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The SUPPLEMENT to The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian, Soviet and Eurasian History

Edited by
Bruce F. Adams

Vol. 10

ESTONIA –
FOOD IN RUSSIAN RESTAURANTS





**THE SUPPLEMENT TO THE MODERN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RUSSIAN,
SOVIET AND EURASIAN HISTORY**

Volume 10

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ISBN: 0-87569-142-0

Composition by Ethel Chamberlain

Printed in the United States of America

By direct subscription with the publisher

Catalog, titles, more at www.ai-press.com

Preparation of this volume
was facilitated greatly by the
support of the
University of Louisville

ETHNOGRAPHY. Branch of anthropology. Description of cultures based upon fieldwork. Important academic discipline used by late imperial and Soviet central governments for the administration and control of non-Russian territories.

The anthropological discipline of ethnography is the process of describing the customs and cultures of various peoples based on firsthand observation, and ethnography was the primary component of anthropology in the earliest stages of its development as an academic field. The terminological understanding of ethnography as referring specifically to fieldwork applies more in the West than in Russia, where the term ethnographer has historically been used more generally to describe all practitioners of social anthropology. Russian ethnography, or the discipline of ethnography as it was practiced in tsarist Russian and Soviet territories, from its earliest stage aimed at reaching a greater understanding of the nationalities inhabiting the imperial and Soviet territory, especially the regions to the east.

Russian ethnography began in the eighteenth century as a subfield of geography, or natural science, and aimed primarily to describe the cultures of the peoples

living in the relatively newly acquired imperial territories in the East. Descriptive notes taken by European travellers in the East as well as the linguistic study of Asian languages were predecessors of the Russian discipline of ethnography. The first attempts at a scientific description of the empire's inhabitants followed the early eighteenth-century administrative reforms of Peter the Great (Petr, r. 1682-1725) and his death in 1725. Two of the earliest works of Russian ethnography, Gerard Fridrikh Miller's (1705-1783) *History of Siberia* (Sibirskaiia istoriia s samogo otkrytiia Sibiri do zavoevaniia sei zemli rossiiskim oruzhiem), a linguistic classification of Siberia's indigenous peoples, and Stepan Petrovich Krasheninnikov's (1713-1755) *Description of the Kamchatchka Land* (Opisanie zemli Kamchatki) were products of the Great Northern Expedition conducted between 1733 and 1743.

Several eighteenth-century ethnographic expeditions were conducted under the auspices of the Imperial Russian Academy of Sciences and aimed to increase general knowledge of the newly acquired eastern regions of the empire. The expeditions conducted by the academy were led by such scientific luminaries as Vasily Nikitich Tatishchev (1686-1750), known as the father of Russian history and geography, who conducted the first ethnographic surveys to take place in the empire, and Johann Gottlieb Georgi (1738-1802), who compiled a four-volume taxonomy of nationalities called *Description of All the Peoples Inhabiting the Russian State* (Opisanie vsekh obitaiushchikh v Rossiiskom gosudarstve narodov, 1776-1780). Eighteenth-century Russian ethnography was far more concerned with minorities living within the Russian empire than with Russians, as the primary motivation for government sanction of such expeditions was the belief that information about subject peoples would make them easier to rule. The expeditions were mainly scientific in nature and Tatishchev and Georgi attempted to mimic research methodologies used in the natural sciences.

The nineteenth century saw an institutionalization of Russian ethnography through the creation of journals, museums, and academic societies. Admiral Count Fedor Petrovich Litke (1797-1882), veteran explorer and tutor of Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich (1827-1892), was inspired by the naturalist Aleksandr Fedorovich von Middendorf (1815-1894) to create the Russian Geographical Society with his friends Baron Ferdinand Petrovich von Wrangel (1796-1870) and Karl Ernst von Baer (1792-1876), the founder of modern embryology. The learned society, which was devoted to studying the geography, statistics, and ethnography of the Russian empire, with a division devoted specifically to ethnography, was approved and inaugurated by Tsar Nicholas I (Nikolai, r. 1825-1855) in 1845. The Russian Geographical Society, alternatively known as the Geographical Society of Russia, immediately gained state funding and the interest of Russia's most prominent scientists. In 1849 it was granted the right to bear the title Imperial by the tsar, which confirmed the society's status as a semi-official institution of the empire. The founding members of the Geographical Society, especially Baer, were fundamental in establishing the anthropological and ethnographic collections of the

Kunstkamera in St. Petersburg, which was renamed the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in 1878 and renamed again Peter the Great's Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in 1903.

