynamisme de la pensée politique, scientifique et littéraire. Vaste monde hétérogène allant du Caucase au Japon en passant par l’Asie centrale, la Mongolie, la Chine ou le monde indien, l’Orient est pour la Russie une notion géographique à la fois extérieure et intérieure. Il occupe une place essentielle dans les quêtes et questionnements identitaires, fonde la pertinence d’une mission civilisatrice russe et prouverait par là même son caractère occidental, mais il permet aussi, par un jeu de miroir, de porter un regard critique sur la conquête et l’impérialisme, et de prendre ainsi en considération la nature orientale – parce que chaotique, violente et désorganisée – de la Russie.

Une démarche sensiblement similaire motive chacun des auteurs. Ils remèdent d’abord, et pour la première fois, à l’une des grandes lacunes historiographiques du livre fondateur d’Edward Said qui n’abordait pas l’orientalisme russe3 (L. de Meaux, p. 55 et 94 ; D. Schimmelpennick, p. 5-6). Ensuite, prenant délibérément le contrepied de la conception sahlienne de l’« orientalisme » en tant que discours et savoir sur l’Orient comme vecteur de domination7 (D. Schimmelpennick préfère le terme plus neutre d’« orientology » [vostokovedenie]) – mais sans pour autant se lancer dans la polémique, ces ouvrages se donnent comme objectif de cerner la spécificité et l’ambivalence de la Russie dans son rapport à l’Orient, objet non seulement de fascination, d’inspiration et de régénérescence, mais aussi de conquête, de domination et de revanche dans la course impérialiste des puissances européennes.

Ce sont précisément les sources utilisées qui permettent de fonder cette démarche et qui nourrissent la démonstration. Dans les deux ouvrages sont abondamment convoquées les sources littéraires des grands auteurs russes (Puškin, Lermontov, Tolstoï, Dostoïevski...) ; les sources scientifiques des grands orientalistes et historiens russes, les sources picturales (V. Veresčagin surtout) et musicales (Borodin, Rimski-Korsakov...). L’ouvrage de L. de Meaux fait un usage
plus important des abondants mémoires et récits des militaires et officiers envoyés au Caucase (plusieurs dizaines de milliers sont recensés, ce qui permettait de pallier le manque de reconnaissance dont souffrait l'armée russe au Caucase), alors que D. Schimmelpenninck s'appuie davantage sur le renouveau historiographique russe aux États-Unis, en Russie et en France. Ils suivent tous deux un déroulé chronologique.

D. Schimmelpenninck ouvre Russian Orientalism avec un premier chapitre, intitulé « The Forest and the Steppe », basé sur les chroniques — pour la plupart religieuses — écrites entre les xvième et le xviième siècles (Chroniques des temps passés, Dit de la campagne d'Igor, Le Voyage au-delà des trois mers, etc.) et le folklore, ce qui lui permet de déterminer les rapports hostiles ou symbiotiques entre Slaves et nomades des steppes (Petchénègues, Polovtse, Mongols et autres peuples turciques) aux époques de la Russie kiéviennne puis moscovite. Sont ensuite présentés plus en détail les règnes de Pierre le Grand et de Catherine II (chapitres II et III : « The Petrine Dawn », « Catherinan Chinoiserie »), qui, pour répondre à des motivations politiques, militaires, commerciales et sous l'influence du savoir occidental, marquent le début non seulement des études orientales scientifiques mais surtout d'une vie intellectuelle et culturelle féconde inspirée par des motifs orientaux. À partir des grandes conquêtes militaires, l'intérêt pour l'Orient s'intensifie et imprègne la littérature et la peinture des créateurs, tout comme l'imaginaire des publics (ch. IV : « The Oriental Muse »). Le premier grand érudit à découvrir et à faire découvrir le Caucase est Puskin, qui joue un rôle fondamental (suivi par Lermontov, Tolstoï et d'autres) dans la constitution d'un mythe caucasiens, non sans une certaine ambiguïté parce que s'exprime aussi une critique à peine voilée de la conquête et de la « pacification », même si l'impérialisme n'est pas radicalement remis en cause. Le savoir scientifique sur l'Orient, laïc ou missionnaire, fait ensuite l'objet des chapitres V et VI (« The Kazan School », « Missionary Orientalogy ») : ceux-ci se structurent principalement autour de portraits d'orientalistes importants travaillant à Kazan', à l'université (Muhammad Ali Kazem-Bek) ou au sein de la Division missionnaire de l'Académie théologique (N. I. Minskij, Père Hyacinthe). Si Kazan' était, de ce fait, le centre majeur des études orientales durant la première moitié du xixe siècle, Saint-Pétersbourg prendra progressivement la relève, notamment avec la création en 1855 de la faculté des langues orientales (ch. VII et VIII : « The Rise of the Saint-Petersburg School », « The Oriental Faculty »). Bien que les attributs de cette institution nouvelle aient été avant tout de former des cadres administratifs (formation d’officiers, diplomates, etc.), cela n’empêchait pas certains orientalistes d’envergure de se consacrer à des questions moins politiques (V. Vasilev pour les mondes chinois et bouddhiste, S. Ol’denburg pour l’Inde et le bouddhisme) de faire rayonner l’orientalisme russe. Le dernier chapitre (« The Exotic Self ») revient sur l’impact de l’Orient dans les arts (musique classique avec Borodin, Glinka ou la littérature avec Bely), mais à une période plus tardive (fin du xixe siècle, et l’ « Âge d’argent » au début xxe siècle).

Si l’ouvrage de D. Schimmelpenninck insiste plutôt sur les grandes figures de l’orientalisme, sur les institutions et sur la place de l’Orient dans la création, celui
de L. de Meaux — tout en reprenant ces mêmes aspects — s’ancre davantage dans l’histoire des idées et l’histoire politique. Il est divisé en cinq chapitres. La Russie et la Tentation de l’Orient s’interroge sur la place et le rôle de l’Orient dans la constitution de l’identité impériale, essentiellement au XIXe siècle. Dans le premier chapitre (« Une épopeée russe : la construction d’un Empire d’Orient au XIXe s. »), l’auteur analyse le processus de conquête au Caucase, en Asie centrale puis en Extrême-Orient, ainsi que les mythes et l’imaginaire que la domination militaire coloniale a générés. S’étirant de 1801 à 1905 (définit dans la guerre russo-japonaise), cette phase de conquête et d’affirmation de sa puissance militaire permet à la Russie de revendiquer son « caractère occidental » et sa mission civilisatrice. Mais elle révèle aussi l’impact de l’Orient sur le vécu de ceux qui sont en première ligne — soldats, écrivains ou peintres. Le deuxième chapitre — « L’invention d’une science orientaliste à l’usage de la Russie » — offre, d’une part, un tableau de la création d’institutions propres à produire un savoir sur l’Orient (Académie asiatique de S. Uvarov, École de Kazan avec Kazem-Bek, puis transfert à Saint-Pétersbourg en 1854) et, d’autre part, un aperçu détaillé des explorations et études des premiers scientifiques (N. Przeval’ski, V. Radlov, etc.). Est enfin évoquée la médiation des orientalistes dans la société impériale, tantôt au service du pouvoir central, tantôt porte-parole de la précarité des sujets orientaux, ainsi que leur rôle dans la politique intérieure comme étrangère ou les milieux d’affaires. La création littéraire est au cœur du troisième chapitre : « De Pouchkine à Tolstoï : le roman de l’Orient », ce qui donne au lecteur l’opportunité de remonter aux origines des représentations russes fondateuses de l’Orient et de refléter, de façon complexe, la domination coloniale et les tensions nationales de l’Empire russe. Avec près d’un siècle de retard par rapport à l’intérêt des lettres occidentales pour l’Orient, Puškin, Lomonosov, Čehov ou Tolstoï bouleversent la littérature russe en mobilisant des motifs orientaux. Ils ouvrent la voie à un romantisme oriental qui hérite des stéréotypes de l’Orient — voluptueux, exotique, religieux ou despotique — forgés par les littératures occidentale ou persane, mais léguent aussi des images d’Orient bien plus ambivalentes. Le regard critique de la littérature dénonce aussi le leurre colonial, l’irresponsabilité de l’aventure militaire, violente et destructrice, où l’« Orient russe » est un lieu d’exil, de souffrance. À cette analyse de la littérature succède au chapitre IV (« Des slavophiles aux eurasistes : l’Orient, obsession de l’idée russe ») celle de la place de l’Orient dans la pensée russe, slavophile en particulier, qui s’est largement constituée contre l’Occident au XIXe siècle. Le discours slavophile, qui insiste à partir de 1830 sur une altérité radicale avec l’Occident et fonde la spécificité russe sur son identité à la fois slave et chrétienne d’Orient, intègre dès les années 1880 l’expansion coloniale, justifiée par un nouveau messianisme civilisateur qui emprunte au registre religieux — ce qui sera récupéré, sous une autre forme, par les bolcheviks. La revendication quant à l’asiatisme des Russes ainsi que les théories élaborées pour affirmer la proximité de la Russie et de l’Asie permettent, selon les auteurs, de considérer les Russes comme les héritiers des grandes civilisations (aryenne, scythe, gréco-hellénique, turco-mongole). Ces considérations tentent de justifier l’impérialisme et s’accompagnent de sentiments hostiles de plus


Quoi qu’il en soit, ces deux ouvrages permettent de saisir toute la complexité, la diversité et la singularité du rapport de la Russie à l’Orient sur le temps long. Il faut d’ailleurs saluer le fait que, tout en restant principalement focalisés sur la période impériale, ils proposent quelques « lignes de fuite » à partir de la période résolu- tionnaire et les années qui suivent, constituant indéniablement une base solide pour élargir le champ chronologique à l’ensemble de la période soviétique afin de déter- miner les ruptures et continuités des représentations de l’Orient et de son instru- mentalisation dans le discours politique et les productions culturelles. L’invocation d’Edward Said – que les ouvrages s’en inspirent ou s’en démarquent – permet
d'interroger toujours plus la nature de la domination russe (impériale ou soviétique) et sa marginalité relative en replaçant cette réflexion dans un contexte européen et comparatiste.


