

THE IMPERIAL TURN IN RUSSIAN STUDIES:

TEN YEARS LATER

ИМПЕРСКИЙ ПОВОРОТ В РУСИСТИКЕ:

ДЕСЯТЬ ЛЕТ СПУСТЯ

1. Do you see/recognize the importance and relevance of studying western colonial empires and of postcolonial theory for exploring the past of the Russian Empire or of certain regions that had been part of the Russian Empire? How would you evaluate the impact of the Central Asian studies field on Russian/Soviet studies? How useful for Russian studies is the recent trend in British imperial history that scrutinizes influences of colonial sociopolitical developments on the metropole? How useful might the study of “non-classic” empires (such as Russian, Habsburg, etc) for the study of transoceanic overseas empires be? What can the field of Russian imperial history offer to historians of the German, French, British, or American empires in terms of comparative perspectives and theoretical insights?

Считаете ли Вы важным и продуктивным обращение к истории западных колониальных империй и к постколониальной теории для изучения прошлого Российской империи или отдельных регионов, некогда входивших в ее состав? Как бы Вы оценили влияние среднеазиатских исследований на историографию России/СССР? Насколько важно для русистики наметившееся недавно течение в британской имперской истории, уделяющее особое внимание влиянию на метрополию со стороны социально-политических процессов, протекавших в колониях? Насколько может оказаться полезным изучение “неклассических” империй (Российской, Габсбургской и пр.) для изучения заморских империй? Что может предложить историкам Германской, Французской, Британской или Американской империй российская новая имперская история в смысле компаративной перспективы и теоретических инсайтов?

Sheila Fitzpatrick, USA

I am all in favor of bringing comparative perspectives to bear on the Russian empire. But it seems a bit like motherhood and apple pie: who is going to be against it?

One of the interesting developments in the scholarship of the past few years is the emergence of a new field of “Eurasian” history, meaning in practice the history of borderland regions where the Russian empire has historically overlapped/fought/coexisted with other empires (Central Asia, the Caucasus, etc). In the course of searching at the University of Chicago for an Imperial (in the sense of 18th–19th century) Russian historian, we were surprised to come across a subfield of “Eurasianists” whose primary research language was Russian but who were really not interested in the Russian metropolis per se, only in their particular region. In addition to knowing local languages, these scholars also tend to know the language of the adjacent imperial power (Ottoman Turkish, etc). It would be interesting to know if this “Eurasian” subfield has its counterparts in Middle Eastern, Chinese, and Indian history, and if so, whether a community is emerging of Eurasianists with different primary research languages (Russian, Turkish, Chinese, etc).

Paul Werth, USA

There is quite a lot in this question – an entire conference, perhaps! In many ways these are the core questions of our subfield. No doubt, consideration of western empires and postcolonial theory is important for our work, though I myself probably do less of both than I should. Here I think it is critical to observe the specificities of western colonial empires and some of the presuppositions – many of them perfectly legitimate – lurking behind postcolonial theory. I am reminded of the subtitle of the important and programmatic Stoler/Cooper volume *Tensions of Empire*: “colonial cultures in a bourgeois world.” I have always thought that the “bourgeois” part of the equation is quite important, as it presupposes a certain set of characteristics of the metropolitan societies in question. Imperial Russia, at least in its late-imperial incarnation, included some of these elements, but far from all of them. And of course, the further back we go in time, the less “bourgeois” Russia becomes. The retention of the *soslovie* order (albeit in an evolving and modified form) until the Bolshevik revolution (and thus the absence, as such, of a body of citizens and of a class system characteristic of countries like Britain), the lack of real political representation until the

past decade, the persistence of the custodial state, the continued reliance on religious institutions and provisions for the tasks of imperial governance, and so forth – all of these things are crucial for understanding the character and functioning of Russia as a distinctly imperial polity. What this means is that the approaches from “the West” (if I can use that shorthand to designate the cluster of analytical concerns that have animated the study of western colonial empires for the past two decades or so) need to be applied critically with real attention to the specificities of the Russian case. This observation is neither radical nor new, but it seems crucial to keep in mind.

This point actually connects to the issue of Central Asia. Readers of course recall the debate in *Kritika* between Khalid and Knight about the applicability of Said to the Russian case. I think both scholars made excellent points that need to be kept in mind. Few seem to have noticed – at least as it seems to me – the importance of the different chronological and geographical starting points of the two scholars. Many have noted that Central Asia was the case in Russia most akin to western colonialism. This is true both chronologically and in terms of the distance between colony and metropole (whereby the steppes and deserts can be compared, roughly, to the oceans in the western cases). I do not find it surprising, then, that Khalid would find Said more relevant, and Knight – less. Any scholar concerned with the imperial experience of Central Asia (and here by “imperial” I mean conquest by a European-style external power) is, willy-nilly, dealing with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – thus with the age of the “new imperialism.” Russia was an active participant in that age and its preoccupations, but once one turns to Russia’s older imperial territories – all the more so if one does so for earlier periods, as Knight was doing – there are earlier trajectories and patterns that have their own logic, one that predates the “new imperialism.” To be sure, the concerns of late nineteenth-century European imperialism affect all cases to one degree or another, but the previously existing layers of experience create a different dynamic, one that reveals a certain resistance to the concerns of the “new imperialism.” This observation, incidentally, suggests that the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (and for that matter the seventeenth and even earlier) need to be taken much more seriously than they often are. Such attention is one of the things that I have always admired about Kappeler’s work, since he began in the early modern period and has always exhibited a strong historical sensibility about longer-term trajectories. Likewise, a major advantage of Robert Crews’s work is its attention to such longer-term patterns, while also recognizing the impact of newer configurations. In short, Central Asia seems the case that allows for

the most comparison with European empires, especially if one is concerned with finding convergences with western European colonial practices. And that kind of investigation should certainly be pursued. But those doing that should recognize the specificity of Central Asia within the larger Russian imperial whole, rather than supposing that this case reveals the “essence” Russian imperial rule in some “genuine” form.

