Siberia: a history of the people, by Janet M. Hartley, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014, i–ix, 1–289., $38.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0300167948

In the mid-1990s, a small Soviet-style "village of the town type" in Northern Sakha Republic (Yakutia) had to be evacuated during a mid-winter crisis caused by nondelivery of fuel. Most of the freezing villagers were ethnic Russians, and when many eventually abandoned the village forever, they took with them pipes and other infrastructure from their homes, making it difficult for local indigenous people (Sakha and Eveny) to occupy the housing they left behind. This kind of "from below" narrative is relevant to themes concerning the buildup and abandonment of settlements that Janet Hartley has developed in her historical overview. But it was told to me by local indigenous people, not by the Russian newcomers they perceived as outsiders. Hartley's ambitious book, taking a centuries-long view of Russian colonization of Siberia up to the present, delivers only part of the promise of her subtitle. Her focus, driven by her sources, is on the Russians and other Slavic peoples who eventually constituted the majority of Siberia's population. As Hartley summarizes, Siberia is "primarily a land of colonists – either free or unfree" (249).

Hartley's well-written overview, perhaps intended as a text for undergraduates, is organized into 16 short chapters that flow into each other quite smoothly. Beginning with "Cossacks and Conquest," she ends with "The New Siberia." In between, she covers "land, indigenous peoples and communications," "traders and tribute-takers," "early settlers," and three tiers of Siberian everyday life venues: village, town, and garrison. She is at her best when using primary archival sources for these portraits, particularly for the impoverished and grueling garrison and mining life of the Altai region, which she also has depicted in other publications. Hartley's cast of characters includes some "usual suspects," such as the Cossack conqueror Ermak, Count Mikhail Speransky, whose 1822 reforms she claims did not go nearly far enough, and brutal civil war Admiral Alexander Kolchak. Personalities also include less well-known figures such as the rogue ataman Ivan Kalmykov, the brave British nurse Kate Marsden, and a disillusioned geophysicist Valentina Diakonova.

Hartley's sensitivity to gender issues is refreshing, especially the implications of population imbalances that put far more men than women into Siberia as explorers, colonists, and administrators in repeated patterns over several centuries. Powerful merchant widows may have been colorful exceptions to the exploitation of women rule. For example, "Elena Grigorevna, aged 62 and illiterate, who ran her deceased husband's firm of Morozov for 14 years in the late nineteenth century" (77). Given the name of this firm, it may well have been part of the Old Believer trader-merchant networks of Siberia, a point Hartley does not mention, although she does cover the self-immolations of the "Old Believers," who prefer to call themselves "Old Ritualists," as well as some of the most famous exile histories, such as Archpriest Avvakum, the Decembrists, and the Poles.

Opportunities for critical historical analysis, not always explored, come in the chapters on "governing and the governed," "exiles and convicts," "religion and popular beliefs," "explorers and imperialists," "railways and change," "wars and revolutions," "collectivization and the camps," and "the new Soviet citizen." In these, Hartley relies mostly on secondary sources, or a category she terms "primary published sources" that includes some collections with minimal attributions, and other sources of disputable "primary" designation, for example, E.M. Downs' 2007 dissertation. Sourcing issues are key to concerns about credit, material selection, and interpretation. Why, for example, are many of the recognizable maps and some of the photographs not given attribution? Why are the

archive-based historians Jerome Blum (on the peasantry), Gregory Freeze (on Russian religion), and Alfred Rieber (on merchants) missing? Where is acknowledgment of anthropology pioneers Maria Czaplicka, Waslav Seriozhevskii, and Jesup North Pacific Expedition exile-scholars Waldemar Bogaras, Waldemar Jochelson, and Bernard Laufer? Why are indigenous ethnographers such as Olga Ulturgasheva and Tatiana Argounova-Low, who have written excellent monographs in English, ignored? Why is perceptive work of Barnaul native son Sergei Oushakine omitted, that of anthropologist Douglas Rogers missing, and that of Caroline Humphrey on Buryatia misunderstood, while generalizations of James Forsyth are recycled?

A project like this inevitably requires judgment about what to omit and how to interpret a topic already overburdened by mythologies of exile, punishment, brutality, and suffering. Hartley perhaps goes too far when she claims for recent Siberian history "more disruption than any other post-Soviet territory" (xviii). Ironically, that dubious distinction probably should go to the regions that have seen more sustained conflict and war, including those regions inaccurately mentioned in the literature as having "frozen conflicts." Hartley acknowledges basic contrasting views between Siberia's reputation as a vast counterproductive prison, and its value as a wealth-producing territory, especially in its western and relatively southern areas, where "peasants" could be relatively free and productive when they gained land grants, and townspeople along trade routes flourished. She is strongest on the eighteenth century, explaining that Siberian settlement was shaped not only by its enormous distances and river-system-dependent transportation problems, but also by its undesirability for elites. Siberian lands east of the Urals had few nobles, and thus by definition had fewer estates with serfs. She is weakest on the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. Recurring debates that persist into the twenty-first century about the human costs of diverse forms of resource extraction, railroad extensions, ecological destruction, energy dependency, interethnic conflict derived from ever-newer migrations, and the larger significance of the "resource curse" for Russia are inadequately discussed.

