



GUIDE

TO

The Great Siberian Railway.

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*With 2 phototypes, 360 photo-gravures, 4 maps of Siberia
and 3 plans of towns.*



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HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY

NICHOLAS ALEXANDROVICH,

Autocrat of All the Russias.

MOST AUGUST PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE SIBERIAN RAILWAY.

Geographical and Historical Review of Siberia.

First acquaintance of Russians and foreigners with Siberia.—Superficial area and extension, administrative division.—Relief, orography and geological structure of the continent.—Mineral wealth.—Hydrography and climate.—Vegetation.—Fauna.—Gradual occupation by the Russians of the whole of Siberia.—Exploration by sea and land.—Colonisation and exile.—Population according to the census of 1897.—Siberian native tribes.—Results of the civilising policy of the Russian Government in the East.



T

HE first acquaintance with the northern inhabitants of the Asiatic continent was due to the enterprising citizens of Nóvgorod who, already in the XI century, were in commercial relations with them. All the tribes dwelling in the neighbourhood of the northern Urál and along the shores of the Arctic Ocean were known under the name of Yúgry. The geographical knowledge of foreigners as regards the lands lying beyond the Urál Range begins only with the XIII century, or with the time of the travels of Ascelin, Rubrukwiss, Plano Carpini and Marco Polo.

The work of the famous Venetian contains some precious particulars about the Pamír, Eastern Turkestan, Mongolia, China and even Japan, but Siberia remained unknown to him.

The towns of Bukhará and Samarkánd are marked on a map compiled in 1375, but the north of Asia is represented as a desert. Later on, the Dzhatái, Altái and other mountains are to be found on the globe constructed by Fra Mauro in 1457, but the country, comprising the present territory of Siberia, was designated by him as a narrow strip of unknown land stretching between the Altái and the Arctic Ocean. More precise geographical notions relative to the Transurál countries were first given in 1544 by the Cosmography of Sebastian Münster published in Basle and, two years later, by the

famous work of Baron Herberstein entitled: „*Rerum Moskoviticarum commentarii*“. Münster's map contains the river Ob in the extreme East, the lands of the Vogúls, Kalmyks, Kirgíz-Kaisáks and the town of Sybír. The map of Herberstein, although somewhat more detailed than Münster's, still gives but a slight idea of the Transurál countries. For example, the Ob is supposed to flow from the extensive „lake of Cathay“ (Kithay lacus); the Urál ridge bears the name of „the girdle of the earth“ (Montes dicti cingulus terrae), the town Sybír is not shown at all; to the north, between the Urál and the Ob, a place is set apart for heathen temples (Aurea anus, Slata baba).

Among the oldest maps, there is one made for the Tsarévich Feódor Borísovich Godunóv, completed in 1624 by Gessel Gerard for the Tsar Mikhaíl Feódorovich, which includes Siberia comprising a region containing the towns of Tiúmén and Tobólsk.

At the present time, Siberia is the collective name for all the Asiatic domini-



Plate 1. Monument to Yermák, the Conqueror of Siberia.

ons of the Russian Empire, exclusive of Transcaucasia, Transcaspia and Turkestan; the Urál and Turgái steppe territories, stretching beyond the river Urál and far into the interior of Central Asia do not belong to Siberia, their administrative centres being situated in European Russia. There have been frequent discussions among philologists as to the meaning of the word „Siberia“: some suppose that it is a local word of the Zyriáns and Ostiáks, but common to all the Urál races and adopted by the Nogáis. In connexion with some archaeological researches among the remains of prehistoric civilisation, students of the East of Asia suppose that the word Siberia may be identified with the name of the Huns or Savirs.

At present Siberia proper includes the following regions:

1) Western Siberia comprising the governments of Tobólsk and Tomsk in the basin of the Ob, subject to the general system of administration adopted in the governments of European Russia.

	sq. miles.	sq. versts.
Tobólsk gov	26,749.9	1,295,758.0
Tomsk gov	15,572.5	749,819.3
Total	42,322.4	2,045,577.3

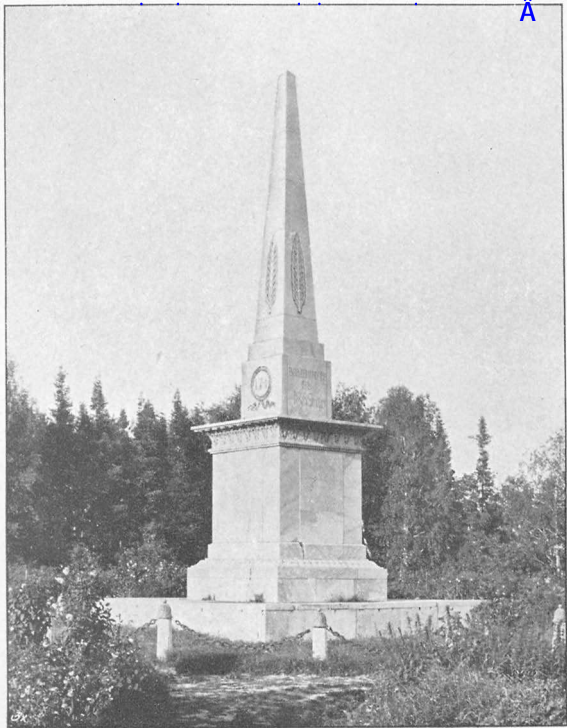


Plate 1. Monument to Yermák, the Conqueror of Siberia.