

Campbell, Ian W. *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire: Kazak Intermediaries and Russian Rule on the Steppe, 1731-1917*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2017. 288 pp. (ISBN-13: 978-1501700798)

At the time of the Russian's eastward expansion and empire-building attempts in the first part of the eighteenth century, Kazak tribes primarily dominated the Central Asian Steppe. During the sixteenth century, these tribes formed themselves into three nomadic confederations known as "hordes." These competing hordes comprised the Kazaks, namely the *Ulu* (Large, Great, or Senior), the *Orta* (Middle) and the *Kisbi* (Small, Lesser, or Junior). The hordes controlled a vast stretch of steppe encompassing over 3,000 kilometers from the Volga River and the Caspian Sea in the west to the Altai and Tien Shan mountain ranges in the east and southeast. However, political, social, cultural, and demographic shifts profoundly altered the nature of the steppe and Central Asian society from the tsarist conquest of 1865 to 1917. It is essential to acknowledge that Russia was an inexperienced imperial juggernaut when it comes to Central Eurasia. Correspondingly, it is essential to decipher the impact of Russian imperial conquest on its Central Asian periphery.

Ian W. Campbell, an associate professor of history at the University of California-Davis, delves into the intricate connections between knowledge and imperial policy making on the Kazak steppes to investigate how the Russians sought better ways to govern the newly acquired territories in Central Eurasia. To this end, the author provides an excellent narrative on the production of knowledge about the local traditions/practices on the Kazak steppes and relies on a rich array of both Russian and Kazak language sources. Campbell's research is eloquently presented within an interpretative framework to explain the transformations and interactions taking place in Central Eurasia. Perhaps more importantly, the monograph represents the continuity of a flourishing scholarship throughout the post-Soviet period,

equally utilizing non-Russian language sources. In *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire*, Campbell specifically centers the analysis on the role of Kazak intermediaries as Tsarist Russian control became firmly entrenched on the Kazak steppe.

The main arguments of the monograph are consolidated in six well-delineated chapters. Chapter I provides the fundamentals of nomadic society on the steppes by focusing on its environmental and geographic confinement along with a particular emphasis on the tsarist administrators' inadequate perceptions of the steppes. Chapter II addresses the tsarist administration's attempts to overcome these deficiencies through the formation of two institutions, namely the General Staff and the Imperial Russian Geographical Society. To this end, the publication of the Provisional Statute of 1868 was the administration's official recognition of unfamiliarity with the local context. Chapter III provides a biographical study of ethnographer and educator Ibrai Altynsarin to identify the empowerment process of the local actors vis-à-vis knowledge production in tsarist administrative circles. The necessity

to further the imperial knowledgebase to govern the territory effectively and thoroughly provided an excellent opportunity for Kazaks to affect the policy choices and outcomes of the tsarist administration.

Chapter IV's focal point is to reveal the *Mission Civilisatrice* of the Russian imperial forces on the steppe and its claims to represent a technologically and scientifically much superior civilization than its local counterparts. The influence of the Western Enlightenment period and its subsequent implications for Russian sociopolitical, economic, scientific, and technological advancements promoted this historical development. Chapter V focuses on a series of statistical research expeditions to Central Asia, which in turn, formed the basis of peasant colonization without harming the interests of the nomadic Kazaks. It would be fair to argue that, at *in-de-siècle*, the transformations regarding the transportation infrastructure such as the construction of railroads across the vast steppe of Central Eurasia coupled with the emancipation reform of 1861 did present another golden opportunity for imperial Russia. The tsarist administration became increasingly focused on turning the steppe into an area of peasant settlement, which in turn created some restrictions for Kazaks to influence policy. Finally, Chapter VI investigates the economic and political disassociation of the local Central Asian populace from the Russian Empire and their struggles to discover a purpose for themselves while guaranteeing their welfare.

There is no doubt that Russian colonial expansion in Central Eurasia is witnessing a rapidly growing scholarship. Adeb Khalid's *The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia* (1998), Virginia Martin's *Law and Custom in the Steppe: The Kazakhs of the Middle Horde and Russian Colonialism in the Nineteenth Century* (2000), and Jeff Sahadeo's *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865-1823* (2007) are just a few examples. Campbell's monograph, *Knowledge and the Ends of Empire: Kazak Intermediaries and Russian Rule on the Steppe, 1731–1917*, is the latest valuable addition to this scholarship. To truly appreciate Campbell's book, readers should be familiar with the general history of the late Russian Empire. The book contributes unquestionably to the academic literature on Russian colonialism. It is a must-read for specialists and graduate students focusing on Russian eastward colonial expansion in general, and Central Eurasia in particular. Most certainly, the book yields an exceptionally compelling account on the role of the Kazak intermediaries in shaping imperial policies.

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