

# The *Etnos* Archipelago

## Sergei M. Shirokogoroff and the Life History of a Controversial Anthropological Concept

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Online enhancements: supplementary PDFs.

The concept of *etnos*—one of the more controversial anthropological concepts of the Cold War period—is contextualized by looking at its “life history” through the biography of one of its proponents. Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff was a Russian/Chinese anthropologist whose career transected Eurasia from Paris to Beijing via Saint Petersburg and the Siberian borderlands of the Russian Empire. His transnational biography and active correspondence shaped the unique spatial and intellectual configuration of a concept that became a cornerstone of both Soviet and Chinese ethnography. The theory of *etnos* turned out to be surprisingly stable, while circulating through various political and intellectual environments ranging from England, Germany, and China to Imperial, Soviet, and modern Russia. This case study presents a history of anthropology wherein networks and conversations originating in the Far East of Eurasia have had unexpected influences on the heartlands of anthropology.

In August 1964, in a crowded auditorium at Moscow State University, anthropologists from West and East gathered at the VII International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES)—held for the first time in the Soviet Union. For Soviet ethnographers, the Congress was to be the turning point at which an inward-looking anthropological school could present itself on the world stage. One of the prized displays was the volumes of a many-decades-long project to map the cultural diversity of the world (Anderson and Arzyutov 2016). A second, little acknowledged, triumph was the international launch of a “new” concept—*etnos*—that would describe the essence of identity and the object of ethnography without the taste of fear lingering over Stalin’s concept of nation. The keynote speech was read out in a clear and booming voice by Rudolf F. Its (1928–1990), a young ethnographer, sinologist, and future director of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAĖ) in Leningrad. It turned out that he was addressing an indifferent audience (fig. 1). Over the coming months, several American and European anthropologists published reports on the Congress, none of them showing any curiosity

about the term *etnos* or even registering that a significant change had taken place (Dunn and Dunn 1965; Lehmann 1964; Ripley 1964). This very public misunderstanding would mark the beginning of a half-century of puzzlement between North Atlantic anthropologists and their colleagues across Eurasia.

To this day, this “most strongly primordialist” theory (Banks 1996:17) continues to present a stumbling block for young students beginning their fieldwork and is no less an obstacle for experienced anthropologists when speaking with their Eurasian-based colleagues (Buchowski 2012; Gray, Vakhtin, and Schweitzer 2003; Tishkov 2016). On the one hand, the bundle of ideas known as *etnos* theory touches many of the familiar assumptions held by cultural anthropologists: that a community can be distinguished by its ethnonym, common territory, and distinctive worldview (Bromley 1977:66). However, many proponents of *etnos* theory also attribute to it a biological foundation, which is often difficult for cultural anthropologists to digest. At best, we translate *etnos* in our heads as a type of ethnicity, politely ignoring its marked biosocial elements. At worst, the concept is disdained as an out-of-date holdover from the era of triumphalist theories of cultural evolution.

These hasty translations can themselves serve as an expression of dominance within the academy. To elaborate on the metaphor of Gerholm and Hannerz (1982), the national anthropological traditions of “peripheral-places” appear as an archipelago of isolated islands, each of them silent, unremarkable, and cold. Rather than imagining an archipelago, the young Soviet ethnographers sitting in that auditorium in 1964 likely could not imagine a more obvious “bridge” reconnecting them to their Western colleagues. After all, this was a concept that

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Figure 1. Rudolf F. Its (*far left*) presenting the paper of Sergei Tolstov (1907–1976) at the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences Congress in Moscow, August 1964 (AMAÉ fond K-IV, opis' 1, delo 29).

had once circulated in the salons of Paris, Berlin, and Saint Petersburg and that had until recently been shunned in Soviet academic circles. In this article, we wish to call attention to this forgotten bridge by discussing the common concerns that once united ethnographers in the West and East and that hopefully will make contemporary Eurasian proponents of *ethnos* theory appear less anachronistic.

During the Cold War, it was common to employ the metaphors of curtains, walls, and mistrust. However, there were also significant bridge-builders. Ernest Gellner (1925–1995; 1975, 1980, 1988*a*), Teodor Shanin (1986, 1989), Tamara Dragadze (1978, 1980*a*), and Stephen P. (1928–1999) and Ethel Dunn (1963, 1974, 1975, 1984) went to great efforts to translate and contextualize Soviet ethnography and *ethnos* theory—often in the pages of *Current Anthropology*. We can identify their work as that of anthropological transnationalism—the use of seminars, translations, and late-night conversations to build up a discipline not defined by the boundaries of a single nation-state. Transnationalism has been widely debated by historians (Bayly et al. 2006; Clavin 2005; Duara 1997). The term has recently come around again as part of a movement to define “world anthropologies” (Dirlik, Li, and Yen 2012; Gledhill 2017; Lins Ribeiro 2014), defying a trend to calibrate the history of anthropology to the work of the intellectual descendants of Malinowski and Boas. Many criticize the transnationalist litera-

ture for overemphasizing the transfer of knowledge between the West and “the Rest” and for being particularly weak on documenting how regional conversations challenge the global canon (Buchowski 2012; David-Fox 2011; van Bremen and Shimizu 1999). More troubling in our view is that knowledge seems to be reified, as if it moves in coherent lifeless blocks unlinked to the lives of specific thinkers. Here, we wish to address these criticisms by presenting a “life-history” of the *ethnos* concept. In so doing, we present a case where a network of conversations in eastern Eurasia gave birth to this difficult-to-translate concept that stands in contradistinction to cultural relativism. We will focus on the biography of one of its pioneers—Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff—to illustrate how the lived experience of a single individual can spark both transnational dialogues and misunderstandings. In the case of Shirokogoroff, his studies, fieldwork, and professional life contributed to the foundation of several very different ethnological traditions. Although he has never been claimed by any one tradition, we will argue that each of these traditions could not be understood without taking into account his influence. Furthermore, we argue that his teaching, his voluminous correspondence, and his publishing projects (mainly in English) did not so much bring European ethnology to East Asia as export an East Asian concept into Russia and parts of Europe. As we will show in the conclusion, the peculiar biosocial metaphor that he championed is very much alive and

well today in twenty-first century *etnos*-talk, although it enjoys a bittersweet reception.

### The Birth of a Transnational Concept and One Man's Biography

Sergei Mikhailovich Shirokogoroff<sup>1</sup> (1887–1939) was born to a family of pharmacists and physicians in Suzdal' in 1887. His father traveled widely as a military doctor, and Sergei therefore was raised in a number of places. The most significant site of his early education was Üriev (today Tartu, Estonia), where he was sent in 1903 to study under the guidance his uncle Ivan Ivanovich Shirokogoroff (1869–1946), who was a famous physician. Having been brought up in the company of physicians, Sergei likely absorbed the biological and cellular metaphors with which he would later color his work. Due to illness, Sergei never completed his secondary school exams. He nevertheless went on to audit courses at the Faculté des Lettres, University of Paris, between 1907 and 1910, as a *lecteur des lettres*—a qualification that in some sources was embellished into a doctorate. He also audited courses at l'École d'anthropologie de Paris and l'École pratique des hautes études. Sergei was deeply involved in café culture and the Russian émigré political circles of the time, keeping odd hours. As one secret police report remarked, “he has irregular habits, comes home very late many nights per week, and receives a voluminous correspondence from Russia.”<sup>2</sup> His time in Paris had a profound effect on his thinking. For example, it is striking that Georges Papillault (1863–1934), who would have served as one of Shirokogoroff's lecturers at l'École d'anthropologie, published a call to create a new discipline of ethnology centered around the concept of *ethnos* (Papillault 1908:127). Shirokogoroff's handwritten reading notes from Paris suggest that he consulted the works of Charles Letourneau (1831–1902), Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904), Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), and Edward Tylor (1832–1917), among others. The Parisian years also shaped his future intellectual community. Many of the senior scholars in Saint Petersburg who would later become his mentors had also studied at the

University of Paris and were active in debates about the need to build a distinct ethnological discipline. The most prominent of these figures was the museum ethnographer Nikolai M. Mogilianskii (1871–1933) and the physical anthropologist Fëdor K. Volkov [Khvedir Vovk] (1847–1918). Despite the profound mark that the Parisian years left on Sergei, our intensive archival work failed to yield any evidence that the erudite Sergei finished any course of study at all, including the exam for the *certificat des études Françaises* for which he registered but may not have turned up to write.<sup>3</sup>

In Paris in 1908, Sergei married Elizaveta (Elizabeth) Robinson (1884–1943), a talented pianist who was the daughter of Estonian-Russian physicians (fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> She would become an underrecognized, lifelong scientific collaborator who helped Sergei make physical anthropological measurements in the field, recorded wax cylinders, edited his texts, and compiled his well-known dictionary of Tungus. She occasionally published scientific work under her own name (Shirokogorova 1919, 1936).

The couple returned to Russia in the autumn of 1910. Sergei was encouraged to complete his secondary school exams (Reshetov 2001:10), and in September 1911 he enrolled in a Physics and Mathematics program at Saint Petersburg University but never completed a degree (fig. 3).<sup>5</sup> He was active in the anthropological and ethnological circles led by Lev ĪA. Shternberg (1861–1927) and Vasilii V. Radlov [Friedrich Wilhelm Radloff] (1837–1918), working intensively in association with

3. Papillault situated his *ethnos* visually in a chart within a network of sciences not unlike that Sergei would later chart out himself (compare Papillault 1908:131 and Shirokogorov 1922a:11). Shirokogoroff's handwritten reading notes in Paris were collected together by Dmitrii Zelenin and archived in several folders—the most important of which is SPF ARAN fond 849, opis' 5, delo 805. Dr. Aurore Dumont conducted 3 months of archival research in Paris, producing a report confirming that there was no record of his degree (Dumont 2015). A photocopy of Shirokogoroff's ticket to write the CEF language exam is attached to a letter addressed to Don Tumasonis (incoming correspondence letter 24) dated May 26, 1978, from the French Directorate of Archives. A letter to the same from the Archive of the Académie de Paris dated December 27, 1976 (incoming correspondence letter 6), confirms that Shirokogoroff was never awarded the qualification.

4. A photocopy of the Shirokogoroffs' marriage certificate is held by Don Tumasonis attached to a letter to him from Archpriest of the St. Alexander Newsky Cathedral in Paris dated January 8, 1981 [incoming correspondence letter 243]. Further details on their marriage are confirmed in the folder of documents accompanying his appointment as a staff anthropologist at the MAĖ in 1917 in SPF ARAN fond 4, opis' 4, delo 672, list 4v.

5. Shirokogoroff's formal education is documented in a number of primary sources, including the abovementioned application for admission to the Physics and Mathematics Faculty; the memorandum appointing Sergei Shirokogorov as junior anthropologist at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography by the Imperial Academy of Sciences 1917 (SPF ARAN fond 4, opis' 4, delo 672, listy 1–5); and a recommendation letter by Aleksandr Mervart to the dean of the East Asian faculty, Vladivostok University, dated January 11, 1922 (RGIA DV fond P-289, opis' 2, delo 1573, listy 11–11v).

1. This scholar's Russian surname—Широкогоров—is published under a number of different transcriptions: Shirokogorov, Shirokogoroff, Chirokogoroff, Širokogorov, Shì lù guó (史禄国), Shokogorov (シロコゴロフ). In this article, we use his preferred and much more prevalent French-English transcription, Shirokogoroff, but retain the original transcriptions in citations.

2. Shirokogoroff's Parisian training is summarized on folio 3 in the folder of documents he used to petition for admission to Saint Petersburg University in 1911 (TSGIA SPb fond 14, opis' 3, delo 59098). Shirokogoroff described his status as *lecteur* as a “scientific degree” (*stepen'*) in a notarized biography he submitted in 1922 for Vladivostok University (RGIA DV fond P-289, opis' 2, delo 1573, list 27). The historian of Russian anthropology Aleksandr Reshetov (2001) was the first to publish this qualification as a doctorate. The quote from the surveillance report on Shirokogoroff is in a memo dated April 9, 1910, in the Hoover Institution *Okhrana* Collection, box 141.





Figure 2. Portrait of Sergei and Elizaveta Shirokogoroff (personal archive of Elena V. Robinson, Saint Petersburg).

the MAË and the Russian Geographical Society (RGO).<sup>6</sup> At the MAË, he worked first as a cataloguer of archaeological collections in 1912 and eventually was appointed Head of Department of [Physical] Anthropology in 1917, a role he held until 1923. Despite his lack of formal qualifications for this post, he “commended himself [to the scientific committee] with his zealotness, industriousness, and scientific knowledge in the area of anthropology.”<sup>7</sup> Between 1914 and 1921, Shirokogoroff was also deeply involved in a commission of the RGO to prepare an ethnographic map of Russia combining physical anthropological and linguistic data and significant examples of material culture.<sup>8</sup>

While in Saint Petersburg, Shirokogoroff became part of a whirlwind of debate about how the scientific study of culture could inform Imperial state policy. Imperial-era ethnographers tended to map difference through the study of material cul-

6. Shirokogoroff’s close intellectual association with Shternberg is documented by Sergei Kan (2009:ch. 6) and also by a thick sheaf of letters from Shirokogoroff to Shternberg held in SPF RAN fond 142, opis’ 1 (do 1918), dela 68, 69, 70, 71; fond 142, opis’ 2, delo 117; fond 282, opis’ 2, delo 319. These will soon be published in their entirety (Arziutov and Anderson, forthcoming). Shirokogoroff directly acknowledges that Radlov proposed that he work with Tunguses (Shirokogoroff 1923a:515). Later, he published an obituary for Radlov—the only obituary he would write (Shirokogoroff 1919).

7. Op. cit, SPF ARAN fond 4, opis’ 4, delo 672, list 1.

8. Shirokogoroff’s work with the RGO on the ethnographic map is examined in detail in a chapter (Alymov and Podrezova 2019) and in protocols nos. 1–4 of the II Department of the [Commission] for making ethnographic maps of Siberia and Middle Asia (dated 1910–1924; NA RGO fond 24, opis’ 1, delo 78), as well as in an unpublished manuscript by David Zolotarëv titled “A review of the commission for making ethnographic maps of Russia at the Russian Geographical Society” held in ARËM fond 6, opis’ 5, delo 6.

ture and “life-ways” (*byt*), which generated endless accounts of ethnic difference mapped across space (Knight 1995). At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a movement to understand how minorities could improve themselves. While some argued for a revised ethnography of “peoples” (*narody, narodnosti*), ethnographers working closely in the MAË and Russian Museum argued that there should be a more scientific way of describing difference. Nikolai Mogilianskii (1908, 1916) coined a new term—*ethnos*—that he distinguished from inaccurate definitions of *narod* (people). As was the style in Paris, he baptized the term with a Greek-language pedigree—*ἔθνος*—to emphasize its expert quality. It is possible to say that “*ethnos-talk*” was “in the air” in Saint Petersburg at this time (Alymov 2019). These three themes—material culture, cultural evolution, and the role of experts in creating knowledge—would characterize both Shirokogoroff’s work and the great debates of the Soviet era on ethnic identity.

In the summer of 1912, and again in 1913, the couple traveled to the steppes on the far side of Lake Baikal to trace the ethnic origins of local Tungus-Orochens (Evenkis). Elizaveta helped with the anthropological measurements of women and assembled a rare collection of wax-cylinder recordings of shamanic songs (fig. 4). Sergei’s first field experience with this highly assimilated and highly exploited population profoundly shook his worldview, launching him and his wife on a lifelong

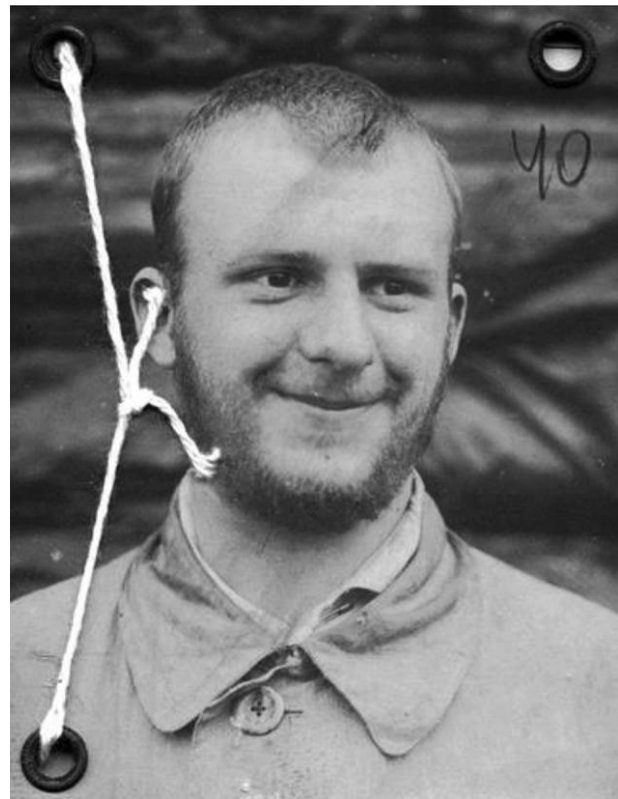


Figure 3. Photograph from the student card of Sergei Shirokogoroff, 1910 (TŠGIA SPb 14/3/59098).



Figure 4. Elizaveta Shirokogoroff (left) photographing an Orochen toddler, 1912 (MAË No. 2002–29).

quest to describe the heart of ethnic identity (Anderson 2019). The young couple had been tasked with classifying these borderland populations into a known cultural type based on language. Having failed to find any fluent Tungus speakers, the couple reached out for any other empirical evidence they could find, assembling an enormous archive of letters, field notes, skulls, artifacts, wax-cylinder recordings, and glass-plate photographs. To this day, their archive of material artifacts and photographs represents the largest single collection in the MAË. What is clear from the few published records of the expedition, and the uncollated and unpublished manuscripts, is that the young ethnographers struggled with the task of finding “pure” representatives of these forest hunters and reindeer herders. In each encampment, they found a *métissage* of projected physical types and people speaking a “jargon” of Tungus, Russian, or Yakut. This all-too-familiar problem for the contemporary ethnographer led Sergei to worry at this early stage about the growth and decline of ethnical units.<sup>9</sup> Although the word *etnos*

9. Shirokogoroff wrote about mixture often in his published and unpublished work. The term *métis* was used conspicuously in his descriptions of anthropometric photographs in MAË photographic collection 2002. Shirokogoroff used the term *zhargon* in a letter to Shternberg dated June 11, 1912 (SPF ARAN fond 282, opis 2, delo 319, list 2). The theme of the

is conspicuously absent from his field notes and letters, he would later credit his Zabaikal fieldwork for first sparking his interest in a general theory of ethnic belonging.

