

Georgian moonlight, feeling simultaneously the landscape's oriental exoticism and an affection for its complex Georgianness.

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“Poniatiiia o Rossii”: K istoricheskoi semantike imperskogo perioda. Volumes I and II. Ed. Aleksei I. Miller, Denis A. Sdvizhkov, and Ingrid Shirle [Schierle]. *Studia Europaea*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie and Deutsches Historisches Institut, 2012. 576, 496 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Hard bound.

The history of concepts (*Begriffsgeschichte*) has become an established methodological approach in the study of imperial Russia, and in these two volumes—the work of twenty-six scholars from Russia, Germany, Israel, the United States, Hungary, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom—editors Aleksei I. Miller, Denis A. Sdvizhkov, and Ingrid Schierle provide a thoughtful sampling of its rich possibilities. Based on a conference sponsored by the German Historical Institute in Moscow, the collection covers subjects such as legislation and juridical practice; social stratification; society and the public sphere; nation (*natsiia*), empire, and the organization of space; and finally, people (*narod*) and race. The chronological parameters run from the late seventeenth to the early twentieth century with the bulk of attention focused on the imperial period from the reign of Peter the Great to the revolutions of 1917. The general quality of all the essays is high, the research rigorous, and the analysis enlightening. Almost any historian working on Russia, regardless of his or her subspecialty, will find useful and much-needed information in these volumes.

To begin the discussion the editors provide a succinct and clear overview of the development of *Begriffsgeschichte* (conceptual history in the Anglophone world and the study of discourse in France) from the 1950s to the present, including its application to the history of Russia. Initially an attempt to discipline the language/categories used by historians and to explain the transition to modernity (1750–1850) through semantic analysis, the history of concepts became a bridge between social and cultural history as well as a window on the development of social and political thought. Interdisciplinary and internationalized (the translation of concepts from foreign languages is also considered), the history of concepts foregrounds stimulating questions such as the relationship of language to reality, the relationship between social and semantic change, the historical circumstances and experience embodied in specific concepts, how words are used, how usages change over time, and finally, who uses particular concepts and for what purpose.

A combination of social history, linguistics, cultural history, and the history of ideas, *Begriffsgeschichte* has been criticized for methodological confusion and the eclectic use of sources. In the Russian case synthesis is not yet possible, and the resources needed to produce a comprehensive dictionary of Russian historical concepts based on German and French models are not likely to become available. But as the editors point out, despite the need for extensive data collection, and despite the variety of interests and methodologies represented in the essays published here, the history of concepts produces foundational work that opens the door to innovative trajectories of research and to more precise analysis of sources. That an overarching *Begriffsgeschichte*—whether defined concretely as micro-studies of specific concepts or as analysis of a cluster of concepts in relation to each other—cannot be completed without an army of researchers supported over the long duration does not detract from the value of this and similar projects.

The essays contained in these volumes show very clearly that the *Begriffsge-*

schichte approach yields interesting results applicable to a range of scholarly endeavors. The six essays contained in part 1 focus on legal concepts and consider topics such as the distinction between God's law, natural law, and state law; changes in the understanding of fundamental laws and constitutions; the appearance of personal (*lichnye*) crimes as a category in criminal law; and the relationship between being a subject (*poddanstvo*) and citizenship (*grazhdanstvo*), which also touches on questions of naturalization. The essays cover developments from the mid-seventeenth century into the twentieth and will be of interest to historians of political, legal, and imperial thought and institutions. The three essays in part 2 add problems of social stratification that are also important for historians of society and social thought. Although limited to the "middle rank" or "middle sort" and to the concept of class, these chapters shed light on the broader history of the educated classes, intelligentsia, and economy. Of special interest is the elucidation of how the concepts of class and class conflict became significant in Russian thought long before the arrival of Marxist theory. Part 3, consisting of six essays, tackles the elusive question of society and the public sphere, concepts that in recent decades have attracted the attention of social, cultural, and political historians. Ranging from eighteenth-century virtue to nineteenth- and twentieth-century liberalism and freedom of conscience, the essays range across diversified intellectual terrain. Among the approaches on display is an extensive discussion of social action, public opinion, and the public that highlights the impact of censorship, authoritarian government, and communications networks on the formation of society. Equally insightful are essays that trace processes of political polarization through the prism of discourse on liberalism and religious toleration.

