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ABSTRACTS

Fractured Central-Eastern Europe: War and anthropologist's fieldwork

Oleksandr Vasiukov

The Russian military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 turned our accustomed world and scientific plans upside down, not only for researchers of Siberia and the Far North, but also for the entire scientific community in the region affected by the war. This paper offers to fellow northern researchers the personal experience of a researcher-anthropologist whose scientific career, fieldwork, and overall life strategies were overturned by the hostilities. As a graduate student at a Russian institution studying minority communities in Poland, and a citizen of Ukraine, the author was caught in Opolian Silesia, while conducting sociolinguistic fieldwork among speakers of a minority Slavic dialect. The paper recalls the events of the first days of the war and reflects on the author's example of how war changes the usual roles of researchers, turning them into implacable enemies for some and objects of care and tutelage for others.

Російське воєнне вторгнення в Україну 24-го лютого 2022 року знищило звичний світ і наукові плани не тільки дослідників Сибіру і Крайньої Півночі, але також і всієї наукової спільноти регіону, зачепленого війною. Запропонована публікація покликана ознайомити дослідників Півночі з персональним досвідом вченого-антрополога, чия наукова кар'єра, польова робота і загальні життєві стратегії були перекреслені воєнними подіями. Автор статті, український громадянин, який в аспірантурі російського університету вивчав меншини сучасної Польщі, зустрів війну під час соціолінгвістичної польової роботи в Опольській Силезії серед носіїв міноритарних слов'янських діалектів. У статті автор пригадує події перших днів війни та на власному прикладі розмірковує про те, як війна здатна змінювати звичні ролі дослідника, перетворюючи його у запеклого ворога для одних і об'єкта піклування з боку інших.

Doing vertiginous ethnography in Kolyma in the first year of the Russian-Ukrainian war

Asya Karaseva

In this article, I delve into my fieldwork experience in the Kolyma area (Magadan oblast') during the period of November and December 2022, at end of the first year of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. Since 2015, this region has remained a focal point of my research. During this trip, I worked in both familiar and new locations, maintaining existing connections in Magadan while establishing new ones

in three settlements deep within the region. Drawing upon the concept of "vertigo" – "the affective structure of a Time of Crisis" (Knight 2021: 4), – I explore my ethnographic work within a context where mistrust is on the rise and some long-standing connections are beginning to crumble. Alongside capturing the volatility of my interpretations of the ethnographic present, I also demonstrate how the experience of vertigo transformed my ethnographic practice into a collaborative endeavor by forcing me to rely on the experience and common sense of my colleagues through long-distance communication channels. By paying attention to the nuances of my ethnographic work in a changing context, I intend to contribute to the discussion about the production of knowledge during an acute political crisis.

Indigenous Students of the Russian Arctic and the Special Military Operation

Mark Zdor

War crashed into students' lives with a shocking reality. Hardly anyone could have imagined that in the 21st century Russians and Ukrainians would kill each other "according to the laws of war." Like the rest of the Russian society, Indigenous students reacted to the war in different ways. Some went out to protest the invasion. Other supported the authorities' decision, like in the case of the annexation of Crimea in 2014; but there were also those who ignored this event. In the first days of the war, students went out protesting. The authorities suppressed the protest movement with a combination of arrests and propaganda and the university administrators harassed students to limit their participation in political protests. Eventually everyone shut down, fearing expulsion from the university and even criminal prosecution. As the repression crushed the wave of protests, the all-out propaganda against "Nazism" in Ukraine provided those Russian citizens who were wavering with arguments to justify the so-called special military operation. Protest and patriotism, compassion and the desire to survive were mixed in the minds of students, often inflicting an intolerable trauma. In such a world, the challenges of learning Indigenous cultures and languages took a back seat, and avoiding prison and war became a priority. Female students focused on their studies and patriotic actions, while male students laid low, and some even left their schools. In this paper I review the search for answers to existential questions faced by young university students, especially those who are indigenous Northerners.

Donbass-Beringia: A personal journey along the East-West divide

Nicholas Parlato

The ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine has catalyzed a rifting between nations of the global North unseen since the 1950s. The Arctic suffers uniquely from the geopolitical crisis in Ukraine, as decades of integrated scientific efforts, emphasizing

the region's complexity and conservation value, and international Indigenous diplomacy have been summarily discontinued. Those of us accustomed to moving and dwelling in a coherent polar universe, find ourselves suddenly disarticulated from and even without a place in the Arctic. This short paper expresses an early career scholar's reflection on being sundered from Russia and Northern Eurasia, along my personal journey from an English-language teacher in Donetsk in 2013 to a scholar of trans-Beringian connections at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Examining my and others people's "frozen" connections, I strive to address how is the Ukraine-Russia war reflected in the diverse relationships of Arctic researchers, governments, and Indigenous peoples.

