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Imperial Acculturation on Russian's Southeastern Frontier: An International Survey

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Юго-восточный фронт России в контексте имперской политики аккультурации: основные результаты международной заочной дискуссии

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Abstract: This article reviews and summarizes the results of an international survey of experts about “Imperial Acculturation Policy and the Problem of Colonialism (based on the materials from the Ural-Volga and Central Asian territories)” organized in Orenburg in 2019. The questionnaire asked participants to reply with their thoughts about the characteristic features of the Russian Empire’s policy of “developing” the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the Kazakh steppe, Bashkiria, Kalmykia on its southeastern frontier from the 18th to the early 20th centuries. Key questions included: The basic terminology (“acculturation,” “imperial acculturation policy”); The heuristic value of the acculturation model with respect to the “colonial approach.” Nomadic and semi-nomadic perceptions of Russian citizenship; The government’s efforts to “civilize” its nomadic and semi-nomadic subjects; The impact of military service, public education and medical care; The role of the Russian Orthodox Church in imperial acculturation policy; The persistence of ethnic identity; General trends in acculturation. The conclusion reflects on using the acculturation model to understand the integration the southeastern nomadic periphery into the Russian Empire.

Keywords: southeast frontier, nomadic peoples, acculturation, enlightenment, historiography, discussion, Russian empire

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Аннотация: В статье представлен обзор и обобщение материалов международной заочной дискуссии на тему «Имперская политика аккультурации и проблема колониализма (на материалах урало-поволжских и центральноазиатских территорий)», состоявшейся в Оренбурге в 2019 году. В центре внимания находится проблема определения характерных черт и особенностей формирования и реализации политики Российской империи по «освоению» своего юго-восточного фронта центрально-азиатских и урало-поволжских территорий проживания кочевых и полукочевых народов (в Казахской степи, Башкирии, Калмыкии) в XVIII – начале XX в.

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Проанализированы такие ключевые аспекты данной проблематики, как базовый терминологический аппарат («аккультурация», «имперская политика аккультурации»); эвристическая ценность аккультурационной модели в сравнении с «колониальным подходом»; характеристика восприятия российского подданства внутри включаемых в империю кочевых и полукочевых народов; основные направления деятельности российской центральной и региональной администраций по приведению включенных в империю кочевых и полукочевых народов в приемлемое для империи положение; специфика административно-политических механизмов имперского управления в регионе и их место в имперской политике аккультурации; влияние военной службы включенных в империю кочевых и полукочевых народов в контексте их интеграции в российское общество; аккультурационное воздействие на кочевые народы посредством внедрения школьного образования и медицинской службы; особенности участия Русской православной церкви в имперской политике аккультурации; основные факторы сохранения этнической идентичности национальными меньшинствами рассматриваемого региона в условиях включения в состав Российской империи; наличие общих тенденций в аккультурационных преобразованиях для империи и региона в целом. Сделан вывод о перспективности использования аккультурационной модели для понимания сути многовекового процесса интеграции юго-восточной кочевой периферии в общее социокультурное пространство Российской империи.

Ключевые слова: юго-восточный фронт, кочевые народы, аккультурация, просвещение, историография, дискуссия, Российская империя

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Introduction

In 2019, S.V. Lyubichankovskii at Orenburg State Pedagogical University distributed a survey to an international group of historians about “Imperial Acculturation Policy and the Problem of Colonialism (based on the materials of the Ural-Volga and Central Asian territories),” whose summary was published¹. The questionnaire’s author S.V. Lyubichankovskii, wrote to a number of prominent experts: S.N. Abashin and S.N. Brezhneva (both in St. Petersburg), Zh.B. Abylkhozhin (Alma-Ata), B.A. Aznabaev (Ufa), S.A. Bogomolov (Ulyanovsk), D.V. Vasil’ev (Moscow), I.Yu. Vasil’ev (Krasnodar), A.A. Gafarov (Kazan), E.V. Godovova (Orenburg), S.V. Dzhundzhuzov (Orenburg), V.V. Dmitriev (Simferopol), I.K. Zagidullin (Kazan), Y. Ikeda (Tokyo), S.I. Kovalskaia (Nur-Sultan), I.V. Lidzhieva (Elista), Yu.A. Lysenko (Barnaul), K. Matsuzato (Tokyo), A. Morrison (Oxford), N. Naganava (Sapporo), A.A. Nasonov (Kemerovo), E. Smolarz (Bonn), and R. Tsirolev (Heidelberg). This article reviews and summarizes their views about the Russian Empire’s “appropriation” and “development” of its southeastern frontier, the macro-region traditionally inhabited by the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of Central Asia and the Ural-Volga region, i.e., the Kazakh steppe, Bashkiria, and Kalmykia, from the 18th to the early 20th centuries.