The couple returned to this border region in 1915, but this time it was to visit the Manchurian reindeer Orochens (Evenkis) in an attempt to locate the core region of Tungus identity (Shirokogoroff 1923a, 1923b; Shirokogorova 1919). They returned briefly to Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) in spring 1917, when Sergei was appointed Head of Department, before ending up in Beijing (Beijing) during the second Russian Revolution. Sergei continued to be formally affiliated with both the MAË and the RGO for many years in emigration despite the fact that he never returned to Petrograd. From 1917 onward the couple would root themselves in several contested geopolitical spaces in the Far East, including the breakaway Russian Far Eastern Republic (1918, 1919; 1921, 1922), the treaty-port of Shanghai (1922–1926), and nationalist Canton (Guangzhou; 1927–1930). In a letter to his lifelong friend Władysław Kotwicz (1872–1944) on April 28, 1924, Sergei would describe their life as a “never-ending business trip.”<sup>10</sup> They lived in these unstable spaces at a time when Japanese and Chinese scholars were indigenizing and redefining European notions of *ethnie*, which they transcribed as *minzoku/minzu* (Leibold 2007; Shimizu 1999). This Far Eastern interest in how ethnic identity would articulate with state power would strongly shift the direction of Sergei’s thought.

Finding himself at the Far Eastern University in Vladivostok in 1922, and charged with developing a new program in ethnology and Siberian studies (*sibirevedenie*), Shirokogoroff first outlined his vision of *etnos* in a self-published pamphlet (Shirokogorov 1922a). He likely handed out the brochure as part of a set together with a small collection of anti-Bolshevik political pamphlets (Shirokogorov 1922b, 1922c, 1922d). After fleeing Vladivostok during the fall of the Merkulov administration, he republished his ideas on *etnos* in book form in Shanghai (Shirokogorov 1923). He later described this book as a study “written in the midst of political anarchy” (Shirokogoroff 1924a:1). Reading much like an introductory textbook, and devoid of concrete examples, *Etnos* situates the study of ethnography among the then-known sciences. It defines the concept—represented in Greek letters—as “a group of people speaking the same language, recognizing their common origin, possessing a complex of customs as a social system, which is consciously maintained and explained as a tradition, and differentiated from those of other groups” (Shirokogoroff 1924a:5). Perhaps more exotically, the author moved on to present a geo-ethnographic theory wherein material culture and geography define “an ethnical milieu” that allows each *etnos* to achieve an equilibrium. He first represented his ideas mathematically,

“growth and decline of *etnos*es” is a phrase to be found passim throughout one of his first publications (Shirokogoroff 1924a).

10. From a letter from Shirokogoroff to Władysław Kotwicz dated April 28, 1924, in BN PAU i PAN kolekcja 4600, tom 6, folio 5.



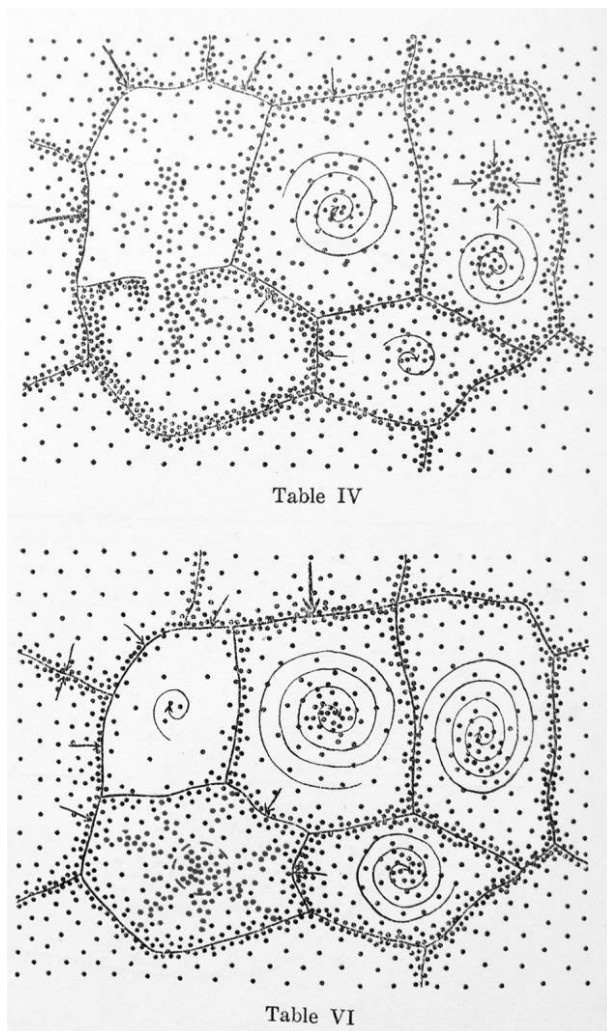


Figure 5. Cellular metaphors of *ethnos* and ethnic growth from *The Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (Shirokogoroff 1935:36).

with a series of equations illustrating the density of *ethnoses* over space. Later, he would illustrate the same idea graphically with sets of colored diagrams sketching the “ethnic milieu” as a set of cellular compartments between which cultural traits would flow (fig. 5; see Arziūtov 2017b). Although his definition of *ethnos* changed over time, he always cited his early Shanghai volume as the cornerstone of his thinking. This book also opened the first rift separating Shirokogoroff from the mainland. This was perhaps best captured in 1923 by Lev Shternberg, who criticized the book for being a “provincialism” (*provintsial’china*).<sup>11</sup> From that point on, Shirokogoroff would represent himself, perhaps unfairly, as the sole inventor of the

11. Shirokogoroff complained about Shternberg’s verdict in a letter to his friend Władysław Kotwicz dated April 28, 1924, in BN PAU i PAN kolekcja 4600, tom 6, folio 10v.

term. Shternberg’s insult may have been germane. Shirokogoroff’s thinking was indeed provincial, or at least rooted, in the sense that his categories now reflected the debates structuring the new nationalisms on the Eastern Pacific rim.

Most commentators quickly pass over Shirokogoroff’s early formal definition of *ethnos* as one that does not distinguish itself from other early twentieth-century definitions of identity across Europe. However, his spatial-territorial definition of an ethnical equilibrium does touch on an element of Eurasianist political discourse where the landscape blends into national identity. The Eurasianists carve up the world in a distinctly different manner than the literal geographical definition of Eurasia that we use in this article. They proposed a nationalist and somewhat mystical definition of Eurasia, which posited Russian civilization in contradistinction to Turkic and Chinese culture areas (Bassin, Glebov, and Laruelle 2015; Hann 2016). The Siberian regionalists believed that the harsh Siberian landscape, with its mix of nationalities, would breed a new, democratic nation separate from and more vibrant than that in the Russian heartland (Ādrintsev 1892; Kovaliashkina 2005). In East Asia, this innovation of linking territory and identity to a somatic vibrancy would capture the attention of expanding nation-states in Japan and China (Duara 2004; Leibold 2007; Morris-Suzuki 2000). Shirokogoroff was guided in his work by his Evenki-Tungus field companions who had “lost” their language and material culture but who nevertheless clung to their identity. His eye for what we might describe today as cultural resilience was ahead of its time. However, the nationalist and anticolonialist administration in Nanking, China, attributed to his work an underlying message that local minorities could survive under imperial exploitation and be reborn. As local Chinese intellectuals began indigenizing foreign concepts of identity in reaction to Manchu-led administrative dominance, they were inspired by Shirokogoroff’s field methods. They argued that China hosted a number of independent, hierarchically organized nationalities. They described them through varyingly inclusive definitions of *minzu*—a set of characters imported from the Japanese that signed a type of “nation-lineage” (Leibold 2007). In Weiner’s (1997) account, these characters fused together the European notions of “race,” “ethnie,” and “nation,” creating a truly biosocial way of ascribing group membership. At this point, it is no longer quite clear whether Shirokogoroff imported his romantic ideas of ethnic equilibrium to China or whether he became one of the most prominent exporters of early *minzu*-talk to Western Europe.

Within nationalist China, Sergei enjoyed no stable academic affiliation. He moved year after year from one university to another as the young Chinese republic reformed its educational institutions and then retrenched in reaction to the Japanese encroachment and occupation of Manchuria. He gave lectures informally, or by contract for various scholarly associations in Shanghai (1920, 1922–1926), sometimes returning to white-controlled Vladivostok across the porous border (1918–1919, 1920–1921). Thereafter he worked at the University of Amoy (Xiàmén; 1926–1928), the Institute of History and Philology at

Sun Yat Sen University in Canton (Guǎngzhōu; 1927–1930), and the renowned Academia Sinica (1928–1930).<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps because of his international biography or because of his interest in the Chinese “physical type,” Sergei Shirokogoroff would enjoy for a short time the support of the growing social science academy in nationalist China. The couple relocated to Canton in 1927 to join a unit of historians and ethnologists who would later create the Academia Sinica, or the Academy of Sciences of the nationalizing state (Shiwei 1997). The physical anthropological research that Shirokogoroff conducted at this time is poorly known and rarely connected to his thinking on ethnical equilibria. In 1928, Shirokogoroff was asked to lead an ambitious anthropological expedition to the unexplored Yúnán interior to document the rebellious Lolo (Yi) people (Kriukov 2007; Shirokogoroff 1930).<sup>13</sup> The goals of the Yúnán expedition were to measure no fewer than 1,000 bodies of young children, imprisoned criminals, and soldiers in order to complete a picture of a “normal” Chinese physical type. David Arkush (1981) argues that lacking any ability to speak Chinese forced Shirokogoroff to adopt anthropometry as a proxy for doing regular fieldwork. Manuscripts from the time suggest that Shirokogoroff saw the physical ascription of type more ambitiously. In an unpublished manuscript, Shirokogoroff argued that nationalist China needed its own anthropometric norm on which to understand ethnic variation:

The importance of these investigations is beyond [sic] the question. They will show the Chinese standards as to the physical and physiological characters whence it will be possible to establish the degree of influence of the geographical environment, as soil, climate and altitude . . . This investigation will permit to find out the influence of the professional work, and its role as a selective factor. So for instance, the correlation between the physical (also physiological) characters and the choice of the professions, also criminality, etc. It will be possible to disclose the influence of the educational methods of artificial [sic] forcing of the process of growth, also the influence of the change of food, and practically their desirability from the point of view of racial betterment and professional adaptation.<sup>14</sup>

The archives further suggest that Shirokogoroff’s enthusiasm for exploring physical types in Yúnán could not keep pace with local enthusiasm for representing social cultural diversity. Faced with daunting logistics, an unsafe “criminal” environment in the Yi uplands, and a lack of support from the local

authorities, the Shirokogoroffs canceled their visit to the rural Yi heartland. This spurred their assistant, Yáng Chéngzhì, to break ranks with them, embarking on his own long-term fieldwork with the Yi, abandoning the couple to their anthropometric work in the city of Kūnmíng. To some nationalist observers, the hasty decisions of the couple to cancel the expedition proved the hollowness of foreign-born academics (Kriukov 2007; Liú Xiǎoyún 2007b). Shirokogoroff was dismissed from his post at Sun Yat Sen University in 1930, and the couple was forced to move north to Beijing where Sergei accepted a contract at Tsinghua University.<sup>15</sup>

Shirokogoroff intended to draw together a decade of anthropometric fieldwork into a magnum opus entitled *Growth and Etnos*. It seems the manuscript was completed but destroyed in a fire at the publishing house in Shanghai in 1931.<sup>16</sup> The most substantial legacy of his work at this time was the field training he gave to Yáng, who would go on to become one of the foremost Chinese specialists on Yi people and a key figure in the development of Chinese anthropology (Guldin 1994:50–55; Liú Xiǎoyún 2007a). Fèi Xiàotōng (1910–2005), the central figure in the development of nationality studies in the People’s Republic, also credits his early anthropometric apprenticeship under Shirokogoroff for developing his skill for “typological comparison” and therefore his later knack for identifying specific nationalities within mixed settings (Fèi Xiàotōng 1994a). He and his first wife applied Shirokogoroff’s “ethnical unit” in the published results of their tragic field expedition to the Yaos in 1936 (Fèi 1999:468–469; Leibold 2007:132). Late in his life, Fèi also would credit Shirokogoroff for providing a key inspiration in his search for “unity in diversity” (Fèi Xiàotōng 1994b; Wang Mingming 2010).

Shirokogoroff’s early work linking human morphology to landscape was clearly intended to be part of a broader project of calibrating self-ascribed identity to somatic vibrancy. However, in terms of his lasting effect on world anthropology, it seems that his training of two well-placed students—Yáng and Fèi—would become his most concrete legacy.

While the couple physically moved eastward, Sergei Shirokogoroff increasingly reached out to Western European audiences through his correspondence and publications. Here

12. Shirokogoroff’s professional biography in China is difficult to reconstruct. These dates are based primarily on the texts of dozens of his letters (Arzyutov and Anderson, forthcoming). Sometimes contradictory information on his shifting affiliations can be gleaned from published sources (Guldin 1994; Liú Xiǎoyún 2007a; Serebrennikov 1940).

13. Shirokogoroff describes the goals of the expedition in an unpublished article titled “Memorandum on ethnological expedition to Yanan [sic], Canton 12 June 1928” held in AS classmark 元186-13.

14. Sergei Shirokogoroff. “Anthropological Investigations [in Canton]” in AS classmark 元 46-8.

15. What a Chinese language historian labels as “the incident” can be followed in a number of unpublished manuscripts (Liú Xiǎoyún 2007b). The decision of Yáng Chéngzhì to abandon the couple is documented in Shirokogoroff’s “Preliminary report on the investigation work in Yunnan in July–October 1928” (AS classmark 元46-5). His dismissal is discussed in a letter from Shirokogoroff to Professor Fuszeniem [sic] dated April 30, 1929 [AS classmark 元 46-13], and discussed in two published sources (Liú Xiǎoyún 2007b; Wáng Fànsēn, Pān Guǎngzhé, and Wú Zhèng 2011:329, 330).

16. The fact that the manuscript was completed is documented in a letter from Shirokogoroff to Fussenien dated May 9, 1930 (AS classmark 元 46-18). The destruction of the manuscript is described in a letter from Shirokogoroff to Sir Arthur Keith, dated May 26, 1932, and held at RCS MUS collection 5, box 3, letter 67. Ivan I. Serebrennikov (1940:206) also mentions the fire in his obituary of Shirokogoroff.

we can observe the unanticipated effects of selective reading and misunderstandings in this transnationalist dialogue. Shirokogoroff's self-published pamphlets came to the attention of the anatomist and British racial theorist Sir Arthur Keith (1899–1955). Keith, excited by Shirokogoroff's (1925) book on physical growth, initiated a correspondence with him on the subject of how physical form was linked to the careers of nations. Shirokogoroff was particularly proud of this correspondence and cited it in personal letters several times, perhaps most significantly to the president of the Academia Sinica in a last-ditch effort to keep his job.<sup>17</sup> In his inaugural lecture as rector of Aberdeen University, Keith would exaggerate Shirokogoroff's notion of a resilient *ethnos* to identify triumphant and weaker nations (Hayward 2000; Keith 1931*b*). Keith (1931*a*) later published a short book titled *Ethnos*, wherein he displayed how a polygenetic ethnology could document the racial strengths of different nations.

Shirokogoroff also carried out a significant correspondence with ethnologists in Nazi-controlled Germany before the war, culminating in to an invitation for the Shirokogoroffs to visit Berlin in the winter of 1935–1936. While the details of this trip are difficult to reconstruct, it would seem from his correspondence that he impressed a wide range of German ethnographers. Given what we know of how history unfolded, it is tempting to link some of Shirokogoroff's interest in biophysical types to the Nazi eugenics project. However, certain hints in his correspondence suggest that he was consistently skeptical about state-directed projects to improve the population. In his correspondence with the China-area specialist Wilhelm Koppers (1886–1961), Shirokogoroff abstractly dismisses the “political complications” of prewar Germany as a “remodelling of interests in equilibrium” that was unlikely to bring the “end of Civilization.” Although it is difficult to know what he meant exactly, it seems to suggest that he was not against pursuing a career in Germany should he be invited. Shirokogoroff also entered into a correspondence with the infamous British eugenicist and Nazi sympathizer George Pitt-Rivers (1890–1966; Hart 2015), wherein he coquettishly argued that the “population problem” could never be consciously controlled and that the very drive to seek rational control over a group of people was merely an “ethnic hypothesis” (i.e., a pipe dream). Undismayed, Pitt-Rivers cited Shirokogoroff's name prominently in support of his proposals to the League of Nations for an international eugenicist organization. On Shirokogoroff's return to Japanese-controlled Beiping, he kept in touch with the young German ethnologist Wilhelm Mühlmann (1904–1988). Mühlmann translated a chapter of the *Psycho-*

17. Shirokogoroff bragged about his correspondence with Sir Arthur Keith in a letter to Vasilii M. Alekseev dated April 9, 1931 (SPF ARAN fond 820, opis' 3, delo 880, listy 40–43); in a letter to Władysław Kotwicz dated October 2, 1927 (BN PAU i PAN kolekcja 4600, tom 6, folios 65–66); and finally in the letter to the president of the Academia Sinica Y.P. Tsai dated July 15, 1930 (AS classmark 元 46–26).

*mental Complex of the Tungus* into German (Širokogorov 1935) and would later write a prominent obituary for his distant pen pal (Mühlmann 1940).<sup>18</sup>

We each lack the skills to consult the German-language archives of this period, which we understand are extensive. Nevertheless, we feel that there is a long reach between Shirokogoroff's vision of a self-regulating ethnic equilibrium tied to an evocative landscape and the directed racial politics of Nazi Germany (in support of our hunch, see Dragadze 1980*b*). In this highly unstable and dangerous period, Shirokogoroff had been desperate to find a place for himself overseas within a “major intellectual centre.” We feel that these letters can be best understood as part of his attempts to flatter and please his correspondents with the hope of getting a job—or at least not to alienate anyone. To that end, he also sent copies of his work unsolicited to many prominent metropolitan scholars, among them Franz Boas (1858–1942) and Brenda (1882–1965) and Charles (1873–1940) Seligman.<sup>19</sup>

However, returning to our argument on transnationalism and its misunderstandings, it does seem clear that his correspondence and visits to Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan were the turning point, if not the last straw, in Shirokogoroff's icy relationship with his Soviet Russian colleagues. Shirokogoroff's signature method of using physical anthropological measurements to argue for cultural resilience became lost in the political tensions of this time.

