



Symbols of colonial empire from the atlas of Siberia compiled for Peter the Great by S. Remezov, showing, below the double-headed eagle of the Russian Empire with allegorical figures, angels supporting the arms of Siberia: two sabres trapped in a bow, and two crossed arrows. The kneeling figures are a Russian Siberian (*sibirets*) with an anchor, representing the river-borne exploration of Siberia, and three submissive natives offering fur tribute: a Tatar (here *tartarinets*) identifiable by his bow-case and quiver, a Samoyed with characteristic knife, and an *obdarinets* or Ostyak of the river Ob in typical head-dress.

A HISTORY OF THE PEOPLES OF SIBERIA

RUSSIA'S NORTH ASIAN COLONY

1581-1990

JAMES FORSYTH

*Reader in and Head of the
Department of Russian, University of Aberdeen*

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To Jo and Marion

A history of the peoples of Siberia is the first ethnohistory of Siberia to appear in English, analysing ethnographic and linguistic features of the native peoples and tracing their history from the Russian conquest onwards. James Forsyth assesses the impact of Russian exploration and settlement, and looks at Siberian relations with Kazakstan, Mongolia and China. He shows how Russian occupation generated warfare, tribute-exaction and exploitation to such an extent that many doubted the capacity of the Siberian peoples to survive.

After the 1917 Revolution and the vicissitudes of civil war (not to mention the growth of Altai, Buryat and Yakut separatist movements) the new Soviet regime brought 'autonomy', medical services and education. However, the policies of the Stalinist era – collectivisation, denomadisation, amalgamation of settlements, Russification and the destructive environmental effects of Russian industrial development – further undermined the native communities, as did conscription during the Second World War. Their critical situation in the post-war period, revealed to outsiders as a result of Gorbachev's policy of *glasnost*, is viewed as the inevitable outcome of Leninist 'nationalities policy', and gave rise in the 1980s to a notable 'native rights' movement. James Forsyth compares the Siberian experience with those of Indians and Eskimos in Canada and the USA, and the book as a whole will provide anglophone readers with a vast corpus of ethnographic information previously inaccessible to Western scholars.