



## Samoyedic Diary: Early Years of Visual Anthropology in the Soviet Arctic

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# Samoyedic Diary: Early Years of Visual Anthropology in the Soviet Arctic

Dmitry V. Arzyutov 

This article describes Georgii and Ekaterina Prokofiev's expedition to the Bol'shezemel'skie Nenets and their experience in filming documentary chronicles. Their records form a unique part of the visual anthropology of the Samoyedic peoples. From extant archival documents it is assumed that the chronicles were filmed with funding from the cooperation agreement that was signed by Franz Boas and Vladimir Bogoras in New York in 1928. The article offers a reconstruction of Prokofiev's fieldwork experience and his accounts of the early history of collectivization. In this regard the filmed chronicles and a collection of photos taken in the field are treated as a visual conceptualization. Available studies of visual anthropology in the USSR suggest that the documentary chronicles by the Prokofievs, made in 1929–30, are the first cinematic records to be produced by ethnographers in the Soviet Arctic.

The majority of historians consider the events of 1929, specifically the Conference of the Ethnographers of Moscow and Leningrad, to be a dividing line between early Soviet ethnography and its later development, resonating with the beginning of Soviet modernization under Stalin [Alymov and Arzyutov 2014; Slezkine 1991; Solovei 2001]. Shortly before that meeting, in October 1928, Vladimir G. Bogoras returned from his last trip to the United States. His tour had been productive and full of events. Bogoras gave several speeches, including those on behalf of his students, at the International Congress of Americanists in

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New York. Besides, he managed to negotiate the renewal of the cooperation with Franz Boas that was for both of them a kind of return to the past, to the era of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897–1902).

After returning from the United States Bogoras delivered a report to the Academic Senate of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE), where he discussed the approval of Russian–American scholarships and the possibility of a student exchange program [SPFA RAN 142-1(1928)-7: 9;<sup>1</sup> on the relationships of Bogoras and Sternberg, cf. Kan 2008]. That collaboration was very important for the MAE because at the time the museum was very short of funds.<sup>2</sup> The MAE Council approved the cooperation and defined the program so that “a young Russian ethnographer [would] participate in an American expedition to the Indians of the Northwest Coast while an American researcher [would] participate in a Russian expedition to a Northeast tribe from the group of the Proto-Asians” [SPFA RAN-142-1(1928)-7: 11]. This continuation of the “Jesup” immediately bore fruit: a young student of Bogoras, Julia P. Averkieva, soon went on an expedition with the “father of American anthropology” Franz Boas or, as she called him affectionately in their correspondence, “papa Franz” [Korsun 2010: 41–45; Kuznetsov 2006; Nitoburg 2003].<sup>3</sup>

Knowing of previous experiences of cinematic chronicling, in particular that of Alfred Haddon (the first ethnographer to have filmed, during the expedition to the Torres Strait in 1898), “papa Franz” also used a cine camera to record the dances of the Kwakiutl. In his letter to Ruth Benedict, he writes: “Julia [Averkieva—D.A.] danced last night with the crowd and has her first formal dancing lesson tonight . . . the dance problem is difficult. I hope that the films will give us adequate material for making a real study” [cited in Rohner 1969: 293; also Ruby 1980: 9].<sup>4</sup>

The history of this filming is notable. The Eastman Kodak Company began producing 16-mm cine cameras in 1923 [de Brigard 2003: 21], but the format was then considered to be for home use. It was not until the late 1920s when 16-mm film was adopted in fieldwork [Ruby 1980: 7]. Being aware of the story of Boas’s filming from numerous books and articles on his work, I worked in the archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences to study the history of Georgii Nikolaevich Prokofiev’s and Grigorii Davydovich Verbov’s expeditions to various Samoyedic groups in the Russian North. While reading Prokofiev’s correspondence to Bogoras, I once found the following phrase in a letter of 4 October 1929 from the village of Khabarovo at the Yugorsky Shar (Yugorsky Strait):

Simultaneously with this [a study on the Ostyako-Samoyedic language—D. A.], I am sending you five filmed Cine-Kodak reels. The fifth one contains [the footage of] bulls<sup>5</sup> crossing the Yugorsky Shar—these shots [*snimki*] are very valuable. I hope they worked out well. The other reels contain various shots of the Samoyedic way of life. I ask you to order some more 100-foot coils; the more the better.\* (\* It would be possible to develop the pictures here in the USSR; but we will have to send them to America for printing.) [SPFA RAN-250-4-269: 5v]

The history of this almost two-year long expedition of Georgii Nikolaevich and Ekaterina Dmitrievna Prokofieva is known only fragmentarily to ethnographers of the Nenets culture,<sup>6</sup> and is missing from some biographies altogether [Omel’chuk 1982]. The next day after the completion of archival work I went



Figure 1 A box cover of the 16-mm Eastman Kodak film used by Prokofiev for his cinematic chronicles. (Courtesy of the MAE RAN)

to the MAE negatives collection (Russian *negateka*) and indeed found the Cine-Kodak films [Figure 1]. Those were the cinematic chronicles filmed by the Prokofievs during their expedition to the Bol'shezemel'skaia tundra. . .

The present article is divided into two parts. The first describes the Prokofievs' expedition and their chronicles. The second part attempts to situate this material within the context of visual projects carried out in the USSR, as well as within the history of visual anthropology in Europe and the United States.<sup>7</sup>

#### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE EXPEDITION AND FILMING

The Prokofievs' Fieldwork Biography, and a "Mistake" of the Committee of the North

Despite the fact that a colleague of Georgii Prokofiev, Nina I. Gagen-Torn, spoke of him as an unsympathetic man with no inclination to become an ethnographer

[Gagen-Torn 2013: 273], one finds that he was really an extraordinary person. Before the expedition of 1929–31 Prokofiev had spent a considerable amount of time in the field, going each time not just for a couple of weeks but for rather long stints. One of his first expeditions was to the Nenets of the lower reaches of the Ob' River in 1921 where, in addition to making notes on the language and ethnography [AMAE RAN-6-1-2, 3],<sup>8</sup> he was practising yoga (!) presumably for health purposes. It is hard to imagine how he managed that while living in a *chum* (lodge) in the tundra.<sup>9</sup> In 1925 Georgii and Ekaterina Prokofiev made a well-known trip to the Selkups. Living among Selkups made them genuine ethnographers and linguistic fieldworkers [cf. fieldwork notes in Gagen-Torn 1992]. In October 1928 Prokofiev passed over a report based on his studies of Selkups to Bogoras, for presentation at the Congress of Americanists in New York. This paper was supplemented with slides showing drawings of Selkup (Ostyako-Samoedic) shamans [SPFA RAN 142-1(1928)-7: 6]. Finally in 1929–31 the Prokofievs traveled to the Nenets and Komi peoples, equipped with a cine camera [Figure 2].