This, in turn, leads to the question of the (potential) influence of scholarship about Russia on the study of the western cases. Central Asia offers the obvious entry points (Morrison’s recent book is a good example of such an approach), but then my concerns in the previous paragraph need also to be kept in mind – that is, the Central Asian case is only one case among several pertaining to Russia. The further west one goes in the Russian Empire, the more the models of the Habsburgs and perhaps the Ottomans become relevant. And it is also in the latter case – more so than in the case of the southern and eastern borderlands – that we see most directly, I think, the influence of “borderlands” on the “metropole” (if I can use those terms). Developments in Poland and the western provinces strike me as especially important in this regard. Likewise, for the country’s multiconfessional order, the case of Catholicism seems especially important, though comparatively few scholars have examined this (in notable contrast to the case of Islam). I think Mikhail Dolbilov’s forthcoming book will be especially important in this regard, just as Ted Weeks and Darius Staliunas have been very important up until this point. I am obviously not a specialist on western imperialism, but I have often wondered whether the claims for the constitutive character of the colonial experience on metropolitan developments have not been a bit oversold there. This is sooner a hunch than a well-founded observation, I admit, and I certainly acknowledge that the colonial experience was too often written out of metropolitan histories almost completely in the past. We should regard these claims with a certain skepticism – as we should all claims, of course – before applying them enthusiastically to Russia.

In the end I cannot help thinking that internal comparison – that is, comparison of developments within the Russian Empire itself – is still the most important task at the present stage. This is certainly how my own work is configured presently, and this gives me more than enough to think about. And of course the issue is not just one of comparison, as such, since so many of the same people were involved in administering different borderland territories (if we take the question of imperial management). We still need, I believe, the kinds of fundamental regional studies dealing with particular cases, preferably with reliance on local sources and local languages. This

does not do much, I admit, for putting us into dialogue with scholarship on the western cases, let alone for influencing them. But there is still a lot of learning that we have to do on the empire that we ourselves study, and my personal inclination is to focus on that.

Mark von Hagen, USA

As is probably evident from my own recent monograph and co-edited volumes of essays, I endorse strongly the study of what you have termed “nonclassic” empires, especially Habsburg and Ottoman together with the Russian empire (and perhaps yet another “nonclassic” empire, that of the Mongols); see the volume I co-edited with Karen Barkey (*After Empire*). Not only are these empires related as territorial/continental (and for the most part not overseas empires) but by virtue of their being contiguous with one another, their interactions across borders have been important, whether for the peoples and nations who lived on both sides of those borders or for the history of wars, trade, and intellectual exchange among them. But we have learned a great deal, I would argue, from the excellent literature on the classic empires, Britain and France above all, but also Spain, Germany, and Japan. The recent trend in British imperial history that highlights the influences of colonial sociopolitical developments on the metropole certainly has shown possibilities for students of the Russian and Soviet empires. (This has also been a trend in French imperial history, including the impact of the Haitian Revolution on the French Revolution back in the metropole and how citizenship was defined by the French.) One such possibility that we proposed in *Russian Empire* (with Jane Burbank and Anatoly Remnev) was to try to better understand the contribution of imperial elites in the borderlands and peripheral regions on the making of imperial policy and culture; religious (largely Orthodox but also Muslim), military, and civilian elites circulated from one region to another, sometimes transferring their insights and experience, sometimes modifying it (the Baltic German Governor-General von Kaufman in Turkestan, for example; or Archbishop Evlogii who descends on occupied L’vov during the first weeks of World War I). But we also know how experiments in peasant emancipation or local government reform had their origins in the western borderlands in particular. And even bigger questions, such as how reformable were the multiconfessional and multiethnic Russian and Soviet empires along more democratic lines? To what degree did empire preclude certain kinds of reform? Above all, as a community of scholars,

we have benefited from comparative studies of empire and nation, whether that be comparing Jewish and Ukrainian history, or Russian imperial and Habsburg history. And, yes, I do think that our colleagues who study other parts of the world are receptive to including material from our empires in their comparisons (see the fascinating collaboration of a husband–wife team, Fred Cooper, an Africanist, and Jane Burbank, a Russianist, in a new study of world empires and the management of difference). As to Central Asia, I think the field is still relatively new, but has already yielded some interesting insights into comparative imperial rule, including British, Russian, Mughal, and, more recently, United States involvement. In the field of German history, particularly its Nazi period, we have seen a new trend in treating Germany as empire (see Mark Mazower’s new *Hitler’s Empire*; and Wendy Lower’s book on the holocaust in Ukraine). If anything, such work not only raises fundamental questions about the old totalitarian comparative framework that equates Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia but also returns scholars to the early insights of Hannah Arendt in her classic study of totalitarianism, which included a long overlooked volume on imperialism.

Finally, a word of caution introduced at a recent roundtable discussion by our colleague Eric Lohr. For all the aspiration to a new comparative and transnational set of histories, we still have precious few such monographs authored by single historians. By contrast, we have a proliferation of very suggestive essays, articles and collective edited and co-edited volumes that are nonetheless offering outstanding research. This will no doubt remain the state of the art because of the very high demands on scholars for such genuinely comparative and transnational research: high levels of competence in several foreign languages, career flexibility to allow work in multiple archives in more than one country, as two most notable barriers to such research. Of course, outstanding monographs are rare in any field and in every generation, so this probably is not cause for despair today. But as we aspire to the noble aim of such transnational and comparative research, we ought not to be overly disappointed if the results of such aspirations are in shorter essays and collections of the work of scholars articulating different generational and national perspectives. This too is exciting scholarship and might be better accommodated by the review policies of our leading scholarly journals (and tenure and promotion processes at our universities and colleges).

Мальте Рольф, Германия¹

В контексте исследований Российской империи мне представляется чрезвычайно важным обращение к постколониальным теориям и конкретным работам, выполненным в их ключе. Исследования взаимодействия периферии и центра в Британской и Французской колониальных империях для меня лично имели не только большое познавательное значение. Как я полагаю, некоторые из представленных в них подходов вполне применимы к Российской империи, в частности тезис о колониях как лабораториях (модерных) практик управления, которые впоследствии оказывали влияние на имперский центр. В своих исследованиях я обращаюсь к интеракции монархий и империй на пространстве Центральной Европы (Габсбурги, Гогенцоллерны, Романовы). Обнаруживаемые здесь взаимозависимости могут быть интересны для имперских штудий, выходящих за рамки структурного компаратива и изучающих империю(ии) сквозь призму *entangled history*.

