

[REDACTED]
Honors Senior Thesis

The Development of Soviet and Russian Turkology in St. Petersburg-Leningrad Since 1917

In Russia, Turkology, the study of Turkey and the Turkic peoples, is unavoidably political. Any Soviet or Russian work on Turkish or Turkic culture, history, or even language carries implications for Russia's policies toward Turkey and its own Turkic minorities. For this reason, the collaboration between Turkologists and the state has always been fraught with tension. The regime changes of the 20th century and the attendant shifts in state attitudes about the value and utility of scholarly research exacerbated this rift. After 1917 the Soviet state and after 1991 the Russian state both needed the expertise of the scholars of the previous regime but recognized the fundamental need to retrain them in accordance with new practices. Both generations of researchers faced a difficult process of adaptation to the new state and its altered expectations. My project will examine the processes of adaptation of scholars to a new regime and the bilateral negotiations with the state that informed the creation of foreign and domestic policy.

An in-depth survey history of the field such as mine has yet to be written, although literature on the topic is copious, particularly in Russian. Some Anglophone works on the topic exist, most notably a survey by Liasan Sahin (an institutional history), as well as the detailed work of Michael Kemper, Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, and others. Kemper and Schimmelpenninck are distinctly productive scholars focused on this field, but most other authors write only one or two articles on the topic. The Russophone literature is extensive, but largely works are either strictly institutional history or deeply political attempts at exculpation or recrimination. Although Russian Sinology and Arabic studies have received considerable attention because of contemporary political developments, Turkology is relatively understudied, and a reexamination of this scholarship in the context of questions posed by Kemper, Schimmelpenninck, and their colleagues is in order. Contemporary researchers debate whether Stalinism destroyed Russian humanities studies, and in what ways these studies were influenced by the USSR's imperial experience; on the basis of two semesters of research, I will argue that Stalinism did not destroy Turkology, and I will explore Russian attitudes and application of Saidian theories of Orientalism.

My research is based on an extensive range of primary and secondary sources. Aside from the Anglophone, Russophone, and Francophone secondary sources available to me online

and through interlibrary loan, I am also using published archival materials from Russian Orientological Institutes. On top of this, I will be making use of archival sources that I examined over the summer at the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Ultimately, I hope that my research will contribute to a greater understanding of the process of producing humanities research under oppressive regimes. Analyzing scholarly works through this lens will help western researchers make the best use of sources by scholars from authoritarian states, as well as facilitate scholarly cooperation with researchers currently facing increasingly restrictive regimes such as those of Turkey and Russia. My research, thus, represents a step toward mutual understanding in the scholarly community across borders and cultures.

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