According to official documents of the MAE, Prokofiev was sent by the Committee for the Assistance to the Smaller Peoples of the Lesser Nationalities of the North (the Committee of the North), to a Samoyedic cultural station (*kul'tbaza*) called Khoseda-Khard, and there appointed as researcher responsible for regional studies (*zaveduiushchii kraevedeniem*), an official title for a staff ethnographer, from April 4, 1929, till July 11, 1930 [SPFA RAN 142-5-153; Figure 3]. A diary of the Prokofievs' expedition (only partially preserved) starts on May 21, 1930. Viktorin Popov writes that his goals included the "formulation of the first Latinized ABC-book for the Nenets language," and further describes the heroism of the expedition, referring to "the ethnographer Prokofiev—a person with asthma, without two ribs, on the move throughout the Far North for about five years, while separated from his wife and children" [Popov 1932]. According to Verbov's diary, Prokofiev's "separation from his wife and children" was rather short: all of them were in the field, albeit in different settlements, but still able to meet each other. Vladimir Kisel', who published Prokofieva's book on the Tuvans, writes: "Ekaterina Dmitrievna studied the traditional culture of the Nenets and at the same time was an assistant to the ethnographer [G. N. Prokofiev—D. A.], the head of a station for the liquidation of illiteracy, and the head of an orphanage" [Kisel' 2011: 14].

The assignment to supervise regional studies supposed that Prokofiev would study exclusively the Nenets language and culture. He writes with regret, however, in one of his letters to Bogoras:

A great disappointment awaited me here: the Samoyedic station Khoseda-Khard is Samoyedic only in name. It is built in an area where the real Samoyeds (*n'enaj n'ennec'*) do not stop off. There are Zyrians and Kol'vinskies Samoyeds in the area who have long ceased to be Samoyeds, having adopted both the language and the culture of Zyrians. There are forty-one pupils in the 'Samoyedic' boarding school, of whom twenty-two are Kol'vinskies Samoyeds and nineteen are Zyrians. The language everywhere here is Zyrian. [SPFA RAN 250-4-269: 9]

In another letter Prokofiev describes his way of life during the assignment:

As to the station as such, it is hard to call it 'cultured'. In an uncivilized, savage nook, which Yanov Stan<sup>10</sup> happened to be, I used to live better than here. The lack of supplies



Figure 2 The Nenets National Okrug, 1931. (Cartography: Alessandro Pasquini)



Figure 3 Georgii N. Prokofiev with his pupils in Khoseda-Khard village. (MAE# n-1174-58; courtesy of the MAE RAN)

is felt in everything, from firewood and kerosene to food. We're sitting here with a kerosene lamp; it's cold in an apartment. The bath (*bania*) happens only twice a month; it could be nothing much, perhaps, but bathing with cold water makes it much worse. I was right in my wish to specify the issue of the food supply in my agreement with the Committee of the North. But they were also right in their unwillingness to include this point in the agreement, because if they had agreed to do so, I would have had the right to break the contract. There is still a long time until spring, but it is already dreadful with foodstuffs: there is no butter; sugar is given out one kilo [at a time]; the quality of the salted fish is below average; there is no white flour. Meat supplies are also poor: there is cattle meat from the autumn slaughter. But it's not easy to buy some reindeer [meat]. The only stuff in abundance is partridges. [SPFA RAN-250-4-269: 10-10v]

In general the trip was a continual disappointment for Prokofiev. In a letter to Bogoras of March 29, 1930 from Khoseda-Khard, he already says quite frankly: "I will be glad if you manage to get me out of the station before the end of the tenure. This is not a Samoyedic station but a Komi one (due to a misunderstanding, on the one hand, and a successful Komi speculation, on the other)" [SPFA RAN-250-4-269: 16v].

Verbov's letters to Bogoras from the Bol'shezemel'skaia tundra in those years are all the more full of resolve:

The conditions of the organizational work were hard enough. Being a supervisor of the educational sector and a teacher of the Nenets language, I was involved with everything,

up to carting firewood and carrying bricks . . . Based on the experience of my last-year's work in the tundra and the current work at the technical school, I have come to the conclusion (I assume Georgii Nikolaevich shares my opinion) that it is possible to change such a state of affairs only *through a top-down directive order*. All other methods have been tried and it is quite clear that here, at the fringes, the workers, unfortunately, will not be able to sort this issue out without pressure from above. After all, the Nenets Okrug is not on the Moon and it is possible, I suppose, to bring an end to this outrage. It should be acknowledged that national policies apply to the territories that stretch beyond the outskirts of Moscow and Leningrad. [SPFA RAN 250-4-61: 5; my italics]

A “mistake” of the Committee of the North related to ignorance of the real cultural diversity of the country at the end of the 1920s. And it was exactly the information from people like Prokofiev that was determining the models of differentiation between the cultural groups and the implementation of identity politics. Regional studies like ethnography were viewed in the 1920s not as a curious academic exercise but rather as a specific development project. It is this vision that underpins Bogoras's saying that “ethnographers are the missionaries of the Soviet way of life,” even though the position of ethnographers then sometimes did not coincide with the position of official authorities. As for Prokofiev, we can speak about his disagreement with the policy of the romanization of the Northern peoples' languages (on the romanization of Nenets, cf. Evsiugin [1993: 19–20])<sup>11</sup> and collectivization in the tundra. He was not alone in that respect: one might cite a biography of Glafira M. Vasilevich, a colleague of the Prokofievs in both the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography and the Institute of the Peoples of the North (IPN) in Leningrad [Ermolova 2003]. The Prokofievs' questions to Bogoras (4 October 1930) illustrate the situation in Leningrad at that time:

I heard about the death of Kotovshchikova<sup>12</sup> in Yamal. I do not know the details. Perhaps you could tell me briefly. It is such a pity. Where are the others? What is the outcome of the cleansing (*chistka*)<sup>13</sup> in the Academy? What are the manifestations of the big changes that you wrote me about? I read about the saboteurs in the Academy of Sciences in one of the issues of *Moskovskaya Pravda* (from November 20). Oldenburg was mentioned; it was said that the Academy was keeping secret military documents, silver goblets of the Guard officers, and so on. I could not find out anything else. How is it going at the *Sevfak*?<sup>14</sup> I have learned about my re-election from E[vgenii] G. Kagarov—he wrote me a postcard. We are living here in complete isolation. The radio has been idle. In short, [everything is] depressing. [SPFA RAN 250-4-269: 13-13v]

The Prokofievs' own fate was hanging by a thread at that moment. Referring to the communication with the Prokofievs' children, Vladimir A. Kisel' writes that it was Bogoras who saved Prokofiev's life by sending a letter in support of him to Stalin [Kisel' 2011: 15].

#### A Movie Camera and the Cinematic Chronicles

Discussing the original cinematic material of Prokofiev with my colleague Craig Campbell, we assumed that he could have used one of three cameras: Bolex, Bell



& Howell, or the Cine-Kodak Model A. These were portable, compatible with Cine-Kodak film, and ideally suitable for an ethnographic fieldworker. As for photographs, the Prokofievs used several types of camera, as there are both glass-plate and film negatives in the collection [MAE# и-1174].