Cloé Drieu

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Olga MAJOROVA
From the Shadow of Empire
Defining the Russian Nation through Cultural Mythology 1855-1870
[Studies of the Harriman Institute]

Olga Majorova a publié en anglais, aux presses de l'université du Wisconsin, un livre dont le titre peut paraitre excessivement modeste. En fait, cet ouvrage apporte des lumières neuves sur la naissance du nationalisme russe, depuis la défaite de Crimée et l'avènement d'Alexandre II jusqu'à l'annexion de l'Ukraine. L'Empire russe n'était pas, ni ne voulait être, une nation. Il regroupait de nombreuses peuples et la simple titulature du tsar l'indiquait (Andrey Beliy) en s'en moquant dans le prologue de son roman Petersburg [Saint-Pétersbourg]. 1812 et la victoire sur Napoléon, remportée par un état-major qui délibérait dans la langue de l'ennemi, avait créé une auréole autour du personnage de l'empereur Alexandre Ier, mais pas autour du peuple ni de la nation russes. C'est la défaite de 1855 qui appelle à définir un nouveau nationalisme russe, indique Olga Majorova, selon laquelle le fut moins le pouvoir que la part de la société s'intitulant « slavophile » qui se charge de concevoir une version « russe » de l'Empire des tsars. L'auteur a déployé les
Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind From Peter the Great to the Emigration

Robert Legvold

The author's focus is not on the Russian mind writ large or even the mind of the ruling elite but rather on that of the generations of academic Orientalists from the eighteenth century on. Peter, Catherine, their nineteenth-century successors, and members of the court paid close attention to these scholars when it suited their foreign policy ambitions or cultural fads. And important Russian writers and composers, from Aleksandr Borodin to Leo Tolstoy, played with Asian themes. From Peter's time to the Bolshevik Revolution, for Russian intellectuals, "the Orient" signified the South -- Islam, the Turks, and the Persians. Russian interest in East Asia began with the Mongol conquerors in the thirteenth century, focused more in the eighteenth century on Catherine's taste for chinoiserie in her summer palaces, and then became more serious in the late nineteenth century as Russia embarked on its last stage of imperial expansion. Throughout, the dialogue had much more to do with the place and function of the Near East in Russia's sense of identity. The book's major contribution is an in-depth three-century study of the emergence and evolution of Orientalism within the Russian academy.

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Schimmelpenninck van der Oye konzentriert sich auf die Petersburger Periode, in der Russland nicht nur zur europäischen Großmacht, sondern auch zur Imperialmacht in Asien aufstieg. Er geht damit sowohl chronologisch als auch inhaltlich weit über sein erstes Buch hinaus, in dem er eine historische Übersicht der Russland Rolle in Ostasien im Vorfeld des russisch-japanischen Kriegs untersucht hat.1 Zwar konzentriert sich Schimmelpenninck van der Oye abermals auf prominente Autoren, insbesondere aus Wissenschaft, Politik und Literatur; doch bezieht er bildende Künstler ebenso wie Musiker.

1 David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, Toward the Rising Sun. Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan, DeKalb 2001.


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Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration – By David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye

1. Matthew D. Pauly

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The author of this book offers an intriguing look at the genesis and development of orientology and Orientalist attitudes in the Russian Empire. His broad treatment of the multiple forms of Russian Orientalism is a welcome contribution to necessarily more narrow works by Mark Bassin and Robert Geraci. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's obvious inspiration is Edward Said's classic text Orientalism, and clearly the author constructs the framework of the text in response to Said's emphasis on a link between knowledge and imperial power, a link that is reportedly weaker in the Russian context. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye argues that Said's understanding of Orientalism assumes a “unanimity” of views towards a constructed East that did not exist in Russia: “The Russian Empire's bicontinental geography, its ambivalent relationship with the rest of Europe, [and] the complicated nature of its encounters with Asia have resulted in a fragmentary understanding of the East among its peoples” (11). The absence of such a unitary perspective meant, in the author's view, that orientology did not uniformly dictate Russian imperial administration.

Russian certainty in its distinction from Asia was greatest during the reign of Catherine the Great, when Russian authors compared the despotism of the East with Russian enlightenment, all the while still seeing “the Orient as an object of wonder, amusement, and beauty” (59). The author continues to examine Orientalism from the perspective of the writers of the golden age of Russian literature to émigré historians of the 1920s. Throughout his account, the author emphasizes that Russian cultural and academic elites assumed a more ambivalent view of the Orient, partly due to a questioning of Russia's relationship with Europe and partly as a result of their own studies and encounters with Asian peoples. He stresses Russian acknowledgement of the commonalities of human experience, sympathetic portrayals of Asian culture, and, in some cases, assertion of the unique character of Russia because of its tie to Asia.

Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's study is admirable for its sheer scope and ambition to complicate what Said criticized as an essentialist view of a complex human reality. He convincingly argues that it is difficult to locate a universal Russian view of an Oriental other. However, his assertion that Russian orientologists did not see themselves “as handmaidens of tsarist imperialism” deserves greater inquiry.
Their motivation for the study of Asia may have originated in an academic curiosity, but their knowledge served imperial interests, however inconsistently, as Schimmelpenninck van der Oye's discussion of the work of Orthodox missionaries and the expanded teaching of Asian languages at St. Petersburg University makes clear. He argues that Russian orientologists were often compassionate towards their objects of study, and yet he does not engage in Said's fundamental contention that even such sympathetic study still reflected a European domination of the Orient through scholars' faith in their abilities to collect and systematize the complexities of Asian life. A work dedicated to the applicability of Said's concept to the Russian context would benefit from the further explication of this more veiled connection between knowledge and power, where the rendering of information assumed control.
managed to overcome formidable cultural and political obstacles to become an established feature of the cultural landscape in some communities along China’s southeast coast.

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Don Baker, University of British Columbia


The theme of this intriguing study in the field of European intellectual and cultural history is the image of Asia in the Russian mind. David Schimmelpennick van de Oye (Brock University, Ontario) takes as a starting point the theory of Edward Said about Orientalism as an imperialistic discourse, devised by the West to conquer and subjugate the East through representing the Eastern peoples as inferior and possibly dangerous cultures, in great need to be colonised and civilised. According to this theory, state servants and intellectuals in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe constructed a negative image of the Orient as the inverted mirror image of a self-righteous Occident. It is also in this period that the westernised Russia of Peter the Great appeared on the scene of European power politics and participated in its imperialistic endeavors. Moreover, Russia’s eastward expansion into Asia had already begun in the sixteenth century. So how relevant is Edward Said’s perspective to Russia? The book is devoted to this question (8).

Schimmelpennick van der Oye examines Russian attitudes towards Asia during the two centuries from Peter the Great to the Russian Revolution, and places these within the wider context of the hotly contested ideas about Russia’s geopolitical position and national identity. The author does not try to give a comprehensive and abstract overview of the historical development as a test case for the theory, but instead makes use of the theory to explore the many specific manifestations of the Russian fascination for the East in all their richness. The focus of the book is on two categories of Russian Orientalism; on orientology as a scholarly discipline at institutions of higher education and on orientalism as a cultural current in literature, music and the arts. The book highlights certain prominent and representative individuals, which works out well because this approach brings the reader as close as possible to the lives and thoughts of the people who actually created the image of the East in Russia. Based on an amazingly extensive collection of Russian and western source literature, this study reveals how profound and varied the Russian encounter with the East turned out to be. In describing how Russian academics, officials, missionaries, painters, writers, composers and poets thought about Asia, Schimmelpennick van de Oye shows that their attitudes were both highly complicated and ambivalent. The impression that this story leaves behind, does by no means fit into the black-and-white scheme of Said’s Orientalism.

The author explains this divergent pattern from the fact that Russia itself is both part of Europe and of Asia. From the very beginning of its existence, Russia was periodically swept over by nomads from the Asiatic steppes and later on developed a symbiotic relationship with the Mongol empire. This left a lasting but also indefinable imprint on Russia’s self-image. Asia was not just the backland of hostile pagans, it was at the same time the cradle of respectable partners. Russia’s proximity to Asia made it difficult to disregard Asians as alien and it necessitated the government to acquire a deeper knowledge of Asia’s respective regions and peoples. When modern Russia wanted to present itself as a great power in Europe, it gave a strong impetus to a more professional and systematic study of its Asiatic subjects and neighbors. The main body of Schimmelpennick’s description is dedicated to the rise of Oriental studies in the new academic establishments of the Russian Empire. In the first half of the nineteenth century the University of Kazan functioned as the “window to the East” and in the latter half the Oriental faculty of the University of St.Petersburg, under the direction of distinguished scholars as Vladimir Vasil’ev and Sergei Oldenburg, grew into a center of expertise
which was unsurpassed in the whole of Europe. Here Schimmelpennick van der Oye makes the interesting and important point that while the autocracy might have considered the Oriental faculty to be a tool for imperial ambitions, its professors often saw things quite differently (175). The relationship between power and knowledge was not one of simple subordination. “On the whole educators in Imperial Russia’s university departments of Oriental letters rarely saw Asians as some inferior, contemptuous, or malevolent ‘other’” (173). In spite of differences between more conservative and more progressive professors, they all emphasised language training, reliance on primary sources and an objective but not unsympathetic view of the East.

When turning to the domain of letters and the arts, Schimmelpennick van der Oye makes an even stronger argument that Russian Orientalism has a special taste of its own. When writers such as Pushkin, Lermontov and Tolstoy discovered the Caucasus, they were fascinated by the exotic other and at the same time identified with his honest, brave and vigorous way of life. “This symbiosis of self and other would become an intriguing feature of Orientalism in Russian culture”, states the author (69). In the nineteenth century there was much diversity and confusion among the cultural elite as to where to belong between East and West. Schimmelpennick van der Oye describes an Orientalist painter, Vasilii Vereshchagin, who created huge realistic war scenes in which the Asians were depicted as cruel and savage. But this is contrasted with an analysis of the opera music by Aleksandr Borodin, in which Oriental elements are integrated and equaled with Western themes. In his most famous opera, Prince Igor, the Russian hero and his Asian protagonist are joined for life. “His [Borodin’s] Asia is not a Saidian other, but the Christian Rus’s alter ego” (209). In the beginning of the twentieth century this exaltation of “the exotic self” reached a climax within the cultural movement of the Silver Age. Poets like Andrei Bely and Aleksandr Blok lauded the Russians as being essentially Asian, as “Scythians”, who represented “the untamed vitality of their nation’s soul” (221).

Schimmelpennick van der Oye concludes that there is no simple answer to the question of what Asia is to Russia. After all, Russian observers did not reduce the Asians to a uniform and inferior other. There is an enormous variation in their representations and judgments of Asia, but a common feature is the respect and intimacy displayed in their perception. Most striking in the Russian thinking about Asia is “the sense among many of a shared heritage” (239). In this book, Said’s theory has proved its relevance, not as a closed definition but as an eye-opener. This is probably why Schimmelpennick van der Oye does not explicitly involve himself in the academic debates that Said and the theme of Russian Orientalism have already aroused. Instead, he has written an erudite and sophisticated exploration of the encounters between one Eurasian world and the other. The only thing left to be desired would be a set of illustrations, because the descriptions of paintings and operas in words ask for more.

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EUROPE AND THE WIDER WORLD


This book succeeds in accomplishing a challenging feat: finding many new insights on race, gender, and anti-colonial movements in Paris between the wars. This territory has been well-mined by many scholars, but Boittin’s determination to link gender to anti-colonialism as well as her creative use of previously neglected sources allows her to contribute effectively to the existing scholarship. Boittin begins with an investigation of the intersections between African-
David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration

Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration by David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye

Review by: Mark Bassin

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from mid-1942 to follow a policy of “open secrecy,” in which they all but explicitly acknowledged that the deported Jews would be killed. This did not mean, however, that Germans stationed in Western Europe knew everything. “In Western Europe, neither the actual extent of the mass murder nor the specific techniques of killing were widely known, nor was there an adequate conception of the extermination camps and the systematicity of murder—even among German officials involved” (78). In other words, Germans involved in the deportation of Western European Jewry knew that something terrible was going to happen to them in the East and that many, perhaps most, would die, but they did not have the level of detailed knowledge that their colleagues in Eastern Europe likely had.