With the exception of sabbatical trips to Tokyo (1933 and 1935), as well as Berlin (1935–1936), the couple were to remain in China for the rest of their lives. Toward the end of his life, living in Japanese-occupied Beiping, Sergei intended to publish a two-volume manuscript in English—his so-called “Big Ethnos.” Unfortunately, that manuscript also has been lost—although we do possess a draft table of contents. Sergei died in 1939 and was buried in Beiping at the Russian cemetery of the Uspenskii Church, which now forms part of the Russian

18. The translation of a part of the *Psychomental Complex* is discussed in a letter dated August 12, 1978, a copy of which is held by Don Tumasonis (incoming correspondence letter 44). A copy of Shirokogoroff's letter to Wilhelm Koppers dated April 14, 1934, from the Archive of Collegio del Verbo Divino, Roma, is in the Tumasonis archive as letter 277. Shirokogoroff's skepticism about state-directed eugenics is in a letter he wrote to George Pitt-Rivers dated November 14, 1935 (Chu.Cam PIRI box 22, folder 3). Pitt Rivers's citation of Shirokogoroff is in his “Interim report on scientific organization and classification [undated] in Chu.Cam,” PIRI box 11, folder 2, folio 3.

19. We thank two anonymous reviewers for suggesting that German archives might hold more information on Shirokogoroff's influence on German ethnology between the wars. Shirokogoroff wrote of his wish to find a place overseas in a letter to Lev Shternberg dated December 4, 1922 (SPF RAN fond 282, opis' 2, delo 319, list 26v). His correspondence with Franz Boas can be found in APS Boas Collection, box 82. His letter to Brenda Seligman is dated February 22, 1930 (LSE Seligman collection classmark 2/5, person PA12017), and to Charles Seligman dated February 21, 1930 (RAI MS262/2/1/15/1).



Embassy complex.<sup>20</sup> Following his death, Elizaveta aggressively promoted his legacy through correspondence with scholars worldwide but primarily with Japanese colleagues during the occupation. Their significant Tungus dictionary would appear in print in Japan posthumously (Shirokogoroff 1944). Elizaveta tragically died in 1943. After her death, according to eyewitness accounts, what was left of the Shirokogoroff archive and library was confiscated by representatives of different foreign states in the chaos following the downfall of the Manchukuo state. Parts of the archive ended up in Taipei, Paris, Moscow, and Tokyo. Other parts remain missing.<sup>21</sup>

Such was Shirokogoroff's conspicuous eclipse during the Soviet period that his work immediately attracted curiosity under perestroika and afterward (Revunenkov and Reshetov 2003; Shirokogorov 2001–2002). Contemporary Russian ethnographers treat him as an ancestor figure (Sirina and Zakurdaev 2016), as do Chinese scholars (Fèi Xiàotōng 1994b; Liú Xiǎoyún 2007a; Wang Mingming 2010; Zhou Kun 2016). He and his *etnos* theory have been criticized for exercising a negative influence on South African anthropology (Sharp 1980; Skalník 1988). However, we wish to demonstrate that his personal legacy is much more complex and ambivalent. The life history of this *etnos* proponent contributed to a formation of anthropologies that today face each other as if they were each independently invented across an archipelago of isolated is-

lands. Sergei Shirokogoroff's biography serves as evidence for the living history that once bridged these competing traditions.

### *Etnos* Theory In and Out of the Soviet Academy

The story of how *etnos* theory was transformed from a regional East Eurasian conversation on cultural resilience to a suspicious émigré category and then once again to the dominant cultural historical paradigm in the Soviet Academy is one of the more fantastic tales of transnational involution. The recalibration of Imperial Russian ethnography into the Soviet academic discourse came at a relatively late date, albeit with a ruthless efficiency (Slezkine 1991; Solovei 2001). In April 1929, a special colloquium was convened in Leningrad with the express purpose to legislate Soviet policy on the "object" of ethnography (K[oshkin] and M[atorin] 1929). A remarkable artifact of this epic 7-day meeting was a sheaf of typewritten verbatim transcripts providing a minute-by-minute account of the event (Arziutov, Alymov, and Anderson 2014). The then-director of the MAĖ, Nikolai M. Matorin (1898–1936), baptized the event with the subtitle "From the Classics to Marxism." Frédéric Bertrand (2002) described it as a rupture between intellectual traditions. The term *etnos* was officially discouraged on the grounds that it represented the work of a bourgeois, antihistorical, and essentialist thought (Arziutov, Alymov, and Anderson 2014:130, 133, 209, 268, others). In particular, the early work of our hero Sergei Shirokogoroff, *Etnos*, was cited and then prominently dismissed by ĪAn P, Al'kor (Koshkin; 1900–1938) as "idealist" and "anti-scientific" (Arziutov, Alymov, and Anderson 2014:411). However, the delegates could not help but continue to use the word *etnos* themselves while at the same time parenthetically stating that they were using it in a different, better way. Their main challenge was to demonstrate that identities could change, evolve, and be improved by state-directed changes to material class conditions, while at the same time insisting that there remained a clear and persistent ethnographic object for them to study. Thus began a remarkable and convoluted period in the history of this nationalizing Eurasian state.

Shirokogoroff's work was treated ambiguously by the new Soviet academy. On the one hand, making reference to his work could have extreme consequences. The prominent Evenki specialist Glafira M. Vasilevich (1895–1971) was arrested and exiled partly because she owned a book by Shirokogoroff in her home library (Ermolova 2003). On the other hand, the wealth of field material that Shirokogoroff assembled continued to attract East Asian specialists. For example, the future leader of Soviet archaeological science in the Soviet Union, Aleksei P. Okladnikov (1908–1981), worked intensively with Shirokogoroff's archaeological collections. Yet at the same time, he published one of the most scathing criticisms of Shirokogoroff, disproving that (Soviet) Evenkis had a southern (Chinese) origin (Okladnikov 1950:45, 46). The Evenki specialist ĪAn Koshkin, who openly ridiculed Shirokogoroff during the Leningrad symposium, nevertheless carried out an engaged correspondence with

20. The fate of the "Big Etnos" was researched by Kōichi Inoue (1991). The draft table of contents was shared in a letter from Elizaveta Shirokogoroff to Teiro Kawakubo and Katsumi Tanaka dated February 17, 1942, a copy of which is held by Don Tumasonis (incoming correspondence letter 103). A letter from Ivan [John] I. Gapanovich (1891–1982) to Don Tumasonis dated June 8, 1980, gives an eyewitness account of Sergei Shirokogoroff's funeral and enclosed a sketch map of the location of his grave (incoming correspondence letter 183). Our colleagues did try to find the grave, but it seems that that section of the Russian Embassy complex has been turned into a parking lot.

21. Speculation on the causes of Elizaveta's death can be found in a letter from Ivan Gapanovich to the Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco dated January 22, 1979, a copy of which is held by Don Tumasonis (incoming correspondence letter 94), and in a second letter that Ivan Gapanovich wrote directly to Don Tumasonis on May 1, 1979 (incoming correspondence letter 109). Gapanovich, who was an expert on oriental cultures, remained in Beijing with the Shirokogoroffs and later emigrated to Australia. According to his account, Elizaveta was asphyxiated as a result of an improperly ventilated charcoal stove. Elizaveta Shirokogoroff wrote to Ivan I. Serebrennikov (1882–1953) in a letter dated February 21, 1940, complaining of the weight of responsibility of caring for her husband's manuscripts and inquiring about various ways of exporting the collection (HA Serebrennikov collection box 8-3). A letter from Nikolai [Nicholas] A. Slobodchikoff (1911–1991) to the Museum of Russian Culture dated February 11, 1979, claims that their manuscript of the Russian-Tungus dictionary was confiscated by Japanese Imperial forces as they retreated (incoming correspondence letter 84). More details on the fate of the manuscript archive can be found in two publications (Khokhlov 2008; Sheshnev 2004) and are summarized in our forthcoming volume (Arziutov and Anderson, forthcoming).

his “idealist” counterpart between 1930 and 1935. A handful of Soviet ethnographers cited Shirokogoroff in print (Ivanov 1954; Kriukov and Cheboksarov 1965:72; Myl'nikova-Forshtein 1937; Zelenin 1936:240). A selection of the couple's field photographs from Zabaikal'e was even published (without attribution) in the reference book *Peoples of Siberia* (Levin and Potapov 1956:723, 718#4). These examples speak to the fact that Shirokogoroff's work was discouraged but not banned in the early Soviet period. During our own research, we discovered that his publications had always been available on the shelves of the main state libraries in Moscow and Saint Petersburg (albeit in the somewhat off-putting “émigré” collection) as well as personal libraries of ethnographers. The MAË also held a set of often-consulted unpublished Russian-language translations of the *Social Organization of the Manchus* (Shirokogoroff 1924b) and the *Social Organization of the Northern Tungus* (Shirokogoroff 1929) reserved for “administrative use.”<sup>22</sup>

Rather than an overt engagement with *ethnos* theory, what is remarkable about the early Soviet period is the prevalence of coded expressions for a biologically and territorially anchored concept of identity. In the buildup to the Second World War, ethnographers were recruited to produce texts and maps that would demonstrate indisputably how particular populations were rooted in strategic parcels of land. As part of this struggle, the scholars deployed an “ethnic unit” (*ètnicheskaia ediniṣa*) as the fundamental building block of Stalinist tribes and peoples. In 1939, a high-level Commission on Ethnogenesis was established, gathering together ethnographers evacuated from behind the front lines. Then, from 1939 to 1942, this weaponized ethnographic assembly fought against Fascist historical concepts by anchoring Soviet peoples within Soviet histories (Bibikov 1941).<sup>23</sup>

Tangibly, these “non-*ethnos*” ethnoses were depicted in a series of classified ethnographic maps that were used in negotiations for the redrafting of international boundaries after the war, as well as in an encyclopedia series on the peoples of the Union

22. The somewhat-difficult-to-access dossier against Grafira Vasilevich is held in the security services' archive (AUFSS SPb i LO No. 40491, listy 13, 26, 283). Okladnikov's interest in the Shirokogoroff collections is described in a letter by Ivan I. Meshchaninov (1883–1967) to the ARAN dated May 8, 1935 (SPF ARAN fond 142, opis' 1(1936), delo 38, list 256). Shirokogoroff described his constructive correspondence with Koshkin in a letter to Władysław Kotwicz dated January 27, 1934 (BN PAU I PAN kolekcja 4600, tom 7, folio 61). The unpublished working translations of *The Social Organisation of the Manchus* is held in AMAË RAN fond K-II, opis' 1, delo 191a. The translation of *The Social Organisation of the Northern Tungus* is in the same collection, dela 215 through 217. Each folder (delo) has a list recording the people who consulted the texts, which reads like the history of Soviet anthropology.

23. The Commission on Ethnogenesis was established by a decree of the Presidium of the Soviet Academy of Sciences on April 19, 1939, and the original copy is held in ARAN fond 2, opis' 1(1939), delo 84, list 3. The use of ethnographers to create maps and politically useful histories is documented in a verbatim transcript of the commission's meeting on August 27, 1942 (ARAN fond 142, opis' 1, delo 1, listy 3,5).

of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR; Anderson and Arzyutov 2016). Intellectually, the decommissioned military ethnographers published works describing their visions of an “ethnic aggregate” (*ètnicheskaia sovokupnost'*; Kushner [Knyshev] 1951), “essences” (*ètnicheskaia suschnost'*; Tokarev 1949:8, 15), or an “ethnic commonality” (*ètnicheskaia obschnost'*; Briusov 1956; Tokarev 1964). Perhaps the best covert example was the publication of the *Historical and Ethnographic Atlas of Siberia* (Levin and Potapov 1961), with its authoritative illustrations of the costumes and implements thought to define particular peoples.

Although some fundamentalist Marxist ethnographers continued to insist that *ethnos* would always be an ahistorical category (Plotnikova 1952:156), others argued for a rethinking. Two leading ethnographers of the Institute of Ethnography and Moscow University admitted that *ethnos* could become “the main research object of ethnography as science” if Soviet ethnographers described ethnographic dynamics instead of bourgeois “stability” and “abstract specificity” (Tokarev and Cheboksarov 1951:12). In our interviews, many elderly ethnographers commented on the ubiquity of “*ethnos*-talk” in the smoke-filled corridors of the Institute of Ethnography. In the postwar period, the Institute of Ethnography shared a building with the Institute of History, and many scholars participated in the same seminars. These public but unpublished fora were a significant incubator of ethnographic and historical theorizing. Given that ethnographic discourse was cultivated in tightly controlled spaces among a cohort of comrades who had endured wartime relocation together, it is entirely understandable how a series of circumlocutory and coded expressions could stand for a type of knowledge that “everybody knew.”

One prominent and somewhat ironic example of the efficacy of “*ethnos*-talk” was the work of the Harbin-born sinologist and physical anthropologist Nikolai N. Cheboksarov (1907–1980), who led a Soviet delegation to help guide Chinese colleagues in the design of their *minzu* classification project in the 1950s. While formally citing Stalin's nationality policy, these technicians of ethnic rationalization advised their Chinese colleagues to think of what kinds of ethnic communities might be “plausible” (Mullaney 2010). In so doing, they taught Chinese ethnographers to document the long-term resilience of a group's traditions, their language, their ethnonyms, and so forth—a formula that recalls classic *ethnos* theory. It may not be coincidental that Cheboksarov, upon returning to Moscow in 1958, used Chinese examples as a way of speaking indirectly about ethnic policy and *ethnos* in Russia (Mikhail Kriukov, personal communication, March 31, 2012). One of Cheboksarov's students recalls him lecturing on Shirokogoroff's *ethnos* in a hushed voice in the safe space of his auditorium (Pimenov 1994:148).

The early Soviet experience with *ethnos* theory was such that it was impossible to live with openly but that practically it was impossible to live without. When Rudol'f Its spoke at the opening of the IUAES conference in Moscow in 1964, he was already addressing a local audience well versed in the main outlines of this suspect concept. During the post-Stalinist “thaw,” the fact that it was an émigré-fashioned theory may even have made

it more attractive. From 1964 onward, *etnos* theory moved from being a headline to being incorporated as a central organizing principle of Soviet Marxist ethnographic science.

The main entrepreneur in the rerecognition of *etnos* theory was Iulian Bromlei (1921–1990)—a historian of Yugoslavia promoted as director of the Moscow Institute of Ethnography from 1966 to 1989. According to the interviews that we conducted with retired members of the Institute, Bromlei first built on the window opened by Tolstov’s speech by discussing *etnos* orally in the regular seminar he convened with ethnographers and historians inside the building that they shared (Interviews 2011: Sergeĭ Arutiunov, Zoĭa Sokolova). He hinted at the term in a coauthored publication in 1968, to be followed by a more confident exposition titled “*etnos* and endogamy” in 1969 (Alekseev and Bromlei 1968; Bromlei 1969a). From then on, like his *etnos*-ancestor, he promoted his vision in an increasingly widening ark of publications in Russian but also in European languages (Bromlei 1969b, 1983; Bromley 1974; Bromley and Shkaratan 1972).

It may be significant that the first volley of Bromlei’s publications was followed hard with the first overt appearance of *etnos* in print by Lev Gumil’ev (1912–1992; 1967). Peter Skalnĭk (1986) would accuse Bromlei of taking advantage of the taboo against Shirokogoroff, and his own privileged access to émigré collections, to appropriate Shirokogoroff’s ideas. To be fair, Bromlei (1973:22) eventually did cite Shirokogoroff along with Mogilianskiĭ when he constructed the genealogy of what he distinguished as his own *etnos* theory. He loudly advertised the fact that his version was not linked to any biological factor. However, as some have protested, his model was nonetheless founded on marriage choices and endogamy—both of which have classically been associated with biological anthropology (Skalnĭk 1986; Sokolova 1992). An early English-language review of Bromlei’s *etnos* theory described it as a brave rapprochement with physical anthropology that “startles” and that in an earlier era “might have had led to certain unpleasant consequences” (Dunn 1975:66). Therefore, it is difficult at first glance to separate Bromlei’s *etnos* from that of his émigré predecessors. If there is a difference, it would be in the development of what we might define as *etnos*-baroque. Bromlei devised a set of interlocking terms, ranging from *ĕtnikos* to *subĕtnos* to the “ethnosocial organism,” to describe various functionalist subsystems of identity governance. With this Byzantine system, he could accommodate orthodox Marxists by pointing out that the ethnosocial organism would reflect changes in class formations, while at the same time he could appeal to traditionalists with his *ĕtnikos*—which for him was a stable marker in all times and in all places.

Bromlei’s strategy seems to have worked. Almost all Western European commentators associate *etnos* theory exclusively with him (Banks 1996; Gellner 1980). In the words of Valerĭi Tishkov, who succeeded Bromlei as director of the Institute of Ethnography (1989–2015), his predecessor “played forts and barricades” (*gorodil gorodushki*) with a framework that enticed different sectors of the sprawling Academy to compete for

funds for state-funded ethnography (Interview 2011). If we employ Shirokogoroff’s terminology here, the “primary milieu” of Bromlei’s bureaucratic empire was a set of cozy barricaded laboratories—total social communities that defined themselves by their study of the people outside their walls.

