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## REVIEW OF: Simon Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 414 p.

РЕЦ. НА КН.: Franklin S. The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019. 414 p.

**Аннотация:** В недавно опубликованной монографии «Российская Графосфера: 1450–1850» Саймона Франклина, который является профессором славянских исследований в университете Кембриджа и лауреатом Большой золотой медали имени Ломоносова Российской академии наук, идёт речь о новой категории анализа, которую он называет «графосфера». Темой книги является изучение важности роли публичного мира слов и технологии письма с XV по XIX в. Подтекстуально книга предлагает аргумент о том, что учёные не должны забывать о сфере книгопечатания и словесности, когда они рассматривают историю Российской имперской.

В настоящей рецензии я ставлю своей задачей показать, что понимание эффектов словесности и этой новой графосферы станет неотъемлемой частью научного дискурса. Исследования такого рода предполагают нормальность российского варианта книгопечатной революции, и потому монография Франклина опровергает культурный стереотип, в соответствии с которым Россия отставала от Европы. Если учёные будут рассуждать о России во всеобщем контексте словесности, они смогут концептуализировать растущую международную роль Российского государства в имперский период.

**Keywords / Ключевые слова:** Printing, literature, writing technology, contexts of words / Книгопечатание, литература, технология письма, словесность

Simon Franklin's newest monograph, *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850,*[1] seeks to decode the world of words that punctuated the Russian imperial experience. Following in the footsteps of his earlier *Writing and Society in Early Rus', ca. 900–1300,*[2] it analyzes the multiplicity of ways in which writing, printing, and their technologies functioned in Russian society during the early imperial period, from the "replacement" of parchment with paper until the invention of the telegraph and the transformation of communication away from the perceivable word. His newly minted term "graphosphere" denotes a realm of spatial analysis, the difference between the word and the non-word which he claims to be both identifiable and mappable (pp. 2–3). The graphosphere is material insomuch as physical objects constitute it, yet it inevitably incorporates the political, cultural,

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[1] Simon Franklin, *The Russian Graphosphere, 1450–1850* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
[2] Simon Franklin, *Writing Society and Culture in Early Rus', c. 950–1300* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002). (См. рус. пер.: *Франклин С.* Письменность, общество и культура в Древней Руси (около 950–1300 гг.) / Пер. Д. М. Буланина. СПб., 2010. — *Прим. ред.*)

and social mores of those who interact with and use it. The stakes and basic questions for Franklin are numerous, ranging from why the Russian empire lacked a "Gutenberg moment," or a definitive "birth" of the printing industry, to the role of state control over censorship and production of written and printed texts and its change over time.

Franklin's book can be divided into two distinct sections: parameters and functions. The first three chapters outline Franklin's approach, wherein he justifies his chronological and theoretical parameters. Chapters Two and Three detail the various types of writing (primary, secondary, tertiary), from monastic copying of manuscripts to early forays into block printing prioritized under Peter I's government. Chapter Three in particular raises the idea of words as material, rather than merely textual, artifacts; thus, "literacy" was not a pre-requisite for engagement with the graphosphere. Building off these outlines, Chapter Four begins a discernable section on the function of the graphosphere by classifying the various forms it may take, in Cyrillic and Latin scripts, in and around centers of imperial power, namely Moscow and St. Petersburg. "Chapter Five: Places and Times of the Graphosphere" interrogates the public and private role of text, and subliminally books, in the lives of Russian who viewed and used them. Keeping with the idea of the materiality of texts, Franklin highlights the naming of buildings and streets in the establishment and expansion of St. Petersburg as one omnipotent way the graphosphere functioned publicly. Chapter Six describes the interplay between handwriting and printed word, emphasizing the use of printed blanks as one way in which Russia not only matched the technological developments of the Gutenberg age in western Europe, but arguably preempted it. Finally, Chapter Seven returns to the role of hierarchies in using the graphosphere, outlining how information technology bolstered the power of the imperial government over a 400-year arc, particularly seen in the implementation of a system of internal passports. Franklin concludes on the notion that his methodology demonstrates that a synonymous relationship with printing, as expressed in western Europe, was not the only avenue of engagement with the written word and writing technologies, and that, above all, the graphosphere remained a cultural space.

