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Историческая культура императорской России. Формирование представлений о прошлом: коллективная монография в честь проф. И. М. Савельевой / Отв. ред. А. Н. Дмитриев. Москва: Изд. дом Высшей школы экономики, 2012. 551 с. ISBN: 978-5-7598-0914-2.

The edited volume under discussion is dedicated to the work of Irina M. Savelyeva, professor and director of the Poletaev Institute for Theoretical and Historical Studies in the Humanities (National Research University, Higher School of Economics) and member of the Russian Society of Intellectual History. The aim of the volume is to set out and study the various ways of construction and reconstruction of the past in the Russian Empire from a new perspective and a new interdisciplinary field of research, Historical Culture, which is new internationally as well as within the Russian academic community.

The formulation of this field of research is related to the considerable rise of public interest in history in recent decades, and it links within a wider field various aspects, such as public history, *Lieux de Mémoire*, heritage, *régime d'historicité*, conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*),

the public use of history (*l'uso pubblico del passato*), and public historical representations. Historical culture includes the multiple and multilevel ways with which members of a present or past society relate themselves publicly to the past and incorporate it into the present. Historical culture comprises ideas, ways of thinking, mentalities, practices, and representations through which collective memory is expressed. It is conceived as a dynamic communicative process that refers to production, diffusion, perception of messages, and interpretations of the past that produce views about the present and expectations for the future. In other words, it points to the interactional participation of society in the formulation of frameworks within which the past is perceived as history. Within this new model of historical research, various ways of production of historical meaning are not contrasted to academic history and they are not seen as mere misrepresentations of the past.¹

This collective monograph edited by A.N. Dmitriev studies the historical culture of Imperial Russia with an emphasis on the nineteenth century. However, the contributions also reach the “golden” and “long” Russian eighteenth century as well as the early twentieth century. In his

¹ A selected bibliography on historical culture can be found at the specialized site www.culturalhistorica.es.

substantial introduction titled, "The Past of Our Past: The Problematic of Historical Culture in the Russian Empire," Dmitriev makes the point, among others, that the emphasis is on the nineteenth century because by that time, scientific, corporative, (*dvorianstvo*, statist), and "mass" representations regarding the past had considerably matured in Russian society. The monograph is divided into three parts: historical knowledge, historical consciousness, and historical imagination, which mirror important aspects of historical culture. The common denominator is the past and the ways that the past turns into history, the different agents that take part in this process, the interaction between material and immaterial culture, and the relations between "high" and "popular" historical culture.

HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Our relationship with the past is forged through knowledge and interpretation. In this sense, academic historiography, as a special kind of historical thinking, is central to the process of production of historical knowledge and consciousness in modern and contemporary societies. The contributions in the first part of the book focus their problematic mainly on academic historiography. It is well known that in the nineteenth century history became a distinct scientific discipline, with

its institutionalization and professionalization and its inclusion as a necessary course at various levels of education, from primary school to the university. N. K. Gavriushin examines the birth of church history; A. V. Antoshchenko and A. V. Sveshnikov examine the institution of the historical seminar as a means of knowledge production, and they associate its introduction with the maturing of historical science and the mechanisms of professionalization of historians. Thomas Sanders highlights the relationship between the university and society and the contribution of the university in creating a subculture among intellectuals, with the dissertation-defense process seen as a cultural institution and public event.

The contributions of A. B. Kamenskii and L. P. Repina problematize the role of the historian in the construction of historical knowledge and its related questions, such as who is the subject, who historizes, what he/she can "see" or wants to see, how he/she can present historical narratives using theories and explanatory frameworks. The authors focus on the early period of the development of Russian historical science. Kamenskii studies the controversial case of G. F. Miller and his role in the formulation of the principles of critical historiography as well as the emergence of the Russian academic historical community.

Repina examines T. N. Granovskii's preoccupation with the field of general history as a reflection on the vicissitudes of humankind with Russia as an inexorable part of it. She stresses Granovskii's conviction that history has an important practical function for understanding the present. In this sense, Granovskii's preoccupation with general history was an intellectual endeavor attached to the mid-nineteenth-century social conflicts regarding the present and future of Russia.

The institutionalization of history as an academic discipline was not only a scientific matter but also a product of the contemporary state authorities in their attempt to control historical output (notably the works of academics). According to B. I. Chesnokov, the state power mechanism intervened not only in the educational process but also in the construction of historical science in Russia through legislation that included university historical education. The issue of power as a major axis for the formulation of historical culture is also seen in the other two parts of the volume (see, e.g., the contributions of I. M. Chirskova, A. V. Topychkanov, E. A. Vishlenkova, K. N. Tsimbaev, and S. A. Ereemeeva).

