

a reflection of limitations to the source base, owing to Cloncurry's habit of destroying correspondence. In a balanced assessment, Holton concludes that Cloncurry's patriotism and ecumenism were 'admirable' (p. 282), while also conceding that his lifelong dedication to his country had only a modest impact on its fortunes. This is a fine biography, which provides a clearly written and painstakingly researched account of a largely forgotten figure.

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Slavery and Empire in Central Asia, by Jeff Eden (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2018; pp. 227. £75).

Undoubtedly, Jeff Eden's monograph is a ground-breaking piece of scrupulous and very timely research and has all the potential to become a reference source for future scholarly enquiries into the seriously understudied modern history of Central Asia. Capitalising on his diverse linguistic skills, the author draws on a variety of hitherto untapped archival documents in Russian, Persian and even Chagatay—the extinct language mainly known to late Imperial Russia's orientalist as *sartskii* and designated as 'old Uzbek' during the early Soviet delineation of Central Asia into a nationalities grid. These documents are bureaucratic and military reports, eyewitness accounts, autobiographies and interviews, and Eden uses them innovatively, attributing the main agency in crucial developments not to Russian and/or British military officers/travellers/diplomats but rather to the slaves themselves. Thus the monograph challenges the conventional wisdom in historiography that it was solely due to Russian military advancement into Central Asia in the 1860s–1870s that slavery ceased to exist as an institution in the region. It puts forward an overarching argument that 'the most important force behind the liberation of Central Asia's slaves was the slaves themselves' (p. 5).

The work mainly focuses on the period from 1750 to 1873, embracing all underlying developments related to the slave trade in Khiva and Bukhara khanates and their immediate neighbourhoods. Eden begins with a thoroughly thought-through introduction setting out the general outline of the monograph, the main body of primary and secondary sources, the context and overarching arguments. The first chapter introduces the reader to the 'historical, social, and political settings of slavery in early modern Central Asia' (p. 12) and the entanglements of the triangular Russo-Persian-Central Asian relationships, markedly emphasising the key nature of slavery therein and somewhat marginalising the overshadowing Brito-Russian Great Game. The following chapters reveal, extensively and in much detail, the economic set-up of the slave trade in Central Asia and convincingly demonstrate that traditional nomadic raiding was the main source of slavery, and that the slave trade was as widely spread in nomadic communities as in sedentary village and urban agglomerations of Central Asia. The pivotal merit of the research is the personal accounts of slaves, providing the reader with first-hand information on their intimate experiences in surviving and even making careers of their own within the ruthless reality of ultimate unfreedom. This is also complemented

by the breathtaking stories of the Russian military's interaction with native informants and agents, where the latter quite often made use of Russian interest and money merely for their own ends, and would even skilfully use this nexus for the good of their covert fight against the Russians. The last chapter of the book logically addresses Russia's military advancement into the region, gauging 'the success of Russian emancipation efforts' (p. 173) therein. Maintaining one of the overarching theses of the book, it argues convincingly that the Russians were not consistent in these efforts; nor was the eradication of the slave trade at the heart of their activities—hence the Russian factor cannot be regarded as major and decisive in the abolition of slavery in Central Asia.

However, even after being enlightened by this brilliant study, which eloquently presents very convincing evidence, one could still argue that it was not so much the abolition of slavery that morally underpinned Russia's invasion of Central Asia, but something significantly stronger in its mobilising capacity, namely the Russian inner discourse on *Russkoe Delo* (the Russian Cause). The Russian version of *la mission civilisatrice* was one of its main components and naturally included the eradication of slavery. This rather broad discourse, immensely absorbing for its time, was widely on the rise in Russian society in the second half of the nineteenth century, achieving its peak by the very beginning of the twentieth century (see D. Volkov, *Russia's Turn to Persia: Orientalism in Diplomacy and Intelligence* [2018]). Therefore, in addition to strong political and economic factors, as well as geographical proximity, the Central Asian 'barbaric' polities in question simply were doomed to be deeply modified by the overwhelming Russian political and military force, and local slaves' uprisings could merely serve as a tactical catalyst factor.

Nonetheless, the very timely scholarly discussion that the author has succeeded in inaugurating is likely to give more precise answers in future. Closely engaging with the most recent works of leading scholars in the field (Morrison, Sela, Sergeev and others) and possessing a solid scholarly apparatus (scrupulous referencing, very detailed and informative footnotes, etc.), the book is undoubtedly a novelty in the main topics it covers and in its scholarly approach, granting the right to speak for themselves to those who have always been left voiceless in the historiography on the region.

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Fighting for France: Violence in Interwar French Politics, by Chris Millington
(Oxford: Oxford U.P., for The British Academy, 2018; pp. xxxviii + 218.
£50).

That French politics in the inter-war years could be rather violent might seem to belong to the category of assumptions so well established that they require no further investigation. But, as Chris Millington reminds us in the historiographical Introduction to his new volume, recent writing by French historians has tended to play down both the extent and significance of violence in French politics of the 1920s and 1930s. According to this interpretation, what violence there was was primarily rhetorical, or at most