Although much serious work has been written about the history Russia’s imperial frontiers, the question of tsarist “colonialism” remains unresolved. The colonial approach, a theoretical stereotype now often employed when describing the history of many of the newly independent post-Soviet states, needs to be moored in concrete historical analysis if we are to understand which elements of imperial governance in these territories were truly “colonial” in the narrow sense of the word, i.e., the process of extracting resources from annexed territories without equivalent compensation or investment in their development. By contrast, to what extent were other factors at play, such as an acculturation policy to create loyal imperial subjects from newly-conquered populations while preserving their own ethnic identity, situational management, or the consequences of foreign policy.

¹ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii i problema kolonializma (na primere kochevykh i polukochevykh narodov Rossiyskoy imperii)* (Orenburg: Izdatel'skiy tsentr OGAU Publ., 2019).

Terminology

The basic terminology (acculturation, imperial acculturation policy) and the heuristic prospects of the acculturation model attracted considerable attention. The discussion was based on the notion that, in methodological terms, the traditional “colonial approach” differs from the acculturation model. Briefly put, the latter is an example of a “hybrid paradigm” of understanding the empire,² which sees not just the metropolis – colony dichotomy, but also many intermediate forms, distinguished by other principles.³

Aside from Abashin, all of the respondents agreed about the term’s validity and generally understood it, as formulated in 1936 by R. Linton, R. Redfield and M. Herskovits, as the cultural impact of one society on another without blending them.⁴ By contrast, R. Tsirulev suggested considering acculturation as a special case of transculturation.⁵ However, his objection was largely semantic. This basic consensus clashed with the opinion of Abashin, who disagreed with the idea of acculturation, in part because it does not have an “unambiguous, exact meaning.”⁶ However, from this point of view, the term is no less precise than, for example, that of “colony.” Indeed, while there is a great deal of literature about the latter, there is no clear consensus about its attributes of the colony have been developed.⁷

At the same time, some argued about the correlation of terms. Thus, S.N. Brezhneva and V.V. Dmitriev proposed considering assimilation, separation, marginalization and integration as four main options for acculturation, while B.A. Aznabaev saw only two options: assimilation and integration. I.Yu. Vasil’ev also thought that acculturation leads to two scenarios, but he defined them in a slightly different way, as assimilation and adaptation. These points of view do not fundamentally contradict each other, since they are based on the same idea: acculturation can lead to ways cultures can coexist, from the complete disappearance of one of them to full symbiosis. Because S.N. Brezhneva and V.V. Dmitriev

² M. Epstein, “«Transculture: A Broad Way between Globalism and Multiculturalism»,” *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 68/1 (2009): 327–352; P. Burke, *Cultural Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009); I. Sablin, *Governing Post-Imperial Siberia and Mongolia, 1911–1924: Buddhism, Socialism and Nationalism in State and Autonomy Building* (London: Routledge, 2016); “The hybrid nature of pure forms,” *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2018): 17–25; “From the editors. The ambivalence of hybridity,” *Ab Imperio*, no. 3 (2018): 15–22.

³ S.V. Lyubichankovsky, “The periphery of the empire as a scientific problem. Review of the collective monograph: “Finding a Homeland”: Society and Power in the Middle Volga Region (second half of the 16th – early 20th centuries),” *Saint-Petersburg Historical Journal*, no. 1 (2015): 278–285.

⁴ R. Redfield, R. Linton, M.J. Herskovits, “Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation,” *American Anthropologist* 38, no. 1 (1936): 13–41.

⁵ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii i problema kolonializma (na primere kochevykh i polukochevykh narodov Rossiyskoy imperii)* (Orenburg: Izdatel'skiy tsentr OGAU Publ., 2019), 46–52.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁷ S.V. Lyubichankovsky, “The acculturation model of understanding the empire as a methodological alternative to the colonial approach,” *Journal of History*, accessed November 13, 2019, <https://history.jes.su/s207987840006065-0-1/>; W. Sunderland, “Empire without Imperialism? Ambiguities of Colonization in Tsarist Russia,” *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2003): 101–114; F. Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); N. Breyfogle, “Russian colonizations: An introduction,” in *Peopling the Russian periphery: borderland colonization in Eurasian history* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 1–18; A.I. Miller, *Imperiya Romanovykh i natsionalizm: Esse po metodologii istoricheskogo issledovaniya* (Moscow: Novoye literaturnoye obozreniye Publ., 2008); A. Kappeler, “«Rossiya – mnogonatsional'naya imperiya»: nekotoryye razmyshleniya vosem' let spustya posle publikatsii knigi,” in *Mify i zabluzhdeniya v izuchenii imperii i natsionalizma* (Moscow: Novoye izdatel'stvo Publ., 2010), 265–282; J. Burbank, F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); W. Sunderland, P. Holquist, R. Geraci, D. McDonald, “Colonialism and Technocracy at the End of the Tsarist Era,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 120–188; A. Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011); M. Khodorkovsky, “In what Things Russia Outstrips Europe, or Russia as a Colonial Empire,” *The Political Conceptology*, no. 2 (2013): 85–91.

considered more possibilities, their approach is the most relevant one. However, in this context assimilation, or loss of ethnic identity, should be seen as a special phenomenon, far beyond the scope of acculturation.