The early founders of the Geographical Society, whose goal was greater knowledge of the geography and peoples of Russia's imperial territories, were of nationalist and reformist orientation. Within the Russian imperial administration itself certain young enlightened bureaucrats, such as the brothers Nikolai (1812-1872) and Count Dmitry Alekseevich Miliutin (1816-1912), who were devoted to reform and especially to the abolition of serfdom, saw promise in the Geographical Society for expediting their goals, and in particular in collecting accurate demographic data on the empire. For the Miliutins and other enlightened bureaucrats, ethnographic descriptions of Russian peasant society could also potentially provide insight into how to improve administration on the local level. The Miliutins and their reformist circle built the philosophical groundings for their work largely around the opinions of their mentor, Konstantin Dmitrievich Kavelin (1818-1885), a well known professor at Moscow University, who was a committed Hegelian thinker, and also influenced by the work of the French utopian socialists.

As a result of the reformist inclinations of many ethnographers and their supporters in the imperial government, some members of the aristocratic elite, for example Baron Modest Andreevich Korf (1800-1876), a close confidant of Tsar Nicholas I, believed that the Geographical Society might eventually threaten imperial power. Contrary to Korf's concerns, the Geographical Society became very much an instrument for the defense of enlightened autocracy. Despite the fact that the Geographical Society was from its inception dominated by non-ethnic Russians—thirty-one of its fifty-one founding active members were of foreign or Baltic German origin—the Geographical Society was geared toward the scientific glorification of Russia. The society's titular head was the tsar's second son, Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, who was associated with the most nationalist elements of the imperial government. It was only because of Tsar Nicholas I's support for applied scientific endeavor that non-ethnic Russians such as Karl von Baer, Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), and Aleksandr Middendorf were welcomed into the fold of the Geographical Society.

The creation of an Ethnographic Division within the Geographical Society represented the first effort by a Russian institution to treat ethnography as an autonomous scholarly field. The Ethnographic Division published linguistic and cultural studies of various peoples living throughout the Russian territories in Asia. An All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition took place in Moscow in 1867, leading to the creation of Moscow's Rumiantsev Museum. With the emergence of a Russian ethnographic discipline a dispute arose as to the conduct of ethnographic study in the empire. The so-called German faction, exemplified by Baer, saw Russian ethnography as a science devoted to the study of the multi-ethnic Russian empire rather than the Russian nationality. According to Baer, as an empire's indigenous subjects inevitably succumb to the progress of civilization, their ways of life must be

studied before they disappear. He thought the central focus of ethnography should be explaining the European understanding of racial hierarchy and argued that the Ethnographic Division of the Russian Geographical Society should concentrate on studying the smaller ethnic groups in the empire. Russian ethnographers such as Nikolai Ivanovich Nadezhdin (1794-1856), the editor of the *Journal of the Ministry of Internal Affairs*, on the other hand, argued that Russian ethnography should first and foremost be cultivated as an expression of Russian national identification, and therefore the focus of the Ethnographic Division's efforts should be upon Russian culture.

The differences between these two dominant views were mainly philosophical and related to differing conceptions of the role of nationality in science, which was itself part of a larger debate between scientists of Slavophile and westernizing orientation. In contrast to the Darwinist-leaning Baer, whose concern was the Russian empire but not nationality, Nadezhdin's approach borrowed from both Friedrich Schelling's transcendental Idealism and the organic theories of Johann Gottfried von Herder, and was very much centered on notions of Russianness. In the realm of literary and visual art Nadezhdin claimed that Russia was qualitatively superior to other nations, arguing that as Russia was the last European nation to develop a sophisticated artistic heritage, Russian art represented the highest stage in the evolution of European art. After replacing Baer as chairman in 1847 Nadezhdin refocused the activities of the Ethnographic Division by organizing a large ethnographic survey of the empire's Russian provinces. The Russian interest in ethnography spread from St. Petersburg to Moscow with the founding of the Society of Friends of Natural History, Anthropology, and Ethnography, which sponsored ethnographic expeditions, exhibitions, and publications. By mid-century a third important center of Russian ethnography emerged in Kazan, namely the founding of the Society for Archaeology, History, and Ethnography at Kazan University.