Светлана Горшенина, Франция

Да, я думаю, что опыт постколониальных исследований важен для изучения российской истории как в её периферийных/колониальных регионах, так и в метрополии, т.к. сложная система взаимодействий между центром и периферией задествовала и видоизменила мироощущение и самосознание и “колонизаторов”, и “колонируемых”. Во многом этот подход, предполагающий двухсторонние изменения, уже был продуктивно использован западными историками в ходе анализа европейских колониальных держав (в частности, в ходе анализа феноменов человеческих зоопарков, связи между экзотическим и эротическим танцем, в отношении рекламной “экзотизированной” продукции); по отношению к российской истории подобный двухсторонний подход только обозначил своё присутствие. Изучение различных аспектов этого взаимодействия, в частности на уровне визуальных клише, представляется продуктивным. Еще более интересным, думается, будет вписать анализ этих взаимоотношений в треугольник Европа – Россия – российские колонии (в моей случае – Средняя Азия), что даёт возможность проследить, как определенные ключевые идеи мигрировали в многостороннем направлении, меняя в ходе транснациональных и

¹ Перевод с немецкого А. Каплуновского.

внутригосударственных перемещений свою внутреннюю сущность, литературную и визуальную форму. Изучение культурного трансфера в этом гораздо более сложном контексте, где постколониальные теории должны будут применяться к “неклассическим” колониальным державам, должно добавить новые аспекты к пониманию теории Э. Саида, что, представляется, будет важно и для историков других, более “классических” европейских стран, т.к. это позволит сделать методологические подходы более совершенными.

Jane Burbank, USA

Briefly, the task of Russian historians is to set their empire’s history into a broader context of world history without simply adopting prefab “western” categories. We need to escape “we, too” history: we, too, have colonialism, internal colonialism, center/periphery distinctions, and so on. What counts in understanding the history of other empires for Russia is the ability to see both crosscutting similarities in imperial practices and distinctive features of various empires (not just Russia). A long-term historical awareness is essential. Russia was an empire from the beginning (Muscovy) and took on its shape as a polity as it absorbed and transformed political traditions from its imperial ancestors, neighbors, and competitors. Thus, my answer is, yes, do more world history, but do not simply “take” the categories offered by the historiography on other empires.

Заур Гасимов, Германия

Изучение истории Российской империи в контексте компаративного сопоставления с историческим развитием Британской, Французской, а также и Османской империй крайне важно. С учётом усилившейся миграции отдельных частей населения, представителей некоторых этносов, а также прослойки интеллигенции сравнение империй особенно важно при изучении истории “долгого” XIX века вплоть до 1918 года. Отчётливо это видится при анализе так называемых “периферий”, а также при более детальном исследовании биографий представителей интеллигенции. Сравнительный подход важен не только из-за возможности “трансфера” теорий, ранее уже использованных при изучении “западных” империй для изучения и лучшего понимания истории России, но и потому, что история империй является историей теснейшим образом друг с другом связанных государственных образований,

взаимодействующих между собой городов, культурных пространств² и индивидов.

Так, история Азербайджана – это история региона между империями, а следовательно, история переплетённая (*histoire croisée*). Но в таком виде она осмысливалась лишь американским историком Одри Альтштадт (*Audrey L. Altstadt*),³ американо-польским азербайджановедом Тадеушем Швентоховским (*Tadeusz Świętochowski*)⁴ и немецкими тюркологами Раулем Мотикой (*Raoul Motika*)⁵ (Гамбург) и Фолькером Адамом (*Volker Adam*)⁶ (Халле). Берлинский историк Эва-Мария Аух (*Eva-Maria Auch*)⁷ ввиду незнания азербайджанского и турецкого языков⁸ опиралась в

² Учитывать историческое развитие культурных и языковых пространств, пределы которых часто не соответствовали административным границам, крайне необходимо при изучении истории Российской и любой другой империи.

³ Audrey L. Altstadt. *The Azerbaijani Turks*. Stanford, 1992.

⁴ Tadeusz Świętochowski. *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905–1920: The Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community*. Cambridge, 1985; idem. *Russia and Azerbaijan. A Borderland in Transition*. New York, 1995; idem. *Azerbejdżan*. Warszawa, 2006.

⁵ Raoul Motika. *Glasnost in der Sowjetrepublik Aserbaidschan am Beispiel der Zeitschrift Azərbaycan // Orient. Zeitschrift des deutschen Orient-Instituts*. 1991. Bd. 32. S. 573-590; idem. *Die politische Öffentlichkeit Iranisch-Aserbaidschans während der Konstitutionellen Revolution im Spiegel der Täbriser Zeitung Āzarbāyġān*. Frankfurt a.M. u.a. 2001; idem. *Aserbaidschan-Nationalismus und aseritürkischer Nationalismus // Nationalismus im spät- und postkommunistischen Europa. Band 2: Nationalismus in den Nationalstaaten / Hg. Egbert Jahn*. Baden-Baden, 2009. S. 299-329.

⁶ Volker Adam. *Auf der Suche nach Turan: Panislamismus und Panturkismus in der aserbaidschanischen Vorkriegsperiode // Raoul Motika and Michael Ursinus (Eds.). Caucasica Between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1555 – 1914*. Wiesbaden, 2000. Pp. 189-205.

⁷ Eva-Maria Auch. *Aserbaidschanische Identitätssuche und Nationswerdung bis zum Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts // U. Halbach & A. Kappeler (Hrsg.). Krisenherd Kaukasus*. Köln, 1995. S. 94-109; eadem. *Muslim – Untertan – Bürger. Identitätswandel in gesellschaftlichen Transformationsprozessen der muslimischen Ostprovinzen Südkaukasiens (Ende 18. – Anfang 20. Jh.)*. Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Nationalismusforschung. Wiesbaden, 2004 (=Kaukasienstudien – Caucasian Studies, Bd. 7).

