

and a Russian Scholar based in Vladivostok. At times, it is not difficult to discern who has written what, but this adds an element of intrigue as you search for tensions and contradictions between the authors. The book is organized into twelve chapters and the first quarter is scene setting. The bulk of book then presents different perspectives on the region; first, the view from Moscow, then Moscow's view on China and the role of the region in the evolving relationship between Moscow and Beijing. The analysis suggests a tension between Russia's strategic concerns about increased cooperation with a large and increasingly powerful neighbor, and its need to promote trade and attract Chinese investment. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Russian Far East, where federal government plans, statements of intent, and presidential appointments have made little material difference to the region's economic development. It is a harsh reality that—in the face of western sanctions—Russia now needs China's economic support, but Russia is but one of China's many suitors. Understandably, perhaps, the view from Washington is also paramount in the analysis; but here the authors' struggle to provide a rationale for the amount of the book that is given over to the US, let alone provide a reason for the US to re-engage with Russia in its Far East. In my view, less emphasis should have been given to the US angle and far more should have been said about the role of Russia-Japan relations in shaping the region, independent of its membership in the G7.

Even as someone who has studied this region for almost 40 years, I learned a great deal from reading this book. The Russian elements benefit from very detailed research that provides numerous new insights. I became frustrated more than once, however, by the desire to set the lens too wide and indulge in discussions of Russia-China relations or US-Russia relations. I was also frustrated by the failure to really unpack the regions of Russia's Far East. Most of the analysis was really only relevant to three southern provinces of Khabarovsk, Primor'ye and Sakhalin. Finally, because of the way that it is written, there is no clear central narrative or proposition about the factors that have shaped and will continue to shape the region. The scenarios at the end are more an afterthought. The title talks of new dynamics, I would maintain that there is as much continuity as change and that many of the dynamics are not new. However, for those with an interest in Russia's Far East and in Russia's role in the Asia Pacific and beyond, this is essential reading and I commend the authors on producing a fine volume.

MICHAEL BRADSHAW  
*University of Warwick, UK*

***Staying at Home: Identities, Memories and Social Networks of Kazakhstani***

***Germans.*** By Rita Sanders. New York: Berghahn Books, 2016. xiv, 256 pp.  
Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Figures. Tables. Maps. \$110.00, hard bound.

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During the Soviet period, the USSR's two-million strong population of ethnic Germans was a little-known *natsional'nost'* (nationality/ethnicity). Initially recruited to the desirable Volga Region of Russia by Catherine the Great in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for demographic and expansionist aims, later Alexander I continued the policy and German-speakers settled on the Black Sea Coast. Some fled east to escape poverty, war, or religious persecution; others were attracted by the privileged economic benefits offered. In the following century German life flourished, as the settlers maintained their language, established newspapers, schools, churches, and other elements of civil society.

A gradual downward turn in their privileged status ensued in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, though they were granted limited autonomy by the USSR. The German Reich's invasion early in WWII, however, was followed by the dissolution of the Volga Autonomous Region and the expulsion of the Volga Germans to the east, as Stalin was worried about a potential 5<sup>th</sup> column. Thus, a new German diaspora was created throughout Central Asia and Siberia. Many were deported to rural steppe villages in Kazakhstan. Despite the multi-national ideology and internationalist ethos of the Soviet world, the Soviet-Germans were seen as an internal enemy, with limited rights to the extent that well into the 1960s some of them lived under a sort of house arrest, not permitted to move from their villages and obliged to register with the local authorities monthly. The local Kazakh populations had an ambivalent attitude toward them, but most agreed that their houses and gardens were better maintained and more attractive.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, a full 75% of the then two million Soviet Germans moved to Germany as *Aussiedler* (settlers), taking advantage of Germany's ethnicity-based law of return. This policy welcomed these co-ethnic kin as long-lost relations, rewarding them with generous benefits.

But what became of the quarter-million who remained in the post-Soviet states? These are the Germans who are the focus of Rita Sanders' *Staying at Home: Identities, Memories and Social Networks of Kazakhstani Germans*. In particular, she describes, through a synthesis of qualitative interviews, ethnographic research, quantitative methodologies, a thoughtful critique, and review of relevant literature, the everyday realities of the practices of identity, given a new set of transnational ties in a newly nationalizing state, Kazakhstan.