Part 4 introduces the second volume of this study, adding to the discussion of political and social concepts the effects of nineteenth-century ethnonationalism. The four essays in this section cover a variegated range of subjects, reminding the reader of how exercises in Begriffsgeschichte can take off and become self-sustaining, as the history of one concept touches on, indeed often depends on, the history of others. This is evident from a study of the concept of nation (*natsiia*), which cannot be understood apart from categories such as *narod*, *narodnost'*, *natsional'nost'*, and *natsionalizm*, all of which must in turn be considered from different points on the political/ideological spectrum of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian thought. A similar exponential effect is evident in discussions of empire and imperial consciousness, concepts that branch off into the semantic fields of civilization and barbarity or into the politico-administrative categories of federation, decentralization, and autonomy, again with reference to a range of political philosophies, ideologies, and social or political movements.

Continuing the exponential effect, the six essays in part 5 move into the sensitive terrain of people (*narod*), nation (*natsiia*), and race, including nineteenth- and twentieth-century classifications of human beings based on biological and cultural characteristics. The articles in this last section challenge non-Russian and Soviet historiographies that downplay the significance of racialist theories in nineteenth-century intellectual life. Several authors who focus on academic discourse argue that both chronologically and conceptually Russian and western European discourses of race remained closely integrated. From the late eighteenth century onward, Russian translators and scholars working in the fields of natural history and ethnography incorporated the category of race and other related concepts into their vocabulary and analysis. In the political sphere, the relationship between legal-administrative categories such as *inorodtsy* and *tuzemtsy*, on the one hand, and the realities of constituting a national/ethnic minority or a local minority community/culture group, on the other, is emphasized by contributors who bring specific regions and ethnic groups into the discussion: Siberia, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians (or "Little Russians").

Not unlike the totality of these volumes, the essays that make up part 5 pull the reader in multiple directions. Clearly, there exists a pressing need for historians to sort out and distinguish the legal-administrative, political, cultural/religious, and ethnic/racist understandings and usages of the Russian imperial lexicon (not to mention the lexicons of indigenous peoples, minorities, and regions). Surely, given the diverse and massive array of conceptual possibilities, historical implications, geographical variations, and empirical realities—all illustrated by these essays—there can be no question but that the decades-old attention of “younger” scholars (and their precursors such as Marc Raeff, Andreas Kappeler, and Seymour Becker) to research topics related to empire and nationality is fully justified and far from being exhausted as an area in need of empirical and conceptual work. To the contrary, study of the regions and minorities of the Russian and Soviet empires is just beginning to reach the critical mass that will allow scholars to engage in synthesis and historiographical debate. The articles on nation and race thus give less-informed scholars such as this reviewer a taste of just how much empirical knowledge has been gained and just how much remains to be discovered.

The exercises in Begriffsgeschichte contained in these two volumes illustrate the infinitely rich and enlightening insights associated with the method. As with any collection of essays—and this is a particularly voluminous one—it is sometimes difficult to see the forest for the trees. For that very reason, however, scholars and students of Russian history and culture are likely to find discussions of sources and categories that are relevant to numerous topics of study already under way. For those in search of a topic, there is also the possibility of encountering a hint or suggestion that may help to light the way. Congratulations to the German Historical Institute for its unique approach to the support of Russian studies and to all the scholars involved in this project.

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Kampf um Wort und Schrift: Russifizierung in Osteuropa im 19.– 20. Jahrhundert.

Ed. Zaur Gasimov. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, Abteilung für Universalgeschichte, no. 90. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2012. 213 pp. Notes. Index. Tables. €44.95, hard bound.

In view of the editor’s goal of critically differentiating the concept of “Russifications” (in plural), which he outlines in the introduction, the lineup of authors and the corresponding states, nations, and time frames chosen for the case studies is somewhat problematic. Seven out of nine case studies focus on the (early) Soviet period, two on the second half of the nineteenth century. The term *Osteuropa* in the title, moreover, promises a much wider scope. Apart from Malte Rolf’s chapter on tsarist Poland, geographically none of the authors ventures beyond the western border of Russia or the USSR. The authors are all well-known country experts, and some of them old hands in the field of nationalism studies. In addition, they are all historians, but their actual approaches to the subject differ widely—too widely for a slim volume on such a gargantuan subject.

Andreas Frings focuses on Soviet policies (again, in plural) of Cyrillization of alphabets in the 1930s. On the basis of his PhD thesis, Frings argues convincingly against a grand strategy of linguistic Russification (both against the grand strategy and against the singular). In line with the overall message of this volume, he demonstrates that the switch to the Latin script for many minority languages had not been a premeditated move to prepare the ground for eventual Cyrillization and Russifica-