First published in "A Fractured North – Journeys on Hold," edited by Erich Kasten, Igor Krupnik, Gail Fondahl 2024: 283 – 287. Fürstenberg/Havel: Kulturstiftung Sibirien. — *Electronic edition for* dh-north.org

A FRACTURED NORTH AS OF SUMMER 2024 – A "POSTSCRIPT"

Chapters for this volume were received in late Winter and Spring of 2024. As we worked through individual contributions and, particularly, following interactions at the International Congress of Arctic Social Sciences (ICASS-XI) in Bodø, Norway in late May-early June, some new elements worthy of mention became obvious. This concluding postscript addresses our evolving vision of the "Fractured North" a full year after we announced the series in June 2023.

It is now a common knowledge that, since February 2022, social and humanities research in Siberia/Russian North remains an *internationalized* field — but is hardly a common body anymore. The most conventional interpretation of this state, following Peter Schweitzer's terminology (Schweitzer 2001; *this volume*), is that we are at the beginning of a new era of "closure" of the Russian North to international research and scholars. We concur with Schweitzer's vision that such transitions are usually triggered by international political turmoil or by major internal shifts. Yet to better understand the trajectory of change, we need to explain *how today's situation is different* – as well as similar – to the previous eras of "closure" in the history of our discipline.

No historical model can fully illuminate the nuances of today's situation. Regretfully, in the summer of 2024, the picture is looking increasingly reminiscent to the realities of 110 years ago. Back then, the formerly internationalized field of Siberian research was rapidly fractured, first by the guns of WWI and, later, by the regime change and the ensuing Civil War in Russia in 1917–1922. The changes were both tragic and abrupt. Many believe that the peak of international partnership in the studies of Russian Arctic/Siberian Indigenous people was during the time of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (JNPE) of 1897–1902. Yet more foreign scholars were working across the Russian North in 1912–1914, on the eve of WWI, than in the JNPE period.

In summer 1912, American biological anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička of the US National Museum traveled to south Siberia, the Trans-Baikal region, and Mongolia, then part of China, in search for evidence of the early peopling of America from Northern Asia. Following this trip, he commissioned two Polish scholars, Kasziemierz Stołyhwo and Stanisław Poniatowski, to conduct more studies in southern Siberia in 1913–1914 for the US National Museum (Krupnik 2024). Farther north, in summer 1914 a joint expedition of the University of Oxford and the University of Pennsylvania Museum brought an international team of Maria Czaplicka (a Pole), Henry Hall (an American), and their British colleagues to the mouth of the Yenisei River (Kubica 2015; Vider 2022). They were preceded in the area by two Finns: Oxford-trained ethnologist Kaj (Karl) Donner and Toivo V. Lehtisalo, a linguist; both of whom were interested in the broad Finno-Ugric and Samoyedic cultural connections (Lukin 2023). A Hungarian, Benedek Barathosi-Balogh was exploring Indigenous groups

along the Amur River and the Ainu of Hokkaido, and a Dane, Knud Rasmussen, was contemplating his plans for a journey across the "Eskimo Land," from Greenland to Chukotka, which he implemented several years later as the Fifth Thule Expedition of 1921–1924 (Michelsen 2021).

These were just a few highlights of the once-burgeoning international field that was abruptly fractured a century ago. When WWI broke out in July 1914, most of these scholars were forced to abandon their fieldwork, even to leave their collections behind (e.g., Poniatowski); some were detained as "alien nationals" (e.g., Barothosi-Balogh). The war brought almost a complete stop to international partnerships, academic meetings, publications, and data exchange. The International Congress of Americanists, at that time the leading professional body in the (North) American and Arctic cultural studies, held its last full biennial meeting in London in 1912, followed by a truncated session in December 1915 in Washington, attended primarily by US-based scholars. The next Congress, scheduled for 1918 in Rio de Janeiro, did not take place until 1922. Because of the war-induced barriers, the former system of international academic collaboration splintered into smaller segments that were not re-united until a full decade later, and then not completely. What emerged from that decade-long gap was a *different* system governed by new political alliances and rules.