When it comes to the films, dating them is the most challenging question. Based on the available materials there are several possibilities with regard to Prokofiev's reels. First, film is mentioned in Prokofiev's letter to Bogoras dated October 4, 1929 (*date no. 1*) [SPFA RAN 250-4-269: 5v]: he writes about five reels. Exactly one year later, in another letter to Bogoras on October 4, 1930 (*date no. 2*), Prokofiev asks: "Have you developed the cine films? I still have five untouched reels (one of them in use). I will send them in the spring or in the summer. It would be nice to get extras" [SPFA RAN 250-4-269: 13]. From this letter we know about the remaining five reels. The *date no. 2* does not coincide with the information from Verbov's diary, where he notes the date of his acquaintance with Prokofiev, and mentions that the latter "at the moment" must be boarding the ship "The Nenets" to Tel'viska, whence he would go to the cultural station, and only then to Leningrad [AMAE RAN 2-1-16: 46]. These particulars provide a rather relative date: specifically, that the filming could have been partially complete by August 1930 (*date no. 3*). This date correlates with the details to be found in Prokofiev's personal file: he returned to Leningrad on September 30, 1930 [SPFA RAN 142-5-153]. This presumably more-or-less clear picture is complemented with the information from Ekaterina D. Prokofieva's inventory: in her commentary to the first reel, she notes that the filming was occurring in August 1931, during the reindeer crossing from the Vaygach Island to the mainland over the Yugorsky Strait, in the vicinity of the settlement of Khabarovo (*date no. 4*) [inventory of the MAE collection и-1173]. The personal file of Prokofiev offers support for this fact: according to this document, during July 20 to September 20, 1931 Georgii was on a business trip from the Institute of the Peoples of the North in the Nenets Okrug, in order to participate in the re-training of teachers. Was it possible that he took a cine camera with him again and could get to Khabarovo settlement to film the given footage? Perhaps yes. However, comparing this date with the mentioned fragment of the letter to Bogoras of October 4, 1929 (*date no. 1*), one can assume that there must be a mistake in Prokofieva's inventory. This confusion of the dates is further complicated by one more fact: the (original?) reel boxes display the factory's "develop before" stamps, according to which the reels should have been used before December 1929 (*date no. 5*). This nevertheless does not exclude the possibility that Prokofiev could have used the expired films.

Comparing all the above-mentioned dates, we can assume that the chronicles were likely filmed in several sessions between the spring of 1929 and the autumn of 1931, but most probably till the late autumn of 1930. Table 1 presents an analysis of the notes on the reel boxes alongside the contents of the respective cine chronicles. If we assume that the numbers on the boxes were written in the field, then the reels MAE# и-1173-6, и-1173-3, и-1173-2, and и-1173-5 are those first films, which were sent to Bogoras (cf. *date no. 1* above).

In addition to the issue of dating the films, there is some question about their editing or cutting. The reel MAE# и-1173-5 is the hardest to date since it contains frames with both snow-covered tundra and summertime landscapes. The mixture

TABLE 1 The order of the reels

Number of the museum collection	Number on the boxes (fieldwork?)	Contents	Relative chronology
MAE# и-1173		Reindeer crossing over the Yugorsky Strait (Yugorsky Shar); tobacco sniffing; polar foxes on a leash; women are eating fish on a sledge; <i>erkolava</i> ; <sup>a</sup> reindeer in a corral; preparations for sending boats.	The footage is filmed at the same time. The location of filming is known only from the initial frames. According to Prokofieva's inventory, it is August 1931.
MAE# и-1173-2	4	Several variants of keeping reindeer on a leash; drying of fish nets; hides tanning; firewood chopping near a <i>chum</i> ; tobacco sniffing; a Nenets narrating something; women are carrying water; tobacco smoking (the same person who was narrating).	The footage is filmed in the same location and at the same time.
MAE# и-1173-3	2	Setting up a <i>chum</i> on the shore; reindeer in the corral; people among reindeer in the herd; releasing of reindeer from the corral; children.	The footage is filmed in the same location and at the same time as that on the reels MAE# и-1173-4 and MAE# и-1173-7.
MAE# и-1173-4	5	Weaving of fish nets; a man narrating something; weaving of fish nets; several people are eating raw fish together; a cradle; knife sharpening; hides cleaning; sewing of <i>niuks</i> ; <sup>2</sup> a woman near a <i>chum</i> ; gods; hides tanning; sewing of <i>kisy</i> and <i>tobaki</i> . <sup>c</sup>	The footage is filmed in the same location and at the same time. Perhaps, the filming was taking place in the same location as on the reels MAE# и-1173-3 and MAE# и-1173-7.
MAE# и-1173-5		Reindeer crossing over a strait; hides tanning; a dog sled team (winter/early spring/late autumn); collecting of driftwood along the shore; chopping of driftwood; drying of <i>kisy</i> ; kneading of <i>tobaki</i> ; face washing; reindeer intestines processing; children are picking berries (most probably, enacting	The footage was filmed in different seasons and presumably in different locations.

(Continued)

TABLE 1 Continued

Number of the museum collection	Number on the boxes (fieldwork?)	Contents	Relative chronology
MAE# и-1173-6	1	berry picking). Harnessing of reindeer; reindeer; the village of Khabarovo; urging of a reindeer into the harness; a reindeer team is approaching the village; frames with the details of the harness; a reindeer team leaving; departure of Nenets on a boat; the village.	The footage is filmed in the same location and at the same time (presumably summer).
MAE# и-1173-7	6	Children; children are playing with kids' sledges; children; children and chopping of firewood; children; catching of reindeer (spring); a reindeer team; reindeer; a reindeer herd and a reindeer team; a reindeer herd (the frozen strait in the background); a reindeer <i>argish</i> <sup>d</sup> moving across the snow-covered tundra; a reindeer herd, a sledge, and a person and a herd.	The footage is filmed in the same location. Probably, the filming was taking place in the same location as on the reels MAE# и-1173-3 and MAE# и-1173-4.

## Notes.

a. *Erkolava*: the selection of draught reindeer for reindeer herders (translator's comment).

b. *Niuks*: chum covers sewn from large reindeer hides (translator's comment).

c. *Kisy* and *tobaki*: traditional footwear made of reindeer skin, consisting of inner (*tobaki*) and outer (*kisy*) boots (translator's comment).

d. *Argish* (*argysh*): a reindeer train (translator's comment).

of frames implies that the Prokofievs were filming only the scenes valuable from their point of view, but this may also mean that they had cut and edited the film. There are no reasons to be sure about either option.

It is also noteworthy that some of the frames are seemingly staged; such as, for example, the footage with tobacco sniffing where Prokofiev (or someone of similar appearance) measures the distance from the camera to a person, using a meter ruler (a procedure common in the early years of cinematography). In some frames people pay attention to the movie camera, as if asking the beholder whether he is satisfied with their performance.