⁸ Тема “язык” все еще остается одной из основных проблем учёных, занимающихся историей Азербайджана. Без владения азербайджанским не представляется возможным учёт историографических публикаций азербайджанских историков (в отличие, например, от стран Центральной Азии, подавляющая часть публикаций по истории в Азербайджане издается на национальном языке). При изучении истории Азербайджана XIX века, а также советского периода необходимо и знание русского языка, коим ввиду объективных причин не владеет большинство западных востоковедов. При этом многие азербайджанские историки из-за слабого владения европейскими языками всё ещё оторваны от достижений западного азербайджановедения. Примером этому служат публикации бакинского историка Эльдара Исмаилова о сталинизме, где, к сожалению, не учтена фундаментальная монография берлинского историка Йорга Баберовского о сталинизме в Азербайджане, изданная в 2004 г.

основном на русскоязычные и западные публикации. В итоге азербайджанская история XIX и XX веков у Аух предстала как история взаимодействия и конфронтации центра (Петербург, Москва) и периферии (Баку, Азербайджан) внутри Российской империи, а турецкое и персидское влияние она не учитывала вовсе. Швентоховскому, Мотике и Адаму удалось представить отдельные периоды азербайджанской истории как взаимодействие периферий (Кавказ, Закавказье, Балканы, Анатолия и т.д.) и городов (Баку, Тифлис, Стамбул) отдельных империй.

Мусульманская интеллигенция Баку и Гянджи ориентировалась вплоть до распада Российской империи и создания национального государства в мае 1918 г. на Стамбул.⁹ Активист социал-демократического движения М. А. Расулзаде работал в Иране и Турции до 1913 г., куда вынужден был выехать из-за царистских преследований. В Стамбуле находились и многие другие деятели азербайджанских политических партий того времени. После советской интервенции 1920 г. тысячи представителей азербайджанской интеллигенции, дворянского сословия и духовенства выехали в Турцию, Польшу, Германию и Францию. Во время перестройки и особенно в 1992–1993 гг. идеи этой самой азербайджанской эмиграции, которая находилась под сильным влиянием политических процессов в Европе 1920–1950-х гг., стали интенсивно проникать в общественный дискурс в современном Азербайджане. Эти аспекты часто не учитывались при изучении советской истории и истории постсоветского пространства, т.к. большинство историков, занимающихся этим “регионом”, всё ещё исходит из позиции национального государства.

Serhy Yekelchyk, Canada

The crude notions of “Russian imperialism” and “Russian colonial policies” have been present in Ukrainian diasporic scholarship ever since the end of World War II, but they have had little in common with modern concepts of postcolonial studies and Orientalism. Rather, they were blunt statements about political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural assimilation. In the early 1990s, when postcolonial studies became a major influence in literary scholarship and theories of Orientalism in historical works, some of the same people who for decades had decried Russian imperialism met the new theoretical winds with unease. In part, this was connected to the

⁹ То же самое относится и к азербайджаноязычному населению в Тифлисе, Дербенте и Эривани.

then-prevalent ideology of Ukraine's "return to Europe," rather than to the family of "decolonized" third world countries. A subtle interpretation of colonial domination, in which natives play a major role, also left some scholars uncomfortable. Hence the popular argument that Ukraine was not a "classic" colony of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union, as if the more sophisticated theories of how power functioned in unequal relations between the center and the periphery only applied to some "classic" Asian and overseas possessions of the European powers. Interestingly, this was also the time when the Western historical methodology came to Ukraine, often through the mediation of diaspora scholars, who were now themselves split on the interpretation of Russian colonialism. In this confusing intellectual context, projects such as *Ab Imperio* have played a major role in exposing the post-Soviet cohort of scholars to the innovative research done by both Western academics and their peers in other former Soviet republics.

2. What are the recent historiographic fashions and how, in your view, could the 19th century and especially the late imperial period contribute to or complicate these fashions? Does your experience support the impression of the fading popularity of the imperial period as opposed to the growing popularity of the history of the 20th century, which attracts most of the specialists in our field? Do you feel the student enrollments show preferences for the Soviet history and political studies of the post-Soviet period? If so, is this shift an exceptionally American phenomenon? Can you explain it? Do you think that the 18th and 19th centuries can still be relevant as a laboratory for innovative exploration of social, cultural, environmental, political, and economic history?

Какие темы сегодня считаются модными в историографии и как, на Ваш взгляд, может XIX век и особенно позднеимперский период вписаться в эти модные сюжеты или осложнить их? Подтверждает ли Ваш опыт ощущение угасания популярности имперского периода при одновременно растущей популярности истории XX века, привлекающего все больше исследователей? Не кажется ли Вам, что студенты при записи на курсы отдают предпочтение советской истории и политологии постсоветского пространства? Если так, является ли этот поворот исключительно американским феноменом? Можете ли Вы его объяснить? Считаете ли Вы, что XVIII и XIX вв. по-прежнему могут служить лабораторией новаторских исследований в области социальной, культурной, политической и экономической истории, истории окружающей среды?

Sheila Fitzpatrick, USA

I do not see the imperial period as “fading” at the moment. In the United States, it was in the 1990s that the Imperial period fell out of fashion, perhaps partly because of its teleological construction by many American historians as the “pre-revolution.” In the past decade (nonteleological), Imperial history seems to have made a comeback, especially with respect to thematic studies straddling the great divide of 1917.

Naturally, student enrollments in Soviet history are higher: students, at least American students, generally prefer history courses on the recent past, particularly the deadly twentieth-century trio of Stalin, Hitler, and the Holocaust. The same goes for publishers. Historians of 18th- and 19th-century Russia must just bravely ignore these marketplace calculations and keep on doing innovative work.