According to Meyer it is, if anything, yet more difficult to determine what the victims knew prior to their arrival in the death camps. Their postwar testimony is contradictory, with some witnesses claiming to have known nothing in advance and others claiming to have known full well what awaited them. This testimony was often likely shaped by retrospective projections of knowledge gained in the camps back in time to the period before deportation. Yet there is evidence, from German documents among other sources, that by late 1942 Western European Jews were hearing substantial rumors about the mass killings in the East. Above all, what Meyer finds is that the Germans went out of their way to deceive their victims to the last possible second. Perhaps Meyer’s most striking argument concerns the “unimaginability” of the Holocaust, which, he insists, “lay in the logic of events themselves.” The whole process of deportation and extermination was surrounded by euphemisms and deception, “maneuvers that not only kept global opinion in uncertainty and were intended to enable the self-deception and/or self-exculpation of a large number of perpetrators, but that served above all to undermine the victims’ ability to orient themselves” (187). It did not much matter whether the victims believed the Germans’ lies, so long as they created enough uncertainty and confusion to keep the victims off kilter and easier to manage.

Meyer’s book is a welcome addition to the scholarly literature on the Holocaust. His meticulous research and careful reading of his sources, together with a nuanced and careful argument, make this an invaluable text for scholars interested in the dissemination and obfuscation of knowledge about the Holocaust during the Second World War.

DEVIN O. PENDAS

Boston College

Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration. By David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye.


Among the most electric issues in the identity debates that have raged in Russia since perestroika is the dilemma regarding the country’s relationship to Asia. The grip that the Russia-Asia juxtaposition exercises on Russia’s post-Soviet imagination can be seen in the powerful revival of Eurasianism, a perspective first formulated by Russian émigrés during the interwar years that uncompromisingly asserted Russia’s natural kinship with Asiatic peoples and its corresponding distance from the civilization of the European West. The robust emergence of neo-Eurasianism has attracted the attention of Western analysts as well to these questions, and the book under review—which seeks to provide an overview of Russian views of Asia across the centuries—is a recent and notable contribution to the debate.
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Russian Orientalism begins with a consideration of the primeval encounters between the sedentary populations of ancient Rus’ and the nomadic peoples of the prairie grasslands on their southern and eastern frontiers. This so-called meeting of “forest and steppe” ended unhappily for the early Russians, with their conquest in the thirteenth century by mounted warriors of the Genghisid empire. After setting out this early historical framework, the book largely proceeds along two separate trajectories, considering the representation of Asia in Russian high culture (belles lettres, art, music) since the eighteenth century on the one hand, and *vostokovedenie*—the scientific and academic study of the Orient—on the other. Schimmelpenninck describes how the Russian perceptions and attitudes that took shape in the early period after Peter were strongly influenced by views of Asia coming from the West, no more strikingly so than during the reign of Catherine the Great, which indulged extravagantly in the fetishes of a chinoiserie largely imported from the French court. In a similar way, the scientific study of Asia, supported importantly by the Academy of Sciences, which Peter himself had founded, was conducted almost entirely by Western scholars brought into Russia for this purpose. In the nineteenth century, Schimmelpenninck examines the influence of Asian themes in, among others, the poetic legacy of Aleksandr Pushkin and the musical work of the composers Aleksandr Borodin and Mikhail Glinka. The visual representation of Asia is considered mainly in the paintings of Vasilii Vereshchagin, which as the author demonstrates illustrated many of the key ambivalences on the issue that characterized Russian views more broadly.

Various dimensions of Russian *vostokovedenie* during the period are also discussed, notably the celebrated “Kazan school” active in the first half of the century, and the activities of religious figures involved in missionary work such as Nikolai Il’minskii and Nikita Bichurin. The Kazan school was eventually superseded by the development of Orientalist studies in St. Petersburg, originally stimulated by Nicholas I’s Minister of Education Sergei Uvarov, who famously corresponded with Goethe about his plans for founding an Asian Academy. St. Petersburg’s leading position in the field was consummated at mid-century with the formal establishment of an Oriental faculty at the university, which supported the work of outstanding specialists such as Vladimir Vasil’ev, Vasilii Grigor’ev, and Sergei Ol’denburg. The Silver Age of Russia’s fin de siècle, which experienced both Russia’s first military defeat by an Asiatic power (Japan) since the Mongols, as well as the revolution itself, was particularly preoccupied with Asian themes. The poetry of Konstantin Bal’mont, Andrei Belyi, and Vladimir Solov’ev is discussed, as is the emergence of the movement of Scythianism, culminating in 1918 in Aleksandr Blok’s powerful poetic masterpiece, *The Scythians*. Russian Orientalism concludes with a chapter considering some of the political expressions of Russia’s preoccupation with Asia, including the late nineteenth-century philosopher Konstantin Leon’t’ev, the so-called *Vostochniki* who encouraged Tsar Nicholas II’s imperial designs in the Far East (and about whom the author has written a separate book), and finally the very group of émigré Eurasianists whose ideas are the subject are of such active interest to Russians today.

The subject, indeed the very title of Schimmelpenninck’s book inevitably evokes Edward Said’s celebrated work, and the author’s critical engagement with Said’s brilliant but problematic arguments about Orientalism as a power discourse as one of Russian Orientalism’s strongest points. He points to the importance of early Soviet-Marxist *vostokovedenie* as a major source of Said’s own perspective (a legacy also traced in the work of Vera Tolz and others). More substantially, he demonstrates how the realities of the Russian example—never considered in any detail by Said—actually undermine the latter’s interpretation. For Russia, simply put, was simultane-
ously an Orientalizing object and Orientalized subject. As Said argues in the case of Germany, France, or Britain, Russia as well was an imperial power that produced Western-oriented scholarly and cultural discourses about the exotic backwardness of its Asian colonies, as part of a larger project of domination and control. At the very same time, however, Russia itself was commonly perceived as a non-Western, quasi-Oriental society, which together with the rest of the Orient was clearly distinguished from an enlightened and progressive Occident. This was of course a common attitude among the Western empires, but Russian Orientalism makes it very clear just how deeply internalized and embedded it was in the Russian imagination as well. Thus in Russia we are dealing with an Orientalist mentalité, the self-image of which, however, was significantly shaped as a response to a foreign Orientalist critique. Clearly this messy ambivalence cannot begin to be accommodated within a Saidian model of neat bifurcation between an imperial European West and its subjugated Oriental Other.

At the same time, however, Russian Orientalism leaves a variety of significant questions untouched or unclarified. While the author makes it quite clear that Russia perceived the Orient in “a multiplicity of hues” (238), he does not really attempt to unpack and explain these differences. The debate between the Slavophiles and Westernizers, for example—already very well known, to be sure, but critical nonetheless for an understanding of the issues that the book raises—is treated extremely superficially and only in the conclusion. (Indicatively, there is no entry at all in the index for zapadniki or “Westernizers.”) The problem is clearly exemplified in Schimmelpeninck’s discussion of Blok’s magisterial poem Skify. The author largely overlooks the quite extraordinary ambivalence of a poem that begins with a belligerent declaration of Russia’s hostility to the West and its commonality with the nomadic Asian hordes, then moves Russia into a middle space of identification with neither Occident nor Orient, and concludes with a rousing call for the West—by implication Germany, with whom Russia was still fighting the final battles of World War I—to “sheathe its sword” and recognize its essential fraternity with Russia: “Comrades! We shall become brothers.” What exactly does Asia represent in Blok’s mind? We are not really much enlightened. A chapter could have been devoted to deconstructing the tortuous inconsistency about Russia between Asia and the West in this poetic landmark, and with it we would have gained a finer appreciation of Russia’s fraught ambivalences.

A rather different dimension of the book’s failure to probe as deeply and aggressively as it could have is the lack of a conceptual distinction between what might be called Russia’s “internal” and “external” Orients, that is to say, the formal colonial spaces of the empire (Siberia, central Asia, the southeastern steppe, and the Caucasus), as opposed to Asian societies beyond the imperial boundaries such as China, Japan, and Persia. Both Orients figured importantly in the Russian imagination, but they represented different qualities and ultimately carried quite different political and social implications. The author’s discussion of Konstantin Bal’mont offers one example of this problem, for while the poet’s evocations of the “external” Orient are discussed in some detail, Bal’mont’s cycle of poems about Siberia, Golubaia Podkova, is not mentioned, although the latter tells us certainly no less about Asia in the Russian mind.

These issues aside, Schimmelpeninck’s book is intelligent, well-informed, and engagingly presented. It represents a useful contribution to the ongoing debate about Russia’s position on the map of world civilization.

**Mark Bassin**

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“The East is a subtle affair.” This catch phrase from Vladimir Motyl’s iconic Soviet film of the 1960s, the *White Sun of the Desert*, serves, in a sense, as the leitmotif for David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s new study of Russian views of Asia. Rather than reconstruct a single hegemonic discourse of the East in Russian culture, Schimmelpenninck emphasizes the ambivalence and multiplicity of Russian views, rooted in large measure in Russia’s own contested identity. The result is an engaging and insightful study that vividly brings to light Russia’s multifaceted Eastern entanglements.

Not surprisingly, Schimmelpenninck takes as his starting point Edward Said’s influential work, *Orientalism*, as well as more recent debates on the applicability of a Saidian approach in the Russian context. While acknowledging the importance of Said’s contribution, Schimmelpenninck refuses to accept the derogatory connotation of the term *Orientalism* propagated by Said and the related assumption of a uniform orientalist discourse. Rather than engaging in theoretical debates, however, Schimmelpenninck offers a lively historical account of the individuals and ideas that constituted Russian orientalism.

Schimmelpenninck defines the scope of his topic along much the same lines as Said. *Orientalism*, for both, is an enterprise of imagination and representation finding expression in the arts and scholarship as well as political thought. Thus, while the center of gravity in Schimmelpenninck’s study falls clearly within the realm of what he terms “orientology,” the scholarly study of Eastern languages, history and culture (*vostokovedenie* in Russian), his work is not a comprehensive history of an academic field. Key figures in Russian Turkology, (V. V. Barthold, V. V. Radlov and E. A. Malov, to name a few) are given scant attention, for example, while long and quite interesting discussions are devoted to artists, composers, philosophers and writers. But if Schimmelpenninck delineates the confines of orientalism in roughly Saidian terms, he resolutely resists Said’s contention that these pursuits are part and parcel of a common enterprise devoted to the marginalization, domination and subjugation of the oriental “other”.

*Russian Orientalism* is divided into thematically framed chapters organized more or less chronologically. Schimmelpenninck sets the scene by investigating what the forbearers of modern Russia from Kievan Rus’ through the Muscovite period knew and thought about their eastern neighbors: notwithstanding the inherent biases, Schimmelpenninck finds evidence of interaction and relatively tolerant attitudes. In Chapter 2, Schimmelpenninck reviews the first scholarly investigations of the East during the reign of Peter the Great. Skipping over the mid-18th century, Schimmelpenninck concentrates in Chapter 3 on the extraordinary vogue for oriental images and artifacts during the reign of Catherine the Great. Even at a time when Russian elites most strongly identified themselves with European culture, they continued to view the Orient as “an object of wonder, amusement and beauty.”(59) By the nineteenth century, as Schimmelpenninck describes in Chapter 4, this fascination with the East had developed into a potent source of artistic and literary inspiration. But unlike their Western counterparts, Russian writers and artists drew on an awareness of Russia’s own eastern roots producing works that were often surprisingly nuanced and sympathetic.

