

At The Edge Of Empire: The Terek Cossacks And The North Caucasus Frontier, 1700-1860

By Thomas Barrett



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At the Edge of Empire examines the history of the Cossack frontier settlements in the North Caucasus during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The specific focus is the Terek Cossacks, frontier settlers along the Terek river who became servants of the Russian state, warriors, and occasionally soldiers for (and deserters from) the Russian imperial armies. Barrett reconsiders Cossack history with an eye for its relation to the policies and reality of pre-Soviet Russian imperialism. The rich historiography of the American frontier informs this reevaluation—the Cossack interaction with native peoples and the formation of a unique frontier society closely mirror the contemporary borderland settlements in the American West. But Barrett presents Russian colonization as a fluid mixing of cultures rather than a cut-and dried military conquest, as it has previously been presented in ideology-laden histories of the Soviet Union. This opens up new ways in which to consider the myths and perceptions of historic Russian nationalism and its relation to state formation and ethnic identity in the Caucasus and post-Soviet Russia today.



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About the Author

Thomas M. Barrett is assistant professor of history at St. Mary's college of Maryland. He has written numerous articles on the encounter between Russia and the North Caucasus and is presently writing a comparative history of the popular culture of the Russian and American frontiers.

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