

KİTAP DEĞERLENDİRMELERİ

Tim Buchen, Malte Rolf (Hrsg.).
*Eliten im Vielvölkerreich. Imperiale
Biographien in Russland und Österreich-
Ungarn (1850-1918)*. München: de
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Imperial biographies are the life stories of mobile elites who were connected to imperial structures, and reflect the imperial frameworks in which these elites processed their experiences. Imperial elites experienced empire as a part of their life courses in the midst of contradictions between local realities and changing state structures. They represented the empires of which they were part, while at the same time serving as advocates for their reform. Their interaction at the interfaces of center and periphery and of state and society shaped, transformed, and circulated imperial images, loyalties, and identities. Imperial mobility patterns, career paths, and elite circulation in multinational empires assured the transfer of experiences and expectations from old contexts into new ones, as well as the transfiguration of reform concepts in the light of these experiences.

Malte Rolf and Tim Buchen began to work on this conceptualization of imperial biographies in 2009. They organized a section at the *Historikertag* in Berlin 2010, and two international conferences in Berlin and Bamberg in 2012. Five of the eighty papers presented in these twin conferences,

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representing the British, Ottoman, German, Russian, and Habsburg empires, were published in a special issue of *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40/1 (2014). Now these diligent scholars have edited a bilingual (German and English) volume with seventeen of the remaining papers –nine on the Russian empire, six on the Habsburg, one on the German, and another on the Ottoman– all to show the entanglement of empires and imperial careers.

Historiographically speaking, this is actually the entanglement of biography and history. *Eliten im Vielvölkerreich* is based upon a (collective) biographic approach to imperial lives, and is divided into several sections dealing respectively with state officials, military and political elites, experts and entrepreneurs, and intellectuals and academics. The volume begins with an informative introduction that details the conceptual framework employed in it, providing the necessary bibliographic references for further engagement in the study of elites from the perspective of imperial biographies. The editors emphasize the importance of this perspective for understanding “how historical subjects made sense of the imperial framework as a part of their personal biographical experiences, and how these expressions of subjectivity related to the underlying structural patterns of mobility, career and life-course” (p. 35).

The second part of the book, dealing with state officials, begins with Michael Khodarkovsky’s work on native interlocutors on Russia’s colonial frontiers. In an effort to secure the loyalty of the indigenous non-Russian elite, individuals from Asiatic Russia were taught Russian and then sent back to their home regions. Jörg Ganzenmüller’s article is on the changes that took place in a governor’s bureaucratic mind in dealing with a non-Russian province in the aftermath of revolts. He describes how Michail N. Muav’ev changed from a modernizer to a Russifier in the context of the Polish policies of the Russian Empire. Ulrich Hofmeister’s article is on Konstantin von Kaufman, the first Russian governor-general of Turkestan from 1867 until his death in 1882, who was locally described as a half-tsar, a *jarym padsha* (*yarım padişah*), in the region. Hofmeister also deals with the apparent evolution of Kaufman’s thoughts about subjects from non-Orthodox religions. Kaufman is known as an ardent fighter against Polish Catholicism in his earlier office in Wilna who became an agent of religious tolerance in Turkestan. Hofmeister masterfully criticizes this claim in the literature under the subtitle of imperial transfer of experience. He also connects the weakness of the Russian Orthodox Church in Turkestan to the fact that the governor-generals assigned to administer the province were of German-Lutheran origin, arguing that they were likely sent there in an effort to keep them away from the northwestern provinces because they were not Russian enough. But this was not a problem for Kaufman,

who took advantage of ruling such a remote province. Marion Wullschleger explores the imperial careers of two governors of Trieste, Hohenlohe and Fries-Skene. He advances an important argument mentioned in the introduction of this volume that becomes a leitmotif of many articles in it: National and imperial identities and loyalties did not have to be in conflict, but rather could overlap with each other. Bettina Brockmeyer focuses on the careers of German colonial officials in Cameroon and Togo, mainly through the career of Rudolf Asmis.