The abolition of serfdom in 1861 led to a greater interest in peasant culture among urban Russian intellectuals. As Russia entered its fin-de-siècle the challenges to traditional life created by industrialization and urbanization led to the refocusing of Russian ethnography toward the task of cultural preservation and hence to intensified ethnographic activities as well. In the 1870s and 1880s some Russian ethnographers, such as Petr Mikhailovich Bogaevesky (1866-1929), believed the foundations of peasant life and culture to be deteriorating because of urbanization and the injection of urban culture into the villages by peasants returning from work in the cities. Russian ethnography, which began in the late eighteenth century as a science of empire aimed primarily at improving the administrative capacities of the government, became a method for distinguishing a Russian national culture and finally by the early twentieth century a way of preserving this culture from disintegration.

The collection and study of folklore, a sub-discipline of ethnography which from its origins was particularly concerned with the preservation of peasant culture, was an important component of the activities of the Ethnographic Division of

the Russian Geographical Society. The first attempts to collect and record Russian folklore began with Nikolai Aleksandrovich Lvov (1751-1803) and Ivan Prach (d. 1818), who in 1790 published a collection of folksongs under the title *Narodnaia Pesnia*. In the 1830s, inspired by the German Romantics and their search for the spirit of the Volk, Petr Vasilevich Kireevsky (1808-1856) and the poet Nikolai Mikhailovich Yazykov (1803-1846) initiated the systematic collection of Russian folklore. Following soon after Kireevsky, the lexicographer Vladimir Ivanovich Dal (1801-1872) began collecting Russian tales and proverbs. Dal's collections were used by Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanasiev (1826-1871), who borrowed heavily from the style of Jacob Grimm in compiling his anthology of Russian folktales between 1855 and 1864. Russian folklore collection flourished in the 1860s when it was discovered that the heroic epic songs (byliny, pl.), which were previously believed to be extinct as a living tradition, were still being recited in the Olonets region of Karelia.

The reorientation of Russian folkloristics and ethnography toward preservation can be seen in changes in the Russian Geographic Society near the end of the nineteenth century. Despite having dominated Russian folkloristic studies in the nineteenth century, bylina scholarship appeared moribund in comparison to studying the tale tradition, which appeared to be a living art. The Tale Commission was established in the Russian Geographical Society in 1896 by members who feared that the art form was disappearing and who aimed to use their journal *Living Antiquities* (*Zhivaia Starina*) to publish a complete collection of Russian tales from the archival resources of the Geographical Society.

In the 1890s, as Russian ethnography grew increasingly academic and professionalized, western anthropological theory began to influence Russian ethnography. Nikolai Nikolaevich Kharuzin (1865-1900) and Lev Yakovlevich Shternberg (1861-1927) were particularly important in introducing anthropological evolutionism to Russian scholars, Kharuzin through his textbook on ethnography, and Shternberg through fieldwork conducted while living in exile on Sakhalin Island and his reading of Western European evolutionists. Between 1901 and his death in 1927 Shternberg was the senior curator of Moscow's Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE), Russia's only museum devoted solely to general anthropology. Other members of the evolutionist school included Maksim Maksimovich Kovalevsky (1851-1916) and Dmitry Nikolaevich Anuchin (1843-1923). Shternberg also became personal friends with the German-American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942) through his participation with two other leading Russian exile ethnographers, Vladimir Germanovich Bogoraz-Tan (1865-1936) and Vladimir Ilich Iokhelson (1855-1937), in Boas's Jessup North Pacific Expedition to Chukotka and Kamchatka (1901-1902), which was sponsored by the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