The sphere of historical knowledge and its production is perceived by its contributors as wider than the knowledge produced by aca-

demical historical science. The logic of these chapters does not follow the traditional history of ideas or historiography but it includes society (its receptive and creative practices) in the process of production and transmission of historical knowledge. H. G. Federova, in particular, focuses on this aspect by examining a central mechanism of memory in contemporary society, namely, the content of school textbooks. The school textbooks disseminate a specific kind of historical knowledge aimed at socializing groups to a particular community. The author examines the involvement of academic historians in writing these textbooks and also touches upon the important question of the school teacher in the selection and presentation of historical material. The teacher can contribute to the reinforcement of dominant beliefs but is also in a position to do the opposite – that is to put these beliefs into question.

Academic historians in that period, as is the case today, were public figures who were involved with what we would call today, *mutatis mutandis*, “history disputes” and this perspective is a fertile way to understand how history becomes a mass experience. A. P. Tolochko examines the polemics regarding ethnic belongingness and the “ancient” history of Kievan Rus’ and Ukraine as unraveled in the metropolitan Slavophile publica-

tions of the mid-nineteenth century between the respected professor of Moscow University, M. P. Pogodin, and the professor of Kiev University, Mikhail Maximovich, as well as the memory of this dialogue and its uses in later national discourses especially in Ukraine. This contribution also introduces the imperial context in the production of Russian historical culture, which links with the contributions of V. V. Boiarchenkov, N. N. Rodigina, and A. V. Topychkanov, who examine the prospects of local history. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, regional renditions of historical memory do not tally with the future nationalist narratives. The various chapters in this volume highlight the complexity of the transition from the imperial to the national discourse and the variety of local or regional histories. This poses the question: can we speak about the historical culture of Imperial Russia in the singular or would it be more accurate to use the plural, historical cultures?

HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

The second part of the book deals with the different ways in which people think about the past, use it in the present, and orient themselves in the future. It puts a greater emphasis on the communicative aspect of historical culture and examines the role of society and power in shaping ideas, perceptions, and images of the past.

V. S. Parsamov examines the case of the great academic historian Nikolai Karamzin through the chain historian–narrative–public, but he shifts the focus of his narrative from the historian to the public or to the potential – or still in formative stage – public that consumes history. He examines Karamzin’s preoccupation, at a time when history had just emerged as a scientific discipline, to render history as a solid element of the cultural experience of his contemporaries.

As it is today, historians in the nineteenth century were not the sole “mediators” between the present and the past, and not the only ones claiming authority to speak about the past. T. A. Saburova’s contribution sheds light on educated people (*dvorianstvo*) at the beginning of the nineteenth century – actors of the Russian “golden” eighteenth century – who with their public activity aimed to transform the individual memory of the recent past (French Revolution, Napoleonic Wars) into a historical consciousness of their contemporaries. Saburova’s problematic regarding the historical consciousness of the provinces is expanded by the next contributions, one by V. V. Boiarchenkov, who examines the little-studied subject of the regionality of historical consciousness, and one by N. N. Rodigina, who examines the “new mass media” of that age – the thick

journals and their role not only in transmitting historical thinking and diffusing images of the past, but also in deliberately attempting to shape perceptions of what history is in the postreform era.

The other axis mediating the production and diffusion of the symbolic constructs of the past is the role of state power. As I. M. Chirskova points out, in Russia the close mechanisms of censure set the framework of what was acceptable as legitimate information and what was not, the aim being the retention of state power without any threat whatsoever.

The state intervened in the development of historical science, in setting the limits of what was acceptable but also in political activities related to cultural heritage. A. V. Topychkanov researches the material aspect of social memory – specialized structures of the maintenance and reproduction of memory about the past – such as archival infrastructures, archaeological excavations, museum activities (expositional and educational), in the long period from the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. He examines different and successive models of the principles of preserving material traces of the past. The material traces of Russian “antiquity” were treated respectively as objects of curiosity (by Peter the Great), as evidence that produces

knowledge (the principle of historicism), and ultimately, at the beginning of the twentieth century, as monuments with aesthetic and art value. This last model related to cultural heritage was not aimed at the mind but at feelings and emotions in perceiving the past. During the nineteenth century, public interest in the past increased, as is seen in the establishment of an array of museums and in the number of visitors to these museums. Through the policies of retention and commemoration of monuments that were linked to the dynasty, the state contributed to the legitimation of the highest authority. But cultural heritage was also a preoccupation of local initiatives, and, from the second part of the nineteenth century, also of regional movements, as in the case of Siberia and other rising national projects in the Empire. The author points to the activities of very different agencies, such as social organizations, writers, artists, and others that, however, set very different ideological and political objectives.