Despite the initial coldness shown to *etnos* theory, the Eurasian passion for a collectivist, historical, and physically rooted concept would continue to grow. Cold War warriors assumed that Bromlei’s forts and barricades strategy would collapse with the decomposition of the USSR and the bureaucratic apparatus that supported it. Tishkov even published a *Requiem for Etnos* (Tishkov 2003), assuming that the newly independent states of Eurasia would embrace the Euro-American model of ethnicity along with neoliberal markets (fig. 6). It was the surprise of the century that rather than collapse, *etnos*-talk became more and more pervasive at the beginning of the twenty-first century across Eurasia and especially outside the academies.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, we drew attention to *etnos* theory as a forgotten bridge that once linked together the still-emerging

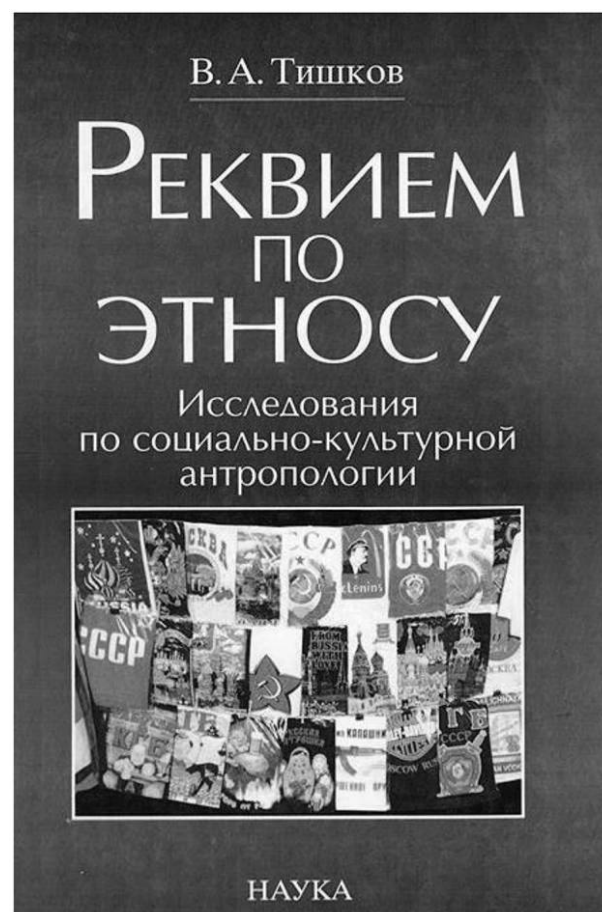


Figure 6. Front cover—monograph by Valerĭi Tishkov (2003) *Requiem po etnosu* [Requiem for Etnos].



schools of ethnography and social anthropology across Europe, Asia, and North America. In this study of a single term, we put our emphasis on how the work of a single scholar intersected, and repelled, various intellectual communities. We suggested that the unstable postcolonial situation of Far Eastern Eurasia drew the attention of Sergei Shirokogoroff to factors that contributed to cultural resilience. By folding together vocabulary lists, kinship diagrams, and collections of artifacts into an East Eurasian cellular idiom of “ethnic equilibrium,” he created an idea that ties together the social and biological in a manner that makes European and North American anthropologists uncomfortable. It was a deep irony that this white émigré’s quest for resilient forms of social life also proved extremely attractive to professional state ethnographers in the new socialist states of Eurasia. Meanwhile, the mainstream of European and North American anthropology in the early twentieth century cast off on an entirely separate course, propelling itself into an “anti-naturalist” orbit that was critical of ascribed, transgenerational identities and that favored the ability of a person to choose their own identity (Benton 1991).

Perhaps the contrast to the evolving, North American model of ethnicity made Shirokogoroff’s ecological and collectivist notion of an “ethnic unit” more attractive to scholars in Eurasia over time. The bridge-builder Teodor Shanin gave perhaps the best assessment of the evocativeness of the term:

Soviet perceptions of ethnicity . . . differ in emphasis and in angle of vision from their Western counterparts. They follow a different tradition, which has led to different readings . . . While rejecting racialist ahistoricity, they did not accept as its alternative a fully relativist treatment of ethnicity. They accorded ethnic phenomena greater substance, consistency, and autonomous casual power . . . Compared to mainstream Western studies, theirs have been more historical in the way they treated ethnic data. (Shanin 1989:415, 416)

It is curious that for all his insight, Shanin nevertheless failed to translate the *ethnos* concept into English—he mystified it as “the case of the missing term” (Shanin 1986). His intuition—that a new term was needed—is a revealing judgment on the fragmented manner in which Euro-American science strives to achieve an ever more precise compartmentalization of ideas.

Across Eurasia, the popularity of *ethnos*-thinking is growing. In Russia, historians of ethnography now laud the once-ostracized émigré as “our very own” (a paraphrase of the poet Pushkin; Filippov 2005; Kuznetsov 2001). *Ethnos* theory is particularly popular with intellectuals based in Siberian regional museums and universities, where they employ oral history mixed with genetic metaphors to sketch out the long-term vibrancy of local nationalities (Nabok 2012; Oushakine 2010; Pavlinskaiā 2008). In this light, the ethnopolitical deployment of the term begins to look more like what many in North America might identify as a type of indigenous rights discourse. In China, the identity and autonomy of discrete minority minzu has become a contentious issue, with some intellectuals pointing to the “unbalancing” between the relation of the 55 state-recognized mi-

norities and recommending the construction of a single, all-encompassing Chinese nation (Leibold 2016). Resisting this tendency, some intellectuals are redeploying Shirokogoroff’s texts to sketch out a vision of “plural oneness” as one answer to the puzzle of Chinese multiculturalism (Wang Mingming 2010). If Shirokogoroff was attracted in the frontier areas to query the outer limits of Han identities in China, today debates on “mixed race” and “ethnopolitics” are used to query the unity and identity of the dominant Han Chinese identity (Mullaney et al. 2012).

However, the valences of *ethnos* theory continue to be ambiguous. Shirokogoroff’s work is cited approvingly by the ultraright intellectual Aleksandr Dugin (2010). His published lectures on the “sociology of the *ethnos*” enchant this once very positivistic term by crossing it with a theory of myths and eternal structures taken from the French anthropologist Levi Strauss (Dugin 2009.04.09, 2011). The timeless and eternal quality Dugin gives to the *ethnos* concept has been picked up by Russian President Vladimir Putin himself. He coined the idea of a “single cultural code” (*edinyi kul’turnyi kod*) that elaborates a centralized version of multiculturalism wherein Russia is seen as a multinational society acting as a single people (*narod*); (Putin 2012). More recently, he has argued that his “cultural code” should be militarized to protect the very existence of the *Rossiiskii narod* as an *ethnos* (Kremlin 2017.05.09). Furthermore, he has criticized foreign scientists for collecting the “biomaterials of different *ethnoses*” for suspicious purposes (RIA Novosti 2017).

This new equilibrium of suspicion stands in tragic contrast to the intercontinental collaboration that once sustained this transnational concept. This unfortunate term, which never was entirely Marxist nor seductively Western, has never properly fit within the history of anthropology. Caught between Imperial, Soviet, and post-Soviet epochs, and simultaneously looking inward to Russia and China and outward to North America and Europe, it is a tragic concept that is not at home in any of these contexts. Yet as clumsy as the term is, it has been tremendously influential in structuring the ethnographic academies of the former Soviet Union—and of China. In those two countries, in particular, it sits at the pinnacle of ethnic reorganizations, language policy, and affirmative-action nationality policy. Given the complex geopolitical setting in which this transnational dialogue took place—a context of revolution, occupation, genocide, and world war—it is perhaps not surprising that some scholars and politicians might wish to wipe the slate clean and begin anew. However, as ethnographers, we feel that we have a responsibility to listen to 100 years of Eurasian conversations on the topic rather than to insist that all respectable scientific conversations begin in the metropole.

## Abbreviations

AS, Library of Academia Sinica. Taipei. Taiwan

AMAE RAN, Archive of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg

APS, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ARAN, Archive of Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow

ARÈM, Archive of the Russian Ethnographic Museum, Saint Petersburg

AUFSB SPb i LO, Archive of the Department of the Federal Security Bureau of Saint Petersburg and Leningrad *oblast'*

BN PAU i PAN, Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Skills and the Polish Academy of Sciences, Kraków

Chu.Cam, Archive of Churchill College, Cambridge

HA, Hoover Institute Archive, Stanford

LSE, Archive of the London School of Economics and Political Science, London

NA RGO, Scientific Archive of the Russian Geographical Society, Saint Petersburg

RAI, Archive of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, London

RCS MUS, Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons, London

RGIA DV, Russian State Archive of the Far East, Vladivostok

SPF ARAN, Saint Petersburg Filial of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Saint Petersburg

TS̄GIA SPB, Central City Historical Archive of Saint Petersburg

### Acknowledgments

This study could not have been assembled without the support of dozens of colleagues working with collections stretching across seven countries. We are greatly indebted to Donald Tumasonis who shared with us his private archive—the result of a lifetime spent interviewing and corresponding with people who knew Shirokogoroff. We dedicate this article to him.

We are also grateful to Professor Hitoshi Yamada of Tohoku University for his work transcribing the Shirokogoroff archive in Taipei. A special word of thanks is due to Dr. Sergeĭ Alymov, who has both guided us through the intricate archival collections in the Academy of Sciences and commented on this work. The article would not have been possible without the hard work of Drs. Svetlana Podrezova and Natalĭa Komelina, who searched for manuscripts in Saint Petersburg, and Wen Guo, who helped us with the Chinese translations. We also thank Dr. Jocelyn Dudding for sharing her expert interpretations of the Shirokogoroff photo collections, Professor Roberte Hamayon for her help trying to locate a lost set of Shirokogoroff field notes in France, and Dr. Jeff Kochan for invaluable last-minute guidance on the manuscript. We wish we could thank dozens of archival professionals who identified and interpreted difficult citations in dozens of archives internationally. We also thank the three anonymous reviewers who helped us to reframe the article with less ambition but hopefully more clarity.

This research has been supported by a standard research grant from the Economic and Social Research Council “Etnos: A Life History of the *Etnos* Concept” (ESRC ES/K006428/1) and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research (ICRG-103) “The Concept of Etnos in Post-Soviet Russia.” The

final phase of Arzyutov’s work was possible thanks to the support of the ERC project “Greening the Poles: Science, the Environment, and the Creation of the Modern Arctic and Antarctic” (GRETPOL; PI Professor Peder Roberts).

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## Comments

### Sergei Alymov

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I want to comment on two thematic areas of this excellent article: the transnational dialogue, part of which Shirokogoroff’s theories were, and the relevance of his thinking in contemporary Russia. By calling Shirokogoroff’s *etnos* a “biosocial metaphor,” the authors in fact draw our attention to a whole archipelago of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century thought that may bear this designation.

Historians of Russian science have already commented on this phenomenon. Beer (2008:29) remarks that “the two paradigms—biological and social—merged, and the object of medical science and the object of social science were defined in the course of mutual projection.” A historian of physical anthropology describes this discipline, to the development of which Shirokogoroff contributed a lot, as a “hybrid field of knowledge that exemplified the highest ambitions of modern natural and social sciences to uncover objective laws governing both nature and societal organisms and to influence both” (Mogilner 2013:3).

Russia was part of a larger European context where biosocial ideas flourished. One can think of race science, eugenics, anthropogeography, “biopolitics,” and other spheres of (pseudo) scientific knowledge as elements of this trend, all of which had repercussions in Russia. For example, Ratzel’s anthropogeography was popularized by Saint Petersburg anthropologist Dmitriĭ Koropchevskĭi (1901), who outlined the correlations between the density of population, territory, and “the level of culture” obtained by certain peoples or states, which are very reminiscent of Shirokogoroff’s famous equations. Like Shirokogoroff, Koropchevskĭi was preoccupied with people’s viability and expansion, thus subscribing to the biopolitical notion that “only a politics that orients itself toward biological laws and takes them as a guideline can count as legitimate and commensurate with reality” (Lemke 2011:10).

Anderson and Arzyutov remind us that nowadays the idea of *etnos* often serves as a stumbling block, preventing communication between Western and Eastern scholars. At the beginning of the twentieth century, it was, on the contrary, an element of knowledge that transcended national intellectual traditions. However, knowledge indeed does not move in “coherent lifeless blocks.” Anderson and Arzyutov mention sociologist Georges Papillault’s early use of the term in a French-language publication.

Papillault, as Conklin explains, was a proponent of “racist colonial sociology” as well as eugenics and “biosociology” (Conklin 2013:54). This was consistent with the tradition of Paul Broca’s anthropological school to define anthropology as a natural science of human anatomy and “physical types” put in the service of racial science. Similarly, Shirokogoroff’s correspondent from Scotland, Sir Arthur Keith, sought to address “national problems . . . with the eye of an evolutionary biologist,” concluding that “nation-building is the first step in race-building” (Keith 1931a:82, 83).

Shirokogoroff and his colleagues in Saint Petersburg had their own take on race. Nikolai Mogilianskiĭ and his older colleague and mentor Fëdor Volkov studied in Paris at l’École d’Anthropologie. Both understood ethnography as a part of the natural science of anthropology and championed the idea of establishing the departments of ethnography at the universities’ natural science divisions. Mogilianskiĭ also believed that peoples can be defined by their secondary characteristics within racial groups with the use of anthropometry, the latest French standards of which Volkov propagated in Saint Petersburg. Thus, common physical (anthropological) characteristics occupied the first place in Mogilianskiĭ’s definition of *ethnos*, followed by common historical fate, language, and spiritual culture. Shirokogoroff’s definition of *ethnos* did not feature common physical characteristics at all. For him, ethnos were also “biological unit of man,” but they were held together not by “mechanical solidarity” of alike individuals, but rather by a kind of *mentalité* or “environmental fitness” (Anderson 2019). Ethnology for him was a generalizing science, “crowning the knowledge of man.” He used biological metaphors to account not for evolution but for adaptation of human groups to the environment and their neighbors. I believe that this supports the point made by Nathaniel Knight, who argues that although racial conceptions played a role in Russian history, the dominant discourse on nationality—and *ethnos*—was “the quest for identity and distinctiveness based on the totality of distinguishing features rather than a global hierarchy of races defined through physical traits” (Naĭt 2019).

As Anderson and Arzyutov show, theories of *ethnos* made a comeback in the 1960s, a period that can be also be characterized by a renewed interest in synthesizing natural and social sciences. The collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Soviet Marxism brought about more debates. A new generation of experts at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, led by Valerii A. Tishkov, criticized the inconsistencies of the concept and called for abandoning it in favor of ethnicity. At the same time, during the “ethnic revival” of the 1990s, the concept took deep roots in regional academies, among experts in other disciplines, as well as Russian, “Eurasian,” and non-Russian nationalists (Tishkov 2016). The situation, perhaps, can be compared with the trajectory of culture concept in American anthropology, which was undergoing a profound critique while, as Marshal Sahlins (1999) put it, “all of a sudden, everyone got ‘culture.’” Ethno-nationalists relied on Bromlei and Gumil’ev to dissociate “*ethnos* proper” from the structures

of the collapsed state and reinvent their sense of national vitality (Oushakine 2009). Meanwhile, the DNA and other advances of modern biology made it possible for critics and enthusiasts of *ethnos* alike to hail the long-awaited possibility of distinguishing ethnic groups on the basis of hard science data. Shirokogoroff’s *ethnos* theory, as the authors show, matured in times of civil wars and collapses of states (Arzyutov 2019). It is telling nowadays that not only Shirokogoroff’s contributions to linguistics, ethnography, and the study of shamanism are highly valued in Russia but also that his name appears in the context of “ethnopolitics” and international security (Kuznetsov and Shih 2016).

*Ethnos* theorizing usually requires at least an imagination and enthusiasm for natural science, if not proper expertise in it. It seems that political instability, national feelings, and fascination with life sciences will long be parts of the modern world, so the story of *ethnos*, as well as appropriations and rethinking of Shirokogoroff’s legacy, is likely to be continued.

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For many anthropologists, the term *ethnos* probably sounds quite familiar because its spelling reminds one vaguely of the core but debatable concept of *ethnicity*. *Ethnos* is, however, distinctive not only because of its ambiguous meanings but also because of the historical and political circumstances in which it developed. “The *Ethnos* archipelago: Sergei M. Shirokogoroff and the life history of a controversial anthropological concept” is a worthy paper that explores the *ethnos* theory along its transnational paths. In doing so, both authors follow two parallel and complementary stories: the “life history” of the *ethnos* concept and the “lived experience” of Sergei M. Shirokogoroff, a Russian anthropologist renowned for, among other achievements, his early contribution to Tungus studies in Siberia and Manchuria. *Ethnos* and Shirokogoroff thus form a couple, linked by a common fate made up of travel, correspondence, political ban, and subsequent rehabilitation. *Ethnos* appears to be more than a simple scientific and theoretical method aimed at evaluating and demarcating the “national identities” scattered across the Eurasian peripheries in different eras. It was a multidimensional conceptualization that articulated discourses on identity, political power, and nation-state-building among diverse social circles. While Anderson and Arzyutov do not highlight the term’s epistemology, they stress its remarkable evolution from Imperial Russia to Communist China, passing from one scholar’s hand to the next, and garnering strength, doubt, and recognition as it did so.

*Ethnos*’s “life history” started more than 100 years ago when it was first used at the beginning of the twentieth century by Nikolai Mogilianskiĭ, the curator of the Russian Ethnographic Museum in Saint Petersburg. Engaged in the ongoing debates



over how ethnography could serve the state policy of the Russian Empire for capturing the cultural difference of its various peoples, Mogiliānskiĭ proposed the term “*etnos*” as an alternative. However, as the authors demonstrate, it was Shirokogoroff who played the decisive role in the expansion and understanding of the concept. The strength of the article indeed lies in the way Anderson and Arzyutov conduct an innovative analysis of the history of anthropology from one man’s biography alone. The case study is based on long-term work that combines meticulous examination of archival collections scattered across the world with interviews conducted among older Russian ethnographers. The authors track Shirokogoroff everywhere he went, finding unpublished manuscripts, original political writings, and numerous letters to various scientists, thus putting together a puzzle that emphasizes the historical resilience of the *etnos* concept.

The young Russian anthropologist was confronted with ethnic encounters for the first time during his early field trip among the Evenki people of Lake Baikal in 1912–1913. What was happening on the ground was very distant from what he had been taught in Russian and French academic anthropological circles. Struggling “with the task of finding ‘pure’ representatives of these forest hunters and reindeer herders,” Shirokogoroff saw in the *métissage* of these populations favorable grounds for testing theories of ethnic belonging. The authors clearly demonstrate how Shirokogoroff’s multiple trips abroad deeply influenced his own vision of *etnos*. Linking social and biological realms, he defined *etnos* for the first time (a decade after his Siberian fieldwork) as a group of people sharing a common language and origin and possessing a set of customs. As Anderson and Arzyutov argue, this brand-new definition that highlighted space and territory was echoed in discourses on nation-state-building. One may recognize in Shirokogoroff’s definition of *etnos* some of the most distinct components used in communist state ideologies to outline their paradigm of indigenous peoples. During the Stalin era, *etnos* was disqualified in the Soviet academy, as it was considered an antiscientific and bourgeois ideology; however, it was not totally banned. In parallel, *etnos* attracted the attention of Western scientists and politicians, such as the Scottish anthropologist Sir Arthur Keith and the ethnologists from Nazi Germany with whom Shirokogoroff maintained a regular correspondence.