Terminology varies over time. Thus, the concept of “foreigners,” which nationalist extremists today consider to be pejorative, was a neutral term in 19th century legislation⁸. In government documents of the period, “Russification” was often synonymous with acculturation (or what Lysenko refers to as the “Russification project”), rather than physically eliminating an ethnic group.⁹ Meanwhile, the term “colonization,” which was very common in the Imperial Russian government, scientific and public circles, tended to the equivalent of “development by migration.” According V.I. Dahl’s dictionary, a colonist is, among other things, just a settler, an immigrant. At the time, the term was widely used with regard to all of the empire, rather than only its border regions.¹⁰ However, just as not every frontier was a colony, any measure to raise the living standards of the latter’s population to that of the Russian core is not assimilative.¹¹

There was less agreement about the notion of imperial acculturation policy. Some did not address issue; others, including S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, D.V. Vasil’ev, E.V. Godovova, I.Yu. Vasil’ev, S.N. Brezhneva, I.K. Zagidullin, V.V. Dmitriev, and S.A. Bogomolov, recognized the existence of such a policy. At the same time, A.A. Gafarov, I.V. Lidzhieva, Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin, and S.N. Abashin rejected it arguing that it occurred spontaneously, was unplanned, or that acculturation resulted not thanks to, but contrary to official policy. In other words, the scholars disagreed about what could be considered to be a policy and what cannot.

Much depends on how broadly “policy” is defined. In the most narrow sense, a policy exists only if a document confirms a corresponding goal. Naturally, this is unlikely with regard to earlier periods in Russian history. Few surviving documents from the 16th and 17th centuries discuss acculturation, colonies, or, for that matter, health care, education, etc. There were more of them later, but they did not concern all aspects of government policy. However, does this mean that, because no such document exists, there was no corresponding policy? This seems unrealistic, largely because “strategies” and “concepts” are modern notions.

Perhaps, S.V. Lyubichankovskiy reconciled the supporters and opponents of the existence of imperial acculturation. He argued that, as a culturally heterogeneous space, the empire had to have such a policy, even if at times its elite considered it to be self-evident that such a state could not be viable without turning newly conquered nations into loyal subjects. Moreover, even if fragmented and contradictory, the existence of such a policy does not necessarily exclude any spontaneous acculturation while a conquered population adapts to its new circumstances.

Thoughts about the correlation between the acculturation model and the colonial approach were paradoxical. Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin and S.N. Abashin vehemently disagreed about replacing the colonial approach with a new model. (The discussion’s initiators had not raised the question; they only wondered whether there was any correlation between the two and if the idea of acculturation was relevant to historians today.) The others stressed that, together, the two approaches allowed for a more sophisticated understand-

⁸ A.Yu. Konev, “Inorodtsy’ of the Russian empire: history of concept’s origin,” *Theory and Practice of Social Development*, no. 13 (2014): 117–120.

⁹ Yu.A. Lysenko, “The Russian Orthodox Church in Religious Space of Kazakhstan: Stages and Peculiarities of Institutional Model (XVIII – beginning of XX centuries),” *Bylyye gody*, no. 3 (2014): 387–391.

¹⁰ A. Masoero, “Kolonizatsiya v pozdneimperskoy Rossii: istoriya ponyatiya,” in *Aziatskaya Rossii: lyudi i struktury imperii: sbornik nauchnykh trudov* (Omsk: Poligraficheskiy tsentr KAN Publ., 2016), 340–364.

¹¹ *Mestnoye upravleniye v poreformennoy Rossii: mekhanizmy vlasti i ikh effektivnost’* (Yekaterinburg – Izhevsk: UIIYAL Publ., 2010), 457.

ding than colonialism on its own. S.N. Abashin also agreed that integrating the concept of acculturation into that of colonialism was valid. Thus, while the question provoked a heated debate, the participants generally agreed about the complementarity of the heuristic models as two sides of one complex phenomenon (colonialism).

S.V. Liubichanovskiy and R. Tsirulev dissented. As they saw it, the acculturation (or, according to R. Tsirulev, transculturation) model is more universal than the colonial approach, since it is applicable to studying the transformation of various types of territories other than colonies, while the reverse was not true. Meanwhile, B.A. Aznabaev brilliantly argued against the idea that “Bashkiria is a colonial outskirts,”¹² thereby providing a concrete example of the shortcomings of the colonial approach to study tsarist policy regarding nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples.

The Evolution of Imperial Acculturation on the Southeast Frontier

When assessing the evolution of imperial acculturation on the southeastern frontier, there was rare unanimity about its chronology. The scholars emphasized three main stages:

1. The period until the end of the 18th century, which consisted of an attempt to adapt traditional relations).

2. The first half of the 19th century, when reforming the administrative system improved integration.

3. From the 19th century’s second half until the empire’s collapse in 1917, a period marked by growing pressure to integrate, or Russification.

