Book Review

"The Touch of Civilization": Comparing American and Russian Internal Colonization. By Steven Sabol. (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2017. xii + 298 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. $65.00.)

Steven Sabol's *The Touch of Civilization* is a welcome addition to the small but growing number of histories of colonialism in the North American West, perhaps most notably areas that existed as so-called "internal colonies" inside of U.S. borders. Sabol compares internal colonization's effects on the Sioux and the Kazakhs of the Russian Steppe in order to explain "how and why two nineteenth-century expanding powers colonized two different peoples, yet one is clearly understood and accepted to be an empire (Russia) and the other is not (United States)" (p. 9). Sabol's comparison ultimately leads to important larger conclusions about the nature of colonization in the nineteenth-century world.

Sabol begins by noting that the United States and tsarist Russia colonized the Sioux and Kazakhs, respectively, thus de-essentializing U.S. western expansion. Sabol sets up his discussion with an overarching analysis of Kazakh and Sioux societies, establishing not only their respective complexities but also how oversimplified notions of each group as "imagined communities" complicated the processes of internal colonization. Although Russian expansion into the Kazakh Steppe preceded U.S. expansion into the Great Plains by two centuries, both powers advanced in stages prior to the nineteenth century in search of economic profit, which required, naturally, military security. Sioux and Kazakh efforts to resist such dominance reinforced for nineteenth-century Russians and Americans the conviction that the two groups' lands must be settled and occupied; subsequently, both nations launched "civilizing missions [that] could elevate the Sioux and Kazakhs sufficiently from their backwardness and barbarism to prevent the seemingly inevitable extinction" (p. 139). Finally, Sabol establishes that colonial relations of dominance existed inside of Russian and U.S. borders, while Kazakhs and Sioux exerted some level of agency against "civilizing" agents of the U.S. and Russian states, which functioned with subtle differences from one another.

One might criticize Sabol's macro-level approach, which results in Sioux and Kazakh voices being somewhat muted. Such criticism, however, would be misplaced. The author's careful choice of the word *colonization* instead of *colonialism* in the title is apt. Sabol joins a growing course of scholars interested in the phenomenon of how colonialism/colonization occurs inside of the borders of modern nation states; rather than focusing primarily on the lived experiences of the oppressed. However, Sabol's ultimate point is that nineteenth-century Russia and the United States were colonizers in much the same way that contemporary states colonized parts of the world that were overseas. This point is often missed by historians who study colonialism during the nineteenth century. *The Touch of Civilization* is thus an important addition to the growing canon on global and comparative histories of the nineteenth-century world.

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