Having explored images of Asia in the creative imagination, Schimmelpenninck turns back in the mid section of the book to the realm of academic Orientology. Chapter 5 focuses on the...
rise of Oriental studies at Kazan University, a major center whose prominence was abruptly curtailed in 1854 when the decision was made to consolidate the study of Asia in St. Petersburg. Chapter 6 looks at Oriental studies in the context of missionary work in the Russian Orthodox Church. Few missionaries, of course, had as deep a sympathy for Asian cultures as Father Iakinf Bichurin, the renegade monk whose exploits “going native” while head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing brought both condemnation from the Church and international acclaim as one of the founding fathers of Russian Sinology. But even the famous Nikolai Il’minsky, founder of the network of missionary schools for Russia’s ethnic minorities, whose hostility to Islam later in life was legendary, showed surprising balance and tolerance toward Islam in his early years when he produced the bulk of his scholarly work. In the next two chapters, Schimmelpenninck examines the Oriental Faculty at St. Petersburg University looking first at its origins and then its heyday from the 1860s onward when it stood as Russia’s preeminent center for the study of the East. While acknowledging the ties linking the Oriental Faculty to the state, Schimmelpenninck emphasizes its scholarly orientation and the steadfast resistance of its professors, regardless of their political views, to any attempt to subjugate the scholarly pursuit of knowledge to the practical needs of the Empire.

Turning back to the arts in chapter 9, Schimmelpenninck probes the ways in which fin de siècle artists expressed the idea of an affinity between Russia and Asia. Among the first to embrace this theme was the composer Pavel Borodin who, in his opera *Prince Igor*, explored the notion of Russia as a fusion between East and West. Silver Age writers such as Vladimir Solov’ev, Andrei Belyi and Alexander Blok took this theme in an apocalyptic direction, envisioning impending doom at the hands of Asiatic hordes yet placing the Russians squarely in their midst: if there was to be an apocalypse it would be from within. In his concluding chapter, Schimmelpenninck reiterates the multiplicity of perspectives on Asia and Asians in Russian culture. He does not deny the strongly negative views espoused by Slavophiles and Westernizers alike who concurred in their association of the East with backwardness, corruption and immobility. Yet there were always exceptions—individuals who recognized and celebrated Russia’s eastern roots, from the Slavophile Alexei Khomiakov, to Alexander Herzen the Westernizer. Scholars such as Vasilii Grigor’ev, Vasilii Stasov, Nikolai Veselovskii and Baron Victor Rozen took up the theme of Russia in Asia (and vice versa) and imprinted the notion of Russia’s Asiatic origins with the stamp of scholarly legitimacy. As a foil to the mechanistic rationalism of Western modernity, the idea of Russia as an Asiatic civilization rapidly gained force fueled by the writers and artists of the Silver Age and reaching its culmination in the historical and cultural theories of the Eurasianists. The revival of Eurasianist thinking in post-Soviet Russia and the immense popularity of writers such as Lev Gumilev (whom, surprisingly, Schimmelpenninck does not mention) remind us that these ideas remain a potent force in the present day.

Schimmelpenninck recounts the story of Russian Orientalism with economy, vigor and a sharp eye for exemplary detail. His vivid portraits and thoughtful analysis make the book a pleasure to read. While its approach is by no means simplistic *Russian Orientalism should be accessible to the well informed general reader and is eminently suited for use with undergraduates. Specialists may find the work slightly less edifying. It does not appear that Schimmelpenninck engaged in significant archival research, and scholars already familiar with this material will find little that is fundamentally new. Still, given the breadth of the topic and the author’s love of biographical detail there are more than enough intriguing morsels to reward readers on all levels.*
Schimmelpenninck provides ample evidence to support his argument regarding the complexity of Russian Orientalism. But by refusing to engage the Saidian paradigm in theoretical terms, he leaves himself open to criticism. Proponents of Said may well say that Schimmelpenninck is missing the point: what is important is not whether one or another scholar, painter or poet had positive or negative things to say about Asian peoples, but rather the underlying dynamics of power inherent in the very act of representation. It might also be pointed out that Schimmelpenninck’s narrative is thinnest precisely in its discussions of actual imperial contexts—the areas in which a postcolonialist approach might be most fruitfully applied. Putting aside these criticisms, which have been addressed elsewhere, I, for one, am satisfied that Schimmelpenninck has succeeded in undermining the notion of an all-encompassing discursively constructed image of the East in Russian culture intrinsically implicated in imperial domination. In its place, he invites the reader to view individual scholars and artists as autonomous agents whose thought was informed but not determined by the broader ideological and discursive context. For this alone, his book represents a substantial and welcome contribution to the on-going discussion on Russian Orientalism.

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Can we speak of a Russian Orientalism? This is the driving question behind David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s new book revisiting the rise of Russia’s relations with points east, points south, and perhaps most importantly, its own diverse population. He sets out to do so by looking both at the rise of *vostokovedenie* as a field as well as a variety of artifacts of Russian culture and history, from the early chronicles through 1917.

The project covers a remarkably wide swath, beginning with accounts of “Pechenegs” and “Polovtsy” encountered in the days of Kiev Rus’, a fine reading of *The Song of Igor’s Campaign*, twelfth-century pilgrimages to the Holy Land by Igumen Daniil, and the extensive travels through India of the fifteenth-century merchant Afanasii Nikitin. Throughout the book, the author pays welcome attention to frequently overlooked instances when diplomats, scholars, and travelers demonstrated appreciation for, rather than the more garden-variety dismissals of, new worlds. A particularly good example is Dimitrie Cantemir’s early eighteenth-century work, *The System of Religion and Conditions of the Turkish Empire*, where the erudite Moldavian “represented Islamic texts without too much editorializing and reminded his reader that ‘Eastern peoples are in no way inferior to Westerners’” (pp. 40–41). Further chapters track Catherine II’s *kitaishchina*, Pushkin’s engagement with the Caucasus, the rise of orientology through the building of the Kazan’ school, and later institutional developments in St. Petersburg. The book relies on published sources rather than archival work, and its felicitous style recommends it as a highly accessible introduction to Russia’s Eastern Question.

Narratively, what holds the book together is a focus on the rich personalities of the age, notably the dashing Mirza Aleksandr Kazem-Bek, Osip Kovalevskii, Nikolai Il’minskii, Sergei Oldenburg, and the founding dean of Russian Sinology, Father Hyacinth. A particularly good passage comes in the interpretation of the Oriental cycles of Vasilii Vereshchagin (a point where the absence of illustrations in the book is perhaps most keenly felt). To be faithful to the scope of Russian experiences of the East, the book takes up artworks, popular accounts, and formal studies of Turkey, Persia, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Islam, Siberia, Buddhism, and China. While such breadth limits the depth of the author’s analytical engagement with each area or tradition, it also ultimately informs the book’s summing statements that no defining tradition might be wrought of such a diverse set of peoples, places, and practices.

When Schimmelpenninck van der Oye does venture into the more formal work of Russian scholars, he is quick to contend that “this did not mean that the scholars who studied the East ... saw themselves as handmaidens of tsarist imperialism. ... What impassioned the orientologists on the Neva was not how to conquer or rule the East but such questions as the origins of Mahayana Buddhism, pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, or Kushite inscriptions on ancient coins” (p. 198). This is an argument that recalls the work of Talal Asad, among others, who observed many years back how links between scholarship and colonialism have long been greatly exaggerated: while it is clear that scholars gained significantly from their colonial sponsors, there is far less evidence that those same sponsors spent much time staying up late reading academic books.

*Bruce Grant, New York University*

Edward Said’s ill-judged exclusion of the Russian Empire from his study of the unequal intellectual relationship between Europe and Asia has proved both a blessing and a curse for historians of Russian imperialism. On the one hand, it has contributed to the very late development of a postcolonial sensibility in this field, as some scholars have persisted with the Soviet-era line that an assimilationist Russia was not a colonial power. On the other hand, the absence of any canonical text to be either worshipped or refuted has allowed historians of Russia to develop their own, more subtle models for examining cultural imperialism, which may one day turn out to be more useful than Said’s, not just for Russia, but also for the other European empires. Whilst there have been a number of excellent articles on the subject (some of them earlier versions of chapters here), *Russian Orientalism* is the best general book-length contribution to this debate to have appeared so far. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye is venturing into territory often characterized by incomprehensible jargon and bad-tempered polemic, and thankfully eschews both. This elegantly-written, even-handed study instead seeks to give an empirical account of Russia’s intellectual relationship with Asia since the late seventeenth century. Pulled towards Europe by her Christian faith, and towards Asia by the legacy of the Mongol conquest, ‘Russia looked at the East through many lenses. This book focuses on two of them, Orientology (vostokovedenie) and culture’ (p. 10)

Whilst the first of these two ‘lenses’ is manageable and well-defined, it is also located within the latter, which is vast, amorphous and altogether too gigantic a subject for a volume of this relatively modest size. The best sections of the book are accordingly those which look at the work of academic Orientalists (I understand Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s desire to eschew this term, thanks to the pejorative connotations it has acquired, but I still believe that it can be rehabilitated) and the development of the discipline of Oriental Studies in Russia. The chapters on the ‘Kazan School’, ‘Missionary Orientology’ and the flowering of the Oriental Faculty of St Petersburg University in the late nineteenth century are outstanding intellectual history, rigorous and carefully researched, but also animated by a keen eye for human detail and a gently humorous tone. Some characters leap off the page, notably the merry Chuvash missionary, Iakinf Bichurin, the founder of Russian Sinology, and the Russified Pole Osip Senkovskii, the first Professor of Arabic at St Petersburg University, whose acid pen outraged both high society and his academic colleagues elsewhere in Europe. Alongside these figures, more staid but equally distinguished scholars such as Baron Viktor Rosen and Sergei Oldenburg also receive detailed attention, and the book provides a valuable account of the institutional development of Russian Orientalism within the academy, first at Kazan University and then in St Petersburg.

Regrettably, but understandably, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye is unable to bring the same level of detail to his examination of all the other various cultural ramifications of Russia’s complex relationship with the Orient. The
sections on the Romantic response of writers such as Pushkin and Lermontov to the landscape and people of the Caucasus, on the obsession of the poets and writers of St Petersburg’s Silver Age with Russia’s supposed ‘Mongol’ identity, and on the fantasies of the émigré ‘Eurasianists’ have little new to add to the vast quantity of earlier work on the subject. Some of the individual cameos, in particular his description of the career and paintings of Vasilii Vereshchagin (pp. 74–91) and of the life and works of the composer Alexander Borodin (pp. 204–10) are much more detailed, but overall the coverage is inevitably somewhat imbalanced. However, it suffices to give some general background to the book’s main aim of charting the development of Orientalism as a discipline, so this does not detract too greatly from its value.