Paul Werth, USA

I think that there is a certain “rush to the present,” one that I see well reflected in my own department on the American side. Likewise, the twentieth century seems the most popular in our own field of Russian history, especially now the 1950s–1980s. I would not overstate the case, though. My own course on early Russian history – a broad survey on Russia from the beginning to 1825 – seems always to enroll perfectly well, despite my continued fears that it will not. Partly, this is a function of being in a department with a very strong focus on American history, so that there are relatively few offerings in non-American history (students have to take what they can get!). But the students seem perfectly interested and engaged in the topics, even as all of it is initially alien to them. And there is a perfectly good quantity of fine scholarship on Russia before the 20th century, especially if we consider all countries where scholarship on Russia is being produced. I think that there is plenty of innovative work occurring in the 18th and 19th centuries (and earlier). As concerns “historiographic fashions,” I suppose the big question is whether the study of empire itself is such a fashion. I would like to believe that there is still so much to be done for understanding this endlessly fascinating place that we will be occupied with it for a long time. And part of the issue, I think, has to be a better integration of the imperial dimension of Russian history into that country’s larger narrative sweep. This is where, crudely speaking, the European portions of the empire are so important, because they are so intimately connected with Russia’s nucleus

(whose very definition, of course, is open to diverse interpretation). I cannot help wondering how declining library budgets, especially in the United States, will affect our field in the longer term. It is clear that there will not be as many orders, and this, in turn, will require publishers to make harder choices about what to publish. I think we all should be a bit nervous about this, though some good may come of it as well.

Jane Burbank, USA

It seems to me that the history of imperial Russia is flourishing in the United States. The dominance of Soviet history is much exaggerated. In the early 1990s, I ran an Social Science Research Council workshop to encourage the study of the history of imperial Russia. This resulted in a book, *Imperial Russia: New Histories for the Empire* (Indiana University Press, 1998). I do not find that students are more interested in the Soviet period than the imperial period. They are, however, interested in contemporary Russian affairs. Approaches that consider empire are relevant to early Russian history, to imperial Russia, to the history of the Soviet Union, and to the ongoing transformations of the Russian Federation.

Students do not have much choice in which courses to study, and many of them do not even know what the Soviet Union was! It is our responsibility as faculty members to offer a full range of courses in Russian history. The field that is really suffering is early Russian history – and it is essential to a better understanding of both the imperial and Soviet periods. Since the USSR lasted only 74 years, even study of the twentieth century would be a better, more fruitful way to study Russia than a course focused on the Soviet Union only.

Дариус Сталюнас, Литва

Ответить на вопрос, какой период литовской истории сегодня наиболее популярен в академических исследованиях, научно-популярных изданиях или среди учащейся молодежи, несложно. Эпоха с 1940 по 1990 год выигрывает это соревнование без особых проблем, и причин тому несколько. Во-первых, в советское время изучать историю XX века было сложнее всего. Исследования литовского прошлого с 1918 года, т.е. с провозглашения независимой Литовской республики, и через весь советский период подвергались усиленному идеологическому контролю. Меньше всего руководители советской исторической науки в

Литве вмешивались в исследования средних веков. Историки XIX века сталкивались с проблемами главным образом тогда, когда официальные и неофициальные советские цензоры усматривали аналогии между описываемыми процессами царского периода (например, восстаниями 1830–1831 или 1863–1864 гг.) и советскими реалиями. Поэтому, начиная с 1990-х гг., когда отпали все препятствия, всё больше и больше историков занимаются советским периодом.

Во-вторых, а может быть, это как раз главное, – советский период особенно актуален в современной Литве потому, что он составляет самый главный компонент в сегодняшней исторической политике. Часть современной политической элиты Литвы сформировалась и активно действовала в советское время, поэтому “правильное” преподнесение истории этого периода гарантирует или, по крайней мере, должно гарантировать легитимацию тем или иным политическим группам. В то же самое время советский период и особенно 1940 год – начало оккупации Литвы Советским Союзом – часто используются во внешнеполитической риторике. Такая политизация истории, с одной стороны, усложняет жизнь историков, но, с другой, делает их работу более видимой за рамками академической сферы, что чаще всего воспринимается как желательный фактор.

Актуализация советского прошлого, по моему мнению, пока принесла мало инноваций в исторические исследования. Большинство работ пишется по схеме “советский режим (вместе с местными коллаборантами) против литовцев – литовцы против режима”. Наиболее востребованные темы разрешаются в рамках вышеописанной схемы: введение советской власти, массовые депортации, преследования инакомыслящих, партизанское сопротивление после Второй мировой войны, коллективизация, диссидентское движение и т. п. Правда, в последнее время появились более нюансированные работы, посвящённые советской экономической политике, истории политики или историографии советского времени. Из них, например, видно, что советская историческая политика инкорпорировала многие элементы литовского националистического нарратива.

В то же самое время все меньше историков занимается имперским периодом Литовской истории, хотя как раз эти исследования были, как мне кажется, самыми инновационными в конце 1980 – начале 1990-х гг. Тогда именно специалисты по XIX веку решительнее всего отошли от этноцентричного подхода в изучении истории Литвы: было “реабилитировано” польскоязычное дворянство, в поле зрения истори-

ков попали другие этнические группы, помимо литовцев. Произошли большие изменения в изучении имперской политики: по крайней мере, часть историков отказалась от тезиса о том, что российские власти во все времена стремились к ассимиляции литовцев. Появился интерес к “ментальным картам” имперских бюрократов, исследователи начали сравнивать имперскую национальную политику в разных регионах империи и т.д.

Ослабление интереса к имперскому периоду в литовской историографии, по моим наблюдениям, связано с тем, что эта эпоха “проигрывает” другим, более привлекательным и актуальным для литовского исторического метанарратива: средним векам (время, когда Великое княжество Литовское являлось самым большим государством в Европе), советскому периоду и особенно межвоенному времени, когда на протяжении двадцати лет существовало независимое Литовское государство. Этот последний период, по моим наблюдениям, привлекает и будет привлекать большинство молодых исследователей, выбирающих темы диссертаций и особенно магистерских работ. Здесь очевидны и вполне практические соображения: быстрыми темпами уменьшается знание русского языка среди учеников средних учебных заведений, и пока, по моим данным, ни один литовский университет, имеющий историческую специальность, не ввел изучения русского языка. Всё, что остается для литовского историка, не знающего русского языка, – это изучать межвоенный период (1918–1940 гг.).

Мальте Рольф, Германия

Соглашусь, что в данный момент наблюдается явная тенденция, в том числе и в Германии, к доминированию исследований по истории XX столетия. Указанная тенденция проявляется также и в интересе студентов к этому периоду истории России. Однако именно исследования Российской империи XIX века сыграли решающую роль в переосмыслении истории Советского Союза как империи. Во всяком случае, я рассматриваю XIX век в истории России как “лабораторию”, поскольку здесь формулируются ключевые вопросы формирования модерности, определившей историю XX столетия. Одновременно в рамках имперской истории ставится под вопрос одна из центральных аксиом XX столетия, согласно которой история [народов и государств] является национальной. Изучение имперских взаимодействий помогает преодолеть зауженность взгляда национализирующих историографий.