## The Cinema and Nenets

The story of the Prokofievs' expedition is closely intertwined with Grigorii Verbov's entry into the ethnography and linguistics of Samoyeds. According to the documentary book *The Knights of the North*, by Anatolii K. Omel'chuk [1982], Prokofiev and Verbov had known each other before 1930; but this information is apparently erroneous, for Verbov writes in his diary: "On the 15th [of August 1930] I also got to know G. N. Prokofiev who had managed to do a lot of linguistic work for a year and had to get to Tel'viska by the "Nenets" [ship], then to the cultural station, and from there to Leningrad" [AMAE RAN 2-1-16: 46]. That meeting was consequential for Samoyedic studies in the 20th century, when in their heyday. And another contact significant for the history of the Bol'shezemel'skie Nenets occurred during that expedition—the encounter with cinematography. Ekaterina Prokofieva starts her inventory of the cine chronicles with the following story [Figure 4]:

The reindeer crossing from the Vaygach Island to the Mainland over the strait Yushar [Yugorsky Strait or Yugorsky Shar] near the settlement of Khabarovo in August 1931. In spring, the Nenets nomadizing from the tundra transport the reindeer over ice to Vaygach. There are rich reindeer moss and grass there, and constant wind blows over the island, so there are almost no mosquitoes. The reindeer that spend summer at Vaygach put on weight and get stronger. An interesting moment is filmed. The reindeer did not follow the boat immediately. For some reason they started circling around [unclear] in one place,



Figure 4 Reindeer crossing the Yugorsky Strait. (MAE# u-1173-37; courtesy of the MAE RAN)

near the shore, thus creating some sort of a “mill” in the water. Only after continuous efforts, the other day, Nenets were able to make the reindeer swim across the strait. This failure was eventually ascribed to the presence of G. N. Prokofiev with his photo camera. In order to mitigate the harmful effects of the device Nenets requested an insole from his shoe and shared it among the organizers of the crossing as a charm. [From the inventory note to the MAE collection# и-1173]

This story is interesting in many respects. First, the footage with the reindeer crossing over the Yugorsky Strait (and any other strait in general) is indeed rare material.<sup>15</sup> Prokofiev himself understood that very well and pointed it out in his letters to Bogoras. Second, in comparing the material with the notes of Verbov one can say that Nenets already knew about cinema. The point is that the responsibilities of the head of the first Bol’shezemel’skii “Red *chum*,” the position occupied by Verbov in 1930, included the showings of propagandistic films.<sup>16</sup> He wrote in his diary on August 30, 1930, from Khabarovo, about one such film: “Novolotskii and I organized a daytime cinema showing attended by about 50 Nenets persons. The majority were watching a film for the first time and were expressing their rapture in various ways” [AMAE RAN 2-1-16: 55]. Probably, being tired of the constant showing of cine films, Verbov drew a few cartoons in his diary representing drunkards in a pub—scenes from one of those films. Viktorin Popov’s notes explain why drunkards were a curious issue: “The urban anti-alcoholic scene [campaign] is not clear to Nenets. After the showing, there was a lot of talk in chums discussing how bad life is in a city but, on the other hand, how abundant the liquid fire [alcohol] is there . . .” [Popov 1932]. After returning to Leningrad Prokofiev was to cite that story with a movie at one of the meetings in 1932 as an unsuccessful instance of the anti-alcohol campaign in the North.

Despite their familiarity with the cameraman’s work, Nenets still saw photography as a threat to their well-being, calling such pictures *gadgango’mo* or “a glued reflection,” and *sidriang* or “a shadow.”<sup>17</sup> It is noteworthy that Prokofiev had already experienced this phenomenon among Selkups in 1925–26. There is a snapshot [MAE# и-1177-50] in his collection of photos that represents Selkups covering the eyes with their hands. In the inventory for this picture there is a note that Selkups were resisting attempts to photograph them, referring to the same beliefs as those of the Bol’shezemel’skie Nenets.

### Khabarovo

The scene of one of the main locations where Prokofiev was filming his chronicles appears quite depressing. Viktorin Popov writes that the village of Khabarovo consisted of literally “five huts, a warehouse of Gostorg [the State Trading Agency—Transl.], a bathhouse, and a tiny church.” The settlement was situated in complete isolation, far from all others, despite being a well-known place: it had been visited by Nansen and Amundsen during their voyages and, as Popov assures us, one of the dwellers of Khabarovo had a plate from the “Fram” [Nansen’s ship—Transl.] in his house. Early in the 20th century there used to be Norwegian warehouses there and the territory was functioning as a peculiar frontier in trade between Norway and Russia. In Prokofiev’s time Khabarovo

was a mere trading post: Nenets were coming here to buy foodstuff and to hand over the furs (rather as we see in *Nanook*). From Popov's words, the bakery was the main location of activity in the village, while the church had already been idle during the Prokofiev's and Verbov's expeditions. It may well be that it was this church in Khabarovo whence Verbov brought a collection of documents archived in the MAE [e.g., AMAE RAN K-V-1-173-174; also Arzyutov 2013].<sup>18</sup>

According to the correspondence between Prokofiev and Bogoras, the route of the Prokofiev's lay from Ust'-Usa to Yushar and Khabarovo and thence to Khoseda-Khard.

### Getting Acquainted 85 Years Later

Combining all the available materials it is possible to restore the names of the filmed subjects. We can see the chairman of the RIK (Regional Executive Committee), Ivan F. Taibarei [a photo by Prokofiev, MAE# и-1174-50, and the drawing by Verbov, MAE# и-1215-76], a Nenets pauper Vadio Valei [MAE# и-1174-23], and a Nenets Dmitrii Lagei who is feeding dogs in a photo [MAE# и-1174-25] and is riding with a dog-sled team in the chronicles. Ekaterina D. Prokofieva wrote about him: "This Nenets has no reindeer, constantly resides in the vicinity of Yushar, and hunts walruses and fish. He has a dog-sled team. In winter, he sets traps for polar foxes. Checks them riding his dogs" [the collection inventory MAE# и-1173]. Each of these subjects is described in detail in the diaries of Prokofiev and Verbov, as well as in the book by Popov.

Together with his constant guide Taibarei, Prokofiev often visits Vadio Valei [Figure 5] and gets to know his entire family. Vadio is mentioned in Prokofiev's diaries as "a poor person." However, considering the official division of rural dwellers into the poor, the middle, and the *kulak* (a rural dweller in Russia and in the early Soviet Union wealthy enough to own to hire labor), Prokofiev wrote that he was concerned over the issue of the assessment of the condition of reindeer in this social classification:

One should pay serious attention to all those particulars in the methods of reindeer herding, think them over, compare them with the details of the reindeer herding of the so called 'poor guy' and only then make a conclusion on why the *kulak* has such decent reindeer... What if he is not a *kulak* but a good owner—a worker? If I compare reindeer herding of Vadio Valeiskii with that of Rogachiov Egor or Pavlov 'Evden', how can I, considering the issue quite impartially, at least in some way come to the conclusion that Vadio Valeiskii is a poor man who has been robbed of [his wealth] while Pavlov-*kulak* is the robber? [AMAE RAN 6-1-28: 18v]

It is such observations concerning the people in the tundra that reveal Prokofiev's sentiments in the discussions on collectivization.