After the Bolsheviks assumed power in 1917 Lev Shternberg and Vladimir Bogoraz-Tan were widely acknowledged as the leading scholars of ethnography in the new Soviet Union. Although Shternberg and Bogoraz-Tan themselves were not

Marxists, they were both populists and had spent time in exile under the tsarist regime. Initially, although a few Marxist ethnographers were active in the field, there was no serious attempt to create a Marxist ethnographic discipline. Beginning in 1924 the older generation of ethnographers and ethnography as a discipline came under attack from leftist and radical students as part of the expectation that colleges be purged of socially alien elements.

Ethnography was able to maintain its pluralistic non-Marxist orientation until April 1929, when Moscow and Leningrad ethnographers met at a large conference organized by the Academy of the History of Material Culture. The older generation of ethnographers was criticized for engaging in theoretical studies of culture contradictory to historical materialism. As a result of the conference a distinction was made between practical ethnography which the Marxist ethnographers claimed they practiced, and the discipline of ethnology, which was defined as a bourgeois science of culture in which the non-Marxist ethnographers were accused of being engaged. Young Marxist scholars successfully dismantled non-Marxist ethnography by forcing the closure of museums and scholarly societies and persecuting ethnographers they called counter-revolutionary or subversive. Even museums which were not closed, such as MAE, had their displays dramatically reconfigured to reflect contemporary political campaigns against religion and capitalism instead of evolutionist or cultural-historical principles.

Elder ethnographers, such as Bogoraz-Tan, attempted to orient their analysis in a Marxist direction. This re-orientation was difficult because Marxist ethnography revolved around uncovering and differentiating classes and class conflict in societies which the non-Marxist ethnographers presumed to be classless. The very nature of the ethnographic discipline, which suggested that some groups had developed less or more slowly than others, was also questioned by the younger generation of Soviet ethnographers. In 1932 Nikolai Mikhailovich Matorin (1898-1936), who had become the leading scholar of the new radical Soviet ethnography, declared practical ethnographic fieldwork to be intrinsically imperialistic. At the instigation of Matorin, Sergei Nikolaevich Bykovsky (d. 1937), and others, the All-Russian Conference on Archaeology and Ethnography even issued a declaration of expulsion of the sciences of archaeology and ethnography from the pantheon of Marxist scholarship.

Soviet ethnography was partly affected by the thawing of the cultural revolution which occurred simultaneously with Matorin's attempt to subordinate the discipline. A new Institute of Anthropology, Archaeology, and Ethnography was established in Leningrad in 1933, and the Institute of Ethnography was founded in Moscow in 1937. Still, ethnography had been reduced by the radical Marxist faction to the theory of primitive communist formations, and focused solely upon attempting to determine the origins and development of class by studying pre-class societies. The goal of Soviet ethnography as it existed after 1932 was to determine a particular subject group's stage of class development and then to decide what could be done to improve its situation.

After 1932 Soviet ethnographers almost exclusively concentrated their scholarship on examination of the social organization of so-called primitive societies within the Soviet Union or on the speculative reconstruction of such societies outside of the Soviet Union, where scholars could not conduct research. The generational conflict ended in 1936 when Matorin and Bykovsky were accused of deliberately sabotaging their scientific fields and were arrested as enemies of the people. Matorin was executed in 1936, Bykovsky in 1937. Some of the so-called bourgeois opponents of Matorin were also arrested, and academic ethnography was effectively paralyzed until its revival after World War II by a number of young radical Marxist ethnographers who survived the purges.

Despite the theoretical controversies which raged in academia, ethnography played an important practical role in the early Soviet Union, especially in mapping the ethnic boundaries of its republics. The Bolsheviks were successful in the Civil War which followed the October Revolution of 1917 partly by holding out to national minorities the promise of self-determination. In the 1920s ethnographers worked closely with government statisticians and administrators in deciding which peoples should be considered official nationalities and which groups of peoples should be consolidated. Reports made by Soviet ethnographers in the 1920s were used to demarcate the boundaries of ethno-territorial regions and to determine policy relating to the education, collective farming, and daily affairs of national minorities. In 1919 the borders between Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Russian Federated Socialist Republics were drawn on the basis of a linguistic definition of nationality.