This periodization correlates well with that of A. Kappeler.¹³

A. Morrison, Y. Ikeda, Yu.A. Lysenko, A.A. Nasonov, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, and I.K. Zagidullin went on to propose additional aspects of the evolution of imperial policy. A. Morrison noted the growing antagonism between the settled and nomadic worlds, while Y. Ikeda stressed disagreements among the ruling elite between encouraging a common imperial identity, promoting Russian interests as the dominant ones, or preserving the existing eclectic status quo. Yu.A. Lysenko suggested that the authorities’ desire to integrate the empire by class, rather than ethnicity or religion, which among other led to a paradoxical consequence: Constructing “social exclusivity of foreigners/natives” coupled with restrictive measures regarding Islam accelerated the process of ethnic consolidation in their environment and the integration of Kazakh society in the all-Russian Muslim movement (an underestimated consequence of the acculturation course!). To A.A. Nasonov, the autonomous integration of local socio-political institutions and cultural practices were frontier variations of the general, complex imperial system. S.V. Dzhundzhuzov made a similar argument, but insisted that this stopped in the second half of the 19th century.

Of all the discussants, only I.K. Zagidullin suggested specific factors in implementing imperial policy with regard to the region’s nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples, going on to highlight two basic ones: the degree a territory’s of integration into the empire and the status of the local population. They were the keys to success, which could be measured by the governor general’s increased authority, the sedenterization of the local population, and the elite’s assimilation via education without threatening its Islamic faith.¹⁴

Despite differences in nuance, the participants agreed that imperial policy for the region’s population was a dynamic process accompanied by trial and error implementation of various approaches to acculturate it to serve the needs of the empire.

¹² S.V. Lyubichanovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii i problema kolonializma (na primere kochevykh i polukochevykh narodov Rossiyskoy imperii)* (Orenburg: Izdatel'skiy tsentr OGAU Publ., 2019), 16–23.

¹³ A. Kappeler, *Rossiya – mnogonatsional'naya imperiya: Voznikoveniye, istoriya, raspad* (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya Publ., 2000).

¹⁴ S.V. Lyubichanovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 110–115.

S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, B.A. Aznabaev, D.V. Vasil'ev, S.I. Kovalskaia, Yu.A. Lysenko, V.V. Dmitriev, A.A. Gafarov, and Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin discussed how the empire's nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples saw Russian citizenship. Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin claimed that the empire's Kazakhs perceived themselves as subjects only of their kinship community and *zhuz* (horde).¹⁵ The others felt that the peoples in question did recognize the authority of the Russian Empire. However, they interpreted how nomads understood Russian citizenship in different ways. Based on the examples of the Kalmyks and Kazakhs, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov and D.V. Vasil'ev, respectively, argued that Russian power was perceived as patronage/vassalage and alliance, which is less important than citizenship. In sharing this view, Yu.A. Lysenko pointed out that since the authorities hardly interfered in the internal politics of the Kazakh steppe until the end of the 18th century, during that period citizenship was perceived by the Kazakhs as vassalage to their new rulers. In contrast, B.A. Aznabaev demonstrated that the Bashkirs considered themselves to be citizens. However, their understanding of this phenomenon provided for both submission to the White Tsar – the successor of the Chingisids – and the right to resist and even overthrow the ruler in case he violated established laws.¹⁶

This important thesis introduced a fundamentally new development in the question's historiography, since it violates the consensus among scholars that nomads viewed of Russian citizenship as vassalage or even a foreign political union. As a result, it is necessary to investigate whether these perceptions in different parts of the nomadic world was really so diverse. If so, why did this divergence occur? If not, which scholar is wrong? Moreover, B.A. Aznabaev's argument raises the important question of whether Russian authorities could rely on their earlier experience with Bashkirs to conclude that other nomadic peoples also fully considered themselves to be the empire's citizens.

When considering nomadic views of themselves as Russian citizens in the second half of the 19th century, after they fully came under imperial rule, V.V. Dmitriev, A.A. Gafarov, Yu.A. Lysenko, and S.I. Kovalskaia discussed divisions in the loyalties of local elites to the emperor. At the same time, they agreed that emotions about which group in the split elite was “more representative”, should be set aside in the interests of impartiality. But it is worth noting Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin's opinion that the center's efforts to modernize the Kazakh steppe were ineffective,¹⁷ clearly contradicting Yu.A. Lysenko's beliefs about the westernization of Kazakh society.¹⁸ This dispute could potentially become an interesting development in historiography.