Throughout the article, the authors highlight the various trajectories followed by *etnos* through Europe and Eurasia. Having spent a long time in China, where he eventually passed away, Shirokogoroff has since the late 1980s been considered a leading scholar in Tungus (especially Manchu) and Shamanism studies in the country, where two of his major works were translated into Chinese (*The Social Organization of the Northern Tungus* and *Social Organization of the Manchus: A Study of the Manchu Clan Organization*). However, Shirokogoroff’s legacy of *etnos* remains quite obscure. We know for sure that its equivalent term, “*minzu*,” served as a key concept for the Ethnic Classification Project that led to the political framework of the 56 nationalities officially recognized by the People’s Republic

of China. The life history of *etnos* continued into the 1960s, when it was reintroduced into Soviet ethnographic science as an acceptable theory for contextualizing models on ethnicity.

The two authors lead us to consider the term “*etnos*” in a novel way and demonstrate “how the lived experience of a single individual can spark both transnational dialogues and misunderstandings.” They immerse the reader in the twentieth-century history of anthropology and bring us knowledge about unfamiliar names and theories once discussed within political and intellectual circles. While the authors examine carefully how *etnos* appeared under multiple variants in distinct countries and circles, we wonder how the meaning of the concept was exactly understood in every corner of the world and applied in the field. In their conclusion, the authors raise briefly the issue of the revival of *etnos* in Eurasia today, especially in Russia among some politicians, ethnologists, and members of the native intelligentsia. One might easily suppose that *etnos* has become a kind of contemporary theory for identity and ethnicity. But how did it end up on today’s stage after the end of the Soviet Union? Was there any theoretical redefinition involved? How can contemporary ethnographers link the modern concept of *etnos* in their field with its previous multiple meanings? The native intelligentsia’s reappropriation of the term mirrors indigenous movements worldwide, which aim to defend local identities and cultural survival. From the perspective of my personal interest, I would have liked to have had more details about the reappropriation of *etnos* by indigenous peoples, but the authors will undoubtedly develop this issue further in their forthcoming monograph on this resilient concept.

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In their introduction, the authors entice readers by announcing the “‘life history’ of the *etnos* concept” shedding light on a bridge that “once united ethnographers in the West and East and that hopefully will make contemporary Eurasian proponents of *etnos* theory appear less anachronistic.” To reconstruct both bridge and life, they bring to light the personality of Sergei Shirokogoroff, who merged Western education with Russian/Chinese anthropological experience and generated or articulated a concept of *etnos*. The article provides a clear picture of how the protagonist acquired the basic ideas of the concept from Georges Papillault in l’École d’anthropologie, Paris, and from Nikolaĭ Mogiliānskiĭ and Fëdor Vovk in Kunstkamera and the Russian Museum, Saint Petersburg. In fact, the first person to coin the term “*etnos*” and emphasize its significance was Ukrainian ethnographer Nikolaĭ Mogiliānskiĭ in his paper in 1908, more than 10 years before Shirokogoroff’s pamphlet was released in 1922. Then the story bifurcates: one of its lines

stays in Saint Petersburg (Petrograd), where “*etnos-talk*” becomes commonplace, and another follows émigré Shirokogoroff to the Far East and China.

It will not be a hard task to find out how the idea of *etnos* penetrated back into the USSR from China if accounting for the fact that “*etnos-talk*” in Saint Petersburg (Leningrad) did not stop in the years of revolution, since the “national issue” was a chief priority for a multiethnic empire in crisis. Moreover, this very theme appeared long before the revolution, and neither Mogilianskiĭ nor Shirokogoroff invented the “ethnovision” as an angle of science. It has happened in Russia a century ahead of the classic European anthropology emergence in the mid-1800s. The eighteenth century witnessed how the explorers from the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences—Gerhard F. Müller (1705–1783), Johann E. Fischer (1697–1771), Peter S. Pallas (1741–1811), Johann G. Georgi (1729–1802), and others—elaborated the “folk-description” (*Völker-Beschreibung*, *Völkerkunde*, *Volkskunde*, Rus. *Narodovedenie*) that quickly gained popularity via Göttingen and Vienna in the academic community of Europe (Vermeulen 2018). In multiethnic Russia, this systematically descriptive ethnography evolved as a “rooted” science responding to regular needs for the Empire to realize and organize itself. Russian monarchs, and especially Peter I and Catherine II, encouraged the academicians who had been hired from Germany to study various resources of the Empire, including its manpower. Sometimes the knowledge of peoples produced an effect of “fashion for ethno,” followed with peculiar grand entertainments such as “a parade of peoples” in the time of Empress Anna Ioannovna in 1740. The science of peoples was accumulated not in the office but rather on long journeys across Russia by field explorers, and it was Russia’s enormous scopes and ethnic diversity that ensured that naturalists would turn into ethnographers while research trips. Among others, that was academician Johann Gottlieb Georgi, who compiled and published in 1776–1780 a four-volume “Description” of the Empire’s 80 peoples. The focus on a people as a subject of the study indicated that a new science of ethnography had come into being.

All these details are to snapshot the “rootedness” of ethnic studies in Russia and persistent, sometimes exaggerated, ethno-focus in political and academic debates. The Bolshevik Revolution had also been triggered and driven, inter alia, by ethnonational forces. Shirokogoroff clearly voiced the importance of ethnic dimension, particularly after “the affirmative action Empire,” as Terry Martin (2001) indicated that the USSR has openly manifested its multiethnic state design. It is no surprise that the first decade of Soviet power in 1920s was a heyday of ethnic movements, while the ethnography/ethnology was called the “quintessence of social sciences.”

The émigré Shirokogoroff hardly could influence and maintain the “*etnos-talks*” in Leningrad and Moscow. The ethnic issues bound up with the frequently-used term “*etnos*” were set in the agenda of the Leningrad Conference in April 1929, which became a tragic turning point for Soviet ethnographers. Soon,

half a thousand of them were arrested and repressed, and the ethnography/ethnology had been disgraced to the rank of “subsidiary historical discipline” and pushed to study “the primitive communism.” According to the Bolshevik diagnosis, the crucial defect of ethnography was in its discordance, including irrelevance of the term “*etnos*” with Marxism (Golovnev 2018).

None of ethnography’s executors—neither academician Nikolai I. Marr (1865–1934), who sought to borrow the “quintessence” status from ethnology for his own “new doctrine of languages” (Yaphetic theory) nor his henchman, “anti-ethnologist” Valerian B. Aptekar’ (1899–1937)—might have dared to attack ethnology so vigorously if they did not expect its coming failure. Since the Soviet state had been stabilized and new ruling elite strengthened their positions in the late 1920s, the “national forces” and ethnic interests that recently so much inspired and empowered the revolutionary leaders were no longer in favor. Moreover, these forces, in alliance with ethnography/ethnology, apparently became a threat to social and political stability.

Where was “*etnos-talk*” in the time of the “genocide of ethnographers” undertaken by Soviet power in the 1930s? Indeed, it was deep underground, camouflaged by the themes of ethnogenesis and ethno-history, or in émigré discourse such as that of Shirokogoroff. Repressed ethnography together with repressed ethnicity was one of the gloomy features of Stalin’s regime. In the same way as the West relied on a multiparty system, the USSR/Russia has always relied on the multiethnicity concept. The Russian rule of the people has always been ethnic in its nature: there were the voices and the interests of the peoples that formed the multinational community and acted as the main counterbalance of political centralism.

The article’s authors, however, skipped these and highlighted other aspects representing *etnos* (an obsolete term in today Russian vocabulary) in the aura of Shirokogoroff’s ties to “ethnologists within Nazi-controlled Germany” and Japanese and Chinese scholars involved in the discourse of *ethnie* (*minzu*). In the end, *etnos* acts as sinister ghost flashing between the lines of Russian nationalist Aleksandr Dugin and behind the phrases of Russian President Vladimir Putin. Perhaps, if a keyword of the article was *Tungus* (whose ethnography was brilliantly made by Shirokogoroff), rather than *etnos*, Russian ethno-studies might acquire another profile.

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What is the proper subject of ethnology/anthropology? Were it not for this huge question in the background, we would probably not be so intrigued by the career of the Russian term “*etnos*.” Anderson and Arzyutov show that it has both reactionary and progressive potential. It is both a “peculiar biosocial

metaphor" and a "tragic concept." Despite its "bridging" role across Eurasia, it has failed to establish itself in the Atlantic (anglophone) heartlands of contemporary sociocultural anthropology. That there may be good reasons for this failure is not to deny the value of this impressive exercise in reconstructing the "life history" of a slippery and contentious term.

The most significant shortcoming of the paper is that, because the authors have no knowledge of German, this component of the transnational story is downplayed. We learn little about the early life of Sergei Shirokogoroff, but we do know that before proceeding to audit courses in Paris and begin his career in Saint Petersburg, where *et(h)nos* was "in the air" before the First World War, he spent 4 formative years in the city now known to the world as Tartu. The official languages of Tartu University today are Estonian and English. But in the first years of the twentieth century, the two dominant languages were Russian and German. Nazi ideologist Alfred Rosenberg imbibed the theories of the racist Wagnerite Houston Stewart Chamberlain in German as a 16-year-old secondary school student in nearby Tallinn. So *et(h)nos* was "in the air" here too. We do not know whether Shirokogoroff ever read Chamberlain (one assumes that Anderson and Arzyutov have found no trace of anti-Semitism in his work). But it cannot be denied that while Arthur Keith and George Pitt-Rivers remained isolated figures in Great Britain, racist ideas found their most fertile soil in the German-speaking world, which before 1917 included the Baltic territories of the Tsarist Empire.

On the other hand, I sympathize with the authors' proposal that Shirokogoroff's apparently dubious self-presentation (we are spared the detail) in correspondence with German colleagues in the mid-1930s does not warrant hasty ethical condemnation by those who have never had to face existential uncertainties. The situation of the distinguished Austrian Richard Thurnwald (1869–1954) was not dissimilar: had he been able to secure a post in Britain or North America, he would not have ended up collaborating with the Nazis to the extent that he did (Melk-Koch 1989). A closer contemporary of Shirokogoroff, Thurnwald's compatriot Wilhelm Koppers (1886–1961) lost his position in Vienna because he refused to toe the ideological line. One can only speculate how far Shirokogoroff might have been prepared to go. (Incidentally, it is misleading to describe Koppers as a specialist on China.)

The authors' interpretations of later episodes in the history of Soviet anthropology, the main focus of their narrative, are similarly reasonable. I was puzzled as to the identity of "ethnographers evacuated from behind the front lines" in 1939 (before the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War) and would question whether the USSR can be characterized as a "nationalizing Eurasian state." What comes across with great clarity is that *etnos* was "in the air" again in Moscow institutions in the 1950s, although to be on the safe side it was advisable to address sensitive Russian debates through the invocation of Chinese proxies. This reminds me of the delight Ernest Gellner used

to take in reading between the lines of Soviet anthropological texts in order to extract the authors' coded commentaries on their own socialist society (see Gellner 1988b). As Anderson and Arzyutov point out, however, Gellner was not just another metropolitan Western anthropologist patronizing provincials in Moscow, who in turn might look down on their own provincials in places like Vladivostok. Like Teodor Shanin, Gellner was a pluralist bridge-builder. Despite cultivating the image of an "enlightenment fundamentalist," he respected other traditions of knowledge production in anthropology. He was convinced that anglophone anthropologists in thrall to Malinowski and what might be termed constructivist approaches to collective identity had much to gain from a serious engagement with their more historically minded Soviet colleagues.

Do we learn from the travels of this concept beyond fragmentary insights into one scholar's turbulent life and enduring hierarchies of academic knowledge production? Is there in fact a coherent body of "classic *etnos* theory," as the authors state toward the end of the paper? Or is the term an empty signifier allowing endless localized manipulation? In the hands of its best-known exponent, academician Iŭlian Bromlei, we are told that *etnos* theory in its post-1964 heyday in Moscow could satisfy both scientific Marxists theorizing human social evolution with reference to class and modes of production and, at the same time, Eurasianist primordialists. Even before the collapse of socialist power, the latter usage was becoming dominant. *Etnos* is redolent of discredited anthropometric techniques and the neat boundaries of ethnographic atlases. It turns up frequently in the speeches of Alexander Dugin and Vladimir Putin himself. In this sense, the debates addressed in this paper are far from antiquarian and need to be understood by anyone interested in public anthropology in Eurasia.

Anderson and Arzyutov have outlined a fascinating Eurasian archipelago, the early formulations of which are provided in 1922 and 1923 by a white Russian émigré who happened to find himself on a shifting political frontier in East Asia. But the larger story begins much earlier, with ancient Greek identifications of *ethnos* in the borderlands between Europe and Asia. Today, this story is truly global and there is no sign that the dust has settled. As the authors note, although it is inextricably bound up with romantic-essentializing notions that few contemporary anglophone anthropologists wish to defend or even treat seriously, this elastic concept can equally be deployed in terms of cultural resilience to defend indigenous rights against dominant states.

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In this very interesting paper, Anderson and Arzyutov discuss the "life history" of *ethnos*, an important as well as controversial



anthropological concept central to both Soviet and Chinese ethnology. They do so by using a biographical approach, that is, exploring the life, the research, and the academic writings of one of its major creators, Sergei M. Shirokogoroff, who lived and worked on the periphery of Russia and China. This study is a fine example of a history of anthropology that pays careful attention to an anthropologist's entire life and career as well as his or her entire body of writing (academic and nonacademic, published and unpublished; cf. Kan 2009:xvii–xviii).

The paper also expands the scope of the history of anthropology by introducing ideas developed by scholars located outside the discipline's Western European/North American metropolitan core into the conversation and demonstrates the importance of the intellectual contributions of peripheral scholars, as well as an enduring significance of their ideas in the ideological and political debates and policies of their respective countries.

The first half of this piece is an overview of Shirokogoroff's education, early career, and intellectual milieu, which shows that they influenced the development of his theoretical views, the style of his ethnographic research in the Far East, his forced escape from Saint Petersburg to Vladivostok and later to China, and his political views and activities during and after the Russian Civil War. This discussion goes a long way in explaining why and how this brilliant and rather isolated scholar developed a unique theory of *ethnos*, first outlined in his early 1920s publications. Comparing Shirokogoroff's early writings on this subject with his subsequent scholarly works, and especially his monumental *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (Shirokogoroff 1935), the authors demonstrate how his views on the subject became more nuanced.

The second half offers a thoughtful exploration of the fate of Shirokogoroff's *ethnos* theory in Soviet academic writing, where it underwent a number of quasi-Marxist reinterpretations and remained one of the central concepts of Soviet ethnography/ethnology, from the time it was rearticulated in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Iulian Bromlei until the dissolution of the USSR. The theory's major impact on the development of Chinese anthropology is also discussed, shedding light on a subject unfamiliar to most Western scholars.

This paper is part of a much larger project that Anderson and Arzyutov have been engaged in for the past few years and has already resulted in several major publications as well as the edited volume (Alymov, Anderson, and Arzyutov 2018; Anderson, Arzyutov, and Alymov 2019; Arzyutov 2017a). One of the main arguments running through this entire body of work is that while Shirokogoroff's *ethnos* concept does appear to have a biological foundation, as well as an essentialized and primordialist emphasis, it is much more complex and includes elements of a constructivist view of ethnicity prevalent among Western European anthropologists today.

As the authors also demonstrate, the difficulty with figuring out how much weight Shirokogoroff assigned to the somatic and the geographic factors as opposed to the sociocultural ones in the

process of an *ethnos*'s development and survival has a lot to do with a lack of consistency and a use of contradictory arguments that characterize his writing on the subject. Another problem is that he never completed a planned monograph on *ethnos*.

While agreeing with the authors' main arguments, I am left with an impression that in their effort to bring Shirokogoroff into the current history of anthropology discourse, Anderson and Arzyutov seem too generous in their evaluation of some of his key ideas, giving short shrift to a darker side of his *ethnos* theory. This is surprising since they themselves cite Shirokogoroff's correspondence with such odious figures as Sir Arthur Keith, a right-wing racial theorist; George Pitt-Rivers, a British eugenicist and Nazi sympathizer; and Wilhelm Mühlmann. The latter was a prominent German ethnologist who admired Shirokogoroff's ideas greatly and used them to develop his own concept of the German *Volk* and the need for its mastery over the "inferior" ethnic groups that Nazi Germany was dealing with. A recent overview of the history of German anthropology characterizes Mühlmann as "possibly the major Holocaust ideologist among German anthropologists of the Nazi era" as well as a "colonial anthropologist" whose ideas contributed directly to the development of Germany's genocidal ethnic policies in occupied Eastern Europe (Gingrich 2005:123).

It is not surprising that some of Shirokogoroff's anthropological theorizing, as well as his comments on the state of ethnic relations in Europe prior to World War II, appealed to Mühlmann. After all, by the time this German scholar began his correspondence with his Russian colleague, Shirokogoroff had already developed a conservative Russian nationalist and monarchist ideology combined with a negative view of the Masons and the British, as well as strong sympathies toward Imperial Japan and Fascist Germany. Moreover, he clearly harbored strong anti-Semitic views. The latter were already expressed in his 1923 *Ethnos* work, in which the Jews were used as the main example of a "parasitic" *ethnos* existing at the expense of its neighbors. It is also plausible that this particular notion influenced Mühlmann's own concept of *Scheinvölker* (fake peoples), a category that included Roma, Jews, and African Americans, as well as people without clear ethnic characteristics. Furthermore, Shirokogoroff's insistence on the importance of having an adequate territory for a "resilient" *ethnos* to thrive had to appeal to Mühlmann, who at the time was developing an academic justification for Germany's expansion eastward (Gingrich 2005:134).