### Discussions on the Collectivization and the Ethnographer's Dilemma

Staying in Khabarovo, Prokofiev was at the center of the local discussions about collectivization. Like many other Soviet ethnographers of that time he did not



Figure 5 Georgii N. Prokofiev (?) measuring a distance from Vadio Valei. (MAE# n-1173-02; courtesy of the MAE RAN)

acknowledge that it was dangerous to express opinions that differed from the official “general line” of thought. He wrote in his diary:

They [Nenets—D. A.] have the most negative attitudes towards collectivization. According to the current [Nenets] rumors, a collective organized in Malaya Zemlya is falling apart—two people have left it already. One of them left his reindeer to the collective because the collective had refused to return them to him... Tel’viska’s reindeer herders (Russians), in the information given by Nenets, were *de-kulakized*: they were deprived of their reindeer and property and evicted from their houses. Nenets call this nothing other than that “they were robbed.” [AMAE RAN 6-1-28: 11-11v]

Filming the chronicles Prokofiev repeats several times a frame where the letter “K” is being cut on the rump of a reindeer [Figure 6], as if emphasizing the significance of the action. That letter “K” apparently stood for the word *kolkhoz*.<sup>19</sup> This frame, repeated twice in the cine chronicles, is important both for understanding the ethnographer’s speculations in the field about the current events and for documenting the practice of branding as such. In his fieldnotes from 1930, taken in the Bol’shezemel’skaia Tundra, Verbov describes reindeer branding like this: “The tags on the ears are cut with a knife; those on the hip, also with a knife. The ears of calves—yearlings (spring)—are marked (May-June); on the fur, [marks] are cut in spring or in winter, when there is snow and new fur. Only *vazhenki* [female reindeer—Transl.], *khory* [sires—Transl.], and the young ones are branded. Calves are not branded” [AMAE RAN 2-1-11: 7; cf. Stammer 2012].



Figure 6 Branding a reindeer. (MAE# n-1173-3; courtesy of the MAE RAN)

The ethnographer's dilemma assumes that, being involved in the heated debates about collectivization, Prokofiev was a doubter in his diaries and presumably in the conversations with his friends and acquaintances in the field; apparently he did not agree with local practices of collectivization.

#### THE PROKOFIEVS' CINE FILM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HISTORY OF THE VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE RUSSIAN NORTH

Shortly before his assignment to the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra, Prokofiev was an active participant in the meeting of 1929. At that same meeting Ian P. Koshkin (Al'kor), a well-known researcher of Tungusic history and culture and one of the activists at the Institute of the Peoples of the North, said: "Here [at the Institute] we have well-organized studies of topography, drawing; besides, *we are introducing cine filming because we think that if an ethnographer goes to the field he should know how to film.* On the other hand, we consider photography and sketching, technical reproduction, which is very important for the ethnographer, as well as movie-making to be very important in our scientific plan, and these technical subjects are included now [in the training]" [Arzyutov, Alymov and Anderson 2014: 412; my italics].

Referring to these words we might say that the cine chronicles are the films of the Institute, which was introducing training in filmmaking at the time. However, although we know the motion pictures produced by students of the IPN [Trofimov 1939] as well as the filmed scenes portraying how Archibald L.



“Archie” Phinney—a Nez Perce Indian who was staying in Leningrad in 1932–37 within the framework of the previously mentioned Boas–Bogoras project—was using gestures [Korsun 2010: 45; J. Smith 2015],<sup>20</sup> we cannot be sure that the reel under consideration was filmed with a cine camera belonging to the IPN. Some details are confusing. First, there is the phrase from Prokofiev’s letter: “we will have to send them to America for printing.” This sounds strange: Lenfilm (Leningrad Cinema) had been working as a film studio since 1918 and it was possible to print photos from a 16-mm film there. Secondly, we cannot exclude the possibility that the cine camera and/or the film reels which pioneered ethnographic cine chronicles of the Soviet Arctic were acquired in the framework of the Boas–Bogoras project.

Despite the possibility of such an exchange, Soviet ethnographers were not very familiar with the history of Western visual anthropology of the North.<sup>21</sup> One can only assume that Bogoras could have known about the feature film *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (its other title was *In the Land of the War Canoes*), shot by Edward Curtis among the Kwakiutl tribe of British Columbia in 1914 [Evans and Glass 2013]. The film *Nanook of the North*, produced by Robert Flaherty in 1922 and featuring Inuit of Hudson Bay in Canada [Christopher 2005], was familiar to Soviet researchers of the North, as is seen (in addition to other sources) from the textbook by Anatolii N. Terskii [1930].

A linguist and ethnographer, Petr P. Shimkevich, had by that time filmed in Manchuria. Sergei M. Shirokogorov wrote in his letter to Lev Ia. Sternberg on April 26, 1915: “[Shimkevich has organized] a partnership on equal footing [called] ‘Kino-Sibir’ [Cine-Siberia] for filming landscapes, but, first of all, ways of life, rites and types of the Siberian peoples. The project of Shimkevich... is supported by the Geog[raphical] Soc[iety] and by another semi-scientific soc[iety], and both of these societies want to take matters into their own hands” [SPFA RAN 142-1 (1918)-70: 85]. The Kino-Sibir society was eventually established within the USSR in 1926.

The real breakthrough in the visual anthropology of the North and Siberia apparently occurred in the late 1920s. An ethnographer-mongolist, Kapitolina V. Viatkina, created her first film in Buryatia, in Khorinsky *aimag*, during her work for a Russian–German expedition to combat syphilis.<sup>22</sup> Only several frames from this motion picture, copied to photo film presumably in the 1970s, have been preserved in the MAE RAS. Unfortunately we do not know whether this film was screened in the MAE or other places. In the same year, in Oyrotia (today the Republic of Altai), the Kino-Sibir society shot a “historic and ethnographic motion picture,” *The Altaians* [KPSA RA P-1-1-494: 7, 8, 9], that referred to Andrei V. Anokhin—a composer, folklorist and ethnographer living in the Altai—as its main consultant.<sup>23</sup>

In Ivan A. Golovnev’s opinion, it is the film “Forest People (Udihe)” (*Lesnye liudi (udihe)*),<sup>24</sup> created by the film director Alexandr I. Litvinov along with the ethnographer Vladimir K. Arsen’ev, that was the turning-point in the history of Soviet visual anthropology (“the first Soviet ethno-cinema”) [Golovnev 2012; also Divnina 2009; Golovnev 2013, 2014]. At the same time *Proletkino* (Proletarian Cinema) was making the motion picture “Down the Yenisey [river] above the Arctic Circle” (*Po Eniseiu za Poliarnyi Krug*), while the politician and vice-

chairman of the Committee of the North at the Central Executive Committee, Anatolii E. Skachko, was filming "Polar Countries" (*Poliarnye strany*). The famous Dziga Vertov was also including scenes depicting aboriginal peoples' ways of life in his movie "The Sixth Part of the World" (*Shestaia chast' mira*). It is likely that the Prokofievs were aware of most of these motion pictures and probably would have seen some of them.