The respondents were of two minds about how the government saw the extent to which nomads accepted Russian citizenship. A. Morrison believed that, unlike the Bashkirs and the Tatars, tsarist legislation defined the Kazakhs not as subjects, but as “foreigners,” while A.A. Gafarov argued that the authorities always saw Russian Muslims as more loyal to their faith than to the Christian Tsar. Curiously, these historians were on the same side in this dispute. For A. Morrison, pan-Islamism among Russian subjects was a chimera that existed only in the minds of the authorities,¹⁹ whereas A.A. Gafarov believed that it was one of the most fundamental elements of life among the empire's Muslims.²⁰ On the other hand, Yu.A. Lysenko, D.V. Vasil'ev, and V.V. Dmitriev stressed that

¹⁵ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 167.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 147–148.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 67–72.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 153–157.

¹⁹ A. Morrison, “Sufism, Panislamism, and Information Panic. Nil Sergeevich Lykoshin and the aftermath of the Andijan Uprising,” *Past and Present*, no. 214 (2012): 255–304.

²⁰ A.A. Gafarov, *Rossiyskiye musul'mane v kontekste obshcheislamskoy modernizatsii (XIX – nachalo XX vv.)* (Kazan: Kazanskiy universitet Publ., 2014).

to Russian authorities the nomads' citizenship was full-fledged and not discriminatory, but instead aimed at preserving cultural autonomy – at least until the 1860–1870s. Indeed, D.V. Vasil'ev evoked the metaphor of parallel realities in the imaginations of imperial and Kazakh elites.²¹

In this regard it is striking how views about the notion of foreigners varied. As we have seen, in A. Morrison's opinion, this category translates into inferior citizenship, while Yu.A. Lysenko suggested that the Russian state considered Siberian "foreigners" to be their subjects. Yu.A. Lysenko and V.V. Dmitriev concur with V.V. Trepavlov's well-known argument that the supra-ethnic principle of making equal rights for all classes (for example, equating the 19th century Kazakhs with peasants, and the Crimean murzas with nobility) is an indicator that the authorities saw those nomads who had sworn their loyalty to the tsar as full-fledged subjects.²²

Methods of Implementing Acculturation on the Southeast Frontier

As for ways to achieve these goals, *Dmitriev* responded with the most detailed list:

- Conversion to the settled way of life and farming.
- Involvement in stationary commercial and industrial activity.
- Adaptation of local government institutions to the all-Russian management system, that is, keeping some local institutions and aspects of customary law, with the transition to unification only after the most Nogai were settled.
- Protection from harassment by those who wanted to take advantage of the new subjects' ignorance of Russian legislation.

A.A. Gafarov defined these initiatives as "expansion," highlighting, in addition to the military-political, their cultural-ideological" sub-aspect as well. His answer implied that he defines any transfer of ideas from the Russian ruling class as "expansion", which wrongly stretches and actually devalues the term's very concept; it makes any government policy about language, culture, education, anywhere and anytime, *a priori* expansionary. However, in the framework of this terminology, among the activities of the Russian administration, the scholar also noted the measures to "somewhat expand the rights of Muslims," the desire in some cases to use institutions and customary law at the local level traditional, while also introducing elements of the imperial educational standard into the nomadic environment. In other words, his list largely corresponds to that of *Dmitriev*.

Among the main areas that acculturation addressed, I.V. Lidzhieva also noted preserving local law and a various traditional institutions of administration. But at the same time they were adapted to the imperial system of governance. She described Russian policy towards the Kalmyks as asymmetric, at times emphasizing unification and on other occasions preserving local legal traditions and traditional religion. D.V. Vasil'ev argued that, with regard to the Kazakhs, the government only actively intervened in their social structure and internal relations at the turn of the 19th century.

In studying different territories, all of these scholars discussed the stages in the policy the authorities pursued and their chronological disparity. Nevertheless, they agreed that unification and eliminating regional differences intensified during the late imperial period (1860–1917). This reflects the ruling elite's approach to maintaining stability during the period of the Great Reforms, followed by growing disparities between the need to modernize and the population's backwardness, including that on the frontier.

²¹ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 168.

²² V.V. Trepavlov, "Formirovaniye mnogonatsional'nogo gosudarstva v Rossii: zakonmernosti i osobennosti," in *Trudy Otdeleniya istoriko-filologicheskikh nauk RAN. 2007* (Moscow: Nauka Publ., 2009), 64–71.

Intriguingly, I.V. Lidzhiya had a different thought. When discussing Russian efforts to preserve traditional administration on the Kalmyk steppe, she invoked S.Iu. Deev by suggesting “some Kalmyks preferred Russian power to national (Kalmyk) one.”²³ More research in this area could change our understanding of the government’s motives in addressing political struggles within nomadic communities.

In considering how acculturation was adapted to local circumstances I.V. Lidzhiya, D.V. Vasil’ev, K. Matsuzato, N. Naganava, and A. Morrison considered their effectiveness. They predictably agreed that the authorities did consider the characteristics of traditional local institutions. However, they somewhat differed in further assessments. Thus, I.V. Lidzhiya and D.V. Vasil’ev believed that such local variations worked well to acculturate the region’s population. K. Matsuzato agreed, but added that any evaluation should consider both border defense as well as the need to keep the peace among the nomads themselves and elimination class differences (for example, among the Orenburg Cossacks).

