

and abbreviated; moreover, the volume lacks a bibliography, and it contains multiple typographical errors and reveals poor editing of both the text and notes. Such cost-saving measures on the part of Cornell University Press do a disservice to the book and the profession. Despite these limitations, however, *Murder Most Russian* makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of the development of the Russian legal system, the intersection of crime and culture, and the transition to modernity in late imperial Russia.

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***Asie centrale: L'invention des frontières et l'héritage russo-soviétique.*** By Svetlana Gorshenina. Espaces et milieux. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2012. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Figures. Tables. Maps. €27.00, paper.

There seem to be as many definitions of “Central Asia” in the English language as there are countries that comprise the region. Part of the confusion comes from its relative isolation from the Atlantic world, not to mention the modern era’s geopolitical upheavals. Indeed, the term itself is fairly recent, having originated with the Prussian geographer Alexander von Humboldt 150 years ago (as *Zentralasien*). While most demarcations include the five republics that constituted Soviet Central Asia, opinions differ widely about which other nations belong. What about Xinjiang? Afghanistan? Mongolia?

The area’s imprecise geography is the subject of Svetlana Gorshenina’s intriguing new book. As its subtitle suggests, the work focuses on the five newly independent “stans.” Part *Ideengeschichte* and part political history, *Asie centrale* examines how Russians considered, conquered, and carved up their southern frontier colonies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While a substantial monograph, it is only part of a much broader inquiry that also addresses the history of the concept of Central Asia and its geographical representations, “from Tartary to Central Asia”: “De la Tartarie à l’Asie centrale: La cœur d’un continent dans l’histoire des idées entre la cartographie et la géopolitique,” her doctoral dissertation (Université Paris I and Université de Lausanne, 2007).

The book consists of three parts. The first substantial chapter, “Les projets russes de progression vers l’Asie,” begins with a brief chronology of the tsarist absorption of Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand. There are no surprises here, but Gorshenina then goes on to examine the ways various contemporaries thought about the area and, more important, how they explained and justified conquest. There were various reasons, from the “natural” and “spontaneous” to protection against hostile nomadic raids or beating Great Britain to the punch. She is careful to point out that there were dissenters, most notably the cautious foreign minister Prince Aleksandr Gorchakov.

Ultimately, Gorshenina suggests, there was something inevitable about the process: “Geography favors Russian expansion: Without any continental interruptions or major physical obstacles that might hamper the ambitions of the conquerors, Russian statesmen always think that they are expanding *their* borders rather than annexing the lands of *others*” (45). The fact that much of the area was inhabited by nomads whose notions of territory were very different from those of more settled polities greatly simplified the process. She concludes that imperial Russia was not so different in this respect from other large continental states facing less well-organized populations on their marches: “Without fail, the reasoning of military men on the frontier became a logic of the state [*une logique d’état*] in Russia in the same way that the British expanded in India or the Americans in their west” (186).

Ideas are one thing. Putting them into practice is another. In a particularly valuable chapter, Gorshenina studies the occupation of the Ili Valley in 1871 as a case study in how the two intersect. What makes this section so unique is that it is based on a close reading of one of the most important Russian archival sources for the conquest of Central Asia, Colonel Andrian Serebrennikov's *Turkestanskii krai: Sbornik materialov dlia istorii ego zavoevaniia* (The Turkestan Region: A Collection of Materials for the History of Its Conquest). Even the most thoroughly documented Soviet history of the tsarist Central Asian campaigns, Naftula Khalfin's *Prisoedinenie Srednei Azii k Rossii* (The Joining of Central Asia to Russia, 1965), largely ignores the question. As with other exploits in Turkestan, the sources suggest that the initiative came from "the man on the spot," in this case Governor-General Konstantin von Kaufman. Unfortunately, Gorshenina does not go on to explain the more unusual aspect of the question—namely, why did Russia return the Ili Valley to China in 1881? The fact that Serebrennikov's collection ends in 1876 may be an explanation for this omission.

The remaining chapters discuss how Russian and Soviet authorities set the new colony's boundaries, both external and internal. While Gorshenina refrains from excessive theorizing, she does remind us that borders are "invented"; thus, there are no natural frontiers. Much as in Africa at the time, neither geography nor ethnicity played much of a role in the capital's considerations. Administrative efficiency and the need to avoid conflicts with the other powers largely guided how the map was drawn. The early Soviet era, which also receives much attention in this work, was no exception. While the author does stress that local elites played a role, *divide et impera* was clearly behind Moscow's decision to split the region up into separate "republics."

Provocative and exhaustively documented, *Asie centrale* makes a valuable addition to our understanding of the shape of modern Central Asia, not to mention the Russian empire. I look forward to seeing the remainder of Gorshenina's study in print.

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***Bukhara and the Muslims of Russia: Sufism, Education, and the Paradox of Islamic Prestige.*** By Allen J. Frank. Brill's Inner Asian Library, vol. 26. Leiden: Brill, 2012. vii, 215 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$133.00, hard bound.

Based on a range of Tatar and Bashkir as well as Russian and Central Asian sources, this erudite and well-written book proposes a history of the emotional and intellectual relationships between the Hanafi Sunni Muslim clerisy of Russia and the Islamic religious schools of Bukhara from the period of Islamic religious practice's liberalization under Catherine II to the Bolsheviks' seizure of power. By paying attention to the continuities and changes in representation among scholars of Islam, the author examines the impacts of a succession of legal, economic, and political upheavals—from the evolution of Russian legal policies towards Muslim communities to the industrial revolution in Russia and the expansion of Tatar and Bashkir commerce in Central Asia—on Russian Muslims' stereotypes of Central Asia.

Among the sources of Bukharan prestige, Allen J. Frank cites the Sufi tradition, which was nurtured by the use of Central Asian saints as ancestral figures in Tatar and Bashkir genealogies. The *sayyid* and *khwaja* connections are mentioned despite the scarcity of historical studies on these high-status groups of descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun, the first four Righteous Caliphs, in the Volga-Ural region. Among the book's most captivating contributions is a subchapter on Bukharan fashion and cosmetics. The author highlights the self-conscious dimension of these adoptions, observing that the fashion for the *chapan* from the mid-eighteenth cen-