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Born in 1946 in Hartford, Conn., USA

Studied Russian Literature at Reed College, Portland, and Russian History and Soviet Studies at Harvard University

FOCUS

PROJECT

The Legal Life of the Russian State, or Sovereignty Seen from the Middle; Kazan Judicial District, 1890-1917

My project is a monograph about the operations and significance of the legal system in late imperial Russia. I focus on the "middle" level of the law – on appeals courts, district supervisors, police and administrative institutions – in Kazan province, a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional region on the Volga River. After the revolution of 1905 and the consequent restructuring of imperial sovereignty, middle-level authorities confronted disruptions initiated by both state reformers and radical opponents of the government. Litigation and legal supervision were mechanisms whereby basic elements of civic life – family and property – were to be managed and potentially reconfigured. Provincial officials charged with responding to civil disputes, as well as to crime and subversion, were critical intermediaries of imperial power at this time of economic expansion, political pressure, and extensive legal activism.

As middle-level authorities did their work, they articulated among themselves and to users of the legal system notions of sovereignty supposedly shared by imperial subjects. Their actions open to scrutiny the ways that people interacted with imperial law and what they expected of it.

Communications between governors' secretaries, assistant prosecutors, gendarmes, policemen, and regional supervisors allow me to trace webs of connection among people from the bottom, top, and middle of the polity. My study challenges the conventional view of Russia as a lawless state, but also exposes particular qualities of Russian law in the last decades of Romanov rule. Having written on intellectuals and peasants in the past, I now focus on bureaucrats. Their practices, judgments, and expectations offer insights into strengths and weaknesses of the empire's way of rule.

Recommended Reading

Burbank, Jane (with Frederick Cooper). *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010; paperback 2011.

- . *Russian Peasants Go to Court: Legal Culture in the Countryside, 1905-1917*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.

- . *Intelligentsia and Revolution: Russian Views of Bolshevism, 1917-1922*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986; paperback 1989.

Unseparated Powers: Law and Sovereignty in the Russian Empire

This talk will introduce the legal system of imperial Russia as it operated in the early twentieth century. Contrary to much scholarly and popular opinion, the Russian empire was ruled through law. The framework of imperial law established institutions through which subjects of the empire could resolve their conflicts legally and seek to punish behaviors they deemed criminal. A critical element of the imperial governance was the empowerment of officials operating in multiple "middle-level" institutions to supervise the conduct of local authorities and institutions.

I will consider the operations of Russia's legal regime at two levels. First, I discuss litigation in the lowest level (township) courts, an example of the empire's devolution of legal powers to local authorities. Then I turn to what I call the "middle" level of the law, where judicial and administrative officials provided essential links in the imperial order, connecting the multiple institutions of legal governance to each other and to the overarching, law-giving authority of the emperor.

Cases from the lower-level courts and communications from inside the mid-range administration display the pluralistic, paternalistic, and quite efficient functioning of rule of law in Russia. Can analysis of these legal matters give us access to the ideas of sovereignty communicated across and enforced by the intersecting networks of Russia's legal system?

PUBLICATIONS FROM THE FELLOW LIBRARY

Burbank, Jane (2018)

Russia's legal trajectories

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1048204537>

Burbank, Jane (2017)

Supervising the supervisors : bureaucracy, personality and rule of law in Kazan province at the start of the 20th century

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Burbank, Jane (Xin bei shi,2015)

Shi jie di guo er qian nian : yi bu guan yu quan li zheng zhi de quan qiu shi

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Empires in world history

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Burbank, Jane (2015)

Des empires toujours renaissants : méthodologie de la frise chronologique

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=849716357>

Burbank, Jane (Paris,2015)

Empires : 4 000 ans d'histoire impériale, les nouvelles stratégies de domination

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Burbank, Jane (Frankfurt am Main [u.a.],2012)

Imperien der Weltgeschichte : das Repertoire der Macht vom alten Rom und China bis heute

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Burbank, Jane (Princeton, NJ [u.a.],2010)

Empires in world history : power and the politics of difference

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=627011470>

Burbank, Jane (2008)

Securing peasant society : constables and courts in rural Russia, 1905-1917

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=832626783>

Burbank, Jane (Bloomington, Ind. [u.a.],2007)

Russian empire : space, people, power, 1700 - 1930

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=529582929>

Indiana-Michigan series in Russian and East European studies

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=529582929>

Burbank, Jane (2006)

Mercy, punishment, and law

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=83238982X>