N. Naganava and A. Morrison were more interested in those policies that adversely affected the empire. These included growing nationalist sentiments among both the Russian rulers and the minorities on the steppe, which hampered imperial unity. However, they disagreed about the problem’s severity. While A. Morrison considered this development to be fatal for the empire, N. Naganava downplayed the harm, going on to point to the increased “possibilities for negotiations and interactions between the authorities and the subjects and among the subjects.” The fact that Russia, retained Siberia, Bashkiria, Kalmykia, Crimea and many other regions supports N. Naganava’s conclusion.

K. Matsuzato’s comments about Cossack resistance to the Great Reforms of the latter half of the 19th century were well taken.²⁴ They correlate with well S.V. Lyubichankovskiy’s description of how both the Russian and native population on the southeastern reforms reacted to the introduction of zemsto regional self-government.²⁵ Their criticism of the Great Reforms was typical of the thinking of those nomads who wished to preserve their traditional ways of governance and justice. If S.V. Lyubichankovskiy is right in suggesting that such resistance was uniform²⁶ (which certainly requires a separate study), employing the colonial paradigm to understand this process is largely meaningless, because then all of whole Russia, aside from its capitals, may be considered to be a colony to a greater or lesser degree. The acculturation model, by contrast, allows for deciding that whether approaches to the “indigenous aristocracy,” Cossacks, and Russian village elders were the same.

To consider the individual mechanisms of acculturation and clarify their role in integrating peoples into the empire, we asked the researchers to focus on the military and border service, the introduction of schools and the medical service on the Russian model, as well as the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church. Judging by the answers, health care was either insignificant or was ignored. However, the authors added two more mechanisms to the list: economic integration (S.I. Kovalskaia, Yu.A. Lysenko, I.V. Lidzhiya, S.N. Brezhneva, Zagidullin, etc.) and supporting Islamic clergy loyal to the empire (S.V. Lyubichankovskii, Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin, E. Smolarz, V.V. Dmitriev, etc.).

With regard to the army and border guards, only Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin argued that these institutions were ineffective among the Kazakhs, since they were not subject to draft, and Cossacks did little to integrate them into Russian society. Indeed, on occasion the reverse was true. A. Morrison was somewhat less negative. He agreed with Zh.B. Abylkhodzhin

²³ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 204.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 222–228.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 228–233.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 233.

about the Kazakhs, but added that there were exceptions, such as Ch. Valikhanov. However, he did consider this method of acculturation to have been effective with Bashkirs and Tatars. Meanwhile, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, Yu.A. Lysenko, V.V. Dmitriev, and N. Naganava attached great importance to the military and border service by citing the example of the Kazakhs, Nogais, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, as well as “foreigners” in general. In light of Zh.B. Abylkhozhin’s unambiguous position, Yu.A. Lysenko mentioned the phenomenon of *zhataks* (those not roaming) when discussing Kazakhs who improved their social status by joining Cossack troops. As for A. Morrison, mass by itself is not an effective acculturation mechanism. Valikhanov, to whom he referred, had such a strong impact on the development of Kazakh society, that it allows us to speak of the effectiveness of the mechanism as a whole.

Particular attention should be paid to N. Naganava’s convincing argument that military service not only served as a “key catalyst” for political unification, but also established a “hierarchy of citizenship” among the empire’s Muslim.²⁷ Indeed, the latter encouraged some members of categories that were freed from the draft to abolish this exemption. While their efforts met with some success, they did lead to difficulties in the armed forces themselves.

Zh.B. Abylkhozhin and A. Morrison likewise did not see public education as an effective means to acculturate the Kazakh, although the latter considered Altynsarin schools to be an exception. By contrast, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, V.V. Dmitriev, A.A. Gafarov, I.V. Lidzhiyeva, and S.V. Liubichanovskiy did think that schools helped to accomplish the task, despite all of their contradictions and shortcomings. A.A. Gafarov was particularly emphatic about the latter, but he also considered it possible that this policy “played an important role in the development of the educational movement, involving the peoples of Russia in the achievements of European civilization, activation of the modernization processes.” Nevertheless, these scholars did not agree that the primary goal of education was as a tool to acculturate. While A.A. Gafarov strongly believed this to be the case, the others thought differently. Thus, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov emphasized that education did not lead to a loss of national identity. The contradiction arose because A.A. Gafarov saw religion rather than ethnicity as the primary indicator of identity. Perhaps further research is warranted to examine to what extent efforts to combat pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism changed or even curtailed imperial acculturation.