The entertaining narrative, character descriptions and analysis of paintings, literary works and scholarship inform an argument about the nature of Russian Orientalism that is developed from chapter to chapter. Whilst many Russian writers and thinkers (particularly missionaries) were hostile to Asians and to non-Christians and considered the ‘Orient’ to be separate from Russian civilization, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye argues that this never developed into a consistent ideology of ‘othering’. This was partly because a high proportion of early Russian orientalists were themselves of ‘Oriental’ origin, notably Mirza Alexander Kazem-Bek, a Persian from Resht who was converted to Christianity by Scottish missionaries in Astrakhan and eventually became a Professor at Kazan’ University. It was also because of the complex identity of outwardly Russian figures such as Borodin, the illegitimate son of a Georgian prince who also had Tatar ancestors. Whilst his In the Steppes of Central Asia, with its classically Orientalist phrasing and underlying narrative of Russian imperial conquest, might seem to be a textbook example of the exoticization and subjugation of the Orient, the composer’s own mixed heritage complicates this somewhat, although perhaps not as much as Schimmelpenninck van der Oye suggests (p. 200).

Whilst overall the argument that the Russian view of Asia was ambivalent and almost never consistently hostile is convincing, the same could also be said of British, French or German Orientalism. One of the major failings of Said’s original work, apart from his failure to consider either Germany or Russia, was his view of Occidental Culture as a monolith, always sure of itself and certain of what it was not. This was never true for any part of Europe. Equally it is rare for scholars to devote their lives to the study of subjects they dislike and despise, and there are clear parallels between (for instance) the critical attitude of the Indologist Sergei Oldenburg towards European colonial arrogance and the persecution of Russia’s ethnic and religious minorities (p. 194), and that of the British Persianist Edward Granville Browne. Some more comparisons would have given a clearer impression of just what is distinctive about the Russian case. Furthermore, whilst he skilfully shows how many Russian intellectuals and scholars felt that the ‘Orient’ was somehow a part of their own make-up, and did not consider it to be a separate sphere, official attitudes were generally very different. At various points (pp. 120, 197) Schimmelpenninck van der Oye acknowledges that the development of Oriental Studies in Russia was closely linked to the needs of the Russian state,
with its rapidly expanding empire in Asia, something which does chime with key elements of Said’s original arguments. The personal hostility or indifference of individual scholars to the imperial enterprise is less important than the use which the state can make of the knowledge they produce and the people they train in its colonial enterprises, and in this respect Russia would appear not only to conform to the Saidian paradigm, but — given the much greater role played by the state in intellectual life than in Western Europe — to do so more thoroughly than either Britain or France. It is probably true that less exalted institutions such as Moscow’s Lazarevskii Institute played a more important role than the Oriental faculties at Kazan’ and St Petersburg, but this is something that could have been explored further.

Those seeking a comprehensive theoretical contribution on the place of Russia in the debates surrounding Said’s Orientalism and postcolonial studies may be disappointed by this book, but it successfully avoids both tired clichés about Russian exceptionalism (of the kind provided by Orlando Figes in Natasha’s Dance, London, 2002) and the unquestioning application of Said’s ideas to the Russian case (as seen in Kalpana Sahni’s polemical Crucifying the Orient, Bangkok, 1997). Instead, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye has given us a volume which provides by far the most comprehensive history in English of the academic discipline of Orientalism in Russia, with an overall thesis on Russia’s relationship with Asia which, despite some limitations, is reasonable and convincing. Russian Orientalism is also very well-written, accessible and entertaining, and ought to appeal to a wider reading public beyond academia.

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commune. By August, however, the Union of Landowners faced a dilemma shared by others. Prepared to adopt the organizational strategies of the new regime, they had enjoyed some success influencing the Provisional Government. It grew apparent, however, that this government was not strong enough to protect the elite’s most basic interests in the face of peasant activism.

What was true for landowners was even truer for officers. By 1917 they were a socially and politically diverse group. What united them were professional interests, chief among which were restoring the military’s fighting ability and saving Russia. To this end a number of officers’ organizations came into being, and Rendle is at his best dissecting them. Concerned not to provoke further anti-elite backlash, officers’ organizations nonetheless decried the government’s weakness. Some officers backed Kornilov’s coup in August. But Rendle demonstrates the lack of united support for an authoritarian government among many of these conservative organizations. He concludes that “the uncertainty among elites was crucial. It ensured the failure of the revolt” (234).

Rendle tracks Russia’s elite on the eve of its disintegration. In the process he painstakingly describes the unions and leagues formed in 1917, which were halfway houses on the road to becoming byvshie liudi, so-called former people, or, more simply: individuals.

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Russia’s “confusion” about its own “continental identity” (4) made it surprisingly sympathetic rather than hostile to Asia and its eastern borderlands, argues David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye in this wide-ranging history of Russian orientalism from the medieval era to 1917. Early East Slavic nobles often intermarried with Tatar families from the steppe, the administrative regulation of Islamic practices and its ecclesiastical hierarchy through the imperial era was comparatively tolerant, Catherine’s “Greek project” (the notion of the return of the southern frontier to its presumed Byzantine and Orthodox historic identity) was informed by a “playful equality” and “whimsical curiosity” (48), the famous creators of Russia’s literary Caucasus routinely blurred the boundaries between Russia and Asia, and painter Vasilii Vereshchagin possessed a civilizing mission in Central Asia that was sometimes critical of Russian expansion. In a stimulating chapter dedicated to Silver Age literary and cultural figures, the author describes a fascination with the east that recognized Russia’s own complicated and entangled history with its Asian borders. Russia’s long history of shared experience and interaction with the east contributed to a culture and eventually an academic orientalism comparatively free of the antipathy that the author claims scholars who address the topic expect to find. The author’s diverse interests and broad learning inspires attention to church chronicles, literature, music, intellectual history, and painting. A vast chronological and geographic sweep cannot be entirely original, of course, and readers will recognize within his work the voices of a diverse collection of scholars, among them Charles Halperin, Richard Wortman, Robert Crews, Thomas Barrett, Susan Layton, and Daniel Brower.

Less convincing is the author’s portrayal of academic orientalism. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye wants to show that individual scholars (Mirza A. K. Kazem-Bek, O. M. Kovallevskii, N. I. Iliminskii, N. I Bichurin, V. P. Vasilev, V. R. Rosen, S. F. Oldenburg) and the institutions (Kazan University, St. Petersburg University’s Faculty of Oriental Languages) that sponsored them were often inspired by curiosity and a “distinctly unpractical thirst for pure knowledge” (43). Their work can thus be appreciated in a “neutral, pre-Saidian sense, much as Russians understand . . . vostokoved (orientologist)” (11). This effort results in a series of biographical vignettes of scholars, a method also common in Soviet studies of the topic, which illuminates their personal experiences, interests, and educational pathways but avoids the larger issues of Russian imperial expansion, the settlement of the frontier, interconfessional relations, and so on. Greater attention to archival research and
regional history would perhaps make these connections more obvious to the author. Imperial administrators, military officers, ethnographers, and others in the Russian borderlands were engaged in the same world of debate as the scholars as they attempted to shape the religious education of the ulama, identify customary legal practices, limit “apostasy” (the return of baptized small peoples to Islam) in the Middle Volga, or “restore” Christianity to the North Caucasus. Contributions to newspapers in towns such as Tbilisi and Orenburg, or to the many publications of the vast Imperial Russian Geographic Society, routinely illustrate the intersecting concerns of scholarship and imperial administration on the frontier. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s argument about orientalists as scholars rather than colonizers is reasonable, but his reluctance to situate academic debate within its social context runs the risk of trivializing his own subject matter.

The author concludes with an interesting discussion of “Eurasian” trends in Russian culture and politics but skips the Soviet period without explanation. Some of Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s insights into the imperial era might be usefully applied to Soviet-era orientalism. The expansion of the socialist world into China in the 1950s allowed Soviet scholars the chance to extend their interests in the Russian frontier to China. “Whereas most Western Europeans approached China from the sea, Russians typically traveled to the Middle Kingdom via Mongolia” (150), the author notes of the earlier era. In the Soviet era as well, however, scholars (and embassy officials) such as S. L. Tikhvinskii were simultaneously engaged in the study of both Mongolian and Chinese history and culture. Soviet orientalists perhaps continued to contribute to a tradition of writing about Asia unique in its comparative sympathy and closeness to the topic at hand. They also tended to be significantly connected to state power and the management of intrabloc relations in the socialist world, routinely moving from research institutes and universities to embassies and the international department of the central committee. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye romanticizes a bygone imperial era of supposed scholarly detachment, distant from the politics of both the Soviet Union and the American academy.

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Long relegated to the dustbin of Russian intellectual history, Eurasianism is enjoying a renaissance. The notion that greater Russia, or “Eurasia,” is a separate continent combining both European and Asian elements briefly flourished in émigré circles during the 1920s before fading into obscurity. In the aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse, however, its notions of empire and aversion to the west have struck a chord among Russians nostalgic for superpower status. *Die eurasische Bewegung* is therefore a welcome addition to the growing literature about this movement.

Originally written as a doctoral thesis at Zurich University, Stefan Wiederkehr’s monograph provides a clear and relatively concise overview both of the ideology’s origins in the interwar years as well as its late- and post-Soviet incarnations. Taking up two-thirds of the text, the first part nicely situates Eurasianism in the context of European political thought during the uncertain years after World War I. The movement originated in 1921 among a circle of young intellectuals recently exiled from revolutionary Russia who began publishing essays and books proclaiming their erstwhile homeland’s quasi-oriental identity—much as Aleksandr Blok had famously done three years earlier when he announced, “We are Scythians and Asians too, with slanting eyes bespeaking greed” (“The Scythians,” 1918).

Wiederkehr explains that Eurasianism shared a deep hostility for bourgeois liberal democracy with contemporaries on the extreme right and left. Indeed, as the author convincingly demonstrates, the Eurasianists were ideological cousins both of Benito Mussolini’s fascists and Vladimir Lenin’s Bolsheviks. Some of its members even advocated a rapprochement with the new Soviet order toward the end of the 1920s, but by then...
David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration*

**Élise Hanut**

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Temps : XXe siècle, communisme, XIXe siècle, XVIIe siècle

**Texte intégral**

Ce livre offre une analyse des relations entre la Russie et l’Orient depuis Pierre le Grand jusqu’à la Révolution de 1917 par l’étude de l’orientologie scientifique, la littérature, l’art, la musique, la culture matérielle et l’orthodoxie. Pour chacun de ses thèmes, Schimmelpenninck se concentre sur les biographies et les productions scientifiques ou artistiques d’un certain nombre d’intellectuels, d’artistes, d’écrivains et de compositeurs, russes et étrangers. Sur base de ses analyses, l’historien démontre que, contrairement à ce que prétend Said, les Européens comme les Russes regardaient l’Orient de façon plus pacifique et qu’ils étaient bien souvent poussés par la curiosité et la soif de connaissance. De plus, afin de mieux comprendre leur histoire et leur personnalité, les Russes ont découvert l’importance de l’héritage asiatique. Mais ils ne se sont intéressés à l’Orient qu’à partir du moment où elle se considérait comme pays européen, c’est-à-dire à partir des règnes de Pierre le Grand et de Catherine II. Au XIXᵉ siècle, pour s’afficher ouvertement dans le concert des nations européennes dans lesquelles la mode était à l’orientalisme, la Russie suivit également cette voie. Schimmelpenninck reconnaît que la vision russe de l’Orient était alors entièrement influencée par la pensée ouest-européenne, mais il tient à mettre en évidence la spécificité et l’ambiguïté des relations entre la Russie et l’Orient, à cause de son histoire et sa géographie. Après certains événements historiques, comme la Révolution française, la Russie comprit qu’elle ne pouvait continuer à imiter l’Europe, mais qu’elle devait suivre son propre chemin et que l’Orient pouvait lui apporter certaines connaissances dans sa quête identitaire, sans pour autant se définir comme asiatique.

