

BOOK REVIEW

circumstances of his work and modernize the meanings of the texts. Numano's historical approach helps readers understand Chekhov's texts by thinking about Chekhov's milieu. With his detailed descriptions of 19th-century Russian society, the abstract protagonists of Chekhov's works are placed within concrete images, living in his time period's social reality.

However, this book is about Chekhov specifically, rather than the historical moment in which he lived and worked. Thus, the book does not provide any models of historical changes, and it does not involve any theories of history. The historical facts presented in the book do not relate to each other at all, thus, providing a chaotic impression for the reader.

It seems to be a paradox that the universality of Chekhov's texts becomes obvious after reading this historical approach. The more detail with which the author describes Chekhov's relationships with women, the more obvious it becomes that Chekhov's stories are independent of the writer's own life. As indicated in this book, many scholars have sought out the real models of Chekhov's stories—such as Lydia Avilova, whose own life imitates the stories; however, fictional stories are independent of real lives. Numano shows Chekhov's detachment from his works and life. When Tolstoy praised “The Darling,” Chekhov was confused. The writer's isolation and works become remarkable through Numano's descriptions of his stories.

Consequently, we can say that the historicism of this book is not completely effective. Though readers do get concrete image of Chekhov through this book, many questions are left unanswered. Why did he go to Sakhalin? Why did he ignore his disease? What made him write these extremely unique stories?

Nonetheless, this book is unique for Japanese readers, and it invites us to closely read the work of this important author.

Kazuhisa Iwamoto
(Sapporo University)

Demography of Russia: From the Past to the Present by Tatiana Karabchuk, Kazuhiro Kumo, and Ekaterina Selezneva, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

This is a comprehensive study of the demographic problems of imperial Russia, the Soviet Union, and the Russian Federation. Three researchers from Japan and Russia dealt with birth, marriage, divorce, death, and inter-regional

BOOK REVIEW

migration of Russians with deliberate treatment of statistical data. A wide range of problems are well documented and cautiously analyzed. The main message of the book is that population dynamics cannot be changed overnight, and that the impact of the dramatic fall in the birth rate seen in Russia immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union will only become evident from the mid-2010s onward. Therefore, the authors conclude that population dynamics in Russia in the near future are more or less determined (p. 324).

We can point out many merits of this book as compared with previous studies. First, the authors collected as many statistical materials as they could and used them very carefully. Concerning this, especially Chapter 2 (written by Kumo) is worth mentioning because it explained the statistical system of demography and the method of compiling population statistics from imperial Russia through the Russian Federation today. In this chapter, the author reconstructed a time-series of population statistics from imperial Russia, the Soviet Union (the part of RSFSR), and the Russian Federation that included data for the total population, number of births, number of deaths, number of infant deaths, and other statistics from 1867–2002. Here, we must emphasize that the author paid special attention to the problem of the country's changing territory, which is closely connected with the accuracy of the data. The figures on pages 29–41, which are the results of the author's efforts to reconstruct the data, are the main contribution of this book to the demographics research community.

Second, I appreciate the fact that this book contained a chapter of concise history of the population policy of the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation (Chapter 3, written by Selezneva). This chapter is helpful as a guideline for understanding the background of the analyses conducted in other parts of the book. In this chapter, readers can realize the many twists and turns during the Soviet period in the sphere of the status of legal marriage, the roles of wives and husbands in families, the legality and illegality of abortion, and the protection of females' health before and after delivery. It is impressive to know that the tradition of a low-contraception culture persisted in the Soviet era. The author argued that the Russian Federation (1992–) inherited its main principles and directions of demographic policy from the Soviet Union, although by 1991–1992, the pronatalist policy of the Soviet state had ended (p. 85). She also referred to the fact that depopulation became evident shortly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, but it only attracted the serious attention of politicians after 2006, when a course of action to stimulate fertility was announced (p. 101).

BOOK REVIEW

Third, I give high marks to the fact that the authors conducted a series of econometric analyses about several critical stages in the life cycle of Russians, namely, birth, marriage, divorce, and death by a nearly unified method¹ (Chapter 4 by Karabchuk, Chapter 5 by Selezneva and Karabchuk, Chapter 6 by Karabchuk, and Chapter 7 by Kumo). In these chapters, the authors showed very interesting findings by using Russia Longitudinal Monitoring Survey–Higher School of Economics (RLMS-HSE) thoroughly for the first time. For example, Karabchuk pointed out in Chapter 4 that cohabitation prior to year T increased the likelihood of getting married in the year T+1 for both men and women, although children did not have any significant influence on getting married for either men or women (p. 142). She also referred to the fact that women’s employment status did not affect their probability of divorce, which is different from the practices of European people (p. 147). Selezneva and Karabchuk reported in Chapter 5 that a woman’s own income is negatively related to her probability of having a first child if she lives with a partner (p. 174). Karabchuk reported in Chapter 6 that their model did not confirm significant interdependence between the probability of having a second (or third) child and the employment status of the mother in the year before the child was born, which is contradictory to Gary Becker’s rational choice theory (p. 211). Kumo asserted in Chapter 7 that the newly discovered facts seem to be consistent with the view that the increase in psychological stress accompanying the transition to capitalism, the resultant rise in alcohol consumption, and the subsequent increase in deaths due to diseases of the circulatory system and external factors contributed to the rise in mortality rates (p. 247). These things are all scientifically significant for the future study of demographics.

Fourth, in this book, a problem that is not directly related to people’s life stages but is very important for people’s economic activities is analyzed in detail. This issue is domestic interregional migration (Chapter 8, written by Kumo). The investigation of this problem is demographically meaningful because population distribution is very important in a huge country with a relatively small population, such as Russia (p. 261). Kumo concluded that regions with higher populations and income levels naturally attract people, though this was not the case during the Soviet era. He also stressed that outflows from remote regions

¹ Only Chapter 7 written by Kumo uses a different method (Meta-analysis).

BOOK REVIEW

and inflows into resource-producing regions situated in the Extreme North occurred simultaneously, even in the new Russia (p. 304). This chapter suggested that we must connect migration problems with the life-stage problems of birth, marriage, divorce, and death in a synthetic way in order to further analyze the problems.

Although I highly evaluate this book, as is shown above, we must touch on the fact that it is insufficient for fully understanding the situation. First, it is necessary to compare Russia with other industrialized countries. That is, I would like to know the singularity and generality of Russia's demographic characteristics. It is true that the authors fully understand this, and I admit that they tried to refer to other countries' examples from theoretical and empirical standpoints (see especially pp. 122–124). However, the references concerning the comparison problem are anecdotal and are scattered all through the book.² A more comprehensive and systematic comparison is necessary.

Second, I would like to raise a problem of continuity and the breaking of the demographic trend between the Soviet period and the new Russian era. Here, also, the authors were aware of the problem and referred to the points concerned. However, again, I would note that most of the references are anecdotal, and we still cannot know what has been abandoned and what remains in the Russian Federation from the Soviet period.

Both are complicated problems that cannot be resolved easily. They and other related issues may be studied in the future by the research community. In that case, this book will be an important guide for researchers.

Akira Uegaki
(Seinan Gakuin University)

² Only Chapter 7 makes the comparison in a way that is somewhat systematic.