Missed opportunities to better integrate indigenous peoples into the narrative are particularly obvious for this reader, although it is praise-worthy that they appear at all, mostly as clichéd, exploited, and assimilated victims of colonization and Sovietization. The chapter with indigenous peoples in its title could mention that early Cossack marauders manipulated indigenous group conflicts and specific leaders, beyond the vilified Tatar Khan Kuchum, to conquer Siberia as rapidly as they did. Some indigenous families were also key in helping Russian Orthodox missionaries with transport and accommodations, although Hartley seems too often to accept the viewpoints of many Russian sources that indigenous people actually became Christian when they took Russian names and claimed conversion to avoid fur tax quotas and other administrative demands. In more recent contexts, Hartley admirably quotes the well-known Khanty leader Eremei Aipin on native devastation, but misses important distinctions concerning the post-Soviet cultural and political revitalization of larger groups with their own "titular" republics, juxtaposed to smaller, vulnerable groups living in energy and mining extraction areas with little economic and political defense. Oddly, she includes "Burkhanism – a mixture of shamanism, Buddhism and Christianity" in her mention of "extreme sects" that have "taken root" in Siberia (244). A substantial literature on Burkhanism, including the uncited monograph of Agnieszka Halemba on the Altai, would have saved her from this unfair characterization.

A set of hot topics sparking reasonable debate concerns the significance of Siberian regionalism, Siberian separatism, and the existence of a special category of people, "Sibiriaki," that some scholars and activists consider a distinct ethnonational group in the making. This has political implications, given the vehement opposition of Russian nationalists to the

2010 self-defined census category "Sibiriak." Hartley's coverage of these interrelated themes begins by downplaying the impact of the "Siberian regionalist" movement of the nineteenth century, although she mentions leaders Grigori Potanin and Nikolai Iadrintsev. She discusses the politically messy and bloody consequences of the short-lived Far Eastern Republic during Russia's civil war, and yet underestimates more recent attention by some Siberians to their separatist and regionalist local histories. She mentions a few personal encounters with self-designated "Siberians," but rarely uses the term "Sibiriaki" (cf. 170). Her underestimation of the influence of Siberian natives (including "superstitious pagans") on newcomer Slavic peoples over the centuries may provide a clue as to why she does not stress the mixed-background, intermarried "Sibiriaki" as a significant ethnic group in the process of fluid self-identification vis-à-vis others. Native influence is precisely what most official document writers and literate Russian memoirists were reluctant to admit. Hartley acknowledges contemporary "multiple identities" of many individuals in Siberia, a common pattern often matched in theories of interethnic relations to "situational identity," but this very multiplicity may be undermining her recognition of the emergent "Sibiriak" self-identity. In any case, serious analytical conclusions concerning the tension between the conceptual separateness of Siberians and their inherent Russianness are avoided by ending the book with a quote from the passionate "village writer" Valentin Rasputin on the "fascination" of Siberia (251).

At least twice Hartley uses observations made from a plane to emphasize the vastness of Siberia (defined as spanning the Urals to the Bering Sea), or the strategic coherence of a given region's river system (e.g. the Amur area bordering China). This "bird's eye view" could be a metaphor for her sweeping book: in trying to see so much "from above," she sometimes loses sight of the eclectic scholarly digging and conversation that need to be done for comprehensive "from below" portraits of Siberia's many people and peoples. In sum, this reviewer would have preferred a more sophisticated analysis of debates surrounding many thematic aspects of Siberia's complex history, rather than a grand, authoritative-in-tone narrative.

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Blood libel in late imperial Russia. The ritual murder trial of Mendel Beilis, Robert Weinberg, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2014, xii + 188 pp., US$70.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0253010995; US$24.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-0253011077.

Robert Weinberg's book explores the Beilis Affair and trial, which took place in Kiev in 1911–1913. Mendel Beilis was accused of ritual murder because he was a Jew who worked near the site where the body of a 13-year-old Christian boy Andrei Iushchinskii was found. The Beilis Affair divided all of Russia between supporters of the case against Beilis, and those who believed in his innocence and thought that the accusation that Jews committed ritual murders was nonsense and a great embarrassment for the country.

The Beilis Affair and trial were widely debated in the press in the Russian Empire and abroad. Several novels and scholarly books have been published about the Beilis Affair;