L’œuvre de Schimmelpenninck, très fournie en exemples et descriptions hautement...

**Pour citer cet article**

Référence électronique

**Auteur**

Elise Hanut
Étudiante à l’Université Libre de Bruxelles en Langues et Littératures slaves

Articles du même auteur

Ellen Rutten, *Unattainable Bride Russia - Gendering Nation, State, and Intelligentsia in Russian Intellectual Culture* [Texte intégral]
Paru dans *Slavica bruxellensia*, 6 | 2010

**Droits d’auteur**

Tous droits réservés

“The East is a subtle affair.” This catch phrase from Vladimir Motyl’s iconic Soviet film of the 1960s, the *White Sun of the Desert*, serves, in a sense, as the leitmotif for David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye’s new study of Russian views of Asia. Rather than reconstruct a single hegemonic discourse of the East in Russian culture, Schimmelpenninck emphasizes the ambivalence and multiplicity of Russian views, rooted in large measure in Russia’s own contested identity. The result is an engaging and insightful study that vividly brings to light Russia’s multifaceted Eastern entanglements.

Not surprisingly, Schimmelpenninck takes as his starting point Edward Said’s influential work, *Orientalism*, as well as more recent debates on the applicability of a Saidian approach in the Russian context. While acknowledging the importance of Said’s contribution, Schimmelpenninck refuses to accept the derogatory connotation of the term Orientalism propagated by Said and the related assumption of a uniform orientalist discourse. Rather than engaging in theoretical debates, however, Schimmelpenninck offers a lively historical account of the individuals and ideas that constituted Russian orientalism.

Schimmelpenninck defines the scope of his topic along much the same lines as Said. Orientalism, for both, is an enterprise of imagination and representation finding expression in the arts and scholarship as well as political thought. Thus, while the center of gravity in Schimmelpenninck’s study falls clearly within the realm of what he terms “orientology,” the scholarly study of Eastern languages, history and culture (vostokovedenie in Russian), his work is not a comprehensive history of an academic field. Key figures in Russian Turkology, (V. V. Barthold, V. V. Radlov and E. A. Malov, to name a few) are given scant attention, for example, while long and quite interesting discussions are devoted to artists, composers, philosophers and writers. But if Schimmelpenninck delineates the confines of orientalism in roughly Saidian terms, he resolutely resists Said’s contention that these pursuits are part and parcel of a common enterprise devoted to the marginalization, domination and subjugation of the oriental “other”.

*Russian Orientalism* is divided into thematically framed chapters organized more or less chronologically. Schimmelpenninck sets the scene by investigating what the forbearers of modern Russia from Kiev through the Muscovite period knew and thought about their eastern neighbors: notwithstanding the inherent biases, Schimmelpenninck finds evidence of interaction and relatively tolerant attitudes. In Chapter 2, Schimmelpenninck reviews the first scholarly investigations of the East during the reign of Peter the Great. Skipping over the mid-18th century, Schimmelpenninck concentrates in Chapter 3 on the extraordinary vogue for oriental images and artifacts during the reign of Catherine the Great. Even at a time when Russian elites most strongly identified themselves with European culture, they continued to view the Orient as “an object of wonder, amusement and beauty.”(59) By the nineteenth century, as Schimmelpenninck describes in Chapter 4, this fascination with the East had developed into a potent source of artistic and literary inspiration. But unlike their Western counterparts, Russian writers and artists drew on an awareness of Russia’s own eastern roots producing works that were often surprisingly nuanced and sympathetic.

Having explored images of Asia in the creative imagination, Schimmelpenninck turns back in the mid section of the book to the realm of academic Orientology. Chapter 5 focuses on the...
rise of Oriental studies at Kazan University, a major center whose prominence was abruptly curtailed in 1854 when the decision was made to consolidate the study of Asia in St. Petersburg. Chapter 6 looks at Oriental studies in the context of missionary work in the Russian Orthodox Church. Few missionaries, of course, had as deep a sympathy for Asian cultures as Father Iakinf Bichurin, the renegade monk whose exploits "going native" while head of the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Beijing brought both condemnation from the Church and international acclaim as one of the founding fathers of Russian Sinology. But even the famous Nikolai Il'minsky, founder of the network of missionary schools for Russia's ethnic minorities, whose hostility to Islam later in life was legendary, showed surprising balance and tolerance toward Islam in his early years when he produced the bulk of his scholarly work. In the next two chapters, Schimmelpenninck examines the Oriental Faculty at St. Petersburg University looking first at its origins and then its heyday from the 1860s onward when it stood as Russia's preeminent center for the study of the East. While acknowledging the ties linking the Oriental Faculty to the state, Schimmelpenninck emphasizes its scholarly orientation and the steadfast resistance of its professors, regardless of their political views, to any attempt to subjugate the scholarly pursuit of knowledge to the practical needs of the Empire.

Turning back to the arts in chapter 9, Schimmelpenninck probes the ways in which fin de siècle artists expressed the idea of an affinity between Russia and Asia. Among the first to embrace this theme was the composer Pavel Borodin who, in his opera *Prince Igor*, explored the notion of Russia as a fusion between East and West. Silver Age writers such as Vladimir Solov'ev, Andrei Belyi and Alexander Blok took this theme in an apocalyptic direction, envisioning impending doom at the hands of Asiatic hordes yet placing the Russians squarely in their midst: if there was to be an apocalypse it would be from within. In his concluding chapter, Schimmelpenninck reiterates the multiplicity of perspectives on Asia and Asians in Russian culture. He does not deny the strongly negative views espoused by Slavophiles and Westernizers alike who concurred in their association of the East with backwardness, corruption and immobility. Yet there were always exceptions—individuals who recognized and celebrated Russia's eastern roots, from the Slavophile Alexei Khomiakov, to Alexander Herzen the Westernizer. Scholars such as Vasili Grigor'ev, Vasilii Stasov, Nikolai Veselovskii and Baron Victor Rozen took up the theme of Russia in Asia (and vice versa) and imprinted the notion of Russia's Asiatic origins with the stamp of scholarly legitimacy. As a foil to the mechanistic rationalism of Western modernity, the idea of Russia as an Asiatic civilization rapidly gained force fueled by the writers and artists of the Silver Age and reaching its culmination in the historical and cultural theories of the Eurasianists. The revival of Eurasianist thinking in post-Soviet Russia and the immense popularity of writers such as Lev Gumilev (whom, surprisingly, Schimmelpenninck does not mention) remind us that these ideas remain a potent force in the present day.

Schimmelpenninck recounts the story of Russian Orientalism with economy, vigor and a sharp eye for exemplary detail. His vivid portraits and thoughtful analysis make the book a pleasure to read. While its approach is by no means simplistic, *Russian Orientalism* should be accessible to the well informed general reader and is eminently suited for use with undergraduates. Specialists may find the work slightly less edifying. It does not appear that Schimmelpenninck engaged in significant archival research, and scholars already familiar with this material will find little that is fundamentally new. Still, given the breadth of the topic and the author's love of biographical detail there are more than enough intriguing morsels to reward readers on all levels.
Schimmelpenninck provides ample evidence to support his argument regarding the complexity of Russian Orientalism. But by refusing to engage the Saidian paradigm in theoretical terms, he leaves himself open to criticism. Proponents of Said may well say that Schimmelpenninck is missing the point: what is important is not whether one or another scholar, painter or poet had positive or negative things to say about Asian peoples, but rather the underlying dynamics of power inherent in the very act of representation. It might also be pointed out that Schimmelpenninck’s narrative is thinnest precisely in its discussions of actual imperial contexts—the areas in which a postcolonialist approach might be most fruitfully applied. Putting aside these criticisms, which have been addressed elsewhere, I, for one, am satisfied that Schimmelpenninck has succeeded in undermining the notion of an all-encompassing discursively constructed image of the East in Russian culture intrinsically implicated in imperial domination. In its place, he invites the reader to view individual scholars and artists as autonomous agents whose thought was informed but not determined by the broader ideological and discursive context. For this alone, his book represents a substantial and welcome contribution to the on-going discussion on Russian Orientalism.

Nathaniel Knight
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The Russian Empire in Asia


In this fine and well-written survey of Russian literature on the Orient, the Dutch scholar Schimmelpenninck van der Oye analyses general Oriental trends in Russian culture in combination with the Russian academic tradition of Orientology. The result is a wealth of case studies that do not fit Edward Said's well-known definition of Orientalism as exoticism plus scholarly legitimacy and support for European rule over the Orient. To be sure, Muscovy and the Russian Empire were enterprises of Eastern colonization, with fantasies to even reach India. Yet exactly against this background of Eastern expansion and of integrating non-Christian populations into Russian society Schimmelpenninck van der Oye argues that the Orient was not only regarded as an 'Other' but also as a part of Russian identity since earliest times. In many cases the Russian view on Asia revealed feelings of Christian superiority over the 'primitive' or godless peoples of the East; yet in other cases it was guided by genuine interest, without racial prejudices and with deep sympathies for Eastern peoples and civilizations.

Russian princes collaborated with the Golden Horde and its successor Khanates as much as they also fought them, and the Orthodox Church bedevilled the Muslims but enjoyed their religious tolerance. As Schimmelpenninck van der Oye claims, Moscow's subsequent conquest of Kazan and Astrakhan in the 1550s did not follow the example of the Spanish conquista after the fall of Granada in 1492. This might be a little overstated, since the defeat of the Khanate of Kazan resulted in the expulsion of the Tatars from that city and in a campaign of forcible Christianization, with a last onslaught on Islam occurring as late as the mid-eighteenth century; and Russian colonization eventually also deprived the Bashkirs, Crimean Tatars, Kazakhs and many other Eastern peoples of their best lands. The greatest forced exodus of Muslims occurred after the Caucasian War in the 1860s. Still, the author is right in pointing out that since the time of Catherine the Great, Muslim communities in the Volga-Urals did enjoy a certain autonomy in religious affairs and Islamic education (which however came under fire in the late nineteenth century). How Muslims understood their situation under Russian rule is of course a different question.