It makes sense to outline the ideas that were important for ethnographers with cine cameras. By the time of the 1929 Meeting and Prokofiev's expedition to the Bol'shezemel'skaia Tundra, the first textbook on ethnographic fieldwork had appeared, written by Sergei A. Makar'ev [1928] on the basis of Bogoras's lectures [SPFA RAN 250-3-170]. The methodological aspects of photo- and movie-making in the field were already discussed in that textbook:

The techniques used by the ethnographer-photographer are infinitely more complex and are approaching the techniques of cinema-making. However, the organization of the frame should not overstep certain limits. It should not include any extraneous moments, psychological or aesthetic, not to mention vulgar-romantic, which often happens in cinema-making. The organization of the frame should seek to identify the essence of a phenomenon, to present it to the audience and to the reader in the most accentuated and clearly illustrative way. [Makar'ev 1928: 32]

These recommendations of Bogoras/Makar'ev are reflected in Prokofiev's cine chronicles and in the discussions on documentary filmmaking of the 1920s. Prokofiev saw his films rather as a collection of stories that could be printed as photographs and used for publication. This assumption is confirmed by both the above citation from Prokofiev's letter to Bogoras as well as by the origin of the photo [Figure 4] published in the book "The Peoples of the North" (*Narody Sibiri*) [Levin and Potapov 1956: 614; 1964: 554].<sup>25</sup>

The initial methodology of filming was articulated by the Soviet writer Anatolii N. Terskoi in his textbook "Ethnographic Film" (*Etnograficheskaia fil'ma*), published in 1930—the year when the Prokofievs returned from the field. The author of the preface to this textbook, Nikolai Yakovlev, a linguist and ethnographer, initiated a particular debate with Bogoras that had already started at the Meeting of 1929 and was related to long-term expeditions or, as we define it today, participant observation. Referring to a camera, a pencil or a paintbrush, an ethnographer, in the opinion of the authors of those years, was turning into a bystander, a distant observer, who should "by all available technical means reflect and fixate the [surrounding—D.A.] objects on the paper, photo, sketch and so on" [Yakovlev 1930: 7]. The quintessence of the ethnographic film was that: "The necessary elements of an ethnographic film . . . are, first, good-quality authentic ethnographic material reflecting the development of a specific real community (a people); secondly, the presentation of this material within its internal causal interconnectedness, in its Marxist sociological illumination and, finally, third, a technically quite perfect, plot-based (structural) design of this material" [*ibid.*: 10–11].

Thus the ethnographic film was supposed to reflect a people as a subject of history, depicting it through the Soviet Marxist paradigm. Of course, as a participant

at the Meeting of 1929, Prokofiev not only knew the “current moment” quite well, but also tried to follow the idea that the “*khoziaistvo* [economy] is the core of the ethnographic film” [Terskoi 1930: 28–29; cf. the contents of the cine chronicles in Table 1].

These claims assumed the field ethnographer to be a curious combination of a “missionary of a new (or Soviet) way of life,” on the one hand, and a distant bystander, on the other. The second role was necessarily related to the technical attributes of the profession which, as a Yukagir, Theki Odulok, argued in 1929, are the most frightening for the “natives,” who misrecognize the ethnographer as the “exploiter” [Alymov and Arzyutov 2014: 58, 327]. While the ethnographer-as-missionary is active and is constantly co-producing knowledge with his field partners, the ethnographer-as-bystander is more engaged with his dissociated observations. These dynamics and statics are reflected in Prokofiev’s chronicles: we can see how the ethnographers are trying to view their field statically, despite their usage of a cine camera designed to take dynamic pictures. The interplay of the static and dynamic representations was related in the USSR in 1927–32 to the movement of “factography” in documentary filmmaking [Malitsky 2010]. One can consider it as an ethnographic “Zeno’s arrow”—statics in each frame and the museification of a pulsating life that grant ethnography an aura of a timeless science occupied with the fundamental (and also timeless) issues of the history of humanity.

The ideas of the “static movement” resurface, albeit with regard to another issue, in the correspondence between Prokofiev and Bogoras:

Our trip from Yushar to Khoseda-Khard took 38 days. With the meagre outfit that we had (in Yushar we had managed to buy nothing but the *pimy*<sup>26</sup>), the journey was not a pleasant one. Samoyeds with whom we were nomadizing [*argishili*<sup>27</sup>] were very poor, the *chum* they had was for the summer, besides, full of holes; the reindeer were lean. Our movement forward contradicted any dialectical understanding of movement, for even when we were riding we were all in one and the same place. True, here is a dialectic too. [SPFA RAN 250-4-269: 7-7v]

The same perception of the cinematic picture can be found in the notes of Ekaterina Prokofieva who, in describing the collection and providing the most interesting information about the process of filming, confused the words “cine camera” (*kinoapparat*) and “photo camera” (*fotoapparat*).

After the Prokofievs’ return from the Nenets expedition and publication of the book by Anatolii N. Terskoi [1930], Vladimir Bogoras suggested that the specialization in ethno-cinema (*etnokinofil’my*) be introduced at Leningrad State University in 1930–31 [SPFA RAN 250-3-93]. This initiative of Bogoras’s was not, it appears, accepted, but a small-scale “seminar for teaching photography to ethnographers” did occur, a joint project of the Central Bureau of Regional Studies and Leningrad State University [SPFA RAN 142–1(1929)-11: 34]. Boris M. Sokolov held a series of seminars on ethnographic filmmaking at the Museum of Studies of Peoples in Moscow at the same time [Terskoi 1930: 21–22]. Besides, there were also some photography courses conducted by Samuil M. Dudin (1863–1929), an

outstanding photographer who worked for the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography and headed a photographic laboratory there [Prishchepova 2011]. The Prokofievs were of course aware of all those activities. Probably the high quality of their photographs and cine chronicles is the outcome of their training.<sup>28</sup> It is worth mentioning however that, being a violinist, Georgii had strong hands which could help him in cranking a movie camera steadily and accounts for the high quality of his footage.

As for the visual anthropology of the Nenets specifically, one notes that they had already been filmed several times by 1930, as follows from the available archival information. The Russian State Documentary Film and Photo Archive (RGAKFD) has preserved several reels of such footage. One of the pieces, entitled *Malozemel'skaia Tundra*, and in two parts, was filmed in Tel'viska in 1930 [RGAKFD 2685]; another one, "Ways of life of the Nenets" (*Byt nentsev*), was also filmed in 1930, at the Yamal Peninsula [RGAKFD 7918]. Except for these documents there is no other information on filming of the Nenets in the archival inventories.

In conclusion I will briefly outline a history of filmmaking that was taking place in the North and in Siberia in the 1930s, when the Prokofievs probably were preparing to cut and edit the footage they had brought from the field.

In 1931 ethnographers and linguists at the Institute for Studies of the Peoples of the USSR (IPIN) were making a film about the Gilyaks (Nivkhs) and the Evenks in the lower reaches of the Amur River [MAE# 5154]. A year later, in 1932, a British anthropologist, Ethel J. Lindgren, and her husband Oscar Mamen, were making a movie, forgotten today, entitled *Reindeer Tungus*.<sup>29</sup> Their experiences also hark to a particular dialogue with Haddon and Boas and resonate with the discussions about cultural encounters that were happening at the time in British and American anthropology. However, this film in particular and Lindgren's works in the USSR in general had been unknown until recently. Some indirect information allows us to claim that Leonid L. Kapitsa, a brother of the outstanding physicist and a student of Fedor K. Volkov, who studied the Karels, Pomors and Lapps (Saami), was also filming chronicles in the early 1930s [on his work cf. Ivanovskaia 2014]. Somewhat later than Prokofievs' chronicles, in 1936, an archeologist and ethnographer, Albert N. Lipsky, participated as consultant in the production of two cinema films, "*Mangobo Nai—the Amur Man*" (*Mangobo nai—amurskii chelovek*) and "*Buni Poktadi—by the Road of the Dead*" (*Buni poktadi—dorogoi mertvykh*), that had for long been considered lost. However, Nina A. Messhtyb has located them in the archives of the State Cinema Fund of the Russian Federation (*Gosfil'mofond RF*) [Vainshtein 2003; AMAE RAN 5-4-90: 86–88]. In addition to these films, Lipsky consulted for the film "From Primordial Communism towards Socialism" (*Ot pervobytnogo kommunizma k sozializmu*) [AMAE RAN 5-4-90: 86]. As for Lipsky's story, there is a noteworthy phrase in his agreement with a film studio that is linked to the "factographic" background of the discussions on documentary filmmaking: "The consultant has the right to use the frames of the leftovers or doubles of the exposed negatives for printing photos in order to illustrate the works or scientific materials of expeditions that are to be published by him or by the IAE [Institute of Anthropology and

Ethnography] of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, or [to be used] in ethnographic collections—outcomes of the expeditions—exhibited in the museums of the Academy of Sciences” [*ibid.*].