Under the shadow of a colonial empire: indigenous people's oppression through the lenses of early scientific explorers in the Siberian northeast

Erich Kasten

Anthropologists who had to work under repressive regimes or in the service of colonialist ventures have often been uncritically condemned. However, each case should be investigated and assessed more closely and individually against the political background of the given time. This refers to early scientific German and Baltic explorers who had worked under the Russian colonial empire during its northeastern expansion since the mid-18th century and into the 19th century. The paper addresses moral dilemmas that many of them faced when confronted with the brutal treatment of local Indigenous people. Some scholars exhibited open empathy to the plights of Indigenous people and took a clear stance, whereas others aligned themselves in opportunistic ways with the government's objectives, as it could have benefited their research and academic careers. This historical retrospection illuminates the dilemmas that many researchers experience now working again under oppressive regimes.

Defending civil society, academic freedom, and international scholarly cooperation: Lev Shternberg in the 1920s

Sergei Kan

Lev Shternberg's experience as a revolutionary Narodnik in tsarist Russia included a year-long confinement to a prison cell and a decade-long exile. Remaining staunchly loyal to the Narodnik ideals, Shternberg eventually came to identify with the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) party and as a journalist harshly criticized the Bolsheviks in the wake of the February 1917 and later, of the October 1917 revolutions. While he decided not to leave Russia after the Bolsheviks seized power and cooperated with the new regime for the sake of continuing building anthropology in his home country, he never betrayed the moral principles that had guided his life. Throughout the 1920s, Shternberg continued to demonstrate his courage and integrity as a citizen and

a scholar in a variety of ways. During the 1922 show trial of the "right-wing SRs" he composed and sent an appeal to the authorities to spare the accused persons' lives, which was signed by several former SRs and SR sympathizers, including prominent ethnologists. When some of his students and colleagues were sent into exile because of their "bourgeois" background or past anti-Bolshevik activities, Shternberg corresponded with them, sent books, and encouraged them to conduct ethnographic research among the local ethnic groups. He refused to curtail his correspondence with colleagues and friends, who had left Soviet Russia and were known for their critical view of the regime, and even encouraged them to contribute to scholarly publications he was editing. Shternberg's commitment to defending civil society, academic freedom and international scholarly cooperation could serve as a valuable lesson to Siberian/Arctic scholars today as we face serious new challenges as researchers and citizens.

Early warning signs of isolationism: A conflict around Soviet-German studies of the Barents Sea, 1926–1927

Julia Lajus

The chapter analyses a hundred-year-old confrontation among Soviet marine scientists over the advantages or disadvantages of international cooperation in the studies of the Russian Arctic seas and its fisheries resources. It erupted in 1926 when German oceanographers expressed their interest in collaboratively researching the Barents Sea, which had been predominantly studied by Russian/Soviet scientists for several decades. At that time, Russian specialists did not have suitable vessels and modern equipment to continue research, while their German partners who had all these resources were interested in cooperation to get access to the data gathered by Russian colleagues. The chapter explores the reasons, personal motives, and public rhetoric of both the supporters and opponents of international cooperation. It shows that preferences for secrecy and exclusion of foreign colleagues have existed among some Soviet scientists, who were keen to develop their careers internally, even before such attitudes towards international partnership were adopted by the Soviet authorities as mandatory for polar marine research and for Arctic geophysical sciences in general.

German Siberian research under Stalinism: Hans Findeisen and Wolfgang Steinitz

Stephan Dudeck

This article focuses on the final chapter of German research in the Siberian North in the first half of the 20th century. In the late 1930s, the Soviet Union withdrew from international cooperation, resulting in virtually no access for foreign researchers to

the northern regions of the country. Nonetheless, there was an uptick in scientific exchange between the Soviet Union and Germany in the late 1920s. The chapter centers on biographies of two German social scientists, Hans Findeisen and Wolfgang Steinitz, who conducted primarily linguistic and ethnographic studies during this early Soviet period. They embarked on an expedition to the Sámi in 1929, were volunteers at the Berlin Museum and began with Bastian's salvage paradigm, but their trajectories diverged considerably thereafter. The influence of restrictive political systems in both Germany and the Soviet Union drastically impacted their lives. Steinitz, Jewish and Communist, was forced to flee the repressive German system and in 1937, he had to depart from the Soviet Union as well, while many of his colleagues from the Institute for Northern Peoples and fellow German emigrants suffered under Stalin's repression. Findeisen, to the contrary, exhibited support for the Nazi regime, which meant the end of his academic career after the war. His collaborator and wife, Nata Findeisen, disappeared in Stalin's camps. The paper delves into how both researchers navigated the moral challenges of fascism and Stalinism; it appears that both approached different inhumane systems with naivety and little critical thought, while also holding a belief in the transformative power of scientific activity on the world. A comparison of two biographies may provide clues to why Findeisen joined the Nazi regime, while Steinitz joined the anti-fascist struggle and later emigrated to the Soviet Union.