As the book shows, Russian views on the Orient have to be studied in connection with Western influences on Russia. Oriental studies were initiated by Peter the Great under the influence of the enlightenment philosopher Leibniz and the historian Dimitrii Cantemir, a Moldavian nobleman who escaped to Russia from Ottoman rule. Peter's Kunstkamera collected the exotic artefacts of the East. Also Catherine was as much under Voltaire's influence as under the spell of the Orient; the latter she staged in a splendid travel to the Crimea and in her love for Chinese porcelain. In the nineteenth century, the experience of the long war against the Muslims of the Northern Caucasus provided Russian literature with new Oriental motives about Self and Other, ranging from the idealization of the primitive but free Caucasian tribes to the outright defence of the Russian mission civilatrice. The book also discusses the ambiguities in the Central Asian motives of the painter Vassili Vereshchagin, in the Oriental compositions of Aleksandr Borodin, as well as in the Russian poetry of the early twentieth century; the book ends with a glimpse at the renaissance of Eurasiast thinking in Russia after 1991.

Academic Oriental studies at Kazan University started in 1807 with the import of German professors; they made achievements in Oriental philology but were outright failures in the field of education (which they carried out in Latin). Still, Kazan was a fascinating place of East-West contact, with printing houses in Arabic script and a gymnasium that employed Tatar teachers. That Russian Oriental studies, more than anywhere else in the West, from early on also absorbed Orientals is demonstrated by the example of Aleksandr Kazembe, a defector from Islam who described himself in 1842 as 'of Persian ancestry, faithful to the Protestant Church, a subject of the Russian Empire and Professor of Turco-Tatar letters at
Het verleden als publiek goed


In het kader van het cultuurhistorische onderzoek naar nationale identiteitsvorming van Joep Leerssen aan de UvA werd begin 2008 een internationaal congres gehouden. De bundel Free Access to the Past is hier de neerslag van, hoewel niet alle bijdragen van het congres hierin zijn opgenomen. Voor ons ligt een bonte verzameling essays over onder andere staatsbegraafenisnissen, het genre van de historische roman, het Rijksmuseum van Potgieter en de opkomst van de nationale opera. Het centrale thema is de manier waarop in de loop van de negentiende eeuw de geschiedenis – de verbeelding en interpretaties daarvan – doordrong in de publieke sfeer en deze mede vorm gaf. Het verband tussen de creatie van historische identiteiten en nationalisme is bekend onderzoeksterrein. Veel nieuws wordt hierover dan ook niet gezegd. Het accent ligt op de manier waarop geschiedenis publiek werd door het openbaar maken van kunstcollecties, musea, archieven en door de wijze waarop de geschiedenis in kunst en literatuur werd verwerkt. In de meer programmatische bijdrage van Peter Fritzsche – in veel opzichten een samenvatting van zijn Stranded in the Past. Modern Time and the Melancholy of History (2004) – wordt nog eens duidelijk hoezeer de ervaring van discontinuïteit als gevolg van de Franse Revolutie een verheving van het historisch besef tot gevolg had. Zowel revolutionairen als conservatieve voelden zich genezen van hun ideeën over de samenleving te legiti-
Julian Jackson  Marriage, Communist style
Ferdinand Mount  A rare bird in Yucatán
Balaji Ravichandran  Haunted Imre Kertész
William Wootten  Sean O’Brien’s muses

Russia’s Orient
Rachel Polonsky
Is this not paradise?

The East through Western eyes, or how the steppe came to St Petersburg: the paradoxes of Russian Orientalism

Though he dropped out of Kazan University's Faculty of Oriental Languages after his first year, Leo Tolstoy's grades in Arabic and Turkic-Tatar were good. It was history, which Tolstoy considered a "false science", in which his examiners declared him a "total failure". Tolstoy's Professor of Turk-Tatar Letters was a Persian from the Caucasian city of Mizra Kazem Bek, who had been converted to Presbyterian Christianity by Scottish missionaries in the 1830s, changing his name from Mohammad to Alexander. Though he had rejected the Islamic way of life and thinking as "too irrational", and was a loyal subject of the Shah, he proudly wore flowing robes and a silk turban in the streets of Kazan, and insisted on the Persian title "Mirza", meaning "sir".

Mizra Kazem Bek embodied the paradoxes of Kazan, a city on the Volga, less than 450 miles, east of Moscow, which in its turn embodies the paradoxes of Russian Orientalism. As the Encyclopedia of Islam summarises, Kazan was a Muslim Tatar khutna in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and then became a Russian university town by the nineteenth. One traveller remarked on its "strange blend of Russian sophistication and Asian simplicity, Islam and Christendom, Russian and Tatar". As St Petersburg looked west, Kazan looked east, Alexander Herzen called it "the main crossroads on the path of European ideas to Asia and Asian culture to Europe". For the first half of the nineteenth century, Kazan University, founded by imperial decree in 1803, pioneered orientology in the Russian academy, with the explicit purpose of training government officials for service in Asia (both within and beyond the borders of the empire). By the 1840s, the University had chairs in Mongolian, Kalmyk, Mandarin, Armenian and Sanskrit, and could boast, as one official in the Ministry of Education did, that it taught Oriental languages in a "depth and variety unsurpassed by any other institution of higher learning in all Europe". For David Schimmelpenning, the Rentmeister of Kazan, the University, despite all its explicit linking of academic scholarship with the governing interests of empire, complicates the "Sasanian distinction between self and other". In his highly readable study, Russian Orientalism: Asia in the Russian Mind from Peter the Great to the Emigration, he restores to the word "Oriental", "orientology" (vostochnovvedenie), and "Orientalism" (vostochozvvedenie) the incorrect "pre-Sasanian" sense that they still have in Russian. Like other recent writers on Orientalism (notably Robert Irwin in For East of Knowing, 2006), he prises his subject free of Edward Said's "blind-capturing schemas" by exploring Russia's "imaginary geography" through the stories of scholars and artists' travels, and of individuals turning, in all their fragmentariness and flux.

RACHEL POLONSKY

David Schimmelpenning van der Oye


VERA TOLZ

Russia's Own Orient


His account (which is not strictly chronologically) begins with the origins of Rumi, and ends with a brief survey of how the Russian sense of a shared heritage with Asia is still ideologically potent under Vladimir Putin and Dmitry Medvedev. Russia's imaginary geography arises out of its real geography, in which forest and steppe, rather than East and West, were the original "self" and "other". The East Slavs who settled the wooded lands on Europe's north-eastern edges in the eighth and ninth centuries crossed with the powers of the Baghdad caliphate, Persia and Byzantium: some paid tribute to the Khazars, an inner Asian nomad nation of the steppe, whose elite had converted to Judaism. In the earliest Russian written sources, the monastic chronicles of medieval Kiev, the Turkic nomads of the southern steppe (the "wild field") are presented as ferocious raiders. However, these nomads were also trading partners, and useful allies in inter-tribal strife between Russian princes, who were sometimes married off to the daughters of Turkic khans. In the first half of the thirteenth century, fiercer invaders swept across the steppe from further east. The nomads horde of Batu Khan (Genghis Khan's grandson) burned their way across the southern grasslands and up into the northern principalities of Rus', which they subjugated for over two centuries. The Mongol overlords (called the Golden Horde by Russians) collected tribute and maintained order from their capital Sarai on the Caspian steppe. The Horde converted to Islam in the fourteenth century, but tolerated other faiths, exempting the Russian cities from taxation in exchange for prayers for the khan. Though Rus' continued to look to Byzantium in matters of religion, the Golden Horde had a lasting influence in politics, business and diplomacy. The words for "money" (dengr) and "customs" (muzdisk) flowed into Russian from Tatar. As the historian Nikola Karamzin (1766-1826) observed, referring to the amicable trading style of sixteenth-century Muscovy, "Moscow owes its greatness to the khan." Karamzin's own name, like the names of many other Russian families of ancient lineage - Yausov, Udshkov, Dasklov, it was of Tatar provenance. It was in the reign of Peter the Great, when curiosity became a virtue, that Russia began to look at the East through Western eyes. Prompted by foreign advisers such as the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz, who thrilled to the civilizational possibilities of Russia's geographical position between Europe and Asia, the modernising Tsar established the foundations for orientology. Yet, as Vera Tolz argues in Russia's Own Orient: The Politics of Identity and Oriental Studies in 19th-Century Imperial and Soviet Periods, 224pp. Oxford University Press, 555 US $90. 9780199394443, the interest in the oriental style of ideas and a field of study. In the eighteenth century, oriental studies in Russia amounted to a few Russian scholars, orientalists and linguists - hired by the ruler to grace the new Academy of Sciences. A more lasting legacy was left by a Muscovian prince, Dmitry Cantemir, born in an Ottoman vassal principality, who was sent to Constantinople as a young man, and instead of yielding to the luxuries of the waning empire's metropolis, devoted himself to learning. In later years, living in Moscow, he wrote on the history of the Tartars in Russia, Cantemir wrote a nuanced study of Islam, as well as the History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire, which was translated from Latin into English (1754), German and French, and remains a standard reference on the Ottomans for a century, cited by William Jones, as well as by Gibbon, Byron and Voltaire.

Russian Orientalism is structured around the lives of individuals like Karamzin, Cantemir, whom the author calls "representative". In their diversity and eccentricity, and their often complicated ethnic and cultural origins, they reveal that until the emergence of academic orientology in St Petersburg at the turn of the nineteenth century, there was no "representative" Russian Orientalism, but

06.09.11 New York

Ten years ago this week, Jay Weerts witnessed the world on the Trade Center's twin towers from his studio in Tribeca. In the year that followed, Weerts painted nine canvases, mixing ash from what had been the Center's garage with black acrylic. This summer he completed "Résolution Triptych" (first panel of which is shown here), signifying "a glorious new day", and now his "9/11 Diptychs: 2001-2011", twelve paintings in all, are displayed in the Northfield gallery at St Peter's Lutheran Church in Manhattan. Works by other artists responding to the 9/11 attacks are currently being shown at more than two dozen gallery and museum exhibitions throughout New York.

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http://tls.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/services/OnlinePrintHandler.ashx?issuetype=issue122820110909000000000001001&printpaper=0&paper=A4
rather an endlessly varied unfolding of scholarly and artistic engagement, with a multitude of imagined "east," intertwined in often surprising ways with the changing interests of high-profile states.

Schimmelpenner's van der Oey's gift for apt and evocative storytelling comes into play in the Great Decisive Orientalism. It begins with the Tsars' state passage to a train of gilded carriages at the Golden Horn in 1787, her silver jubilee year. For the court of the learned ruler who had, twenty years earlier, proclaimed Russia's "European state", the Czars evolved not only Russia's origins (Prince Vladimir had reportedly been baptized in 988 in nearby Kyiv), but also the principle of a new nation Greek-Byzantine, (Catherine's grandsons were named Alexander and Constantine after the Greek emperor and Byzantine emperor, Stage-managed with fantastic extravagance by Prince Grigory Potemkin, this journey of thousands of miles complemented with a carte down the Don river, and a final carriage procession across the steppe, with diversion provided by thousands of Don Cossacks, Kulikov horsemen, and Cossack Tatar cavalry, and even a regiment of "Azmans", former enemy of the ancient Scythia of Herodotus, regaled in neoclassical brocades and white ostrich plumes. The symbolic high point of Catherine's rule was a state visit to Abkhazia, the former capital of the Crimean Khans and a last remnant of the power of the Golden Horde. "I lay here in the summer-house of the Khan / Around the infidel and faith Mihirgans do to / The Paris word is a spire for her vacancy, / And disturbed from my sleep amidt Bakhchisarai / By tobacco smoke and cries / . . . this is not paradise!"