A number of the survey’s participants, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, S.I. Kovalskaia, Yu.A. Lysenko, A.A. Nasonov, A. Morrison, Zh.B. Abylkhozhin and S.V. Liubichanovskiy, discussed the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the empire’s efforts at acculturation, although their conclusions varied. To Zh.B. Abylkhozhin and A. Morrison, in the case of the Kazakhs the Church was insignificant, with, according to A. Morrison one significant exception, “the northern regions of the steppe zone.” On the other hand, I.V. Lysenko, S.I. Kovalskaya, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, and to some extent A.A. Nasonov, did recognize its importance. This is not to exaggerate the extent of conversion to Christianity nor the often nominal faith of many newly baptized minorities (i. e. the *Kriashen*). Nevertheless, they did recognize the impact the Church achieved by, among other, forming an important group of Kryashen intelligentsia (S.V. Dzhundzhuzov), growing tolerance among Muslims of Orthodoxy,²⁸ the appearance of a multicultural model of behavior (S.I. Kovalskaia, Yu.A. Lysenko), and, albeit unintended, the rise of syncretic religious forms (A.A. Nasonov). S.V. Dzhun-

²⁷ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 258–264.

²⁸ S.I. Kovalskaya, S.V. Lubichankovsky, “Orthodox churches of Akmola district at the turn of the XIX–XX centuries and their acculturation impact on the development of the Kazakh steppe,” *Journal of History*, accessed November 25, 2019, <http://history.jes.su/s207987840002552-6-1>.

dzhuzov also felt that the effectiveness of Christianization should not be underestimated. If in some regions, it had little impact on the population's beliefs, even after the decree on religious tolerance in the early 20th century, "the Church managed to keep a large Tatar-speaking population faithful to Orthodoxy, significantly outnumbering those who re-adopted Islam ... For most baptized Tatars and Nagaibaks, Orthodoxy became the basis of a confessional and specific cultural affiliation that combined features of Tatar and Russian Orthodox mentality." He added that Orthodox missionary work indisputably led to "the conscious transition of entire peoples (the Mordvins, the Udmurts, the Mari, the Chuvash and many others) and individual ethnic groups to the Russian Orthodox Church."²⁹

Nevertheless, to many of the tsar's new subjects ethnic identity was still weaker than loyalty to a clan or tribe. In such circumstances, imperial acculturation was often directed at forming an ethnic identity. Such efforts did not mean abandoning variations within an ethnic group, such as not Kalmyk, but baptized Kalmyk;³⁰ not Tatar, but baptized Tatar, not Russian/Bashkir/Kazakh/Tatar, but Cossack,³¹ etc., nor did he contradict the acculturation policy. In contrast to ethnic identity, religious affiliation was not considered to be out of bounds until reliably determined to be part of ethnic self-identification.

Along the Orthodox Church's role in acculturation, Zh.B. Abylkhozhin and S.V. Lyubichankovskiy also considered acculturation among Islamic nomads by the long-standing institutions of state supported Muslim clergy. Indeed, officials explicitly sought to encourage the loyalty of its new subjects by introducing and strengthening certain cultural patterns.

As for the loss of ethnic identity by the southeast's ethnic minorities of the region as they were integrated into the empire, E.V. Godovova, N. Naganava, A. Morrison, Sh.B. Abylkhozhin, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, and A.A. Nasonov were skeptical, pointing to specific mechanisms for preserving ethnic identity among Kalmyk-Christians, Kalmyk-Muslims, Tatar-Cossacks, minorities in southwestern Siberia, including Tatars, Bashkirs, and Kazakhs. In other words, the scholars saw no real threat of assimilation.

With all the nuances and specifics of place and time, S.V. Dzhundzhuzov, D.V. Vasil'ev, Y. Ikeda, and Zh.B. Abylkhozhin all detected a single trend (methodology, model) in the Russian approach to acculturating its new subjects. A. Morrison, however, argued that this was only the case until 1822, after which the policy towards the Kazakhs, on the one hand, and the Bashkirs and Kalmyks, on the other, diverged.³² Nevertheless, along with Y. Ikeda, he emphasized that the model was so universal that it was used throughout almost all the frontier, allowing for different approaches towards settled and nomadic peoples not out of principle but for practical convenience. To the others, there was a general trend throughout the imperial period. D.V. Vasil'ev, very convincingly showed that the evolutionary and progressive model of integrating the outskirts the Russian state that was developed by acculturating the Bashkir was subsequently applied to Kalmyks and Kazakhs (in the latter case using Kalmyk experience as well).³³

²⁹ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 320.

³⁰ S. Dzhundzhuzov, S. Lyubichankovskiy, "The Influence of the Imperial Policy of Acculturation on the Formation and Evolution of the Power Elite among the Stavropol Christened Kalmyks (1737–1842)," *Bylye Gody* 49, no. 3 (2018): 970–979.