The third part of the volume is on military and political elites. Bradley D. Woodsworth explores the imperial career of the Swedish-speaking Finn Baron Gustaf Mannerheim in the Russian army, who would later become Finland's first head of state after World War I. Emphasizing the multi-ethnicity of the Russian officer corps and the network of Finnish connections within it, he touches upon the issue of overlapping loyalties. Mannerheim is described as "an exemplar of an era and a mindset for which there was no place in the twentieth century after the Great War" (p. 154). Irina Marin's subject is Brigadier General Trajan Doda, a Catholic and ethnic Romanian who served the Austria-Hungarian Empire. Marin's interpretation of his subject is close to Wullschleger's. Doda's case offers further evidence for the argument that imperial loyalty and ethnic identity could coexist and even feed on one another. Marin's article thus contributes to the question of "how insights from old imperial institutions... could be recycled and made relevant to new political realities" (p. 177). Faith Hillis reads the story of the Shul'gin family from Kiev in parallel with the story of Russian expansion, actually as a biography of the empire itself, ending up with the simultaneous dissolution of both the family and the empire. According to Hillis, some Ukrainian local activists joined and shaped the Russification campaign, because they saw it as an opportunity to define a political program that effectively reconciled local traditions with imperial rule. The article of Martin Müller-Butz draws our attention to the potential uses and misuses of imperial experiences after the collapse of the Russian empire. His subject is Aleksander Lednicki, a Polish politician who nationalized his imperial past.

The fourth part on experts and entrepreneurs begins with two studies on collective biographies. Ruth Leiserowitz's article examines 112 Polish military physicians in the tsardom, while Katja Bruisch investigates agricultural experts. The problem with collective biographies dealing with such large group is that they are not easily brought together into unified identity profiles. The next article is a dual biography of two industrialists from Habsburgs' Galicia written by Klemens Kaps. Szcapanowski and Zieleniewski's horizon for industrial work was the nation, but for politics it

was the empire. Their connections in the center enhanced their rise in the periphery. Next comes Christoph Herzog's lonely contribution with a subject from the Ottoman Empire. Yorgo Zarifi, the banker of Sultan Abdülhamid II, is another excellent example of the mutability and overlapping nature of loyalty expressions about nation, religion, dynasty, and state. The focus is again the concurrency of empire and nationalism, and the non-linear development from one to the other.

The fifth part is on intellectuals and academics. Jan Surman's "imperial go-betweeners" are Jozef Dietl, the co-founder of therapeutic nihilism in Vienna who would become the mayor of Krakow, and Tomas Garrigue Masaryk, the Viennese sociologist who would become the first president of Czechoslovakia. Both scholars were of mixed ethnic background. Neither found himself naturally in the arms of his own nation, but each was instead driven to his nation by his career. Theodore R. Weeks' subtitle on Jan Baudouin de Courtenay is "the linguist as anti-nationalist and imperial citizen." Weeks investigates his subject's "double bind" position between empire and nation: Courtenay was considered politically suspect by both imperial authorities and patriotic Poles. Christian Augustynowicz's article is on the colorful transnational life of the Polish historian Oskar Halecki. Fredrick Lindström's contribution is on the biographies of the "Austrian state elite" in the late Habsburg Empire. His inquiry focuses on the mutual shaping over time both of state structures and of life and career patterns of intellectual figures like Hofmannsthal, Musil, Renner, and Kelsen. His main question is how these intellectuals interpreted the imperial state and their own identification with it.

Tracing the experiences and contributions of elite figures in the light of the imperial and biographical turns in historiography, *Eliten im Vielvölkerreich* is an outstanding book on the inner workings of empire from personal vantage points. Some of these lives have never been addressed before because they did not fit into traditional national historiographies. "Imperial biographies" is a timely approach that will better allow researchers to understand the interplay between nation and empire, and also to rediscover the fluidities, heterogeneities, and the ambiguities of empires. The idea of the symbiotic interconnection and non-opposition between national awareness and imperial loyalty seems to have a bright future in the academic literature on empires.