

IV demonstrates that Russian-sponsored reform was not *ad hoc*, but was a careful response to the complexities confronting Russian expansion into the Balkans, which, the author argues, was not merely traditionalist or reactive. Substantive reform became the leitmotif of Russian policy with the new aim of protecting their southern frontiers by creating in the Principalities a viable buffer. Interestingly, the more reform-minded French and British played little role in this because in the post-Napoleonic world, they saw preserving the Ottomans as a means of preventing Russian expansion.

Chapter V deals with Russia's reform "constitution" for the Principalities, the Organic Statutes. In contrast to his predecessors, Taki gives the Statutes a much more favorable spin. Chapter VI follows with applying the "well-ordered police state" paradigm to tsarist policy in the Principalities. The reforms actually succeeded too well: undermining Russian Balkan policies and inadvertently leading to the transformation of the Romanian Principalities into the modern Romanian state as they became aware of the contrast between Russian reform and western constitutionalism. The final chapter surveys the policies of a declining Russian hegemon from 1834 to end of the occupation of the Principalities in the 1850s.

What are some of the takeaways from Taki's excellent monograph? He rightly points out that the standard historical narrative on these matters has been unduly influenced by access to French diplomatic documents and lack of access to Russian materials. The primarily diplomatic approach taken by westerners neglects the social and cultural aspects of Russo-Romanian relations. His study is a major corrective to both. Russia's frequent military occupations of the Romanian Principalities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—primarily as a staging ground for conflicts with the Ottomans—eventually colored Romanian historiography against the tsarist empire, which thereby ignores the conflict of realist and idealist elements in Russian policy.

The Principalities were not merely a geopolitical inconvenience but were essential to Russia's protectorate over Orthodox believers in the Ottoman empire. Until 1848, because of their proximity to Russia, the non-Slavic leaders of the Principalities and the Slavic Russian elite interacted more intimately and frequently than the latter did with their more congenial South Slav counterparts. The tsarist regime had greater influence on Romanian development than previously recognized, including accidentally bringing Romanian nationalism to critical mass.

Recommended for anyone interested in imperial Russian history, Romanian history, or modern Europe.

PAUL E. MICHELSON
Huntington University

The Qırghız Baatır and the Russian Empire: A Portrait of a Local Intermediary in Russian Central Asia. By Tetsu Akiyama. Islamic Area Studies. Leiden: Brill, 2021. xiv, 144 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations. Photographs. Tables. Maps. \$113.00, hard bound.
doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.212

In this exquisite book, Tetsu Akiyama uses the biography of a Kyrgyz leader named Shabdan Jantay uulu (ca. 1839–1912) as a case study to explore "the dynamics and the dilemmas of empire-building" (7). On the basis of a far-reaching study of the existing documentation concerning Shabdan's life, in both Russian and Kyrgyz, he successfully argues that Shabdan was no mere collaborator, helping to seamlessly

incorporate the Kyrgyz into the Russian empire. Rather, he was an intermediary, moving between indigenous society and imperial authorities. Imperial officials saw in Shabdan a man with the talent, resources, and influence they needed to help them accomplish their goals, be they administration or expansion. Shabdan saw in the empire resources he could use to maintain or strengthen his authority in changing conditions. The *baatir* (military raid leader) and the empire sometimes had different goals, or different motivations for working together, but a fragile and dynamic space for cooperation existed during Shabdan's lifetime.

Shabdan, the son of a chief of the branch of the Sarıbaghish tribe, made his youthful reputation as a *baatir*. It was his distinction on these raids, in combination with his lineage, that secured his growing influence. Kyrgyz chieftains from the 1840s on were between two ambitious empires, Khoqand and Russia. Shabdan's father sought to use Khoqand to restrain his tribal rivals, and the young Shabdan helped to broker the relationship between his father and the khan of Khoqand. Ultimately, however, growing pressure from the Russian side made cooperation with Russia seem a better choice. In this new context, Shabdan's martial prowess, the respect he commanded in Kyrgyz society, and his knowledge of the situation in Khoqand made him a valuable asset to tsarist officials. The Russian colonial administration was "far too feeble" (42) to directly rule the Kyrgyz, bypassing or replacing figures who had been influential before the conquest of Central Asia, and tried instead to incorporate them under the supervision of district-level Russian administrators. Shabdan's role in this system was unofficial but critical: as a *baatir* of respected lineage, his influence could help to keep chieftains (*manaps*) and the Kyrgyz population under control. His reputation as a warrior and ability to mobilize others, too, meant that he could provide security for officials within his district and offer useful service during the Fergana campaigns of 1875–76. Martial prowess among the Kyrgyz had helped Shabdan to rise; channeling his activities into maintaining order and external campaigns suited both his needs and inclinations and those of an expansionist empire.

