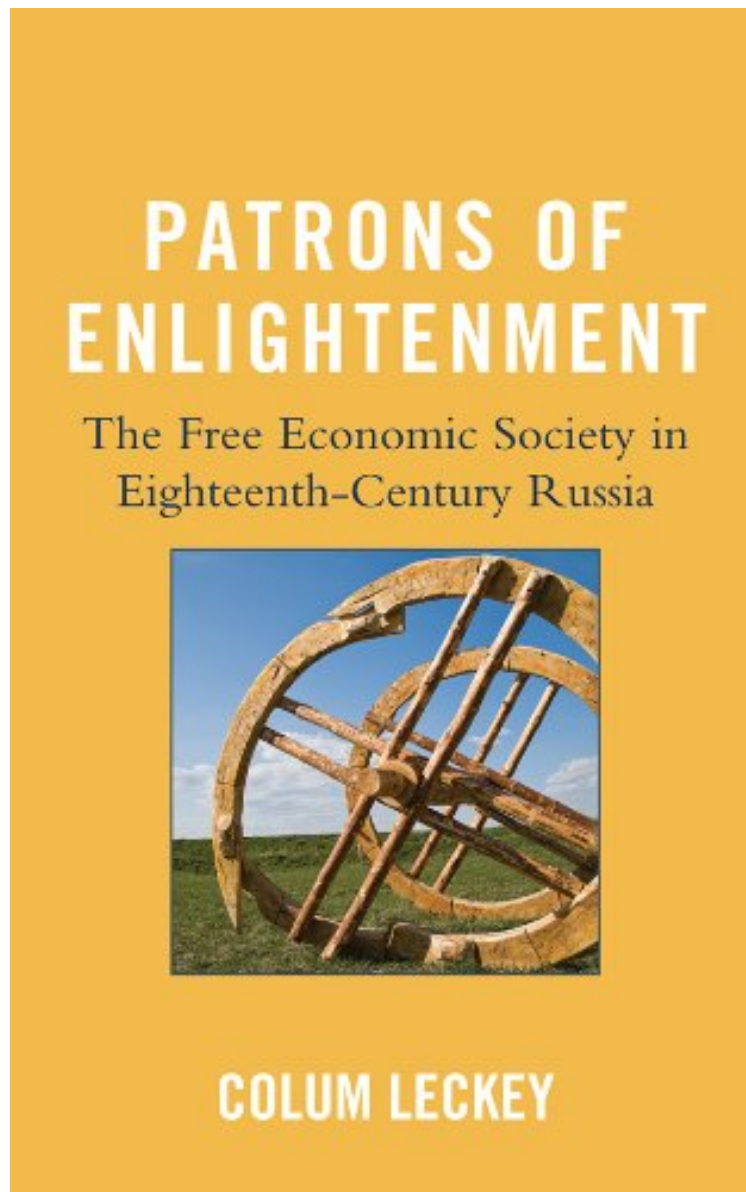


Patrons of Enlightenment: The Free Economic Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia

Colum Leckey

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Colum Leckey : Patrons of Enlightenment: The Free Economic Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Patrons of Enlightenment: The Free Economic Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting bookBy redherringfarmerIf you enjoy history, then this is

an interesting book which should be used as a text or a reference in a number of history courses. The author is an expert in Russian language and history.

Patrons of Enlightenment is the first English language study of the St. Petersburg Free Economic Society, one of the most prestigious and influential public associations in Imperial Russian history. Established in 1765 under the personal protection of Catherine the Great, its mission was to enlighten the villages and country estates of the Russian Empire by spreading the gospel of scientific agriculture to noble landowners and the peasants working their land. Emulating the patriotic associations of Western and Central Europe, it also sought to put the finishing touches on the cultural westernization of Russia initiated by the reforming tsar Peter the Great. Within the walls of its meeting house in St. Petersburg, it offered a neutral space where people of different rank, status, and lineage assembled to debate the great issues of the day, above all else the role of a privileged and enlightened nobility in a society anchored in serfdom. For its network of readers and correspondents in the provinces, it provided an opportunity to earn distinction on Russia's public stage through its voluminous publications and its flagship journal, the Transactions of the Free Economic Society. The Society provided the template for public activity and initiative in Imperial Russia, as hundreds of other organizations in the nineteenth century would emulate its example.

In *Patrons of Enlightenment*, Colum Leckey presents a history of the Free Economic Society during the reign of Catherine the Great, a brief history that he ties both to the longer history of public associations in Russia, and to the concept of a Russian Enlightenment. Leckey describes well how the members of the Society developed a strand of Enlightenment thought that moved far away from the usual conceptions of the Enlightenment. He discusses proposals to alter radically peasant agriculture in ways that placed yet more control over Russia's serfs, from those that wished to create new work units, to those that claimed to speak directly to peasants. And in the end, he describes what probably was the Russian version of the Enlightenment. (Canadian Slavonic Papers) This is a well thought-out and worthwhile volume on a neglected topic. . . . [The book] is well-researched and serves a very useful function in linking Russian intellectual history to the wider tradition of related societies in Europe and America. . . . The book makes an important contribution to enhancing historical understanding of the role of the Free Economic Society in wider Russian life. (Slavonic East European) About the Author Colum Leckey teaches history at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, Virginia.