

ABSTRACTS

Part 1 – The Long Durée: Multi-decade Research and Moving Forward

Forty Years After the Paris Colloquium "Siberia 1582-1982": The Itelmen's Thorny Road to Survival

Tjan Zaotschnaja

In 1983, I spoke at the International Colloquium "SIBIR – 1582-1982" in Paris. The conclusion of my speech was pessimistic: perhaps by the year 2000 there would be no Itelmen speaking their native language and preserving their culture. Thanks to *perestroika*, the Itelmens began to deal with their own culture, traditions and language. In close cooperation with scientists and non-governmental organizations, the Itelmens initiated their own projects. To restore their traditional economy – fishing, hunting, gathering – they created a Territory of Traditional Nature Use, but after a short existence it was liquidated. Although the Itelmens defended their rights through the courts, their struggle was not successful. However, the Itelmens implemented various other projects, in which the older generation took an active part in the project and passed their knowledge to the young people. Both young and old people studied their Itelmen language, along with persons of other nationalities. While at first this was done in clubs and libraries, since the autumn 2024 Itelmen language instruction has been offered at the V. Bering University in Kamchatka.

Collaboration with Khanty Partners: A Story of 30 Years of Engagement

Stephan Dudeck

This chapter summarises reflections on long-term engagement with Indigenous partners in Western Siberia and on the recent experience in collaboration under the project "Documentation of Museum Objects by Indigenous Knowledge Holders." In a complex situation, when, on the one hand, colonial legacies in research are coming under the increased scrutiny and, on the other hand, bonds of solidarity and commitment to the rights of Indigenous peoples in Russia are under attack from the repressive state, I look back to the beginning of his relationships with local partners. Some of these connections have lasted for over 30 years. It might have been an unusual and bumpy road, but such smaller and less trodden paths would hopefully prove to be more persistent and fruitful in the long run than the official academic channels. Collaborative anthropology is commonly associated with the precarity of researchers in the academic world, but it also produces the networks of mutual support that help to cope with this precarity.

Arrivals and Departures: The Shifting “Forefield” of Anthropological Research in Russia from a Personal Perspective

Joachim Otto Habeck

This chapter looks into the circumstances of ethnographic work from the vantage point of someone who grew up in the ‘West.’ It highlights the important role of what may be tentatively called the *glacis* (French, also German) or *predpol’e* (Russian). In the Soviet and early post-Soviet time, the *glacis* comprised academic contacts or ‘gatekeepers,’ who facilitated access to certain locations in the “field” (*pole*). Located in big cities, these colleagues provided intellectually and emotionally significant support for a Western ethnographer’s journey to, and re-emergence from, “the field.” Lately, and particularly after February 2022, this notion of *glacis* has become complicated. The gates are shut. Some former gatekeepers have left Russia for research institutions and universities in Western countries. Younger scholars also took that direction. From my perspective, the field (*pole*) has turned into memories and can be accessed only by remote sensing, whereas the *predpol’e* has come much closer, spatially and psychologically. It created new openings and research topics, even if sometimes enigmatic. We may debate whether we witness an academic landslide in the anthropology of Siberia and where it will go from this crossroads.

Connections that Cannot be Fractured: Respect, Trust, and Gratitude that Transcend a Fractured North

Alex D. King

Since my first trip to Kamchatka in 1995, a pre-fieldwork exploratory trip over five months, my life has been entangled with indigenous people in Kamchatka in ways that cannot be undone. That trip was funded in part by a Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) scholarship during my second year of graduate school. I met people who became real friends during that trip. Subsequently, during my Ph.D. fieldwork in 1997–98 I came to know several others. Many of the people I worked with in large and small ways have passed on. Little kids I knew are now parents, professionals, and scholars themselves. My style of anthropology rests on the assertion that empathy with people very different from myself is not only possible but preferred to studying “myself” or “my people.” I have been educated by people in Kamchatka through working with them, not on them.