Of course, one cannot blame Shirokogoroff's *ethnos* theory for the fact that a number of far-right-wing academics used it to construct their own dark theories of ethnicity. Nonetheless, his tendency to biologize and essentialize ethnicity resonated strongly with the social Darwinism, eugenicism, national chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and racism of several of his admirers. Hence, it is not surprising that, as the authors mention, Shirokogoroff has become a favorite scholar of present-day Russian right-wing nationalist intellectuals and that Vladimir Putin himself has made some public statements echoing his ideas.

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*Etnos*—What's in a word?<sup>24</sup>

David Anderson and Dmitry Arzyutov have done well to draw attention to *etnos*. For a concept that has not gained much traction among Anglo-American scholars and that has been firmly rejected by leading figures in Russian anthropology (Tishkov 2003), *etnos* has shown remarkable resilience. The term's contemporary currency throughout Eurasia rests to some extent on the posthumous popularity of Lev Gumil'ev (Bassin 2016). It is hardly possible, though, that *etnos* could have sunk such deep roots if it did not resonate with large numbers of people in the post-Soviet space. Whether we perceive it as retrograde nationalism or a positive assertion of indigenous subjectivity, the notion that collective identity is durable, multifaceted, and determinative cannot be casually dismissed. An examination of the origins of this idea and the thinking of one of its key proponents can help us understand the implications of *etnos* and the reasons for its continuing vitality.

Anderson and Arzyutov's "life history" of the *etnos* concept viewed through the career of Sergei Shirokogoroff offers much of value, yet questions remain, leaving space for further investigation. The authors are rightfully skeptical of intellectual history that treats ideas as "lifeless blocks" moving along pathways beyond the constraints of individual lives and contexts. Yet I would like to see the life history of *etnos* situated a little more precisely in relation to other anthropological concepts and approaches. Shirokogoroff is not of much help in this regard. He was cagey in acknowledging intellectual influences, leaving the impression that *etnos* emerged *sui generis* as his own creation. As the authors show, this was not the case. Not only did Shirokogoroff draw from the French use of both *ethnos* and the more widespread term, *ethnie*, which he encountered during his studies in Paris, but he was also building on a Russian tradition of ethnography based on the concept of *narodnost'*, which various theoreticians of *etnos* from Nikolai Mogil'anskii to Iulian Bromlei acknowledged as a closely related concept (Bromlei 1973:22–23; Mogil'anskii 1916). Equally important are the concepts and approaches that Shirokogoroff was writing against. In particular, *etnos* stands in sharp contrast to cultural evolutionist models that subsume the distinctiveness of peoples and cultures into a universal trajectory of human development. The same wave of critique that led Franz Boas toward historical particularism was likely also a driving force in the formulation of *etnos*.

24. The comments below reflect and reiterate points expressed in my epilogue to the volume *Life Histories of Etnos Theory in Russia and Beyond* (Knight 2019). More extensive discussion and documentation can be found in that article.

If there is one point that may distinguish *etnos* from its related concepts, the authors suggest, it is its biosocial component. Yet more could be said about how biological elements are integrated into the concept of *etnos*. Inclusion of biological factors into larger constructions of cultural identity was in fact nothing new. Earlier Russian ethnographers readily incorporated observations of bodily characteristics as one component within their larger conception of *narodnost'* (Knight 2009; Tolz 2012). Russian physical anthropologists in the early twentieth century commonly sought to identify a prevailing physical type for particular ethnic groups, despite the contrary teachings of prominent scholars such as Dmitri Anuchin (1843–1923; Mogilner 2013). Shirokogoroff's colleague, Nikolai Mogil'anskii, insisted on including such data in his own conception of *etnos* (Mogil'anskii 1916). Shirokogoroff's position as to whether an *etnos* could be defined through common somatic traits was more ambiguous. Shirokogoroff engaged in extensive anthropometric research in his first two expeditions to study the Tungus and Orochen in 1912–1914. (Anderson 2019) Yet these findings were never published (to be fair, the tumultuous events of the time may have deprived Shirokogoroff of the opportunity), and it is not clear how he intended to use his data or what he thought they revealed. In his seminal 1923 text on *etnos*, however, Shirokogoroff appears to distance himself both from racial theories and from anthropometric data as a tool for determining the identity of an *etnos* (Shirokogoroff 2002 [1923]:63). Unlike Mogil'anskii, he did not see *etnos* merely as a conglomeration of distinctive traits held in common by a given population. Rather, he viewed the *etnos* as an organic entity, a being unto itself, transcending the individuals who comprised it and serving as a mechanism for adaptation to the environment and competition in the struggle for survival. It was precisely this tendency toward reification, viewing the *etnos* as an autonomous organism, that elicited the criticism of Iulian Bromlei (1973:26) in an otherwise favorable discussion of Shirokogoroff's ideas and that found new expression in the writings of Lev Gumil'ev. My point is that it may not be sufficient simply to refer to Shirokogoroff's *etnos* as a biosocial construct. There are additional nuances and distinctions reflecting how he understood *etnos* in biological terms that need to be considered.

Ultimately, it bears recalling (and the authors, I believe, would readily agree) that there has never been a single theory of *etnos*. Shirokogoroff articulated a particularly powerful, influential, and, in many respects, problematic version of the *etnos* concept, but it existed alongside and in dialogue with other renditions. The *etnos* concept as a whole, moreover, is one in an array of terms for defining identity; sharing similar features; and producing similar social, intellectual, and political effects. It may be wise therefore to avoid fixating too firmly on the external forms, the specific words in which a given mode of defining identity is cloaked. Paying closer attention to the functional distinctions articulated, the affinities and antipathies expressed, and the criteria upon which they rest may be just as important as tracing linguistic usage or exploring definitions

of a particular term. In viewing the “life history” of the *ethnos* concept through the eyes of Shirokogoroff, Anderson and Arzyutov have modeled a promising methodology for grounding and concretizing abstract concepts in the specific circumstances of an individual career. It is a path well worth pursuing.

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In a 1935 book, written while he was head of the bacteriological laboratory at the L'viv General Hospital, Ludwik Fleck (1896–1961) argued that the scientific concept of syphilis, in the fifteenth century, was “an undifferentiated and confused mass of information” that was subsequently “developed over epochs, becoming more and more substantial and precise” (Fleck 1979:1, 23). Essential to this process was the strict discipline of a rigorously controlled laboratory. Making the concept more precise meant materially disciplining those bits of nature that were picked out by that concept.

More recently, Bruno Latour (1986:167) has argued that the power of science is best understood through its goal of “transforming society into a vast laboratory.” The question thus arises, What happens when the disciplining rigors of laboratory practice are brought to bear on such concepts as ethnic and national identity?

In 1936, in Dvirtsı, a village north of L'viv, militant Ukrainian nationalists stormed the house of the Ukrainian peasant Mikhaïlo Bilets'kyi, first shooting him, then stabbing him to death. According to one report (Dovgan' 1990), Bilets'kyi's head was removed from his body and a cross was cut into it. Three members of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN)—Ivan Lushchuk, Zenon Buchma, and Andriy Mys'—were tried for the murder. The first two received prison sentences of 4 years and 18 months, respectively; the third was set free. According to one OUN memoirist (Mirchuk 1968:452), Bilets'kyi was killed for being a communist agitator.

Sergei Alymov argues that the concept of *ethnos* has historical roots in the Ukrainian national movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Alymov 2019). This movement, however, was not monolithic. In the 1930s, it included not only OUN members but also the embattled advocates for a Ukrainian national communism (see Mace 1983). These left-wing advocates threatened not only Soviet universalism but also the controlled precision of the OUN's right-wing national concept. Perhaps Bilets'kyi was a national communist and needed to be “disciplined”—in order to keep the OUN's concept precise.

As Anderson and Arzyutov note, the term *ethnos* was coined by Nikolaï Mogilianskiï, who passed it on to Sergei Shirokogoroff. Although Mogilianskiï grew up speaking and was subsequently educated and socially immersed in Russian, he

considered himself Ukrainian. Politically, he inhabited an “ambivalent position as both a Ukrainian ‘patriot’ and a supporter of the Russian-Ukrainian federation” (Alymov 2019:127). Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Mogilianskiï's *ethnos* concept, despite some of his own rhetoric to the contrary, was remarkably ambiguous, hardly a precise term. This ambiguity, too, he passed on to Shirokogoroff.

By weaving together a truly impressive array of archival materials, Anderson and Arzyutov convincingly show that Shirokogoroff and his wife Elizaveta (née Robinson) were outstanding ethnographers. Yet quite on the other hand, as an engineer of precise theoretical concepts—*ethnos*, above all—Shirokogoroff seems to have fallen short. One sometimes senses a note of apology resonating through Anderson and Arzyutov's prose. But I think they should rather celebrate and not apologize for Shirokogoroff's imprecision. For any committed field empiricist, ambiguity can be a strength rather than a weakness. Because society is not and will never become a vast laboratory, we must learn to live comfortably with the inevitable ambiguities of the abstract scientific terms we use to describe it. In my view, Shirokogoroff used what I have called a field style—as opposed to a laboratory style—for thinking and doing science (Kochan 2015). This is not just academic hairsplitting—lives may sometimes be at stake.

Anderson and Arzyutov also seem to apologize for Shirokogoroff's manifest conservatism. Indeed, Shirokogoroff kept and is today now claimed by some pretty nasty company. But not all conservatives are the same. So what sort was Shirokogoroff?

In 1925, Karl Mannheim (1953) distinguished two kinds of conservatism: Romantic and feudal. Feudal conservatism is older, predating the rise of capitalism. Romantic conservatism, in contrast, was a nineteenth-century reaction to the Enlightenment. In their reaction, Romantics drew heavily on feudal conservatism. But they also transformed it. As Mannheim argues, Romantics furthermore adopted the abstracting, totalizing impulses of the Enlightenment. Consequently, the concrete particularism and rational sobriety of feudal thought became infiltrated with the metaphysical holism of modernity. It is probably no coincidence that during this same period the ambiguously bounded and particularistic notion of a “people” became increasingly displaced by the abstract and totalizing concept of a “nation.”

Shirokogoroff was clearly positioned on this shifting ground. Where exactly he stood is probably impossible to determine. But perhaps we can usefully treat him as the uneven agent of a faltering feudal conservatism. This may help us to explain why his *ethnos* concept has been so easily seized on by the mystifying rhetoricians of the right and also why rationalistic Soviet scholars could not entirely dismiss it as bourgeois Romanticism. Furthermore, treating Shirokogoroff as a feudal thinker may throw light on why his successor, Ūlian Bromlei, could develop *ethnos* in way that Anderson and Arzyutov describe as “baroque” and “Byzantine.” These aesthetic styles are genetically tied to the concrete, precapitalist particularism of the



feudal period. Elsewhere, I have discussed the unhappy fate of feudal thought in the context of early-modern experimental science (Kochan 2017).

If *etnos* is rooted in feudal thought, then what chance has it in the present age? Let us return to the example of Ukrainian nationalism. This movement often traces its roots back to the tenth century, when Galicia fell under the sphere of Kievan Rus'. As Paul Robert Magocsi (2002:5) argues, Kievan Rus' was then a loosely knit federation of principalities, nominally subordinate to Kiev, but more often than not operating with autonomy. As Anderson and Arzyutov suggest, such an ambiguous feudal model of "plural oneness" may offer a hopeful answer to current Eurasian puzzles of multiculturalism. Yet with the totalizing tendencies of the center now aided by powerful technologies, it becomes difficult to see how peoples on the periphery could successfully assert their local autonomy without also rejecting their "oneness" with the center.

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This article is welcome as a harbinger of a new historicization of *etnos* and as a critical biography of its forgotten intellectual "father" and most original advocate, Sergei Shirokogoroff, both of which are long overdue. The new venue of study opens up a range of research questions concerning the history of intellectual transfers, the genealogies of modern analytical categories, the reevaluation of the presumed isolation of Soviet social sciences from contemporary "Western" scholarship, and the exploration of the role played by liminal spaces between major imperial powers (or between "West" and "East") in shaping mainstream debates about groupness.

Instead of presenting the transfer of knowledge and ideas as "coherent lifeless blocks" that can be easily abstracted from their political and social contexts, the article offers a "life history" of the *etnos* concept and *etnos*-thinking. It seems that the authors have arrived at their "life-history" approach half-intuitively, while facing the challenge of writing about science produced from a position of total marginality. Shirokogoroff was an émigré without citizenship, a Western-educated scholar viewed with suspicion in nationalizing Asia, an ethnographer working on and among people whose language and culture he did not know, and an anthropologist without an academic position. Hence, the story of his concept and its intellectual

adventures prioritizes human agency and human networks, local and international. In doing this, the "life history" of *etnos* offers a way to overcome Western-centered hierarchies that often permeate the methodology of history of modern sciences. It decenters the West and its epistemological hegemony and problematizes all kinds of binary markers of individual and collective identification, along with the very discourse of authenticity (of national academic traditions or ethnocultural identities).

The authors describe Shirokogoroff as a transnational intellectual and *etnos* as a concept reflecting the universal concerns of the period. At the same time, they are somewhat reluctant to further problematize the transnational context that had formed their protagonist and his vision of groupness—that is, the context of modern nationalizing empires. Meanwhile, Shirokogoroff's biography as told in the article is a typical imperial biography. Moreover, the initial impetus for elaborating concepts such as *etnos* and ethnic equilibrium, we learn, was Shirokogoroff's failure to locate "pure" cultural and racial types among the peoples he studied. Instead, he found only "a *métissage* of projected physical types" and people speaking a "jargon" of Tungus, Russian, or Yakut. Shirokogoroff was not unique in this "failure": the absence of "pure" types across the Russian Empire, including the countryside of its Russian core, explains the fixation of many imperial physical anthropologists of Shirokogoroff's generation on the concept of "mixed physical type" (Mogilner 2013). Similarly, Shirokogoroff's "spatial-territorial definition of an ethnical equilibrium" where Eurasian "landscape blends into national identity" resembled other attempts by his contemporaries to resolve the contradiction between empire as a natural framework of human diversity and the nationalizing episteme of groupness that dominated social sciences and politics at the time. This key contradiction is unfortunately lost when turn-of-the-century Eurasianism is branded simply as "nationalist." Eurasianism was a version of imperial nationalism operating with hybrid rather than pure visions of space, nationality, and culture (Glebov 2017). The same holds true for other examples of the contemporary blending of space and organic groupness cited in the article. Thus, Siberian regionalism cannot be understood outside the imperial geopolitical framework embraced by its proponents (Glebov 2013; Rainbow 2013). On the other hand, Chinese intellectuals' interest in *etnos* was predicated on their own experience in a nationalizing empire: intellectually and experientially, they shared a vision of distinct ethnic groups naturally coexisting within one political/geographical space. *Etnos* as a single totality of many parts, a symbiosis of the biological and social, was a hybrid protostructuralist concept that reflected the ongoing search for language that would enable one to articulate imperial diversity in the language of modern science while avoiding the national idiom and the ideal of pure forms.

In the Saint Petersburg/Petrograd of the 1910s, Shirokogoroff socialized with scholars who were acutely aware of the

25. The article was prepared within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics and supported within the framework of a subsidy by the Russian Academic Excellence Project "5-100."

limitations of their analytical language to convey imperial hybridity, regardless of their attitude toward hybridity as a mark of colonial backwardness or a developmental advantage (Gerasimov, Glebov, and Mogilner 2016). Some scholars of the older generation mentioned in the article, such as Mogilianskiĭ or Shternberg, saw in *etnos*-thinking a way to marry the two principles that were equally important to them: loyalty to a nation and loyalty to the empire as a supranational entity cultivating hybrid, situational, multilayered identities. To them, *etnos*-thinking offered a structuralist language that captured hybridity (when elements produce wholeness through mutual interdependent relationships). To others, it objectified and biologized ethnicity, which otherwise remained a category of subjective and affective belonging.

The fact that in the pre-World War II USSR “it was impossible to live with openly but that practically it [*etnos* theory] was impossible to live without” testifies to the persistence after 1917 of the late imperial situation with its main conflict between imperial and national and hybrid and pure. But as the article shows, when *etnos* returned to the language of Soviet ethnography, its embeddedness in the late imperial intellectual moment and connection to the discourse of imperial hybridity had been long forgotten. A life history of *etnos* should reconstruct this original context, and the article takes an important step in this direction. Otherwise, *etnos* works for the sole effect of biologizing groupness. Indeed, this is how *etnos* was applied by many late Soviet ethnographers, especially in national republics, striving to legitimize hidden nationalist agendas. And this is how *etnos*-thinking operates in the post-Soviet situation, contributing to racializing and objectifying national collectives and territorial claims of nation-states. This *etnos* differs from turn-of-the-century *etnos* as reconstructed in the article, which served as a bridge between Soviet ethnographers and their Western colleagues. To reveal its bridging function, *etnos* has to be deconstructed as a profoundly hybrid concept that anticipated the arrival of structuralist anthropology and complicated the triumph of the epistemology of pure forms in the late imperial and postimperial contexts.

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The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had many unintended consequences. Yet very few observers could imagine the immense popularity that the concept of *etnos* would gain among post-Communist social scientists and the public at large. Providing a useful, if controversial, category for understanding post-Communist realities, *etnos* foregrounded two key elements: a relative stability of ethnic traits and ethnic groups' ability to dynamically adapt themselves to their biosocial environments. Economic and political challenges of the time demanded mo-

bilization and caused resistance, which in turn were often framed through various narratives of ethnic resurrection or survival.

In their impressive study of the life history of the concept, David Anderson and Dmitry Arzyutov illuminate the original international milieu that precipitated the formation of a theory that would later provide the intellectual core for many ostensibly nationalist frameworks. Of course, the importance of a category is rarely determined by its origin. Rather, it is the category's ability to satisfy particular discursive demands and to deliver certain epistemological or narrative effects that really matters. While appreciating their thematic focus of the essay, I do think that it might have been quite productive to go a bit beyond the limits of the story of origin—in order to explore conceptual alternatives and theoretical rivals against which *etnos* had to define its own limits, explicitly or implicitly. I will mention only a couple.

Compare these two definitions. First comes from Shirokogoroff (1923:13): “*etnos* is a group of people who speak the same language and believe in their common origin; these people have a common life-style and a complex of rituals that are transmitted and legitimized by tradition, and which are distinct from other groups.” And this is a definition that was published 10 years earlier: “A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.” The definition was penned by Joseph Stalin in his famous essay on *Marxism and National Question* (published in 1913), which would become canonical during the Soviet period.