Formerly nomadic Kazakhs, once one of the internal "others" of the Soviet Union, constitute the titular nationality of the quarter-century-old Republic of Kazakhstan. During this time Kazakhstan has emerged as the most western-facing of the Central Asian republics, an oil-rich nation-state, and one that has experienced a nationalist resurgence. Sanders' book addresses the complex feelings, attitudes and practices entailed in identifying as German in the post-Soviet independence period. This is juxtaposed with notions of Kazakh identity vs. Kazakhstani (or ethnic versus civic). She claims that Kazakh identity is ascribed, that one cannot "become" Kazakh; this belief plays out in the widespread reluctance of non-ethnic Kazakhs to learn to speak the language of the titular nationals, which, given Kazakh language laws, excludes Russians, Germans and others, despite many Kazakhs themselves being unable to speak the titular language. The book does a good job of describing the complex nexus of language-ethnicity-nationalism, drawing on solid literature for the analysis.

One underlying question is: given the ethnic privileging of Kazakhs in the public sector, the ascendancy of the Kazakh language, and increasing ethno-nationalism, why do non-Kazakhs choose to remain? Here the book comes into its own, as Sanders nicely describes the ambivalence of the Germans left behind. Some have been to Germany and actively disliked it, preferring their Kazakhstani homeland. Others insist on their belonging to and in Kazakhstan. Sanders provides examples of attempts made by these German-Kazakhstanis to jockey for higher social positions in the ethnic hierarchy, hoping to displace the once superior, now resented, Russians. Sanders has an excellent understanding of the subtleties involved in the myriad of reasons and responses, including the attempt some Germans make to identify with Kazakhs as a way to distance themselves from Russians.

One question here that remains unanswered is that of mixed marriages. It is possible that in Taldikurgan, the site of the research, mixed marriages were rare. Many did occur, however, and one wonders how this native theory of identities she poses comes into dialogue with this fact. This comprehensive study of the German-Kazakhstanis

provides a thoughtful analysis of post-Soviet identity/ethnicity/nationality entanglements. Anyone interested in these issues would benefit by reading this book.

RUTH MANDEL  
University College London

**Writing Jewish Culture. Paradoxes in Ethnography.** Ed. Andreas Kilcher and Gabriell Safran. Bloomington: Indian University Press. 2016. xiv, 411 pp. Appendixes. Index. Photographs. \$35.00, paper.  
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Taking their cue from *Writing Culture*, an influential collection of anthropological essays from the mid-1980s, Andreas Kilcher and Gabriella Safran (both scholars of literature and Jewish Studies) bring together fourteen essays that illustrate an argument that Jewish ethnography is a particularly complex and paradoxical kind of writing. There are several obvious reasons for it. Firstly, as a “people of the Book,” Jews as ethnographic subjects were not as sharply separated from the ethnographers who studied them, especially since most of the latter were themselves Jewish. Secondly, while studying the customs and folklore of the shtetl Jews (the major subject of ethnographic research of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries discussed in this volume), Jewish ethnographers were not always certain whether the information they were collecting had come from the oral tradition, the written one, or a combination of both. Thirdly, even though these writers labored in an era and ideological milieu when many Jews and non-Jews perceived Jewishness as an essentially unchangeable category of identity, their own “data” suggested that the notion of Jews as a single and clearly identifiable people comparable with the other peoples described by ethnographers was problematic. Thus, as the editors suggest, the Jewish ethnographers discussed in this book, produced so-called epistemic and aesthetic “aporias,” or moments that give rise to philosophically-systemic doubts. In this particular case, these were doubts about the consistency of Jewish culture across time and space as well as other related issues.

It should be pointed out that most of the scholars whose work is discussed in this volume were not ethnographers in a narrower sense of the term. In other words, only a few of them conducted the kind of research that we have come to associate with Semyon An-sky, the “father of Jewish ethnography,” who led the first ethnographic expedition among east European Jews and the program for which he had developed in consultation with the St. Petersburg Jewish Historical and Ethnographic Society under the guidance of such a prominent professional Russian-Jewish ethnographer as Lev Shternberg. In the tradition of much of Russian and European *Volkskunde*, An-sky and his colleagues focused on recording the customs, beliefs, and folklore of the Jewish shtetl as well as collecting objects of material culture pertaining to Jewish religious and everyday life.

The closest analogy to his project was the work of Yiddish folklorists discussed in Safran’s paper. In it she demonstrates that such early twentieth century folklore collectors as Herschele (Hershl Danilevitsh), Shmuel Lehman, and A. Almi linked their work to that of nineteenth-century Russian Romantic and *narodnik* folklorists, poets and writers such as Aleksei Kol’tsov, Aleksandr Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Nikolai Gogol’, and Ivan Turgenev. The inspiration identified by Safran is obvious, just as was the case with An-sky, who himself had started as a *narodnik* interested in Russian workers’ folklore. However, as she correctly points out, while the Russian folklore collectors had to deal with a major class divide between themselves and their subjects, Yiddish folklorists’ biggest challenge was to bridge the gap between their