*The Russian Graphosphere* may prove to be quite useful to think with. If we cut through the overarching theoretical frameworks which define the book, one crucial question seems to emerge from the text, a question that is reiterated tenfold in Russian imperial historiography: how did the expanding state of the early imperial period interact with its subjects? Franklin's book seems answer to this question quite straightforwardly: one way the state interacted with its subjects was by manipulating and controlling the graphosphere, and through it, its subjects. While Franklin certainly pushes against the notion that Russia is somehow "backwards" or behind western Europe due to despotism preventing the "Gutenberg moment," the state still features heavily in his analysis (p. 38). If, as he argues, the graphosphere in Russia predominantly derived its legitimacy (and indeed, functionality) from the state and its institutions (namely, ministries and the Church), then the state's ability to dictate, if not outright create, the graphosphere became a primary

means of interacting with its subjects. In a sense, the state made a space for itself by engaging and expanding writing and printing technologies. The censorship and regulation of printing, the transference of graphospheric power from the Golden Hall of the Kremlin into the dissemination of the *ukazi* (указы), the act of placing mile markers across the landscape, and the naming of city streets and buildings all point to such a reading. By mediating the graphosphere, the imperial state imposed its will over a pre-existing discursive structure, in this case, the production, reproduction, and display of words.

Franklin's book bears particular interest for his connection of the formation of the Russian experience with words to the "colonization" of Karelia and northern Russia. Franklin argues that the expansion of monasteries in the White Sea and Karelia areas in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries were crucial in linking these spaces to the Russian state, as, in the absence of the imposing presence of kremlin walls, the monastery imposed a physical marker of the growing Russian hegemony on the northern landscape. Though noting the physical distance between these structures, Franklin asserts they were intrinsically connected and in constant communication with each other through the production and exchange of hand-copied books, associating the interconnected monastic world of the book with the expansion and consolidation of the Russian polity in the northlands (p. 23). While emblematic of state power, these institutions nonetheless facilitated cultural production throughout Russia's Baltic region. For example, the dissenting Old Believer community at Vyg in Karelia produced records numbers of monastically copied books during the eighteenth century. When the community founded a sister house for women alongside the river Leksa in 1706, the women copied so many books, local officials enacted various regulations to slow them down (pp. 26–27). In pointing to Russia's northern and Baltic regions, Franklin seems to find ample examples that demonstrate the cultural and political potential of the graphosphere.

Franklin's intervention diversifies studies of the function of power by highlighting the central role of text and words in the definition of imperial spaces; yet, perhaps his greatest contribution is his invitation to use his methodology to expand the questions we ask about the role of the written word in the expansion of the Russian empire. Most notably, the scripts and languages of the graphosphere offer an open avenue of scholarly inquiry. To his credit, Franklin is very clear that the scope of his book focuses primarily on St. Petersburg and Moscow with brief forays to northern monasteries and Old Believer communities (p. 17). Thus, while it expertly points to the use of French, Latin, Russian, Church Slavonic, and German (for the benefit of Riga and the other Baltic provinces), his book stops short of an investigation into the vast linguistic terrains spanned by the Russian imperial state in the Baltic, Poland, the Balkans, Crimea, the Caucuses, Central Asia, and Siberia. Considering the sheer cartesian space of the Russian empire opens a multitude of questions about the newly minted "graphosphere." What was the role of Arabic script as a holdover from the rule

of the Golden Horde or in the lives of Russian subjects who confessed Islam, presumably a large portion of the population following Ivan IV's incorporation of the khanate of Kazan into the Russian empire and its ever-increasing growth through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? Would the systems of communication and relay established by the Tartar-Mongol empires be a prerequisite to the Russian graphosphere? What of the competing linguistic traditions in imperial borderlands, particularly in the Baltic world? What role did a Cyrillic or Latin-based graphosphere play in the lives of even those literate elites who were more familiar with Arabic? Franklin's book opens a door for further diversification of the ways in which scholars discuss the way words functioned across Russia's various geographic spaces.

In conclusion, by de-emphasizing the importance of a westernized notion of the printing revolution, *The Russian Graphosphere* reorients its readers towards viewing the book as an object, rather than text. Such an intellectual move works to decenter the narratives of modernity and premodernity derived from an emphasis on the precarious categories of literacy and non-literacy. Russia of the fifteenth to nineteenth century was not, then, somehow backwards or beneath Europe, but rather a space which developed its own relationship with the written and printed word. By drawing a tentative cartography of the spacial and intellectual realm of words in early imperial Russia, as well as attempting to reconstruct the context in which they existed, Franklin has successfully invited his readers and future scholars to reimagine not only the ways we view discourses of power, but also the systems of communication and information through which that power was produced.

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