While certainly not identical, these two definitions are extremely close, outlining a shared vocabulary through which *etnos* and “nation” were envisioned and articulated at the time. There are some crucial differences, though. In his book, Shirokogoroff explicitly viewed nation as a political rather than ethnic unity, reserving the idea of common origin for *etnos* only. It would take Stalin a few years to get to this point. In *Marxism and National Question*, he still openly ridiculed claims to common origin, reminding the reader that “the Americans had originated from England and had brought with them to America not only the English language, but also the English national character.” And yet he concluded that “New England as a nation differed then from England as a nation not by its specific national character, or not so much by its national character, as by its environment and conditions of life, which were distinct from those of England” (Stalin 1913). This constructivist confidence in human malleability and adaptation would change after the Russian Revolution. In 1924, the process of national delimitation that reshaped Central Asia as an ensemble of Soviet republics made the link between ethnicity and territory—so crucial for Shirokogoroff—pretty palpable. Newly created territorial formations were supposed to crystallize ethnic or, rather, national features of new nationalities within each republic. The politics of nativization (*korenizatsiia*, literally, “taking roots” or “getting rooted”)—aimed at educating and

promoting local ethnic cadres to leading political positions in newly created Soviet institutions—emphasized the connection between soil, blood, and power even more. By 1930, this bio-social approach to nation-building was reflected in a well-defined formula (also articulated by Stalin). While nations were expected to merge into one common socialist culture at some point in the future, “the building of socialism in the USSR is a period of the flowering of national cultures that are socialist in content and national in form” (Stalin 1930).

The point of this short course on Stalin’s nationalism is to indicate a strong family resemblance between the set of assumptions that Soviet view of nation and Shirokogoroff’s vision of *etnos* employed and promoted. It is this resemblance that made *etnos* quite redundant for a while, leaving it in a dormant state. Analytically, *etnos* was too close to nation to generate a distinctive interpretative effect.

There was one radical distinction, and that was exactly the case where different origins of the two concepts mattered a lot. Unlike *etnos*, Stalinist nation was rarely conceived of as a freestanding phenomenon. The “flowering” particularity of nationalities was powerfully balanced by the universality of the “socialist” working class. The dynamic worked the other way around, too. When the concept of *etnos* was revived in the 1960s, its emphasis on the stability of “organic” forms was presented either as way of softening the hard constructivism of class formation (by Soviet anthropologists) or as a rejection of the class-based analysis altogether (by Lev Gumilëv).<sup>26</sup> It was the erasure of this “socialist content” in 1991 that finally exposed the fundamental closeness of *etnos* and nation again, making them virtually indistinguishable for many people. A Russian-language Wikipedia entry for *etnos* captures this transformation well: “The term *nationality* (*naŕsional’nost’*) for a long time was and still is a Russian language synonym [for *etnos*]” (Vikipediia 2018) Is this appropriation of *etnos* unique? Could we trace similar conceptual dialogues in other academic settings mentioned by Anderson and Arzyutov? Perhaps a transnational biography of *etnos* could be the next stage of their research.

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### Charting a Course Through the *Etnos* Archipelago

David Anderson and Dmitry Arzyutov are to be congratulated for this important contribution to the history of anthropology, which is one of its half-forgotten episodes that continues to be relevant in a variety of temporal and spatial contexts. The article deals with an anthropological tradition outside of the English-language mainstream, while at the same time highlighting its connections to other Eurasian traditions. At the

26. I discuss these waves of appropriation in detail in my book (Oushakine 2009:79–129).

center of the investigation is the Russian term *etnos*, which has no one-word equivalent in English (but does in French, German, and other languages) and is typically rendered as “ethnic group.” While Western audiences encountered the term primarily through the writings of Iŭlian Bromleĭ, the “boss” of Soviet anthropology during the Brezhnev years (see, e.g., Bromley 1974b; Bromlej 1977), *etnos* received its first extensive Russian treatment decades earlier (Shirokogorov 1923; Shirokogoroff 1924a, 1934). The author of the publications in question was Sergeĭ Mikhaĭlovich Shirokogoroff, a Russian scholar who studied in Paris, opposed the Bolshevik Revolution, and eventually emigrated to China.

Anderson and Arzyutov take this well-known situation as the starting point for their article. By consulting archives, letters, oral histories, and overlooked articles, they are able to dig deeper than those who made earlier attempts and expose the multipronged connections of the term from pre-Soviet to post-Soviet times, which have been mediated by decades of Soviet anthropology, despite its ideological contempt for Shirokogoroff. The spatial range of Shirokogoroff’s life trajectory and thus of the article is quite impressive: Suzdal’, Tartu, Paris, Saint Petersburg, the Trans-Baikal region, Vladivostok, and a variety of locations in China, Tokyo, and Berlin. Archival work by the authors (or their collaborators) in Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Norway, Poland, and Taiwan provided the material for this transnational life history of an anthropologist and a concept. Still, I guess that the authors would agree that this article should not be the end point of a renewed conversation about Shirokogoroff and the *etnos* concept. Further work in Chinese, German, or Japanese archives and collections, to name just a few potential locations, might add more colors and shades to an emerging picture.

The article has two main topics—the *etnos* concept and the anthropologist Shirokogoroff—and this duality might be responsible for the somewhat ambiguous impression it leaves with the reader, namely, that it raises (too) many topics and issues without being able to treat them comprehensively. One of the topics that gets mentioned without receiving any kind of elaboration is that his wife Elizaveta (Elisabeth) was his “underrecognized, life-long scientific collaborator.” While such underrecognized collaboration was certainly more the norm than the exception at the time, the gender dimension of Shirokogoroff’s professional life would have deserved more attention. As a whole, the importance of the article by Anderson and Arzyutov lies more in synthesizing new and already available information about the subject matters than in focusing on specific sources or episodes of an émigré saga whose scholarly profile had been almost completely erased from the official annals of the Soviet discipline. While certain aspects of Shirokogoroff’s life receive a first closer inspection in this article (e.g., his time spent in Paris), others—such as his time in Russia and China—had already attracted scholarly attention in post-Soviet years. Thus, it is laudable that the authors do not limit themselves to Shirokogoroff’s use of the *etnos* concept but attempt to look at how others did or did not use (and did or did



not acknowledge their use of) the concept. Still, while it may be impossible to be comprehensive here, the task should be to cover the most influential uses.

The main omission in this regard is the relevant work by Lev Nikolaevich Gumil'ev, whose first publication carrying *ethnos* in its title (1967) is briefly mentioned by Anderson and Arzyutov. But the thread is not picked up again later in the article. This is all the more surprising given the lasting, albeit dubious, legacy of Gumil'ev's writings and the fact that Anderson and Arzyutov bring their story right up to Vladimir Putin and other admirers of Gumil'ev, such as the extreme-right-wing intellectual Aleksandr Dugin. While the contents of Gumil'ev's writings tend to be extremely speculative and esoteric (see Gumil'ev 1990 for an English translation of one of his many works), and have been used by Eurasianists and other right-wing intellectuals inside and outside of Russia (Bassin 2015, 2016), Gumil'ev's many books have been consistently bestsellers in the history and humanities sections of Russian bookstores since the dissolution of the Soviet Union (most of his writings were not published during the Soviet period). Gumil'ev would be all the more relevant in the context of the authors' brief discussion of "Eurasianism" and related concepts. While Gumil'ev's enchantment with Turkic-speaking peoples was not in line with classic Eurasianism, Gumil'ev is certainly part of a Eurasian conversation about *ethnos* and related concepts. In short, while I acknowledge that a thorough treatment of Gumil'ev's understanding of *ethnos* and *ethnogenesis* would have gone beyond the scope of this article, even a brief and superficial attempt to compare the concepts of these anti-Soviet thinkers would have been beneficial.

Also, I have a minor disagreement with the authors because of their statement that Teodor Shanin "failed to translate the *ethnos* concept into English," accusing him of mystification. As I mentioned, there is no (reasonable) one-word translation into English that I am aware of, unless one uses a variant of the Russian term—as *ethnos* or *ethnos*—instead. The most common two-word translations, "ethnic group" or Shirokogoroff's "ethnical unit," are clumsy at best.

Still, these minor points should not detract from the fact that the authors have provided a tremendous service to the scholarly community by charting a course through the extensive *ethnos* archipelago. Nevertheless, as many a traveler before them, they face a difficult choice between exploring every corner of the archipelago and transversing the island group as quickly as possible. Anderson and Arzyutov have opted for what seems to be a reasonable compromise; that is, they take us on important side trips without getting lost along the way.

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This well-researched study by David Anderson and Dmitry Arzyutov is to be welcomed because it comes in the era of

renewed ethnonationalism. Of course, it is also contributing substantially to the biography of Sergei Shirokogoroff and his *ethnos* theory. And it reveals the complexities of the reception of Shirokogoroff in communist Russia, before and after Bromleĭ's rediscovery of usefulness of the concept. It also throws light on Shirokogoroff's sojourn in China, including his visits to Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Finally, it shows that his wife, Elizaveta, played an essential role in his research in both Russia and China.

What has to be commended is authors' extensive use of archives in various parts of the world. The research funds available to them proved to be well spent. They admit their inability to use German archives. It is a pity because the link between German and Russian scholarship has a very long tradition (Vermeulen 2015), and the role of Shirokogoroff's German friend Wilhelm Mühlmann during the Nazi era and in its aftermath is not to be overestimated.

I think that the authors depict correctly Ūlian Bromleĭ as an entrepreneur of *ethnos*. The powerful position of the director of the Institute of Ethnography had to be underpinned by something substantial because the theoretical interests within Soviet ethnography were until then concentrated on the reconstruction of prehistory and the institutions of primeval society (*pervobytnoe obshchestvo*). The dogmatism of the dominant theory of historical materialism required that empirical researchers such as archaeologists and ethnographers bring in data supporting the theses of historical materialism, an integral part of Marxist-Leninist theory. Bromleĭ served his purpose by reintroducing *ethnos* as the basic concept of ethnography. After all, it sounded quite logically like the discipline's name should also denote its main subject of study, that is, *ethnos*!

Because the authors refer to my two articles, I would like to comment on their usage of them. While the first (Skalnik 1986) is an exposé of Soviet (Bromleĭ) *ethnos* theory that was intended as a mirror to South African *volkekundiges* (ethnologists), who used the term *ethnos* without knowing its origin and itinerary from Shirokogoroff via Germany, where major figures of *volkekunde* studied, to South Africa, the second (Skalnik 1988; for the English version, see Skalnik 2007a) provides evidence about the links. It is, however, by far not only about *ethnos* theory's "negative influence on South African anthropology" but also points to the parallels in how Soviet communist and South African apartheid regimes use *ethnos* theory for their purposes of manipulating alleged cultural features while constructing their bogus hierarchy of nations, nationalities, and their political homelands.

Unlike the authors, I had the opportunity to meet in person and know closer some of the crucial actors of the Bromleĭ *ethnos* era, both in the Soviet Union (Tolstov, Bromleĭ, Tokarev, Its, Arutiunov, Tishkov, etc.) and in the West. It was perhaps a feature of the post-1970 détente that scholars like Ernest Gellner and Tamara Dragadze (I did not meet Teodor Shanin) did not want to criticize Soviet scholarship too harshly because they were happy to observe in it some retreat from Marxist dogmatism. When I offered the English version of my parallel

article (before the text appeared in French in 1988) to *Current Anthropology*, I was rejected by the then editor, who referred to its daring contents. Did he consult Gellner or Dragadze? Then, in March 1989, the Gorbachev glasnost enabled a whole group of Soviet ethnographers to attend the conference Soviet Anthropology and Traditional Societies in Paris and organized by l'École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. Soon afterward, Bromlei arrived in London to attend the conference Pre-modern and Modern National Identity in Russia/USSR and Eastern Europe, organized by Gellner at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London. I presented a paper at both conferences. In Paris, I spoke about Soviet ethnography and the national/nationalities question (Skalnik 1990), while in London, Bromlei had an opportunity to listen to the translation of a summary of my 1988 article. He showed evident displeasure, and the ensuing debate was soon closed by Gellner, who did not want any unpleasant situation. After all, he was just back from a yearlong sabbatical in Moscow and although always critical of Soviet ethnography, he also had good relations with colleagues in Moscow and then Leningrad (Saint Petersburg). I tried to analyze Gellner's relation to Soviet ethnography and to Marxism in two texts (Skalnik 2003, 2007b).

I would also like to commend the authors for raising the question of the recent return to *etnos* in its sociobiological meanings. They refer to the dangers of Eurasian thinking. It is important to note that Eurasia has at least two meanings. While Eurasian movement is at least a century old, recent usage by Hann (2016) should be received with caution. Its scientific value is problematic; its coterminous position with the essentialist Eurasian movement seems to me even dangerous (see Skalnik 2016). The clarity of the article would have even better served its aim if the authors dwelled more on the analysis of Shirokogoroff's concept of *etnos* as such, but that might be a future research challenge.

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In order to complete this picture of the *etnos* archipelago proposed by Anderson and Arzyutov in their highly informative and thoughtful article, my comments concern its easternmost component: Japan. Below I provide additional information about Shirokogoroff's impact on Japanese academics, with special reference to the acceptance and interpretations of his *etnos* concept.

As mentioned by the authors, Shirokogoroff visited Japan in 1933 and 1935. In the first journey he and his wife made to Japan, they came to be acquainted with Japanese scholars belonging to various institutions, including the Anthropological Department of Tokyo University. As a token of respect for the

linkages that grew over the following years, an obituary was published in the *Japanese Journal of Ethnology*, vol. 6, no. 3 (1940), after the too early death of this talented émigré scholar. Moreover, Shirokogoroff's two books, *Social Organization of the Northern Tungus* (1933) and *Social Organization of the Manchus* (1924b) were translated into Japanese, appearing in 1941 and 1967, respectively. In both publications the translators acknowledged the kind aid of Madame Shirokogoroff, who sent, among other things, a bibliography of her husband.

The most serious theoretician of *etnos* in Japan was Masao Oka (1898–1982), an ethnologist trained in Vienna, who apparently familiarized himself with this concept not only through the works of Wilhelm E. Mühlmann but also through his own field travels and encounters with different peoples in the Balkans. Oka attempted to connect ethnology with folkloristics, both called *minzokugaku* in Japanese, as sister disciplines invariably dealing with *etnos*. He argued that the difference of Japanese folkloristics from its Anglo-American counterpart lies in the former's comprehension of *etnos* of a given culture through the insights acquired by comparative ethnological studies. He defined the term *etnos*—albeit without mentioning Shirokogoroff—as a group of people, identical with an ethnical unit, who share a language, all ways of life, or culture, indispensable for human being (economy, society, religion, art etc.), a common ancestorship, endogamous relationships, and a feeling of belonging to the same group. Interestingly, like his Russian predecessor, Oka included also physical traits in his *etnos* concept and emphasized that in any *etnos* both biological and cultural elements are inherited, altered, and adapted to the changing environment. “Therefore,” he wrote, “*etnos* can be understood as a changeable process of a living organ which is biological, sociological, cultural and psychological at the same time. Because *etnos* is a basic human unit for survival, it is first and foremost a biological human population; then a sociological group for adaptation; a cultural group resulted from sociological adaptation process; further a group sharing awareness and emotion through social unions and common lifeways; a group of will with communal actions required for survival; and a local group dwelling in the same area” (Oka 1979:63). For him, real human culture exists only as a whole within each *etnos*. Consequently, he insisted that it was “impossible for ethnology as a concrete science to immediately address the *anthropos* in general, without discussing the *etnos*” (Oka 1979:98).

In spite of the limited influence of Oka's theories on Japanese anthropology/ethnology, we still can find some endeavors at assessing the *etnos* concept partly with an appreciation of his and Shirokogoroff's arguments. In this context, it is interesting to observe that the major reassessments stem from those who are familiar with German- or Russian-speaking anthropology/ethnology. One of the most significant examples is arguably Taryō Ōbayashi (1929–2001), disciple of Oka, who studied in Frankfurt and Vienna. In a symposium held in 1984, he recognized the pioneering achievement of Shirokogoroff in terms of the *etnos* concept. He furthermore pointed out that the Anglo-American studies of ethnicity since the 1950s are

confined mostly to urban settings and compared poorly to the wider perspective of how *ethnos* was discussed by Shirokogoroff, Bromlei and others. Ōbayashi spoke in favor of Shirokogoroff's view that *ethnos* is never a solid existence but is rather a historical product subject to constantly changing processes. However, the most striking argument that Ōbayashi made might be that in line with Oka's emphasis on physical traits in his definition of *ethnos*, he also paid attention to the importance of the "face" in interactions between human populations. Ōbayashi claimed that the visual appearance of the other can strongly affect the attitude toward him or her, although it is not often taken into scientific consideration (Ōbayashi 1985). This opinion, together with the fact that Ōbayashi employed the *ethnos* notion in his undertakings to reconstruct the ethnogenesis of the Japanese people/culture, closely relates him to the intellectual thought put forth by his teacher.

Japanese scholars who are versed in Russian ethnology have also explored the concept of *ethnos* and the man who allegedly coined the term. Kōichi Inoue (1996), for example, drew attention to the importance of Shirokogoroff's suggestion that an *ethnos* establishes itself and further develops through mutual cognition and relation between human groups. Furthermore, Hibi Watanabe (2008) suggested that sciences including ethnography in Russia have been, as elsewhere, interconnected with their economic-political contexts. Thus, according to him, the emphasis on the group's self-awareness in Shirokogoroff's *ethnos* theory was an outcome of his fieldworks in imperial Siberia, where a gap existed between institutional groups and groups consisting of those who were unaware of their own mutual affiliations.

The Japanese cases described in my comments show, albeit in a modest manner, that transnational interlocutions among different scholarly traditions may lead to more balanced views on the disciplinary history of anthropology/ethnology. As Anderson and Arzyutov rightly suggest, "world anthropologies" should pay respect equally to all pertinent scholars, not only the legacies of Malinowski and Boas.

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## Reply

We would like to thank all 12 commentators for their detailed and engaging replies. One of our primary goals was to rekindle an old debate and to draw attention to the often ambiguous but resilient way that identity is understood across Eurasia. We can read from the replies a great enthusiasm to broaden this discussion into new literatures and to investigate the lives and roles of a greater number of scholars. We can only welcome this interest and look forward to new conversations.