Светлана Горшенина, Франция

На примере Франции можно видеть несколько причин подобного разворота предпочтений современных историков от имперской истории к советской и особенно постсоветской. Первая из них чисто прагматическая – большая часть инновационных работ по имперской истории была написана в рамках подготовки диссертаций, которые, с учётом времени на их публикацию, заняли у авторов от 10 до 15 лет, когда их финансовое положение, подкрепляемое чаще всего небольшими стипендиями, было достаточно шатким. На рынке труда имперская история не может обеспечить всем этим специалистам новой волны ни стабильных постов, ни регулярной зарплаты. Исследования политологического характера находят гораздо более широкое применение и... лучше оплачиваются. Помимо этого, переход к изучению советской проблематики был продиктован естественным желанием расширить рамки анализа и оценить степень преемственности и “живучести” царских догм в советское время, а заодно протестировать версию о двух различных периодах в российской истории – колониальном и советском. Акцент, который сегодня ставится на раннесоветском времени, с этой точки зрения легко объясним и не означает бесповоротного “отката” от изучения колониального времени. Вместе с тем, “колониальные исследования” Российской империи не ушли окончательно в прошлое. Мне кажется, что, исчерпав одно направление, исследователи перешли к другим темам, но крупных публикаций нужно ждать минимум через 3-4 года.

Наконец, энтузиазм исследователей имперского периода стал угасать в связи с закрытием многих региональных архивов для иностранных специалистов (я думаю, в частности, о недоступности Центрального государственного архива Узбекистана, новая дирекция которого уже неоднократно отказывала западным исследователям, что уже привело к изменению тем диссертаций и переходу к более “доступным” сюжетам).

Serhy Yekelchuk, Canada

Historiographical trends or “fashions” do influence the choice of topics within a given geographical field. In the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse, nationalities studies experienced an impressive revival that coincided with interesting theoretical pollination from postcolonial studies. Since then, new

trends have emerged, in particular, the study of sexuality and leisure. Rituals of power and mechanisms of surveillance also returned to the limelight. In my view, this change is not so much about abandoning the 19th century and moving to the 20th, as it is about moving sideways, from social history and nationalism to cultural history and the new political history. Paradoxically, but in some ways also logically, the Russian 19th century benefited from the Soviet collapse, as the search for continuities and longer trends coincided with renewed interest in the nationalities and mechanisms of power, for which it is an excellent laboratory. Neither student interest nor the job market in North America are working against research specialization in the 19th century, but there could be a new set of “hot” research questions emerging, for which the early 20th century or the late Soviet period are better laboratories. Russia’s present-day political evolution may offer some clues as to what these questions will be.

3. New imperial history and old/revised modernity paradigm: do you see contradictions between the two approaches, and if so, what are the main ones? In what ways does the new imperial history, which stresses differences and heterogeneity, complicate the comparative framework of European modernity? What are the alternative analytical frameworks for studying Russian and Soviet histories? How would you comment on two strategies of breaching the proverbial “1917 divide?”(1) when methodological insights and analytical frameworks designed to make sense of Soviet experience are applied to the imperial period, and (2) when the legacy of imperial period is used to explain certain aspects of Soviet society?

Новая имперская история и старая/ревизионистская модернизационная парадигма: видите ли Вы противоречия между этими двумя подходами и если да, какие? Каким образом новая имперская история, с ее упором на различия и гетерогенность, усложняет компаративистскую панораму европейской модерности? Каковы альтернативные рамки изучения российской и советской истории? Как бы Вы охарактеризовали две стратегии преодоления “разрыва 1917 года”: (1) когда методологические идеи и аналитические рамки, созданные для осмысления советского опыта, переносятся на имперский период и (2) когда наследие имперского периода используется для объяснения определенных аспектов советского общества?

Sheila Fitzpatric, USA

As a social historian I see one major difference between “new imperial history” and the “modernity” paradigm, namely, that imperial history has a real-life referent (there are empires on the ground to be studied) and modernity does not. There’s no there there, to quote Gertrude Stein. This is undoubtedly part of its fascination for discourse historians, but others should approach it warily.

On the general anxiety about theory that your question implies: When the Soviet Union collapsed, Western foundations sent in their rescue-and-retraining squads to help former-Soviet historians retool, which essentially meant mastering a *Kratkii kurs* on contemporary Western social and cultural theory. It was a benevolent act of intellectual imperialism, for such mastery really was almost a sine qua non for joining the international community of historians in the early 1990s. But now twenty years have passed, and “theory” has lost some of its magic among American historians. If a particular theoretical approach is useful to you, use it. In the Soviet field, that’s what a bunch of historians of science (Krementsov, Kojevnikov) did, to great effect. But if you are happier with middle-level generalization based on empirical research, go ahead, particularly if you can find some new archival sources and unfamiliar data. In the Soviet field, that is actually the kind of work coming out of Russia that has made the most impact internationally (Khlevniuk and Osokina, for example).

Paul Werth, USA

Perhaps I do not fully grasp all of the implications of these two categories – new imperial history and modernity paradigm – but I do not see any intrinsic contradiction. I see them as asking different questions and perhaps also involving a distinction between where the empire was at any given moment and what its rulers were seeking to attain in the longer term. Each approach – and others besides – are designed to elucidate particular patterns or dimensions of Russia’s imperial experience. A focus on “modernity” might tend to locate certain Soviet practices in prerevolutionary outlooks, preoccupations, and projects, which in many cases is quite justifiable and very illuminating. These need to be weighed against the deep conservatism of the old regime (and not just in a political sense), its relative inertia, and the imperial elite’s relatively good sense of the limits of their ability to act – that is, to shape the society that they supposedly ruled. I’m a bit skeptical,

I suppose, of using insights from the Soviet case to illuminate the tsarist one. A good example might be the search for a tsarist “nationality policy,” which has always struck me as anachronistic (despite the fact, as numerous scholars have shown, that the ideas of nationality and ethnicity were beginning to occupy a central role for conceptualizing Russia’s cultural diversity). On the other hand, asking questions in this fashion can help one to identify what *did* exist, as opposed to what was lacking. My own work is motivated by the proposition that religion was the principal way (or at least one of the principal ways) in which the empire conceptualized and – this is important – institutionalized cultural diversity. If I think back, deep into the recesses of my graduate-student days, I suppose that this investigation was motivated in part by coursework on Soviet nationalities policy (when I think of how little there really was to read back in 1990 compared to now!). I wanted to know how the Russian empire dealt with the issue of diversity, which the Bolsheviks inherited.