Among the well-known cinematic experiments in the North of Western Siberia one can mention the film by Valerii N. Chernetsov and Vanda A. Moshinskaia about the Bear Celebration of the Mansi, made in the settlement of Vezhakory in 1948. This film was staged because it happened to be impossible to get to the site and observe the actual celebration due to the seasonally bad roads [Sagalaev 2014].<sup>30</sup> The post-war history of the visual anthropology of the Arctic in the USSR however saw the creation of hundreds of films, lost or foundering in dust in the archives of various institutions, which could provide a completely novel perspective on the visual anthropology of the North.

## CONCLUSION

During fieldwork Prokofiev paid much attention to developing a theory that explained the ethnogenesis of Samoyeds. Specific ideas with regard to this theory can be found in his fieldwork diary [AMAE RAN 6-1-28: 1v-2] and in the book by Viktorin Popov [1932], who recalls his discussions with Prokofiev about the past of Samoyeds. Prokofiev tended to view the contemporary Nenets as a “pure” group strictly separated from, for example, the Komi people. His concern with this “purity” is observable in his cine chronicles, where the camera lens is focused exclusively on the Nenets and their life. Such a classificatory approach and the construction of strict genealogies of groups were at the core of Soviet ethnography.

In the fall of 1930 the Prokofievs returned to Leningrad. Ahead lay a new wave of meetings and public talks that would to an ever lesser extent be raising scientific questions, and to a greater extent focus on the issues of the “practical significance” of ethnography. Already in 1932 there were two meetings [RA IIMK RAN 2-1 (1932)-201, 202; AMAE RAN K-II-1-161] where the anti-religious theme was almost dominant. Prokofiev took part in those discussions, speaking about the cinema and language construction. His observations with regard to Verbov’s screenings of certain films to aboriginal audiences, as well as his own experiences of filming, were very important in this respect. In August 1932, at the meeting on issues of the enlightenment of the peoples of the North, Bogoras continued speaking about the creation of socially oriented films about the North with “god-less contents” [AMAE RAN K-II-1-161: 8]. Following his speech, Prokofiev said: “The films which are brought to the North sometimes bring the opposite results. Incidentally, there was a screening of a film of the anti-alcohol campaign in the life of a big city, and the conclusion reached by the audience was as follows: why do you tell us that there is no wine when you have wine for yourselves there?” [AMAE RAN K-II-1-161: 16]. The debates resulted in a joint statement by the participants that “through this meeting, we have to manage that *Soyuzkino* [Cinema of the Soviet Union] turn its face towards the North” [AMAE RAN K-II-1-161: 33].

Unfortunately we do not know how the chronicles of the Prokofievs were used for purposes of public agitation and propaganda, but it should be acknowledged that, despite their compliance with the “factographical” genre, the authors were able to avoid almost entirely the propaganda of the Soviet regime (perhaps, except for the frames with reindeer branding that are more related however to Prokofiev’s concerns with the injustices of collectivization). This feature of his work, as well as the very fact of the cinematic documentation of Nenets life in 1929–30, make the chronicles of Prokofiev not only a monument to that time but also a milestone in the history of the visual anthropology of the Arctic.

There are still many questions left that lie beyond the scope of this article. Thus it is unknown who actually provided the money for buying the cine-camera: was it Franz Boas, the Institute of the Peoples of the North, the Institute for Studies of the Peoples of the USSR, or the Committee of the North? Where is the first part of the fieldwork diary of Georgii N. Prokofiev stored, if it is still preserved? Where are the materials of Viktorin Popov’s journey? The answers to such questions could lead to a better understanding of the first steps of cine-camera usage in ethnographic fieldwork.

Today, 85 years later, Prokofiev’s film is digitized and the author of this article is editing it, following the logic of its original creator: to present the final cut of the “Samoyedic Diary” to wide audiences in the Nenets, Russian and English languages.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AMAE RAN – *Arkhiv Muzeia antropologii i etnografii imeni Petra Velikogo (Kunstkamera) Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk* [The Archive of Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences], Saint Petersburg

GULAG – *Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei i mest zakliucheniia* [The Main Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Labor Settlements (1930–56)]

INS – *Institut narodov Severa* [The Institute of the Peoples of the North], Leningrad/Saint Petersburg

IPIN – *Institut po izucheniiu narodov SSSR* [The Institute for Studies of the Peoples of the USSR]

KPDA RA – *Komitet po delam arkhivov Respubliki Altai* [The Committee for the Archives of the Republic of Altai], Gorno-Altaiisk

LGU – *Leningraskii gosudarstvennyi universitet* [Leningrad State University]

RA IIMK RAN – *Rukopisnyi arkhiv Instituta istorii material'noi kul'tury Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk* [The Manuscript Archive of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, of the Russian Academy of Sciences], Saint Petersburg

RGAKFD – *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv kinofotodokumentov* [The Russian State Documentary Film and Photo Archive], Moscow

SPF ARAN – *Sankt-Peterburgskii filial arkhiva Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk* [The St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences]

SE – *Советская этнография / Sovetskaiia etnografiia* [Soviet Ethnography], journal, 1931–91

EO – *Этнографическое обозрение / Etnograficheskoe obozrenie* [Ethnographic Review], journal, 1992–present.

## NOTES

1. This article contains references to the Russian archives. Usually the documents from these archives are divided into collections (*fondy*) which are further divided into inventories (*opisi*) and then into documents (*edimitsy khraneniia* or *dela*). The photographic collections are organized differently in each archive or museum. In this article I use the visual collections of Kunstkamera (MAE). The reference is usually designated by the three letters “MAE” followed by the letter и (“I”) which means “illustrations” (concerning the collections that have been delivered to the Museum since 1930s). So as not to confuse a reader with “I,” as this could be interpreted as a Roman numeral, I will leave the Russian character “и” in the references of the illustrative collections of the MAE.
2. At the same time the MAE (Kunstkamera) was involved in an ambitious project of exchanging collections with many museums in Europe and America. The Soviet–American cooperation mediated by Eugene Golomshtok is discussed in Kupina [2004].
3. It should be acknowledged that the MAE had been living out its cosmopolitan years at the time. Regardless of their origin, citizens of different countries could work there as, for example, the American anthropologist Roy Barton, the Bengali revolutionary Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, or an ethnographer of Dutch origin, Vilhelmina Trismann.
4. The footage is featured in *The Kwakiutl of British Columbia*, a film by Franz Boas [1930]; cf. the Franz Boas Film Publication project at the Burke Museum [[http://www.burkemuseum.org/bhc/projects\\_boas](http://www.burkemuseum.org/bhc/projects_boas)]. The history of the Boas–Averkieva expedition is in Kouznetsov [2011].
5. “Bulls”: male reindeer.
6. See the biographies of Georgii and Ekaterina Prokofievs [Gagen-Torn 1992; 2013: 273; Khomich 1999; Kazakevich 2010a, 2010b; Kisel' 2012; Omel'chuk 1982: 35–98]. For a very brief ethnographic sketch of the Nenets, see Janhunen [1994].
7. The following analysis is based on the body of archival documents [SPFA RAN, AMAE RAN, RGAKNFD, RA IIMK RAN, KPDA RA]. The film itself is analyzed through a juxtaposition of cinematic chronicles [MAE# и-1173] (seven 16-mm reels, total length of 27 mins.); a photo collection of glass-plate negatives [MAE# и-1174]; one negative made on film [MAE# и-1174-6]; Prokofiev's fieldwork diary [AMAE