³¹ E.V. Godovova, S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, "The manifestation of objective grounds for ethnoidentity in the everyday life of the Turkic population of the Orenburg Cossack army (second half of the 18th – first half of the 19th centuries)," *Tomsk State University Journal*, no. 432 (2018): 86–90; A.V. Remnev, N.G. Suvorova, "Russian affair" on the Asian outskirts: "Russianness" under threat or "doubtful" cultural traders," *Ab Imperio*, no. 2 (2008): 157–222.

³² S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 375.

³³ *Ibid.*, 370–375.

Conclusion

In summary, the Russian empire endeavored to acculturate the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of the newly acquired southeast frontier by the following means:

1. Building an educational system that promotes the local residents' adoption of imperial literacy standards and establishing Russian as the language of national communication, to create a socially and culturally homogenous population.

2. Adapting religious worship to imperial standards, either by direct conversion to Orthodoxy or, in the case of Islam, by supporting clergy that recognize the legitimacy of the Russian tsar and the laws of the empire.

3. Promoting the transition to a sedentary lifestyle to lessen social, economic and cultural differences with the rest of the Russian Empire.

4. Involving the local population in Russia's administration, military and/or Cossacks to ease interethnic communication and encourage personal ambition within the imperial context. Those who joined such institutions thereby gained a better perspective on their new government and lessened their parochialism.³⁴

There was some disagreement about how effective these mechanisms were. A minority, primarily Zh.B. Abylkhozhin and A. Morrison, considered practically all them to be ineffective, whereas the rest adopted a much more nuanced stance. Such disputes, which in general concern not the facts themselves, but interpretations, are quite characteristic of historians. Striving to reach agreement among various positions about what can be considered to be effective acculturation can help resolve their differences. This presupposes agreement on the period and region being studied. Otherwise one scholar can declare that the process was ineffective because it did not succeed with a particular ethnic group, and another disagrees since it worked with another ethnic group. By the same token, one historian insists that the policy has failed on the basis of what happened over a hundred years, and another argues that during two centuries it marked a major advance. And each of them is right in their own way. What appears to be a failure in relation to one ethnic group, for the empire as a whole may appear to be a special case, while to the official mind, what looks like a temporary interruption of an inevitable trend may actually mark the beginning of the end of the process as a whole. The right answer depends on the choosing the same chronological and territorial framework, as well as agreeing about the basic terminology.

Such an approach does not yet exist and is a matter for the future. We propose that any researcher's conclusion about the effectiveness of the acculturation policy and its main mechanisms should be accompanied by a clear indication of the ethnic group, region, and time period that have been analyzed. Moreover, any chronology that is adopted should start and end with a serious national upheaval, such as war, famine, a major popular movement, revolution, etc., since only a severe crisis can truly reveal how effective the acculturation policy was. Extrapolating the conclusions of such studies to understand other ethnic groups, territories and periods will always be incorrect. The general imperial situation is only as the sum of all the main ethnic and regional components for the entire imperial period.

Furthermore, it is almost impossible adequately to assess the effectiveness of the acculturation policy solely on the basis of quantitative indicators. And if, for example, this policy did not cover some ethnic group as a whole, then the exceptions should be considered. First, because the status of these people rather than their quantity matters. Social leaders and representatives of the emerging national intelligentsia are few in num-

³⁴ S.V. Lyubichankovsky, "The acculturation model of understanding the empire as a methodological alternative to the colonial approach," *Journal of History*, accessed November 13, 2019, <https://history.jes.su/s207987840006065-0-1/>

ber, but they are the most capable of leading the masses in the future. Second, the empire always developed new territories gradually, incorporating new subjects in parts, which contributed to a better “comprehensibility.”

It is important that none of the respondents considered Russian acculturation on its southwestern frontier to either be altruistic or a civilizing mission. (The latter motive served as a fashionable ideological cover for a more pragmatic process.) In the long run, the policy was aimed at maintaining imperial stability, by turning “strangers” into “friends,” as S.V. Dzhundzhuzov put it.³⁵ The process required enormous investments, many years of painstaking work, and did yield a quick return. But, if successful, it guaranteed the survival of an Eurasian empire, as D.N. Vasil’ev put it, “the transformation of the outskirts into integral parts of a single state.”³⁶ Not all empires pursued such a policy – S.A. Bogomolov showed significant differences with that of the British Empire. It is also important to emphasize that, as it acculturated its frontier, the Russian Empire itself also changed, with complex and ambiguous consequences (Y. Ikeda, D.V. Vasil’ev, S.A. Bogomolov). This obligated the empire to solve emerging problems.

This wide ranging and fruitful international discussion should encourage scholars to continue studying the mechanisms to consolidate the Russian Empire, both on its southeastern frontier and in general, using not only the colonial approach, but also the acculturation model. This is the only way to understand the essence of those historical processes on the empire’s southeastern periphery whose consequences still affect our life today.

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³⁵ S.V. Lyubichankovskiy, *Imperskaya politika akkul'turatsii*, 381.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 386.

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