Vera Kaplan also deals with the role of society and social organizations as part of the complex mechanism for creating historical memory and consciousness. Her contribution examines historical societies and their role in disseminating historical knowledge and constructing representations of the past as characteristic elements of historical

culture in prerevolutionary Russia. She focuses on the conservative variant of these historical societies and reminds us that images of the past are never coherent and uniform in a society, and she highlights the importance of political commitment in the preoccupation with the past.

HISTORICAL IMAGINATION

Any dealings of a people with the past include not only knowledge of the past but also feelings, empathy, and imagination regarding the past. The historical imagination contains various routes: reading, listening, seeing, and experiencing things not related to historiography but to a social construction of the meaning of the past. The ways in which modern societies are involved with the past are complex. The past may be a narrative text or visual. E. A. Vishlenkova's contribution examines material that historians have not yet adequately included in their scientific projects: art images of the past. The author sees the objects of art not only as a manifestation of individual imagination based on historical themes but also as a product of collective creativity. She examines and analyzes the aesthetic conventions of the age and ways of seeing in order to reconstruct the historical-cultural specificities of production and consumption of visual images in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The historical novel, in producing entertainment for readers, is a determining instrument in the formation of perceptions, ideas, images, and emotions regarding the past and its people. E. N. Penskaya studies, on the one hand, the historical novel and, on the other, its dissemination through the thick journals with its peak in the 1870s, when the thirst for historical novels was an "intellectual epidemic" as she calls it.

The issue of power as well as different narrations of the past that can be shared by different strands of society reappears from another route: the use of historical anniversaries and commemorative ceremonies marking anniversaries for political purposes, a theme examined by K. N. Tsimbaev. Anniversaries as a technology of communication with the masses, permits the creation of new perceptions regarding the historical past and its prospects for the future, by recalling a past event in the public memory and linking it with the present and its needs. The public, which mobilizes and participates in the ceremony, is not a passive receiver of the meanings with which power invests the commemorated past, but an active pole of communication that makes the meaning negotiable and thus doubtful. As Tsimbaev concludes, Russian state power was not very successful in projecting its own versions of historical consciousness.

Finally, S. A. Ereemeeva examines material representations of memory and the monumental practices of commemoration – not only those derived from political power but mainly those that express the prerogative of society, in other words, the unofficial rendition of political commemoration. The monuments of the great writers and poets from Lomonosov to Pushkin functioned as a visual point of identity, as a topos in renegotiating memory, in some cases reinforcing a system of values in others, offering a repertoire for the articulation of new images and examples to emulate. Together with the monuments of members of the ruling dynasty and generals erected by state authorities, the monuments of major literary figures also became part of the historical imagination of Russia.

This collective monograph presents a network of different agents, different activities and practices related to history (academic historiography, historical paintings, historical novels, memoirs, museums, journals, social organizations, state, etc.) and it gives us an understanding of how the past was becoming history/histories in the Russian nineteenth century.

Needless to say, the tripartite division of the volume is conventional, as is the case with the division of contributions, and the problematic of some chapters could be placed under more than one heading. However,

the texts communicate with each other (something not always possible in collective works), which is evidence of thorough editorial work. Thus, one reading the various contributions sequentially rather than selectively can find more than one logical interconnection and communication between the chapters.

It is common knowledge that a good book poses more questions than it offers answers, and that is the case with this volume. Within such a perspective, it would have been useful to further examine how and in what way the various means of historical expression, such as academic historical works, school textbooks, historical novels, museum items, ceremonies, and works of art, coexist and influence – or do not influence – each other. Finally, a more systematic theoretical reflection on the questions posed by the problematic of historical culture would have better clarified how the contributors to the volume deal with issues of truth, reality, and objectivity, whether in academic history or other public histories.

In conclusion, this volume crystallizes the field of cultural history in the Russian context and is a worthwhile addition to the general discussion on historical culture internationally. A translation of the volume into English would contribute to a wider exchange of ideas and to a deeper knowledge of Russian history.