

public participation into public life. In the process, they challenged the idea that the Soviet Union was averse to all forms of public participation that it could not strictly control or plan.

One of the unanswered questions in this study is the extent to which the improvised public responses to these disasters actually shaped and changed the Soviet system after the disasters had occurred. As the author notes, the improvised response had “its limits” (7) but just what these limits were is not always clear. Moreover, at least as presented in each of the case studies, there seemed to be little learning from one disaster to another in a way that would take lessons learned and apply it to the next case. The conclusion suggests that Soviet volunteering in the wake of the disasters rarely “built a lasting sense of community” (213). Ultimately, Soviet bureaucracies seemed incapable of communicating their experiences to other agencies and their successors. This point underscores the communication challenge in a system that limited rather than encouraged information exchange. “Somehow the authoritarian state was unwilling to admit that it could learn from previous mistakes . . .” (120). For this reviewer, at least, the system’s inability to learn from past experiences and pass that knowledge on is one of the book’s most interesting findings.

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***Russia and Its Northeast Asian Neighbors: China, Japan, and Korea, 1858–1945.***

Ed. Kimitaka Matsuzato. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017. xxi, 200 pp. Notes.

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In recent years the Far East, with its eventful history at the crossroads between empires, has attracted the attention of researchers from around the globe as a venue to study processes of exchange, adaptation, and reciprocal influences, but also as differentiation beyond mere geographical borders. The book under review strives to contribute to this research in a number of ways. First, it focuses on interrelationships between Russia and its Asian neighbors. In particular it strives “to place Russia and the Soviet Union in a legitimate place in Northeast Asian History” and thus to fill a “historiographical blank” (vii). Its contributors are interested particularly in transnational, as opposed to international, relations. Second, it aims to make Japanese research on this world region more visible and accessible to western academics. Therefore, the majority of the contributors are Japanese. It is the explicit aim of the editors to overcome academic fragmentation between east and west, as well as between different branches of area studies.

The contributions stretch from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth, when the Japanese Empire collapsed after the Second World War. Some articles look at state actors and institutions (see, for example, Shinichi Fumoto, Iaroslav Shulatov), as well as “common” people on the ground (see, for example, Catherine Ladds, Andreas Renner, Michiko Ikuta). The book touches upon a diverse range of topics, like treaties, the media, the economy, borders and border control, and migration.

The book can be divided into roughly four parts. The first addresses Japanese and Chinese reactions to Russia’s expansion into the Far East. The first article by Shinichi Fumoto studies the importance of Russia in Japan’s Korean policy in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his article, Susumu Tsukase also deals with the impact of Russia’s strategy of expansion in the region. He demonstrates how

Russia's advance into Manchuria pressured China to introduce a series of administrative reforms, which consequently led to the collapse of the Eight Banner System and the Qing Dynasty.

The second part focuses on the time around the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway at the turn of the twentieth century, a time of intense competition and rivalry, but also cooperation and collaboration, among diverse powers and imperial interests. The first two articles in this section focus on the Chinese Maritime Customs Service as the "central pillar of Western imperialism in China" (xi). In her contribution, Catherine Ladds analyzes how the construction of the railway affected the custom service's hiring policy. Yukimura Sakon's starting point is the controversy over shipping rights on the Amur and the Sungari between Britain, Russia, and China, which was a concern not only between states, but also between the center and periphery of the Tsarist Empire. Divergent interests between the Russian central government and local business interests are the focus of Masafumi Asada's article, which invokes the example of the two port cities Vladivostok and Dal'nii.

The third section focuses on the relationship between Russia and Japan, and analyzes each party's perception of the respective "other." Dimitrii B. Pavlov's article centers on efforts in the propaganda war between Russia and Japan at the time of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 to influence public opinion locally and in the west. Andreas Renner uses the memoirs and writings of Russian prisoners of war and their representations of the good treatment at the hands of the Japanese to analyze Russians' perception of Japan. The last article in this section by Yoshiro Ikeda focuses on representations of Japanese imperial funerals and coronations in the Russian press as a mirror of internal Russian debates and conflicts over the continuation of the Romanov dynasty.

The fourth section tackles experiences of Russians in, and their knowledge about, the Far East in a longer-term perspective. In her contribution, Michiko Ikuta focuses on one of the focal points of research on transcultural processes in Manchuria: the city of Harbin. Ikuta analyzes the relationship between two segments of the Russian population: Soviet employees of the Chinese Eastern Railway and stateless Russian émigrés, emphasizing their interrelationships rather than segregation. The last article by Yaroslav Shulatov centers on Viktor Kopp, the first Soviet ambassador to Japan after the signing of the Basic Convention of January 1925. Shulatov argues that Kopp's proposed policy of divided spheres of interest in Manchuria shows continuities between the knowledge acquired during the tsarist era and the thinking of at least some Soviet officials, like Kopp.

As ever with edited volumes, the individual contributions vary in depth, but in light of the editor's goal there are two more fundamental points to criticize. First, not all the articles reflect the most current literature, with recent work not always being taken into consideration. This is somewhat disappointing considering the editor's aim to overcome academic divides. Second, the contextual focus of the book is Russia and Japan. This probably stems from the editor's intention to primarily promote Japanese research. Unfortunately, this has led to China, in particular, being somewhat underrepresented. Only Tsukase accords China a central role. The intensive and active interrelationships on international and transnational levels between China and Russia, especially in the context of the Chinese Eastern Railway, are a blind spot. Overall, however, this edited volume is a valuable contribution to the academic endeavor of writing an integrated history of Northeast Asia and highlighting the interplay between the three main actors in the Far East. It presents "a genuine macro-regional history," not a "medley of national histories" (ix).

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