But with the end of campaigning, the situation changed. Shabdan had to find new ways of securing his power and influence without recourse to raiding at the same time as the empire, now more firmly established, began to regard Kyrgyz elites with suspicion. His position unstable, he sought new sources of authority to supplement his reputation as a *baatir*, and found them in both a new economic strategy and a changed relationship with Islam. Both of these strategies, however, came with potential conflict with the imperial state. He sought to change from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle, and thus to obtain new sources of wealth; while tsarist officials encouraged this in principle as a positive example for other Kyrgyz to follow, allotting Shabdan the land he requested was at cross purposes with the growing resettlement movement, and his request for land allotment was not completely satisfied. Similarly, his increasing devotion to Islam, which included building a mosque and making the *hajj*, was "an attractive means of reinforcing his traditional authority" (94), but one that some tsarist officials regarded with suspicion (101). Whereas colonial officials had been deeply dependent on Shabdan in the early years of tsarist rule in Central Asia, towards the end of his life they regarded him with growing distrust. An uneasy peace continued while he was alive, but after his death, colonial officials sought both to prevent his descendants from rising to comparable influence and to do without other intermediaries. One of his sons, Möküş, was chosen as a rebel leader during the Central Asian Revolt of 1916. He no longer had any compelling reason to remain loyal to the empire, but neither did he have authority comparable to his father's, sufficient to raise a significant force. A more apt illustration of the fragility of Shabdan's relationship with imperial power and the changing priorities of the tsarist state could hardly be desired.

As always with case studies, the question of the degree to which the central figure of the study was representative—and of what—lurks in the background. By dint of his family background and the resources on which he drew, Shabdan was in some respects an exceptional figure. But this quibble should not diminish the importance of Akiyama's accomplishment. Just as Michael Khodarkovsky used a biographical case study to detail the "bitter choices" intermediaries faced during the tsarist conquest of the Caucasus, Akiyama has wonderfully illustrated the reaction of nomadic Central Asian elites to a world changed by imperial conquest. Russian dominance foreclosed some paths and opened others; to engage with imperial officials was neither to resist nor collaborate, but simply to adapt.

IAN W. CAMPBELL
University of California-Davis

Black Earth, White Bread: A Techno-political History of Russian Agriculture and

Food. By Susanne E. Wengle. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022. xv, 309 pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. \$79.95, hard bound.

doi: 10.1017/slr.2023.213

By my rough estimate, since 1992 there have been about forty books and at least 400–500 articles written about Russian agriculture across all disciplines. That's not to say that we know everything or there is nothing new left to discover, but the bar to make an original contribution to this ever-growing literature is high.

Despite its title, *Black Earth* is not a history of Russian agriculture in the mold of the seminal *A Century of Russian Agriculture* by Lazar Volin (1970), who produced the most comprehensive one volume study of Soviet agricultural policy. Instead, *Black Earth* is an interpretative analysis with selective coverage that spans the Soviet period to the present. The purpose of the book is to provide a broad history of Russian agriculture during the past 100 years. As such, most of the content of *Black Earth* is well-known by specialists and has been previously discussed by authors both western and Russian. Further, the basic story line—the recovery of Russian agriculture and its transformation from food importer to food exporter—likewise has been analyzed by numerous scholars. Thus, the book provides a useful review of previously known information and brings together evidence from disparate sources, but does not break new ground.

The strength of the book is the analytical framework rather than uncovering new information.

The author employs a "technopolitical" lens to analyze Russian agricultural policy. The term refers to the use of technology to pursue political goals. This basic hypothesis, that technology has been used for political ends in Russia (and elsewhere) is undoubtedly true. In many countries, developed and developing, there is a marriage between technology and politics, so Russia is not unique. The interesting question is how technology is used to strengthen those in power. At the same time, during a period of rapid technological change and economic development, it is fair to ask which is the independent and which is the dependent variable, and do they stay constant over time? One might suggest that technology and its offshoots impact politics and not just vice versa. The impact of technology and specialized knowledge is evidenced by the development of special interest groups who, although controlled by the Communist Party during Soviet times, nonetheless existed to defend the vested interests of their members in the agricultural system. In the post-Soviet period,