

inaccurate “official” counts of Old Believers by both civil and ecclesiastic authorities. Additionally, weakening Bushnell’s placement into the larger historiography on the Old Rite is an unfortunate incomplete discussion and absence of a number of works by Irina Paert, Robert Crummey, and Roy Robson that explore the historiography of Old Rite debates on marriage.

Ultimately, Bushnell’s work presents a fascinating historical overview of the many factors that played a role in the practice of bride theft in northern Russia. Furthermore, this work now provides a thorough foundation for further exploration into this practice’s place within the larger social, economic, and religious debates of both Russian Orthodoxy and the Old Rite in imperial Russia.

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Russia on the Danube: Empire, Elites, and Reform in Moldavia and Wallachia, 1812–1834. By Victor Taki. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2021. ix, 376 pp. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Glossary. \$105.00, hard bound.
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In the often misunderstood history of southeastern Europe, the 1812 to 1834 era has been one of the most poorly served historiographically. Lodged between the Napoleonic era and the revolutions of 1848, functioning under the overwhelming shadow of Prince Metternich, eclipsed by the emergence of liberalism and nationalism, and involving a daunting multiplicity of archives, languages, and cultures, this history has led prudent western historians to prefer diplomatic history. At the same time, most national historians, despite their linguistic and other advantages, persistently remained mired in nationalist and communist historiographical traditions. Both approaches, in Victor Taki’s opinion, tended to perpetuate a mistaken dichotomy between foreign and domestic policy.

Taki addresses these and other issues in this meticulous, somewhat revisionist, and important book. Its core is organized into seven chronological chapters sandwiched between an introduction and a conclusion. The story of Russia and the Romanian Principalities is an instructive case study of an effort to maintain an imperial regime in a frontier zone during a post-revolutionary age. Chapter I deals with beginnings of the Russian-Ottoman conflict in southeastern Europe beginning with Peter the Great’s ill-conceived eighteenth century advance to the south and attempts to establish a protectorate over the Principalities. The unforeseen result was the tightening of Ottoman control through the establishment of the Fanariot regime. Russian policy during this era is characterized by the author as a “weak neighbor” strategy, defending the southern borders of the empire by sustaining an infirm Ottoman regime.

Continuing to utilize previously neglected or inaccessible Russian archives and materials, in Chapter II, Taki argues that Russian officials and military men were painfully aware of the distinctive differences between the Romanians and the Balkan Slavs. To cope with this, as they moved southward, tsarist policy evolved from a protectorate to building an institutional foundation for Russian hegemony short of annexing the Principalities (which they believed would risk creating another Polish problem).

Chapters III-IV cover the 1820s: the uprisings of 1821 and their consequences, the Russo-Turkish War of 1828–29, another prolonged Russia occupation of the Principalities, and the genesis of a reform agenda for the Principalities. Chapter

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.

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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.
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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