Reconceptualizing Siberia: A Personal Account of a Changing Field

Olga Povoroznyuk

Following the dissolution of the USSR, the Cold War lines that had divided the Circumpolar North seemed to be gone and Siberia re-opened for international

research. An increasing number of international projects and growing academic cooperation, involving institutions and individual researchers alike, contributed to the integration of ethnology and social anthropology of Siberia in Russia and in the “West.” Russia’s ongoing attack on Ukraine and its withdrawal from Arctic cooperation undermined the concept of the “Global Arctic.” The newly emerging institutional and informational divides between Russia and the West present ethical, methodological and other challenges to maintaining relations with Russia. This paper draws on my positionality as a Siberian-born anthropologist with long-term lived experience and anthropological expertise in the region. It aims at reconceptualization of ethnographic research in Siberia and the possibilities of maintaining academic collaboration with Russia. Following my professional trajectory, I provide an account of the changing and recently disrupted field of Siberian anthropological research from different geographical, methodological and epistemological vantage points in Russia and in Austria. Drawing on my recent experience in several research projects, I reflect on the reconfiguration of my field research plans and connections with colleagues, friends and informants in Siberia and Russia.

Part 2 – Moving Research On-Line

Witness Now, Write Later? Considerations for Online Language-Focused Research During Wartime

Jenanne Ferguson

With the increasing use of social media as a space to examine both more technical linguistic and linguistic anthropological data, discussions of ethics and best practices have been ongoing over the last two decades among language-focused researchers. In this piece, I consider the specific ethical considerations I have been negotiating as I debate whether – or how – I might conduct research on Sakha language promotion and practices online during the Russian war in Ukraine. The war and the ensuing intensification of surveillance in both in-person and online spaces has led me to reassess and reconsider what best practices in these spaces might look like, especially as language-focused/sociolinguistic research in the Russian context is not considered as neutral as it was a decade ago. Considering the current anxieties of Sakha speakers inside Russia – along with my own concerns about the repercussions of research – I suggest some possible guidelines on witnessing and analyzing the linguistic trends and processes of the present moment for others thinking of doing online research, as well as the important consideration of putting off the writing stage of the research for the time being.

From the Field to a Monitor: Methodological Shifts in a Time of Closure

Mirkka Ollila

In this chapter, I discuss an approach to carrying out research in the Russian Arctic in light of the new limitations catalyzed by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. As these limitations became obvious in the early stage of my dissertation work, I had to give up the possibility of field research. I turned my focus to online data collection, utilizing "netnography" as a research method. I reflect on this new limitation by applying the concept of "closure." Considering the use of netnography due to Russia increasing isolation, I examine how the 'western' response to the war has been reflected in the academic world and via the manifestation of different isolation layers. Following the path that led to my choice of netnography, I show how Russia's isolation has influenced my study of the unbalanced power dynamics between the extractivist industry and Indigenous people on the Kola Peninsula as it is evidenced on-line. By examining the reasons for choosing new methods for my study and by reflecting on my personal experience, I address some of the current challenges of doing work in the Russian Arctic, especially for early-career scholars, and possible responses to them.

Research with the Sámi of Russia: Moving Forward

Ekaterina Zmyvalova

This chapter describes my research journey with the Russian Sámi. The focus is on the influences of former experiences and perspectives on my present research in the light of the current socio-political situation resulting from the war in Ukraine. Some issues of positionality deserve special attention: these include my expertise in Russian law, my outsider status within Indigenous communities, and my socio-cultural experiences growing up and studying in Russia. My current postdoctoral project aims at investigating the rights of those Russian Sámi persons who moved to the other countries within Sápmi because of the war in Ukraine.