By 1924, when the Bolsheviks completed their territorial reconquest of much of the former tsarist empire, the problem of how to classify nationalities became especially acute. Leading ethnographers at the Academy of Sciences were charged with defining nationality and deciding criteria for classifying the population for the purposes of conducting the first All-Union Census. Some Soviet ethnographers, such as Vladimir Vladimirovich Bogdanov (1868-1949), argued earlier that the linguistic definition of nationality was an inadequate means of classifying populations residing outside European Russia. Between 1924 and 1926 Leningrad ethnographers from the Academy of Sciences' Commission for the Study of the Tribal Population of Russia and the Borderlands (KIPS) searched for a new definition of nationality more appropriate to the new Soviet context than the linguistic- and religious-based definition which was a legacy of the tsarist period. The Soviet definition of nationality shifted from a linguistic to a territorial basis, and maps of the Soviet Union were adjusted accordingly between 1928 and 1939.

A new criterion for determining nationality was introduced during this time, economic viability, and ethnographers from the Academy of Sciences were enlisted to lead special expeditions to assess the productive potential of various nationalities whose economic viability was in question. The restructuring of the social sciences and the Stalinist purges did not end the government employment of ethnographers as specialists who continued to be consulted on matters such as demarcating borders. When in 1935 preparations were made for a second All-Union

Census ethnographers from the Institute of Anthropology and Ethnography, a successor of KIPS, once again were asked to play a leading role in the census's organization. Although the second All-Union Census, which took place in 1937, was disqualified by the government because it revealed some uncomfortable facts including population decline in certain regions, ethnographers who were not arrested following the 1937 census were called upon or promoted to lead the second attempt in 1939.

Soviet ethnographers initially tried to include as many different peoples as possible in the lists of officially recognized nationalities but they encountered resistance from the central government, which for practical reasons began to demand the consolidation of smaller groups into major nationalities. The ethnographers' reports which resulted from many expeditions throughout the Soviet Union influenced the list of official nationalities included in the 1937 census, and by 1939 after considerable consolidation the Soviet government finalized a new list of fifty-seven officially recognized major nationalities. Although Soviet authorities and by extension ethnographers and census-takers were increasingly willing to accept a person's nationality according to their own definition, Soviet citizens were limited to the existing nationalities as defined by the government, a range of choices which had progressively narrowed throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

Despite ideological constraints and government mandates some dedicated ethnographers, such as Sergei Aleksandrovich Tokarev (1899-1985), continued to conduct valuable ethnographic research, even in the turbulent Stalinist years. Due to pressure on ethnographers after World War II to reaffirm Soviet nationalities policies, most ethnographic work in the 1950s and 1960s avoided controversy by ignoring contemporary issues and focusing on historical anthropology. Ethnic history and cartography were of particular importance, a number of historical-ethnographic atlases were produced in the 1960s. Some innovative ethnographic work was carried out between the 1960s and 1980s when structuralist, semiotic, and other non-Marxist schools of thought were cautiously introduced into Soviet academic discourse by scholars on the margins of mainstream Soviet ethnography, such as those in linguistics, mythology, comparative literature, and history.

Although historical ethnography and ethnogenesis (the study of the origins of peoples) continued to dominate the field into the 1970s and 1980s, contemporary studies gained some attention when Yulian Vladimirovich Bromlei (1921-1990) served as director of the Institute of Ethnography in Moscow. Bromlei attempted to transform Soviet ethnography into the study of ethnos, which he defined as a people, but is more clearly understood as an ethnically conscious social unit. In the 1970s and 1980s Soviet ethnography vigorously debated how best to define ethnos and the role of ethnoses in the historical process of the peoples of the Soviet Union merging toward a single Soviet national identity. The political liberalization of the late 1980s and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union affected the discipline of ethnography both through the emergence of ethnic nationalism and the flood of non-Marxist methodologies into the social sciences.

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