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Review Of "Imperial Russia: New Histories For The Empire" Edited By J. Burbank And D. Ransel

Robert Weinberg

Swarthmore College, rweinbe1@swarthmore.edu

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Review

Author(s): Robert Weinberg

Review by: Robert Weinberg

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Much of the work is based on an exhaustive study of the approximately 308 Old Rus' coins currently known. Two hoards (at Nižyn and Kiev) account for all but 68 of these coins. The coins are grouped by reigns, types, and every other conceivable arrangement. Fourteen pages of high-gloss illustrative plates provide extraordinarily clear pictures of every feature that Pritsak discusses. I am not aware of better use of such illustrative materials anywhere else.

As might be anticipated, Pritsak goes to some length to demonstrate that there were two parallel monetary systems in Rus', one in the south (the Kiev region, influenced by Byzantium) and the other in the north (the Novgorod region, "in response to the German-Scandinavian economic challenge," 52). Thus numismatically there was no unified Kievan Russian state—and presumably on at least that score there is no historical basis for a unified Ukrainian–Great Russian state. Pritsak does not deny, of course, that there was intercourse between Kiev and Novgorod along the route from the Varangians to the Greeks.

Along the way, many other issues are discussed. Pritsak does much to demonstrate that the Khazars had a monetary economy. The Old Russian *kuna* primarily means "money" and not "pelt"; *bel'* means "pure silver coin," not "squirrel skin." The spelling on coins of Kiev's two most important rulers was always "Vladimir," not "Volodimer," the Ukrainian preference (93–94).

The appearance of this work (on which Pritsak began working in 1977) renews my hope that the projected volumes 2 through 6 of the author's magisterial *Origins of Rus'* will someday see the light of day.

RICHARD HELLIE
University of Chicago

Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire. Ed. Jane Burbank and David L. Ransel. Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998. xxiii, 359 pp. Notes. Index. Photographs. \$39.95, hard bound. \$24.95, paper.

Culled from a series of workshops held during the first half of the 1990s, the essays in this volume seek to reenvision the history of the Russian empire from the time of Peter the Great through the era of the Great Reforms. The essays are impressive in terms of research, conceptualization, and analysis. They succeed in forcing the reader to rethink the accepted story lines and narratives about many characteristics and dynamics of imperial Russian society, culture, and politics. Each essay stands on its own individual merits, but as a whole the assembled collection demonstrates the benefits of imaginatively interrogating sources and wisely borrowing from other academic disciplines and methodologies.

Space does not permit me to provide a summary of the twelve essays that make up the book. Nor can I do justice to the stimulating and nuanced analyses offered by the volume's contributors, established and junior scholars alike. All kinds of historical inquiry—cultural, political, social, institutional, economic, and intellectual—are represented in this collection. The volume does not pretend to treat all aspects of imperial Russian society, culture, and politics, and not all social groups are represented in the essays.

Part 1 has articles on kinship and autocratic politics in the early eighteenth century (Valerie A. Kivelson), the idea of autocracy among eighteenth-century Russian historians (Cynthia Hyla Whitaker), and the imperial family as political symbol (Richard Wortman). Part 2, entitled "Imperial Imagination," contains articles on proposals for a Russian national museum in the nineteenth century (Kevin Tyner Thomas) and on the role of ethnography in the activities of the Russian Geographical Society on the eve of the Great Reforms (Nathaniel Knight). Part 3 is less unified in theme than the previous sections. Two essays concentrate on imperial rule, empire building, and colonization (Thomas M. Barrett and Willard Sunderland), one on the serf economy and family structure (Steven L. Hoch), and a final article on the Orthodox Church and popular religiosity (Gregory L. Freeze). The last section has contributions on the history of an eighteenth-century provincial merchant family (David L. Ransel), Freemasonry and the emergence of public opin-

ion in Catherinian Russia (Douglas Smith), and the journalistic discussion of suicide in the era of the Great Reforms (Irina Paperno).

Jane Burbank and David Ransel have written a valuable introduction that prepares readers for what they will encounter in the articles. Burbank's excellent conclusion not only draws together the common threads joining the disparate essays but also highlights questions unanswered by these essays. Graduate students and others in quest of research topics should find much in this volume to stimulate them and suggest potentially fruitful fields of inquiry.

Unfortunately, readers may be familiar with many of the arguments presented in the collection because some of the authors have already published their results elsewhere. Still, it is useful that Indiana University Press has gathered distilled versions of their research under one cover. *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire* should find a welcome home in advanced undergraduate and graduate courses that seek to introduce students to recent trends in the literature on the history of imperial Russia. As these articles attest, the study of Russia in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is alive and well. The editors point out that historians no longer have to contend with the official, Soviet ideological and interpretive framework that frequently shaped their research agendas and influenced the questions they asked, as well as their accessibility to materials. As Burbank and Ransel write:

For historians eager to move out from the long shadow cast over the tsarist period by the Soviet project and, at the same time, willing to investigate revisionist narratives before proclaiming them, the 1990s offered a chance to reexcavate the historic site of imperial Russia with new imagination and attentiveness. If the "road to revolution" and "crisis of the old regime" could be jettisoned as blueprints for research . . . historians could then ask a variety of new questions and produce fresh, even if explicitly tentative, interpretations of the imperial past (xii).

The dissolution of Soviet power and the opening of archives in the former Soviet Union ensure the sustenance of the study of imperial Russian society, culture, and politics for the foreseeable future.

ROBERT WEINBERG
Swarthmore College

Russian Corporate Capitalism from Peter the Great to Perestroika. By Thomas C. Owen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. xii, 259 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Map. \$55.00, hard bound.

This is an interesting book, although one that gives the appearance of being somewhat unbalanced. It contains four substantive chapters, an introduction, a lengthy conclusion, and a description of a very extensive database in the appendix. The book spans an enormous period, but it does not cover this period evenly. Two chapters are devoted to the pre-World War I period—"Corporations in the Russian Empire, 1700–1914" and "Corporate Entrepreneurs and Managers, 1821–1914"—and then there is a great leap forward to chapters on "Perestroika and the Failure of Soviet Capitalism, 1985–1990" and on "Capitalism and Xenophobia in Russia." The most superficial reader is tempted to ask what happened to Russian corporate capitalism during World War I and the period of the provisional government, when some of its leading figures controlled much of the government. The exclusion of these critical periods is difficult to justify in a survey that claims to span the period from Peter the Great to perestroika. There is also the question of whether elements of corporate capitalism were present in the Soviet period in state capitalism and the New Economic Policy (NEP). The reader cannot help getting the impression that this is a book that cobbles together the author's prime interest in prerevolutionary corporate history with his interest in modern developments and that it conveniently ignores the rest. This is strange, because Owen's admirable book, *The Corporation under Russian Law, 1800–*