Looking through these historical lenses, we are up for a scarily long haul for the fractured International North that already was "on hold" for two years, due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions. The difference between the latest ICASS-XI in Bodø and the previous ICASS-X in Arkhangelsk, Russia in June 2021 (also delayed by Covid for a year) may be an indicator of what is at stake if the rifts persist. We already witness the cessation of international partnerships across the Russain/"Western" border and, with it, the thinning of collaborative publications, attendance of scholars from Russia at conferences focused on the North, and a dearth of data exchange.

Another notable parallel with the era of 1914–1922 is the emergence of new institutional barriers and diplomatic bans on the part of various countries, targeting scholars from other nations. Originally, the WWI Allies directed these toward the citizens of the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, and later, extended it against those from "Weimar Germany" and Soviet Russia. Therefore, the concept of scholars from "hostile nations" is nothing new to our field, as are also travel bans, due to "improper" visa documentation. We are remarkably close to the centennial of Knud Rasmussen's ill-famed detention and expulsion from Chukotka in September 1924, for the lack of the Soviet entry visa, to be reminded of where we stand today.

However, unlike in 1914–1922, the general system of Northern/Arctic academic connections remains generally intact. Both segments of the "Fractured North" have so far preserved its key academic institutions and capacities. We continue to work and write papers; books and journals are being published; and doctoral theses on Siberian social and cultural topics are duly defended. The ICASS sessions in Bodø were attended by lively crowds of colleagues in international Arctic research (although the

usual strong presence of scholars from Russia dissipated to but a few). Even if the looming attrition is already felt – in funding, publications, career opportunities, and the lack of proper data exchange – we have been spared the worst. The actual damage may kick in later. It is already affecting the most vulnerable segments of academic community – the early career scholars, graduate students, the exiles, and those with the temporary placements. We know of the coming damage from the previous historical lows, although we have hardly any knowledge of how serious it is on the Russian side.

The loss of knowledge about the other side of the "Fractured North" and the growing uncertainty about the status of our Russian colleagues and research partners is another alarming signal. So far, at least some communication channels are maintained. But there are no guarantees, and the longer the North remains fractured the harder it would be to re-internationalize it. It might take several decades for another summary of international research in Siberia á-la "Who Owns Siberian Ethnography?" (Gray et al. 2003). Notably, it took more than 70 years since 1922 to get to that point.

Nonetheless, we are in a markedly different space than during the previous "closures" of Siberia, with an array of modern electronic platforms that make it possible to maintain discussions with colleagues (however self-censored on both ends). We may also monitor developments in our areas of inquiry and past field sites from the web-based content (however dubious the information we can access). We have a corpus of dedicated scholars, in both "West" and "East," trained in the language, research protocols, as well as in theories and methodological approaches that are widely shared and exchanged. Here too, the legacy of thirty-some years of a re-internationalization of the Circumpolar arctic studies is imperilled. As time passes, attracting new students in the "West" to study the Russian Arctic will be ever more difficult, given the fraught prospects for fieldwork and academic advancement. Those skills only learned by experience in the field will have to await a new "opening." With every year passes, this trend for diminishing opportunities will intensify the complications of future re-internationaliztion.

A particular and most frightening quality of the current closure, which derives from 21st century technologies of mass media, is the impact of the state propaganda on Indigenous communities. It has so far received little attention, yet its implications are massive. The past 30 years has seen the rise of vibrant and productive international collaborations with Indigenous partners in Russia, resulting in invaluable co-production of knowledge. The need for it to continue is critical, as Indigenous communities face climate change and a myriad other challenges requiring adaptation-in-place. Whereas during previous closures of the Russian North fractures in cooperation involved primarily academic colleagues and institutions, the current closure endangers the carefully nurtured relationships between Indigenous community members and Western partners. Even when a new opening is on the horizon, it may take years for the prejudices, even hostilities against researchers from the West to be once again overcome.

* * *

As the war and the fracturing of our once-common academic field expand into the third year, we are also witnessing a growing diversity of voices and opinions on what to expect next. Some believe that their Siberian research is over, at least in its fieldwork portion – due to political circumstances, ethical considerations, potential risks to local partners or to the animosity that people expect to find at once familiar sites. Yet others argue for continuing research collaboration, often citing the same ethical reasons. The growing dichotomy of personal positions is featured in many chapters in this volume, as well as in Volume 1. It was spoken loud and clear at sessions and discussions at ICASS-XI in Bodø. We may see it even more intensely in papers in Volume 3 ("Maintaining Connections"), which we plan to complete in late 2024.