Unrequited compassion across the border: Complexity behind Mongolian support for the fleeing Russian Buryats after the mobilization

Hiroki Takakura, Kaori Horiuchi, and Dalaibuyan Bymabajav

This paper explores the supporting activities of Mongolian citizens and civic organizations to the exodus of ethnic Buryat refugees from Russia, following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. The invasion drastically changed the global and regional geo-politics and affected the socio-political behavior and perceptions among people in the two countries. The mobilization orders issued in September 2022 by the Russian government triggered a flow of Russian citizens across the country's borders to avoid conscription. Mongolia was among the neighboring countries to accept the refugees. These new migrants are not only ethnic Russians but include a large number of ethnic minorities, such as the Buryats, Tuvans, and Kalmyks, who are historically or linguistically related to the Mongols. We document various types of Mongolian activities across government and public institutions, NGOs, and individuals in support of Russian refugees of the Buryat origin, to identify the nature of such support, based on the type, motives, and ethics of people's actions, and the networking in progress. We also review some examples of the trans-border migration and the impact of the exodus to Mongolia on inter-ethnic relations across Northeast Asia.

Fractured North: Those who hold the line

Eduard Zdor

This paper documents an intricate effort by Chukotka's communities in cultivating young leadership and self-government during the past 30 years. These leaders, in the words of a Siberian Yupik elder, "must hold the line to preserve our identity." The Chukotka authorities consistently, albeit covertly, erased any signs of independence among the Indigenous organizations: rural cooperatives and communities, and non-governmental associations. The main source of data for the study is the correspondence of the Chukotka Association of Marine Mammal Hunters with federal and regional government agencies. Regional media and interviews with some Chukotka leaders, as well as my observations and personal experiences complete the picture.

(Un)linking across the border: International relations, indigenous initiatives, and local politics in Chukotka

Natalia Naumova

Since the Cold War era, Chukotka (the Chukchi Autonomous Area) has been one of the most regulated and militarized regions of the Russian North, due to its proximity to the US/USSR international border. This geographical position, amidst the kin and cultural ties among the Indigenous people across the Bering Strait, contributed to the tangible presence of "'America" in local public discourse. The international border, closed for four decades (1948–1988), became permeable again with the advent of the Perestroika; soon after, active cross-Beringian contacts resumed. Projects with the involvement of Alaskan and Chukotkan Indigenous, environmental, and cultural organizations flourished. However, with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent cessation of international cooperation and travel, the culmination of self-isolation of Russia in accordance with the ideology of "national sovereignty" was reached. As is argued, this process started long before 2022. In Chukotka, American influence has always been a concern to local authorities, and they tried to prevent it. By examining the cases of international projects in Indigenous marine hunting and environmental protection, this paper draws hindsight to an impending severance of contacts. It is argued that for the Indigenous people of Chukotka cross-Beringian partnership has been an important part of their striving for self-governance and cultural survival, but it eventually faced a strenuous and growing resistance from the regional administration as part of the general state course towards centralization of power and diminishing grassroots initiatives.

A turn of no return: Russia's terror in Ukraine and our lives as Bering Strait ethnographers

Sveta Yamin-Pasternak and Igor Pasternak

Anthropological practice embraces research as a relationship. It is especially true for ethnographers with long-term commitment to the study region. Over time we develop family-like relationships, often becoming aunties, siblings, godparents, and close friends to those who teach us through our shared lives. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, most of our close contacts in the Bering Strait communities of Chukotka, where we have worked for over twenty years, have taken pride in going (or in sending their husbands, brothers, sons, community members) to fight in Ukraine. Furthermore, most of our professional contacts in Russia have since emerged as supporters and propagandists of Putin's regime that is also responsible for the detrimental impact to Russia's Indigenous communities where hunters, herders, caregivers, and providers are being disproportionately targeted through mobilization and misinformation. The Arctic research community in Europe and North America is showing a two-fold response, where the incredibly generous, dedicated, often miraculously effective humanitarian efforts to help refugees from both Russia and Ukraine is happening at the backdrop of a near-total radio silence in professional forums. One exception to the latter is lamenting the interruption of fieldwork and collaboration involving places and colleagues in Russia, with hopes that those can somehow continue. This paper asks whether the turn among our Chuktokan hosts and colleagues in Russia is indeed a "turn of no-return" for us, and what it would mean and take for the members of the Arctic research community to pursue fieldwork and collaborations in Russia during and despite the war.