Even more appealing to the imagination of the Voltairean Catherine and her court than the picturesque Islamic world of the Thousand and One Nights of the Middle Kingdom, with its associations of reason, imperial power and exotic taste in prece simultaneously, was Catherine the Great. Catherine the Great.

Asian themes resurface powerfully with Alexander Pushkin's Byronic "southern poem" Khojas. In it, Pushkin had just published the verse fairytales Russian and Latvian (which combined themes from the Thousand and One Nights with Russian folklore), when he was exiled to the empire's south-western frontier for a political poem that had circulated in manuscript. Pushkin's travels in the Caucasus and the Crimean Wars led the narrator to poetic poems. Capture of the Caucasus and The Travels of Bakhchisaray. The Cossacks brought his great acclaim, as well as a number of shorter lyrics inspired by the medieval Persian poet Sa'di. In the tradition of the Great, Pushkin kept a keen sense of what he called his European "taste and eye," even in the "rapport of Oriental splendor."

In the 1830s, wars against the Muslim tribes in the Caucasus inspired the poetry and prose of Mikhail Lermontov, the Decembrist exile Alexander Pushkin (who wrote under the pseudonym Martynsky) and a number of other moodier writers of travel prose, advocates of verse and prose. Their literary Orientalism has been insightful explored by Susan Luson in Russian Literature by Moscow Greenfield in Pushkin and Romantic Fashion (1955), but Schimmelpenner's account of the early nineteenth-century "oriental music" usefully places these writers in the context of the developing Russian fascination with many different "oriental" music. Poets do not repent prominently in the story of Russian Orientalism until the Symbolist movement of the turn of the twentieth century. In Schimmelpenner's van der Oey's account, the mid-nineteenth century belongs, for the most part, to scholars and missionaries: uncommon men, ready to cross geographical and cultural boundaries, to confront doubts, and to change their minds. Among all European nations, Russia is best qualified to study Asia", wrote Count Sergei Uvarov in his proposal for an "academic orientalism". As education minister under Nicholas I, Uvarov (notorious as the reactionary ideologue of Orthodoxy, Monarchy and Nationality) was a champion of orientalism; he hoped the hierarchial traditions of the East would be a counter to European rationalism. As Vera Tolstoy writes in Uvarov's "imagined academy", a "European critic" would work side by side with an "Asianist".

To the great sinologist Nikon Yudovitch Bachurin (1777-1855), better known by his monastic name of Fr Hyacinth, Russia's long borderer with China gave it an inexpressible advantage over Western Europe in the study of the Middle Kingdom. He recommended to the hokkon Mikhail Pogodin that the judgement of European scholars about matters concerning Central and East Asia "is no more reliable than that of a blind ramm about colours". Hyacinth was a disputable priest, but a fine scholar. He raised the discipline of theology to such a level that by mid-century the study of China was more advanced in Russia than anywhere in Western Europe. Hyacinth was a Church of mixed Finno-Ugric and Turkic blood and the son of a village schoolman. Educated at the Kazan seminary, he spent many years in China as head of a diplomatic mission, negotiating religious and administrative duties for his studies. In the 1820s, he returned to St Petersburg, where he lived a loose life, and frequented literary salons with the prominent writers of the day. In 1830, Pushkin was refused permission by the secret police to accompany the priest on an expedition to China through the ice-traffic frontier town of Kyakhta. (Pushkin never succeeded in crossing the border of the Russian empire, though he tried several times.) Two years later, Fr Hyacinth founded Russia's first Chinese-language school in Kyakhta.

With its inauguration in 1855, the Faculty of Oriental Languages at St Petersburg University took over the growing field from Kazan. Its first dean was Ivera Kazarov Bela, who boasted that "nowhere else in Europe have so many orientologists ever gathered in one academic institution as here." The special promise of Russian orientalism that Uvarov and others since the early nineteenth century had asserted more a fiction of speech than a reality was only fulfilled in the last decades of that century. It is here that Vera Tolstoy takes up the story, in an erudite and closely argued interpretation of the significance of a remarkable group of scholars, known as the "Rosen school". The Aristoteleian Victor Romanovitch Rosen became dean of St Petersburg's Faculty of Oriental Languages in 1895. Though he was distinguished more for his achievements in academic administration, reviewing and teaching than for original research, Rosen was seen by his disciples as the founder of an "entire new school of orientalism", which gained international standing by focusing on Russia's "own orient". The most illustrious scholars in the Rosen school were Vasily Bartold, Sergei Oldenburg, Fedor Shcherbatovskiy and Nikolai Marc, whose principal areas of study were Central Asia, Buddhism (particularly its living oral traditions within the Russian empire) and the Caucasus.

Tolstoy is concerned with "families of ideas" rather than with individual biographies, but she notes that these men kept an authentic and distinctive "Russian" school of orientalism, none of them was ethnically Russian. Rosen, a Baltic Dane who grew up speaking German, was a fervent advocate of Russian as a language of scholarship among European orientalists. Tolstoy lays out, in all its complemented, often contradictory detail, the extent of their political and intellectual influence beyond the field of "science" in the early decades of the twentieth century. The ideas of the Rosen school shaped early Soviet policies towards ethnic groups in the Caucasus and Siberia. At a time when Russian imperial policies were being questioned in works such as Tolstoy's sublime late masterpiece Haify Mauiss, whose hero is a Chechen, the Russian imperial scholars and their "minority associates" were redefining certain ethnic groups as national communities, and creating a picture of Russia as a distinctive "political and cultural space", open and multi-polar, in which there was no discernible boundary between East and West.

In the past decade, there has been vigorous argument among scholars (particularly in the journal Arche) about the relevance of Eduard Said's ideas for Russian Orientalism. Tolstoy takes the debate in a new direction by revealing the traces of Russian Oriental studies in Said's thinking. Though he did not know the work of the Rosen school directly, Said was heir to its particular style of thought through the mediation of the Marxist and positivist intellectuals of the early 1960s. The Egyptian Arche Abdeh-Mudeh, who strongly influenced Said, studied in the Soviet Union in the 1950s, and borrowed directly from Sergei Oldenburg's critique of the relationship between known.

Uzbek women attending a literacy class at the Stalin Textile Nizamian in Tashkent, 1935


Page 1 of 2
Writer’s blockade

ANDREW KAHN

Lidia Ginzburg

PROKODYASYCHIE KHRASYBY DRObn-VOLNYYKH LET ZAPISKI BLOKADNOGO CHERNOVEK

Edited by Emily Van Binsbergen and Andre Zorin. 59pp. Moscow: Nevse Izdavlenie. 970 596 379 (415)

The Russian writer Lidia Ginzburg (1902-90) is best known to Western readers as the author of an academic study, On Psychological Promeus (translated by Judson Roseann, 1991), and an account of the Siege of Leningrad, Blockade Diary (translated by Allan Myynes, 1953). Prokodyasychie Khrasby Drobno-Volnakh Let Zapisky Blokadnego Cherov (Fleeting characters, Whirlwind proezd, Notes of a blocked person), meticulously edited and annotated by two leading Ginzburg scholars, Emily Van Binsbergen and Andre Zorin, is the latest in a series of archival publications since her death that are transforming our knowledge of an admired intellectual who developed a remarkable prose style in which to write about the tragic and extended torpor of her life and times.

Towards the end of her life, Ginzburg published excerpts from her autobiographical writing of the 1920s and 30s, mainly personal pieces that had been only the tip of the iceberg. Thanks to this substantial and handily produced and indexically collected, it is now evident that from the disintegration of wartime Ginzburg forged a new outlook and style as a writer, the resulting work is difficult but unforgettable. The editor has lavished painstaking effort on collating manuscript and printed versions of familiar texts such as the epistolary “Notes of a Blocked Person” (the more accurate title of Blockade Diary) and its reprints. Among its new discoveries are a fascinating sequence of thirty entries from her notebooks of 1943, consisting of a collage of aphorisms (Ginzburg always admired La Rochefoucauld), vignettes of the apochryphal, and mini-essays on such topics as Tolstoy’s historism. Alongside numerous new fragments and draft versions of completed pieces there are entire, previously unpublished essays on pacifism and other themes, a chilling account of a meeting of the Writers’ Union and other works germane to the sociology of Soviet literature, as well as two major, harrowing texts about the Siege, “The Day of the Otter” and “A Story of Fyly and Cherovly”, remarkable for their psychological subtlety, dense conceptuality, and sheer pathos.

Born in 1902 into an educated Jewish family in Odessa, Ginzburg went to study literature at Leningrad University in 1922. Throughout the 1920s, Ginzburg was at the centre of overlapping literary circles. Originally, as a student of the Formalists, she wrote about literature that blurred the boundaries of genre. She put her artistic training and brilliant powers of observation to me in her notebooks. Like folding stage sets, the walls of the isolated yet semi-public domains of apartment kitchens, literary societies, and clubhouses appear and disappear in Ginzburg’s vignettes of Vladimir Mayakovskiy, Ahmetov and other favourite poets. Oistrakh Mandelstam’s brilliant speech and pathetic dishevelment inspire concomitantly admiring sketches.

Committed in her youth to the Revolution, Ginzburg was a Marian without being a fellow traveller, a freelance academic without a secure post, who saw her beliefs in civil society, the capacity of individuals to serve as agents of historical change, and the intelligentsia’s traditional values frustrated by the proletarianisation of art and the “revolution from above”. Her career was spent largely on the margins of the academic establishment (she was a lucky survivor given the mass purge and exile of scholars that began in 1929), although her involvement with the Leningrad branch of the Union of Soviet Writers was continuous from its formation in 1932. After surviving the Siege, she secured a modest academic position. In the 1950s, her seminal studies of Alexander Herzen, a socialist icon of the liberal intelligentsia, explained

Nobody’s Uncle

‘That’s one old man who’s nobody’s uncle.’

Dorothy Duan

His wallet will contain no photographs.

Of grandchildren, or the haberdashers he re-entered

Under shellfire, bringing off the wounded.

The lottery’s completely passed him by.

On chairs in shady doorways shifting piles.

Tilling up their faces to the sun,

No gods grown old think fondly of him now,

They find him hard to place. They go inside.

At desk he might be taken for a fisherman.

Who sets out more from habit than belief.

A final wild-haired independent, dressed

In such anemetic swallow-tail and stooped

So anciently among his stalking gear

You might suspect that someone’s made him up,

Suppose you stop to pass the time.

He sees straight through, with the imperious

Assurance of a beast or of a god.

So here you are. And when you step aboard

The shore will slip behind.

So swiftly you’ll be there before you know.

SEAN O’BRIEN

"Leningrad in 1941", by Andre Myyneskov, 1974