Here, again, we may take some cues from hundred-plus years of history and, specifically, from the example of Franz Boas during WWI. Boas' ethical stance is commonly remembered through the story of his censure by the American Anthropological Association in 1919 for his public objection to using scholarly research for reconnaissance in distant lands (Boas 1919; Price 2001). Far less known is Boas' persistent effort to publish writings by his Russian colleagues – those trapped in Soviet Russia, like Waldemar Bogoras and Leo Sternberg, as well as those who opted to emigrate, like Waldemar and Dina Jochelson. To this end, Boas used various academic venues he could influence. Bogoras' "Koryak Texts" (1917), "Tales of Yukaghir" (1918), and the "Chukchee (Language)" (1922) were published in the same tumultuous years, even while the American expeditionary troops were stationed in Siberia during the Russian Civil War.

In Summer 2024, a growing segment of the international community of Siberianists is asking why we cannot publish papers by Russian scholars, use or cite their materials or even cite our own data collected after February 2022. We will see more of such arguments in chapters in Volume 3 ("Maintaining Connections"). A message we received in Bodø was clear: We should not transmit our vision of risks, real or prospective, onto our colleagues in Russia, but rather should let *them* assess their options in keeping international connections (cf. Melnikova and Vasilyeva 2024). Such push from within our own community cannot be ignored, even if some may find it controversial according to our current ethical standards. The lack of voices from the other half of the "Fractured North" seems like a glaring void in our common historical record. Yet, in discussing the inclusion of such voices with some colleagues from Russia, we met with anxiety, trepidation, and despondency, so that no visions for approaches to do it safely could be envisioned at the moment. We may only hope for more clarity in the coming months, during our work on chapters for Volume 3.

Igor Krupnik, Erich Kasten, and Gail Fondahl

References

Boas, Franz 1919. Scientists as Spies. *The Nation* 109:797

Bogoras, Waldemar 1917. Koryak Texts. *American Ethnological Society Publications* 5. Leiden and New York.

— 1918. Tales of Yukaghir, Lamut, and Russianized Natives of Eastern Siberia. *Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History* 20(1): 3–148.

— 1922. Chukchee. In *Handbook of American Indian Languages*, Pt. 2. Franz Boas, ed. *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 40(2): 631-903. Washington, DC.

Gray, Patty, Nikolai Vakhtin, and Peter Schweitzer 2003. Who owns Siberian ethno graphy? A critical assessment of a re-internationalized field. *Sibirica* 3(2):194-216

Krupnik, Igor 2024. A Legacy across Two Continents: The Poniatowksi-Arseniev Collection at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. *Arctic Anthropology* 59(2): 145–165.

Kubica, Grażyna 2015. Maria Czaplicka and her Siberian Expedition, 1914–1915: A Centenary Tribute. *Arctic Anthropology* 52(1): 1–22.

Lukin, Karina. 2023. Encountering the Tsar: Nenets Epic Singing as a Representation of Historicity. *Suomen Antropologi* 47(3):18–38. https://doi.org/10.30676/jfas.115609

Melnikova, Ekaterina and Zinaida Vasilyeva (eds.) 2024. *Academia Across the Borders*. Fürstenberg/Havel: Kulturstiftung Sibirien.

Michelsen, Knud 2021. Plans for the Fifth Thule Expedition and the Great Sled Journey across Canada and Alaska. *Alaska Journal of Anthropology* 19(1-2):24–36.

Price, David 2001. "The Shameful Business": Leslie Spier on the Censure of Franz Boas. *History of Anthropology Newsletter* 28(2): 9–12.

Schweitzer, Peter 2001. *Siberia and Anthropology: National Traditions and Transnational Moments in the History of Research*. Post-doctoral Thesis, Cultural and Social Anthropology, University of Vienna.

Vider, Jaanika 2022. Translating the Field. The Abundance of Possibilities in Maria Czaplicka's Siberian Expedition (1914–1915) Photographs. *Visual Anthropology Review* 38(1): 8–33.