Serhy Yekelchuk, Canada

What you call “New Imperial History” has certainly contributed to a better understanding of the constructed nature of identities – always constituted as they are within representations. This was a helpful inoculation against the positivist certainties associated with the traditional modernization paradigm, as well as an important aspect of the new literature on identity and subjectivity, both in tsarist and Soviet times. In this context, 1917 is not a major cut-off date – and neither is 1991.

Jane Burbank, USA

The real problem is the modernity paradigm itself. It explains nothing, since it contains a teleology that supposedly relates to what is supposed to happen in a certain “period.” This chronological determinism is inimical to finding out specific causalities and uncovering wide ranges of topics to study. A similar problem is attached to the question on the 1917 divide. If we assume that certain methodologies and frameworks belong to one period or another, we are restricting our ability to look for what happened in any point in time. The very notion of a “period” is constricting for historical research.

Mark von Hagen, USA

In terms of recent historiographic trends, my sense is that the Soviet period has always been more popular with students than the imperial, so that what we observe today is nothing particularly new, at least in U.S. and probably Anglo-American institutions. The popularity of study of Russian politics ebbs and flows with U.S.–Russian relations and more specifically with Russian international and domestic behaviors. I do not perceive this as necessarily having as important an impact on the trends in scholarship as earlier (when government and foundation funding was much more generous and tied to “policy relevance”), where I think we continue to see interesting and original work on the imperial period, in large measure strengthened by broad interaction and collaboration with Russian and other post-Soviet colleagues, thereby helping to “normalize” a situation that had prevailed during the Soviet period, when non-Soviet historians had little contact with their Soviet colleagues. This is, however, much less true for the Soviet period itself, where, it seems to me, Russian (and to some degree Ukrainian and other post-Soviet) historians are reluctant or unable to grapple with the Stalin era; here a certain asymmetry continues to characterize the relatively large number of scholars in the west working on the Soviet period and a smaller number of outstanding Russian and Ukrainian historians working on the 20th century. Among the spillover effects of the “imperial turn” for 19th- (and 18th-) century historians has been an interest in the “nationality” question for the Soviet period as well (Yuri Slezkine, Terry Martin). Still, some of the most interesting work in the Soviet field has been in the realm of the modernity paradigm and concerns with Soviet “subjectivity.” Although most of the original work in this area does not treat national or ethnic identity as a primary focus (Anna Krylova’s work on gender, Jochen Hellbeck’s and Igal Halpin’s work on diaries and students), they most certainly could be applied to nationality in the appropriate context. The modernity paradigm invites new kinds of comparisons (with modern western Europe and North America, above all) and also invites topics that cross the 1917 divide to investigate the transformation of imperial projects into Soviet ones (here Francine Hirsch’s work is a very good example of how the imperial turn helps inform our understanding of early Soviet nationality policy).

Wars have emerged as vehicles for exploring not only transnational history but also interactive history of empires and nations: history of occupations, refugees, prisoners of war, nongovernmental organizations, just to mention some of the topics recently addressed by scholars. (Here, see my

recent effort, *War in a European Borderland*.) We have witnessed major international collaborations on the 1905 Russo-Japanese War and current projects on the Great War and Revolution. Borderlands history has also continued to make important contributions to our understanding and reinterpretation of imperial and Soviet history; from my current academic location in Arizona, I am convinced that we can learn much from our Americanist colleagues who primarily understand borderlands as the U.S.–Mexican territories and their multiethnic populations of Latinos, Indians, and white settlers, but that the work of Russian and East European historians, anthropologists, and cultural studies scholars on the regions between Germany and Russia and between Russia and Turkey/Iran might offer something of interest and significance to Americanists as well.

4. How is your own current research project written into the broader methodological and historiographic context? Is there a difference between your interior research logic and the most “efficient” presentation of your work in the current intellectual climate? In an ideal world, which intellectual framework would you consider the most attractive to establish dialogue with?

Каким образом Ваш собственный нынешний исследовательский проект вписан в широкий методологический и историографический контекст? Существует ли зазор между Вашей внутренней исследовательской логикой и наиболее “эффективным” способом презентации Вашей работы в сегодняшнем интеллектуальном климате? В идеальном мире, с какой интеллектуальной традицией Вам бы хотелось установить научный диалог?

Paul Werth, USA

In part, I have answered this question above. My concern is to elucidate certain logics of imperial rule – or to reveal their absence, to the extent that they did not exist – by focusing on religious institutions and personnel. The goal is also to integrate the imperial dimension into Russia’s more general history, as noted above, so that people can no longer write “the church,” “the clergy,” and so on, without specifying which one precisely they have in mind (and recognizing that they were all present and need to be taken account of). I am profoundly insufficiently self-reflexive, but I am not

certain whether this fits into any particular school or methodology, though certain I am interested in how the presence of diversity and heterogeneity complicates the picture (in a good way).

One could write on these questions for days, but I think I'll stop here. Thanks for the opportunity to participate!

Serhy Yekelchuk, Canada

My own work in the 1990s has been greatly influenced by postcolonial theory and, in the past decade, by the “linguistic turn” in the study of Stalinism (the notions of “Soviet subjectivity” and “speaking Bolshevik”). However, it has never been about a blind endorsement and application of “fashionable” theories. In fact, I am not entirely sure what the most fashionable theoretical “color of the season” is right now, which is one reason why I am planning to go back to the late 19th century to reexamine the old issues and familiar theories on being a Ukrainian patriot in the Russian Empire.