Part 3 – Moving Forward: New Initiatives, Novel Adaptations

"Crossroads 2: Bridges to the Future:" Exchange and Dissemination of Anthropological Knowledge in a New Cold War Era

Igor V. Chechushkov, Mikhail M. Rodin, Ivan A Semyan and William W. Fitzhugh

"Crossroads 2: Bridges to the Future" used social media to present world-class anthropological research to a Russian audience through a series of interviews hosted on the "Proshloe" ('Past') YouTube channel. The project fostered scholarly exchan-

ges between American and Russian researchers, with 22 videos garnering 464,225 views, including a maximum of 81,824 views for a single video. However, the median number of views for non-Crossroads videos featuring exclusively Russian-speaking researchers on the same channel over the same period was nearly double that size, which we explain as the outcome of the strong anti-Western propaganda in the Russian media space. Audience feedback revealed four key themes: positive reactions in support of international collaboration; irrational criticism (often at the level of insult and profanity); hostility towards American scholars (with accusations of biases or commercial interests); and anti-scientific myths claiming that 'mainstream' history is being distorted. The negative reactions highlight the impact and depth of anti-American sentiment in Russia. Despite these challenges, the project successfully facilitated exchanges about Arctic and sub-Arctic anthropology and archaeology. The findings underscore the need for continued international collaboration and addressing propaganda's influence.

Co-producing Knowledge about Western Museum Collections: An Avenue for Siberian Communities' Engagement

Erich Kasten, Nadezhda Mamontova, Dmitriy Oparin, Vera Solovyeva, Liliya Zdor and Mark Zdor

Since the era of *perestroika*, fruitful collaborations developed in the Russian North among Indigenous crafts people, artists, and researchers and museums in the West. After the outbreak of Russia's war against Ukraine, most such joint ventures were cancelled. Travel and cultural exchange are severely impaired or halted. To overcome this fracture, the Foundation for Siberian Cultures initiated a project, "Documentation of Museum Objects by Indigenous Knowledge Holders" driven by researchers mostly from Russia, including those who left the country in recent years but were eager to maintain connections to their local partners. Indigenous knowledge about heritage objects in museums in the US, France, Hungary, and Germany was recorded by Indigenous cultural experts, via the use of photographs. This knowledge is now shared with related visual media on the objects by a regularly updated electronic catalog and on the Web. In this way, Indigenous communities can access important parts of their cultural heritage. New information technologies and social networks will enhance disseminating this knowledge among Indigenous people in the Russian North, as well as with museums and other institutions in the West. Such collaborative discourses about dispersed museum collections will trigger more interest in sustaining Indigenous cultural heritage into the future.

Taking a Kaleidoscopic View: Orienting amidst Shifting Realities

Jessica K. Graybill

In this current fractured era in the North, our ability to adjust to changing circumstances requires mental flexibility, motivation to overcome barriers to knowledge about people and places, and keeping our options open for how we might know them. Moving from shock through lament into reflection and new kinds of involvement requires acknowledging the current situation and reevaluating how to be beneficial in new ways to the people, places, and phenomena that we study. A reflexive approach, with a kaleidoscopic intent, can benefit our undergraduate and graduate students, our colleagues and communities in the Arctic, and the field of (Arctic) Russian and Eurasian studies, which is going through a serious period of reimagination, growth, and reorientation. This chapter aims to sketch how kaleidoscopic thinking can open our senses to new perspectives for knowing sites and situations and facilitate new ways of knowing amidst uncertainty. Here, I apply kaleidoscopic thinking to reflect on my roles as an editor for an arctic journal and as an educator about the Arctic, Russia, and Eurasia. I aim to recognize that a changed reality requires changed perspectives and new approaches to scholarship in arctic Eurasian studies.

Sustaining Relations and Opportunities for Co-creating with Partners in Siberia

Florian Stammer and Aytalina Ivanova

Field research in Siberia has become a privilege mostly for Russian citizens resident in Russia, when three decades of Western-Russian research collaboration factually came to a halt in February 2022. On the other hand, voices that argue for the continuation of research collaboration have become gradually stronger, specifically on those topics that can only be studied in Siberia. This chapter emphasizes the importance of relations in this respect, as well as the responsibility of the anthropologist to sustain such relations with the Siberian field where this is desired from the other side. We give examples from two years of continued practices in three different ways: communication through social media and phone, co-creation of data and its remote digital transfer, and physical meetings in third countries, in this case Turkey and China. Rather than contemplating the terrible effects of war, we try to explore what opportunities lie in the new ways co-creating field data jointly between Siberians and international researchers.