

***Japan's Russia: Challenging the East-West Paradigm.*** Ed. Olga V. Solovieva and Sho Konishi. Amherst, Mass.: Cambria Press, 2021. xviii, 541 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Maps. \$149.99, hard bound. doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.59

Earlier work by Sho Konishi (“Reopening the ‘Opening of Japan,’” *American Historical Review* 112, no. 1 (2007), 101–30; *Anarchist Modernity: Cooperatism and Japanese-Russian Intellectual Relations in Modern Japan*, 2013) has outlined a particular view of the history of relations between Russia and Japan which sets them at the forefront of Japanese modernity. Rejecting the primacy often given to the role of the US and western Europe in the formation of Japanese political and social thought from mid-nineteenth century onward, Konishi finds an alternative set of affinities in the “cooperatist anarchism” of Lev Mechnikov and Petr Kropotkin together with its reflection in the later works of Lev Tolstoi, which resonated widely among Japanese intellectuals. Partly because of its social engagement, Russian literature achieved a particular resonance in late nineteenth-century Japan, championed by the literary pioneer Futabatei Shimei, who translated a number of key works. Moreover, Russia differed from other sources of modernization, in that it was itself closer to Japan in many respects, and the Russo-Japanese War came to suggest that Japan had quickly surpassed it.

The present book, as the editors note in their introduction, uses this conceptualization as a “methodology of reading cultural production beyond East and West” (15), and derives from a conference held at the University of Chicago in May 2018. While it may be something of an exaggeration to claim that the Russian cultural presence in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Japan was “comparable to the Chinese cultural presence in the Tokugawa era or the American cultural presence in post-World War II Japan” (13), the approach nevertheless proves extremely valuable and leads to a wealth of interesting and perceptive chapters that illuminate different aspects of the Russo-Japanese relationship.

As might be expected, Tolstoi looms large in this vision of a shared Russian-Japanese cultural space. The literary dimension is reflected in a chapter by Andrew Way Leong that considers Arishima Takeo’s 1918 novel *Labyrinth* and speculates on how revisions to a scene describing the influence of Tolstoi’s 1904 essay “Odumaites’!” (Bethink Yourselves) may have been influenced by an attack of influenza that Arishima supposedly suffered in the spring of 1918. Other chapters address different aspects of Tolstoian utopianism. Erin Schoneveld examines the vision of the Shirakaba group in promoting an oppositional space for cultural production informed by a Tolstoian subjectivity independent of the Japanese state, and reflected not only in the production of an art magazine and the promotion of western art, but also in the formation of an anarchist cooperative at Atarashiki Mura. Ariel Acosta looks more specifically at the work of the syncretic religious community established by Nishida Tenkō in 1904 partly under the influence of Tolstoian Christianity, and the concept of an ideal life encapsulated in the term *seikatsu* that it espoused. Sho Konishi examines the cooperative settlement set up by Arishima Takeo at Niseki in Hokkaido in the 1920s as an embodiment of “mutual aid,” and sees this as a case study in establishing a form of “non-western” modernity.

Another set of essays looks at Russian culture on the borders of the Russian and Japanese empires, and specifically in areas where the boundary between the two was porous or fluctuated. Nadine Willems writes on three Japanese poets who visited the Sea of Okhotsk region in the 1920s. Notwithstanding the fraught geopolitical circumstances of the time, the image of the region they projected in their poetry was of a Chekhovian elegiac “north” that transcended national boundaries and incorporated Japanese, Russian, and Indigenous peoples into a single cultural space. Chelsea

Hudson looks at Soviet and Japanese approaches to Ainu ethnography and welfare policy, focusing on the contributions of Bronislaw Piłsudski and Oyabe Jenichirō in the nearly twentieth century. Lu Tian explores the contribution of the writer Itō Ken to cultural engagement between Japan and China in late 1920s Shanghai in the context of Soviet and Comintern ideas on proletarian literature that allowed them to position themselves outside the framework of western conceptions of international order. Dominic Martin and Igaue Naho document the work of photographer Yamazoe Saburō in recording the Old Believer community in the village of Romanovka in Manchuria between 1939 and 1941, and also the more recent project to work with descendants of the Romanovka villagers to reconstruct a picture of the Old Believer way of life. Larisa Usmanova investigates the migration of Turkic-speaking people from the Russian empire to Japan in the 1920s and 1930s, their attempt at political organization and the role they played in the nationalities policy of the Japanese state. Charles Lock explores the Russian-led development of communications networks across Manchuria to Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries alongside the expansion of Orthodox missionary activity, and dwells particularly on the melting-pot city of Harbin.

Other papers offer comparative insights on a range of cultural topics broadly conceived. Takashi Nishiyami questions the culturally determined conceptualization of *kamikaze* warfare as a manifestation of Japanese fanaticism by tracing parallels in the military doctrine and practice of both Russia and Germany. Olga V. Solovieva considers Akira Kurosawa's stance on Japan's reopening to the west in his first post-war film, *No Regrets for our Youth* (1946), and specifically the Russian inflection given by his inclusion of music by Modest Mussorgsky in the film's score. Elma Hoffman and Olga V. Solovieva discuss the response of the Japanese composer Takemitsu Torū to Andrei Tarkovskii's film *Nostalghia* (1983), and the emotional appeal of the nostalgia that it evokes. In a further chapter, Solovieva views Kamanaka Hitomi's documentary *Little Voices from Fukushima* (2015) about the recovery from the Fukushima nuclear power station disaster against the background of cooperative self-help among doctors and activists in Japan and Belarus, and Svetlana Aleksievich's documentation of responses to the similar disaster at Chernobyl in her book *Chernobyl' skaia molitva* (Chernobyl Prayer, 1997).

*Japan's Russia* covers an enormous amount of ground, and while its case for the pivotal role of Russia in informing Japan's negotiation of the "east-west paradigm" is made more securely in some chapters than others, the book never fails to interest, inform, and inspire.

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***We Shall Be Masters: Russian Pivots to East Asia from Peter the Great to Putin.*** By

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Russia's repeated "pivots" to the east, or "cycles of interest and disinterest" (8), have consistently been overly optimistic and unsuccessful, and generally a distraction from "the reality that its interests and its capabilities are anchored in the West" (12). This remains the case even recently, concludes Chris Miller. To compete with the west, Mikhail Gorbachev once visualized a socialist world successfully imitating Chinese reform and the export-oriented Asian economies. Vladimir Putin's war