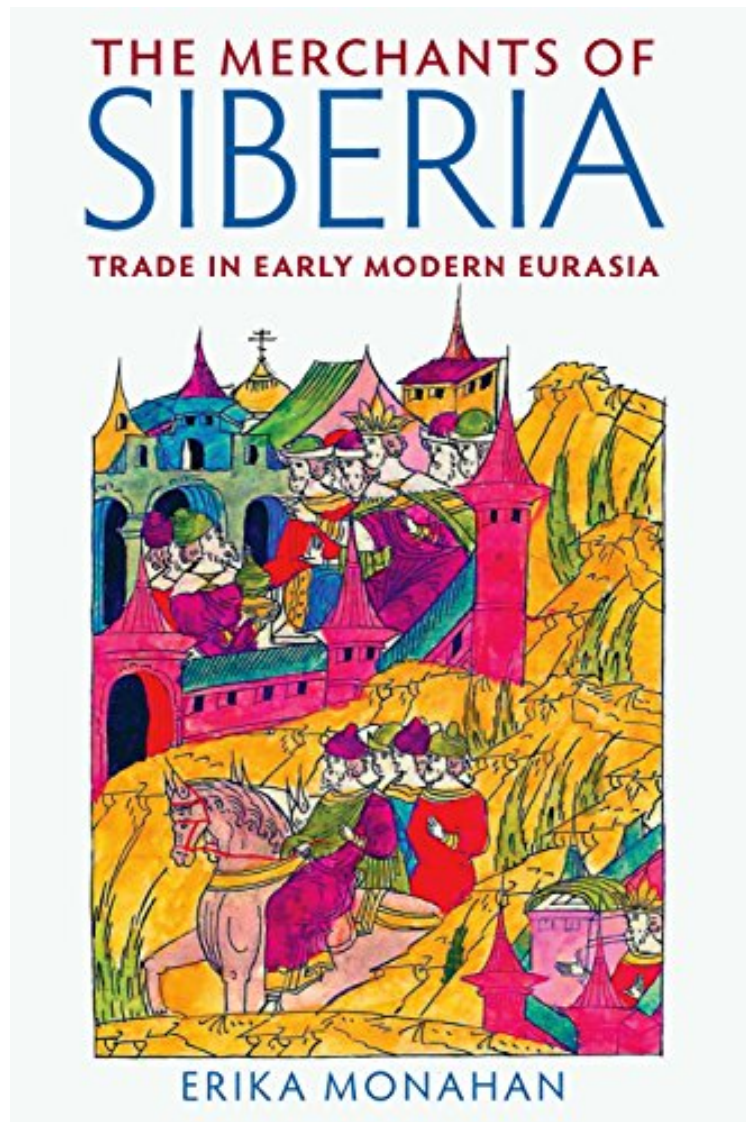


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The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia

Erika Monahan

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Erika Monahan : The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Merchants of Siberia: Trade in Early Modern Eurasia:

In The Merchants of Siberia, Erika Monahan reconsiders commerce in early modern Russia by reconstructing the trading world of Siberia and the careers of merchants who traded there. She follows the histories of three merchant

families from various social ranks who conducted trade in Siberia for well over a century. These include the Filat'evs, who were among Russia's most illustrious merchant elite; the Shababins, Muslim immigrants who mastered local and long-distance trade while balancing private endeavors with service to the Russian state; and the Noritsyns, traders of more modest status who worked sometimes for themselves, sometimes for bigger merchants, and participated in the emerging Russia-China trade. Monahan demonstrates that trade was a key component of how the Muscovite state sought to assert its authority in the Siberian periphery. The state's recognition of the benefits of commerce meant that Russian state- and empire-building in Siberia were characterized by accommodation; in this diverse borderland, instrumentality trumped ideology and the Orthodox state welcomed Central Asian merchants of Islamic faith. This reconsideration of Siberian trade invites us to rethink Russia's place in the early modern world. The burgeoning market at Lake Yamys, an inner-Eurasian trading post along the Irtysh River, illuminates a vibrant seventeenth-century Eurasian caravan trade even as Europe-Asia maritime trade increased. By contextualizing merchants and places of Siberian trade in the increasingly connected economies of the early modern period, Monahan argues that, commercially speaking, Russia was not the "outlier" that most twentieth-century characterizations portrayed.

"In *The Merchants of Siberia*, Erika Monahan demonstrates that trade in Siberia from the late sixteenth through eighteenth centuries was more extensive and significant than has been acknowledged heretofore. Commercial activity in general, not just furs, was the motivation for the Muscovite government's extension of its interests. Monahan tells the reader a great deal about European trade and merchants and uses that evidence to improve our understanding of commercial activity and merchants in Russia in general. In this important book, Monahan sets out nothing less than a revision of the way we imagine the Muscovite economy in the early modern era."—Valerie A. Kivelson, Thomas N. Tentler Collegiate Professor and Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of History, University of Michigan, author of *Cartographies of Tsardom: The Land and Its Meanings in Seventeenth-Century Russia*"*The Merchants of Siberia* is ambitious, original, readable, and significant. In this important book, Erika Monahan sets out nothing less than a revision of the way we imagine the Muscovite economy in the early modern era. With a deeply researched examination of trade and commerce across Eurasia, she challenges a number of ingrained assumptions about Russian trade policies as backwards, xenophobic, state-driven, and monopolistic. She finds that the Russian state encouraged trade across Siberia with farsighted policies that granted temporary tax exemption to lure merchants into the area. The state worked in tandem with merchants pursuing their own agendas and fostered private enterprise as well. By examining central decrees, local customs books, merchants' correspondence with their Siberian agents, and petitions between entrepreneurs and central administrative offices, she finds that the state understood the importance of supplying settlements with the necessary food and materials for survival and the need to negotiate attractive deals with foreign states and itinerant merchants."—Donald Ostrowski, Harvard University Extension School and Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, author of *Muscovy and the Mongols* About the Author Erika Monahan is Assistant Professor of History at the University of New Mexico.