It was a difficult task to try to compress many decades, if not hundreds of years, of *ethnos*-thinking into a short article. It is for this reason that we made the heart of the article transnationalism and especially the story of how a particular abstract

concept—*ethnos*—grew out of the lives of concrete scholars. Admittedly, choosing to focus on the life of one individual was a risky strategy. On the one hand, it gave the unfortunate impression that only this one individual was involved in this transnational dialogue. We thoroughly agree with all of our colleagues about the evocative and important role that scholars ranging from Nikolai Mogilianskii to Lev Gumil'ev and Masao Oka played in *ethnos*-histories. We chose to focus on Sergei Shirokogoroff both because many details of his life and work have been so completely misunderstood and because there are very few individuals whose writings touched so many nations, from Japan to South Africa. On the other hand, this sometimes larger-than-life scholar has an unfortunate tendency to serve as a lightning rod for very emotional arguments. We feel that these may have created some misunderstandings of both our method and argument, and we would like to devote this reply to addressing those.

Having hopefully at least in part set the record straight for the intertwined biographies of Sergei and Elizaveta Shirokogoroff, we should emphasize that we are not claiming for them a privileged role as founder figures for a transnational anthropology or even as *ethnos*-entrepreneurs. As Sergei Alymov, Aurore Dumont, Andrei Golovnev, Nathaniel Knight, Petr Skalniĭ, and Chris Hann all point out, there are a number of older precedents for *ethnos*-talk. It is here that we feel that there has been one misunderstanding. While there are continuities between the way that scholars described *ethnoses* in all these periods, we think it is a mistake to assume that all *ethnos*-talk since ancient Greece to the twenty-first century is roughly equivalent. As Jeff Kochan helpfully points out, Sergei's *ethnos* manifestos can be understood as an unstable and mutable field concept that was tweaked both to describe Evenki, Orochen, Manchu, and Yi peoples and to try to develop several state-financed research programs. This drive to institutionalize and professionalize ethnographic research, in our view, distinguishes the *ethnos*-talk of the early twentieth century from the *volk*-describing practices of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, *ethnos*' lackluster return in the late Soviet Union, as Mogilner and Skalniĭ point out, was to some degree a different concept retooled to create a way to typify and manage national identities while at the same time formally acknowledging Marxist historical stages of development. This later rather bureaucratic *ethnos*, while lacking many of the "protostructuralist" [Mogilner] qualities of Sergei's field concept, was engineered to function as a bridge—albeit a rickety one—both to the Euro-American present and the Imperial past. With its relaunching within the late Soviet academy, it indeed became a much more essentialist concept, as Kan, Hann, and Mogilner point out. Therefore, we think it is important to look at the details of how the concept's use (or indeed its conspicuous absence) was set within specific historical contexts—and not be complacent that the use of the word implied a universal transhistorical meaning.

We placed an emphasis on the biosocial quality of the early-twentieth-century *ethnos* theories in an effort to try to engage this most controversial side to the concept—and we are



thankful that so many commentators tested this term. In our own hopefully more successful attempt to build a bridge, we chose this term to make an overt link to very recent attempts to explore “embodied” or “biosocial” ethnography. But we do not want to overplay the analogy. As Knight remarks, it is “not sufficient” to point to the biosocial qualities of Shirokogoroff’s (and Bromleĭ’s!) work but . . . it is needed . . . to specify how the organic analogy was used. In Shirokogoroff’s case, the amount of energy he spent measuring skulls and bodies distracts from the fact that these measurements never formed the backbone of his theory of the growth and decline of *etnos*. It was almost as if he used the measurements as a way to meditate about other more contingent factors. Similarly, as both Aymov and Knight note, there were variants of a wide variety of theories that merged biological and social factors in the late nineteenth century. Therefore, it is equally insufficient to use biosociality to distinguish early-twentieth-century *etnos* theory from earlier verisons. We feel that Shirokogoroff’s biosocial metaphor distinguishes itself from other discussions by his perhaps subconscious attempt to include an East Asian ethnopolitical vision of a vibrant, organic, political community. Through his energetic if not self-seeking work and self-published books, Shirokogoroff was able to promote his concept widely—unlike those of all the other barely remembered scholars such as Mogiliānskiĭ, Anuchin, or Koropchevskii.

We therefore agree that there was never one unified *etnos* theory—and Shirokogoroff even tweaked his own definition between his earlier and later works. As some commentators (Knight, Mogilner, and Schweitzer) notice, there is a range of *etnos* theories that alter profoundly in language and cultural translations, merging with other concepts and theories. Thus, Serguei Oushakine rightly observes that even Stalin’s concept of the “nation” captures aspects of Shirokogoroff’s earlier definitions. Having read a large sheaf of Shirokogoroff’s published and unpublished works, we are struck by the way that he, like many others, juggled a numbers of “vocabularies” of identity (Hirsch 2005:35–36) to communicate with different audiences. In his academic writing, he preferred to use the term *etnos*, while reserving the terms *natsiĭa* and *narod* in his political pamphlets (Arzyutov 2019). Yuri Slezkine (1994) has a classic article that describes the late Soviet state as being like a “communal apartment” that manages to provision a variety of ethnic groups with very basic living conditions. In some sense, the term *etnos* semantically and prosaically also manages to house a wide variety of competing discourses. Given its deep Imperial roots, perhaps the best architectural metaphor is that of a disused aristocratic residence, once repurposed under state socialism as a museum, and now housing the offices of an investment company. However, this does not make it a term that can be endlessly manipulated. As we state quite clearly in the paper (and as other observers such as Shanin note), *etnos* is at heart a term used by academic experts to trace long-term multigenerational continuities of identity that are nevertheless contingent upon changes in lifestyle, technology, and ecology. This “primordial” yet “contingent” core is that quality that often troubles

those anthropologists who were raised with voluntaristic notions of ethnicity theory—and that constitutes the “missing term” within Euro-American anthropology that Shanin astutely noted (Shanin 1986).

This brings us to our main point—about the importance of researching and understanding the “life history” of a concept. Almost all the commentators commented positively on this approach, and we hope that our example will encourage future work. Our idea here is to do something very different than merely trace the “social life” of a concept, pointing out along the way how it sometimes unites one group while dividing others. Similarly, in contrast to academic biographies, we do not present a full account of the intellectual development of a single scholar nor award one scholar or another a prize for being the first to coin a term. Instead, we tried to show how a concept arose first in translation or in debate, and grew in complexity through fieldwork, the writing up of that research, and then its circulation and renewed debate. Perhaps, as Mogilner suggests, we came to this idea accidentally. We are both field ethnographers. We both have spent days and years in the same places where the Shirokogoroffs conducted their field research and also in those places where they wrote their manuscripts and letters. Through reading their texts and anchoring them in their contexts, we gained an impression of how *etnos*-thinking arose out of fieldwork dilemmas and later was framed in formal texts, until finally it outlived the physical death of its creators or main heralds. This ethnographic attempt to write the history of an idea allowed us to describe a remarkably resilient concept in all its richness—and its contradictory appeal—to a range of audiences.

To this end, we are very grateful for the contributions of Petr Skalnĭk and Hitoshi Yamada. Both speak to the different paths that this transnational concept had in both South Africa and Japan. Skalnĭk’s contribution illustrates how the hierarchical ranking of *etnos*es and their territorial units in the late Soviet Union mirrored similar policies in South Africa. This gives us an occasion to point to yet another twist that distinguishes late Soviet *etnos* theory from that of the museum workers at the beginning of the twentieth century. Bromleĭ, in particular, promoted the idea that *etnos*es could be arranged in hierarchies where the Russian nation played a leading role in the development of Soviet society. This can be understood as subtle reformulation of Shirokogoroff’s more collaborative idea of there being a “guiding” *etnos* (*rukovodiashchii*)—which in his examples tended to be another regional minority in a particular context. Yamada provides a beautiful account of how the work of Oka and Ōbayashi incorporated biological themes within a complex totality that gives a “face” to a local population. Here the biological foundation of social-cultural life does not appear as a simplistic positivistic device for ranking people but instead appears as a quality that enlivens and gives coherence to local groups.

While we agree that Shirokogoroff was a master observer of Tungus peoples (among others), it would be unfair to confine him to that role. It also would be naive to claim that while

sitting in Canton [Guǎngzhōu], Sergei magically transformed the research environment in Leningrad (as Golovnev points out). Our point was that his teaching gave him a prominent role in establishing ethnographic research across the Pacific Rim in Vladivostok, Guǎngzhōu, and Běijīng, while his self-financed English-language publication program introduced distinctively corporatist East Asian metaphors of identity into European debates. Although it has been standard to view his work as that of a Russian ethnographer and to assign him a place as a footnote as an Evenki specialist within the history of Russian/Soviet ethnography, we think it is much more reasonable to understand him as a Chinese or even Eurasian scholar. He lived for most of his academic life in China (1922–1939) and expressed and disseminated concerns that arose out of his field program there. While it is true that he often shifted his academic affiliations in a setting split by civil war and foreign occupation, we also think it is a bit too much to describe him as a marginal scholar. He enjoyed the personal support of the president of the Academia Sinica, and certainly he is acknowledged in the histories of Chinese anthropology as a founding figure.

Several contributors suggest that we have been overly kind about the implications of Shirokogoroff's work. Sergei Kan helpfully sums this up by making direct reference to Shirokogoroff's "dark side." Having read perhaps too much from this controversial scholar, we would be the first to admit that he is not the most pleasant person. He overestimated the value of his own work and was quick to criticize—often in tedious detail—the failings of others. As we intimate in the article, he was hungry to enjoy a stable position, which led him to ingratiate himself to whomever he thought held the resources that he needed. Despite this darkness, it is very difficult to imagine him having a "side." If, as Chris Hann speculates, Thurnwald had carved out a position for this ethnographer in a Nazi-controlled research institute, Shirokogoroff's track record suggests that he likely would have argued with his superiors or sided with a student demonstration and been dismissed within a period of 6 to 8 months. Both Kan and Hann allude to anti-Semitism in his work—but even that charge is hard to support. It is true that he cites the specific example of Jews living in Poland and the South of Russia as an example of a "parasiting ethnos" (Shirokogorov 1923:103, 2010:96), but in that very same sentence he actually puts in first place the examples of Russians parasiting Sakhalin Island Giliaks (Nivkhs) and the Spanish parasiting the indigenous peoples in Latin America. The same volume also has him expressing reserved support for the Jewish state in Palestine (Shirokogorov 1923:103n2, 2010:97). In other words, he was not shy to be critical of specific, historical Jewish communities—just as he was critical about almost everyone. His critical style flows easily into stereotypes, since he had a peculiar habit classifying human behavior, even the behavior of his own friends and colleagues, in terms of *etnoses* or psychological complexes.

Our colleagues have made several requests for more detail—and more transparency—about the 7 months that the Shi-

rokogoroffs spent in Berlin during his "sabbatical" (November 7, 1935–June 6, 1936). Here we were perhaps overmodest in pleading our ignorance. We have read and are about to publish roughly 13 of his letters from Berlin and another 12 letters he exchanged with Wilhelm Koppers, Hans Findeisen (1903–1968), and Wilhelm Mühlmann. We have gathered and read all the German-language translations of his articles, including the widely cited obituary published by Mühlmann. None of these express a sympathy, direct or indirect, with the Nazi regime. Furthermore, our colleague Natalie Wahnsiedler spent many weeks looking through German archives and corresponding with historians on our behalf. She was not able to identify a hidden bunker of previously uncited Shirokogoroff manuscripts. Shirokogoroff wrote to his German colleagues in English. There are absolutely no letters in his hand written in German nor any prominent allusions in his published work to German examples (in the very few cases where he cites an example, it tends to be a French example). Our reading of his archive—as both Sergei Alymov and Nathaniel Knight confirm—is that he found sufficient biosocial (or racial) thinking in the work of Paul Broca (1824–1880) and Georges Papillaut without having to look elsewhere. We certainly welcome more help in researching the hidden debates within Germany in the mid-1930s, with the hope that more minority voices from this time can be recovered. However, from our readings of the French, Russian, Polish, British, Chinese, and many other archives, it is difficult to see how his German sojourn holds the key to interpreting his work—as interesting as it may be. Moreover, suggesting that an early-childhood exposure to a declining German-speaking environment in  $\widehat{\text{U}}\text{r}^{\text{ev}}$  [Tartu] preprogrammed Shirokogoroff to become a Fascist 30 years later seems a step too far! Here, as historical ethnographers, we would like to stay closer to the documents and change our opinion only when new evidence washes up in the future on the shores of new islands of the archipelago.

Perhaps more to the point, we also feel that there is no evidence anywhere in any publication or archive that Shirokogoroff was attracted to eugenic or state-sponsored genocide, despite his interest in anthropometric measurements or his expert interest in measuring the growth and decline of *etnoses*. We are including with this reply, as supplementary material (available online), a set of letters that Shirokogoroff exchanged with Captain George Pitt-Rivers to illustrate the cagey way that he engaged with the eugenic problem. In this article, we deliberately and dispassionately presented his influence on liberal-minded scholars, as well as authoritarian ones, to make a point about the wide and unacknowledged influence of his biosocial thinking. Indeed, the title of the article—with its allusion to Solzhenitsyn's book—plays both on the positive and the negative sides of this extremely constructive but contradictory line of thought.

Marina Mogilner raises an interesting and productive point that this transnational biosocial concept may not necessarily have [yet] been a nationalist one within prerevolutionary Siberia. We agree wholeheartedly that the history of research

into mixed-type identities needs more work to describe both nineteenth-century Siberia and twenty-first century Siberia. We apologize that the text is unclear about the qualities of nineteenth-century Eurasianism—which was a product of over-anxious revision aimed at shoehorning in a discussion of Eurasianism within the word limit. We agree that Siberia was not nationalist then. However, it would be hard to describe twenty-first century Eurasianism as cosmopolitan, which was what we meant here. Nevertheless, Mogilner's suggestion that the pre-*minzu* thinking of the early nationalist Chinese state may indeed have been intended to evoke a pluralist nationalism is an intriguing point that does cast Shirokogoroff's work on the Yi in a new light—and speaks to an ironic East Asian heartland to late Soviet attempts to write a theory of composite internationalist state.

But somehow we feel that we have all gotten lost debating anti-Semitism, and Eurasian nationalism, and whether or not an émigré scholar can ever be properly trusted. These furious debates that so defined the twentieth century are so hard to shed! Golovněv may be right that it is much more useful to return to the heart of the matter—the role of Evenki and Orochen (Tungus) peoples in raising a *tungusoved* (Tungus-scholar), and through him helping frame an influential ethnographic concept. We began this study in 2010 while examining a dusty wooden drawer full of glass-plate verascope negatives from the Shirokogoroff's 1912 expedition, within a mahogany cabinet in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Saint Petersburg. We painstakingly tried to link the images to an initial set of photographs and eventually Elizaveta's (1912) and Sergei's (1915–1917) field notebook in order to better understand how the fieldwork lined up with the classic publications. We came to the conclusion that the heart of the Shirokogoroff's investigation of creole Tungus and Orochen identities was a search for a way to describe the ethnic resilience that Evenkis demonstrated in the face of overt exploitation by Russian traders. It is certainly possible to extend their insights to discuss the world-historical fates of Russians, Germans, or French—but that was not really how their work was originally designed. Neither is it what makes the work evocative today. As romantic, primordialist, and essentialist as their writings might have been, they still strike a chord for indigenous hunters and reindeer herders in the same region today. We read these texts sympathetically, since the descendants of these same peoples, still living in the same places, still struggle to express their identity and sense of autonomy.

In an effort to reduce misunderstandings, we would like to register a few footnotes. Shirokogoroff did publish most of his Zabaikal measurements (with the exception of those made by Elizaveta from the Akima River) within his series of physical anthropological monographs on China [Knight]. Furthermore, we never intended to suggest that Teodor Shanin was a shoddy translator—quite the opposite. He should be praised for being one of the only European-based contributors at that time who had a deep feeling for the differences between these ethnographic transitions, but nevertheless he struggled (as do we)

to express this difference in English [Schweitzer]. Finally, Fëdor Volkov never worked in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (which regained its eighteenth-century designation *Kunstkamera* only after the collapse of the Soviet Union). He worked only at Saint Petersburg University and at the Russian Ethnographic Museum [Golovněv].

The life histories of *etnos*-thinking have not run their course. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many ethnographers keep operating with a late Soviet version of *etnos*—even if officially, as Golovněv notes, it has been stricken from the books of state ethnography. Again, we feel it would be irresponsible to close the book on this concept when it invigorates so many local movements. As Aurore Dumont points out, the term has now been adopted by indigenous rights movements throughout Eurasia. While this is not the place to lay out all these nuances, these movements tend to pick up those aspects of the term that stress a long-term continuity of tradition that flows out of an engagement with the land—and arguably, as Peter Schweitzer correctly notes—build more directly on the *etnos* work of Lev Gumilëv. In a brief attempt to answer the curiosity of Dumont and Knight on the vibrancy of the concept today, we would like to cite the example of the Russian Pomors. Maria Shaw and Natalie Wahnsiedler show how *etnos*-thinking has been integrated in the Russian North into the fabric of the Pomor identity movement (Shaw and Wahnsiedler 2019), where archaeological and even genetic data are wielded to prove the autonomous origin of this creole people. Pomors are not the only ones (re)instrumentalizing this concept. The intellectual elites of Yakuts and Altaians, among other Siberian indigenous groups, wield this concept as a tool in their politics of sovereignty. The link to new forms of indigeneity we feel is a useful one since it draws pressure away from the old debate about what is a primordialist or constructivist approach to describing identity. The rhetoric of indigenous rights evokes many of the same of uncomfortable reactions in urban-based anthropologists as *etnos* theory often does. It points to long-term continuities to evocative landscapes and resilient and respectful forms of subsistence—in short, a different form of cosmopolitics (Blaser 2016). In a century characterized by an unprecedented ecological crisis, rather than a Cold War standoff, a work that catalogues shamanistic adaptive technology gains a new relevance.

We thank the 12 commentators for their insights and their invitations for fresh research. The new intellectual terrain of this concept, adopted by Kremlin politicians and social movements alike, deserves more anthropological attention.

—David G. Anderson and Dmitry V. Arzyutov

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