Jane Burbank, USA

I am an iconoclast when it comes to “frameworks.” I think it is important to let good questions and surprising answers reframe one’s research. If you look for the origins of totalitarianism, you will find them; if you look for the origins of democracy, you will find those, too. Similarly for the workers’ movement, similarly for “colonialism.” What I try to find is what people thought in the past about a variety of phenomena, and if their recorded practices and words do not fit into a research framework, the framework has to go.

SUMMARY

Отвечая на первый вопрос редакции, большинство участников форума высказались за полезность привлечения сравнительной рамки и постколониальной перспективы. Если Шейла Фицпатрик задается вопросом о наличии в индийской, китайской или среднеазиатской историографиях аналога возникшим в русистике “евразийским исследованиям”, то другие участники подчеркивают плодотворность для русистики изучения того, как имперская периферия влияла на культуру метрополии в самом широком смысле. В этом свете полезны как исследования “классических”, так и неклассических империй, а российский опыт имеет все шансы обогатить мировую историографию империй. Светлана Горшенина и Заур Гасимов рассматривают плодотворность применения постколониальных теорий к неклассическим колониальным державам вообще и среднеазиатским окраинам Российской империи в частности. Сергей Екельчик напоминает о попытках заменить подобный анализ самоописаниями в категориях “неклассических колоний”, в то время как Джейн Бурбанк предостерегает от механического переноса “западных”

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Responding to the first question, the majority of the forum participants acknowledged the importance of using a comparative framework and post-colonial perspective to account for the history of the Russian empire/USSR. Sheila Fitzpatrick wonders whether the “Eurasian” subfield that emerged in Russian studies has its counterparts in Middle Eastern, Chinese, and Indian history. Other forum participants stress the importance of studying the impact of imperial peripheries on metropolitan developments. In this respect, historiographies of “classical” and “nonclassical” empires are considered equally important, while the experience of the Russian empire seems to be capable of enriching imperial studies worldwide. Svetlana Gorshenina and Zaur Gasimov specifically focus on the fruitfulness of postcolonial theory’s application to “nonclassical” empires in general, and the Central Asian region of the Russian empire in particular. Serhy Yekelchuk recalls recent attempts in Ukraine to substitute such a sophisticated analysis with a straightforward presentation of the country as a “nonclassic” colony in which natives did not play a role in the system of colonial domination. Jane Burbank warns against the mechanical transfer of “western” categories instead of borrowing “western” research questions in search of specific Russian answers. Paul Werth very cautiously

категорий вместо заимствования “западных” исследовательских вопросов и выработки модели, основанной на специфических российских ответах на эти вопросы. Наиболее осторожно воспринимает перспективы интеграции России в контекст современных постколониальных исследований Пол Верт. Он подчеркивает, что к такой интеграции наиболее располагает Средняя Азия, в то время как прочие регионы Российской империи лучше описываются через сравнение с Габсбургской или Османской империями, и что тезис о влиянии колоний на культуру метрополии требует тщательной проверки. Наиболее продуктивным Верт считает сравнение регионов внутри самой Российской империи.

Отвечая на второй вопрос о тематических и хронологических предпочтениях современных исследователей и студентов, представители Восточной и Западной Европы разошлись со своими американскими коллегами. Если европейские историки указывают на некоторое падение популярности имперской проблематики и преобладание исследований по XX веку, объясняя эту ситуацию политической и академической конъюнктурой, их американские коллеги в целом не видят такой проблемы.

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approaches the perspective of the integration of Russian studies into modern postcolonial studies. If Central Asia allows for the greatest comparison with the colonial practices of European empires, other regions of the Russian empire are better understood through comparisons with the Habsburg or Ottoman empires. Werth adds that claims about the constitutive character of the colonial experience on metropolitan developments are not well substantiated and should be regarded with a certain skepticism. He concludes that internal comparison – that is, comparison of developments within the Russian Empire itself – is still the most important task at the present stage.

Responding to the question about the thematic and chronological priorities of present-day scholars and students of Russian history, the opinions of forum participants from Eastern and Western Europe differ from those of their American colleagues. While the former report the relative decline of imperial topics and a shift toward the twentieth-century history, and explain this on the basis of political and academic considerations, the latter see no such problem at all.

Considering the third question about the relationship between the new imperial history and the modernity paradigm, the majority of the forum

Отвечая на третий вопрос, посвященный соотношению новой имперской истории и модернизационной парадигмы, большинство участников сошлись на том, что, несмотря на существующую в реальности хронологическую привязку первой к периоду до 1917 года, а второй – к советской эпохе, обе парадигмы не связаны конкретным временем и способны дополнять друг друга. Если новая имперская история, по словам Пола Верта, позволяет лучше увидеть то, что реально было в империи и определяло ее специфику, то модернизационная парадигма, как подчеркнул Марк Хаген, предполагает обращение к европейскому и североамериканскому сравнительному контексту.

Четвертый вопрос, посвященный тому, как конкретное исследование соотносится с методологическими предпочтениями историка и с текущей интеллектуальной модой на академическом рынке, оказался наименее популярным. Ответившие на него участники форума идентифицировали те или иные теоретические модели, оказавшие на них влияние, но подчеркнули, что определяющими факторами для них являются специфика материала и вытекающие из их конкретного проекта исследовательские вопросы. Наиболее радикально высказалась Джейн Бурбанк, заявившая о полном неприятии “больших теорий”.

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participants confirmed that in practice the first paradigm is usually associated with the period before 1917, and the second – with the Soviet epoch. Our respondents do not consider this chronological correlation as necessary or justified. The new imperial history and modernity paradigm can be mutually enriching and reinforcing. If, as Paul Werth states, new imperial history allows us to identify what did exist in the empire and defined its specific functioning, the modernity paradigm, as Mark von Hagen stresses, presupposes application of the European and North American comparative contexts.

The question about the broader methodological and historical contexts of the forum participants’ current research projects, proved to be the least popular. Those who chose to answer this question identified some theoretical models that have influenced their intellectual development, but admitted that their research material and their own research agendas form their theoretical priorities (not vice versa). As Jane Burbank put it, “I am an iconoclast when it comes to ‘frameworks.’ I think it is important to let good questions and surprising answers reframe one’s research.”