- RAN 6-1-27, 28, 29]; the correspondence between Prokofiev and Bogoras [SPFA RAN 250-4-269]; the fieldwork diary of Grigorii D. Verbov, who worked in this expedition with Prokofiev [AMAE RAN 2-1-15, 16, 17]; a letter to Bogoras [SPFA RAN 250-4-61]; the collection inventories of the MAE RAN [# и-1173, # и-1174] compiled by Ekaterina D. Prokofieva; and a novel by Viktorin Popov, *Liudi Bol'shoi zemli* ("People of the Big Land") [1932], dedicated to Prokofiev and his expedition to the Bol'shezemel'skie Nenets.
8. These materials were mostly concerned with terminology related to fishing, clothing and ornamentation.
  9. So cold is this area that people often wear *two* fur coats: an inner coat with the fur inside and an outer one with the fur outside. The coat is called a *parka*, doubtless the only Nenets word to make it into the English language. (*Editor's note*).
  10. Yanov Stan is a Selkup settlement where the Prokofievs conducted field research in 1925.
  11. Discussions about the Latin and Cyrillic scripts in the USSR have a long history [M. G. Smith 1998; Vakhtin 2001].
  12. The matter he refers to is the death of a student of Leningrad State University, Natalia A. Kotovshchikova, on the Yamal Peninsula during an expedition in 1928–29.
  13. Cleansing (*chistka*, purges of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union) was the periodic reviews of members of the Communist Party, which became mass repressions.
  14. *Sevfak* (*Severnoyi Fakul'tet*): Faculty of Northern Studies at Leningrad State University.
  15. The practice of crossing the water by reindeer and boats has been known since the 17th century: "The Vaygach Island has a length of about 10 *versty* [an obsolete Russian unit of length of about 1 km—Transl.] or 2 miles [another obsolete unit; an old Russian mile equals 7 *versty*—Transl.]. Samoyeds come there from the mainland. Their boats are made from bark and are drawn by several harnessed reindeer. They cross the waters by [these boats]" [Vitsen 2010: W917].
  16. Among the multiple photographic collections of MAE RAN, there are several *diafilms* (filmstrips) produced for propaganda about the achievements of the Soviet regime, agitation for entering *kolkhozes*, etc. An example of such "agitating images" (for details see Campbell [2014]) is a series of filmstrips by Petr E. Ostrovskikh [MAE# и-776] that contains in particular some illustrations of Nenets life. Along with agitation, these films might be viewed as a type of virtual tourism [Hirsch 2003], as well as a representation of the Soviet North for its inhabitants, or as a means of their conversion to Soviet rule through a demonstration of the ideal present.
  17. In this case I am using the Northern Yamal dialect of the Nenets language.
  18. For researchers of the Nenets culture this church is noteworthy because "Nenets are performing the [religious] services in it themselves." The social life of the ritual constructions left by colonizers is impressive: "The Nenets old men pay flying visits [to it] in the summer. They, of course, do not know the services, but are censuring with the thurible and are singing something like prayers. Immediately in front of the altar they put a sacrifice to god: fish, money. Previously, there was a men's monastery here. All the monks died. Near Khabarovo, in the tundra, there are graves of those monks" [from the inventory to the collection MAE# и-1174].
  19. *Kolkhoz*, a collective farm, a Soviet-state form of economic and social organization of rural communities.
  20. In this regard dwellers of remote areas or such guests from faraway, like Archie visiting the Institute of the Peoples of the North, were becoming a kind of a "field at hand," as Marina D. Liublinskaia termed it [2006].



21. On the other hand the history of visual anthropology in the USSR is almost unknown. Only recently have some works appeared that provide a professional analysis of the history of “ethnographic photography” in Siberia [Anderson, Batashev and Campbell 2015; Anderson and Campbell 2009; Campbell 2014; Tolmacheva 2011].
22. I would like to thank Dmitry V. Ivanov (MAE RAS) for the opportunity to familiarize myself with the materials of Kapitolina V. Viatkina.
23. There are two other feature films worth mentioning: “Valley of Tears” (*Dolina slioz*, directed by Aleksandr E. Razumnyi, 1924; the film is lost) and “Alone” (*Odna*, directed by Leonid Z. Tauberg and Grigorii M. Kozintsev, 1931). The ethnographers Andrei V. Anokhin and Andrei G. Danilin worked as consultants for both films.
24. According to the archival documents Vladimir K. Arsen’ev, staying in contact with the MAE, gave a copy of the film to the museum for its preservation [SPFA RAN 142-1 (1928)-6: 32-32v; SPFA RAN 142-1(1929)-13], but unfortunately it is not listed in the collections of the MAE; probably it was not officially registered there.
25. The idea of making cine films in order to print photos was re-appearing, including manuals on the fieldwork ethnography of the 1960s [Gromov 1996: 22].
26. *Pimy*: winter footwear—Transl. note.
27. *Argishit’/kaslat’/yamdat’*, the Nenets/local Russian words meaning “to nomadize.”
28. Among various manuals on techniques of filmmaking, the work by Kosmatov [1926] was published shortly before Prokofiev’s expedition.
29. This film was recently digitized and presented at the exhibition “River. Stars. Reindeer” that was held with the participation of the author in the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University. I am also working on a paper about the fieldwork and intellectual biography of Ethel J. Lindgren.
30. I would like to thank Elena V. Perevalova (of Ekaterinburg) for directing my attention to the film by Chernetsov and Moshinskaia.

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Litvinov, Alexandr A.

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Prokofiev, Grigorii N., and Ekaterina D. Prokofieva

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Anonymous

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1931 *Быт ненцев* [Lifeways of the Nenets]. Archive: RGAKFD no. 7918. b & w, silent (presumably 16 fps).

Kozin, Sergei G.

1931 [No title; about Giliaks of Amur]. Institution: IPIN; Archive: MAE# 5154. b & w, silent (presumably 16 fps). The film is lost.

Taubert, Leonid Z., and Grigorii M. Kozintsev

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1936–37 (?) *Мангобо най—амурский человек* [Mangobo Nai—the Amur Man]. Mostekhfilm [Moscow Technical Cinema]. Archive: State Cinema Fund of the Russian Federation; b & w, silent (presumably 16 fps).

1936–37 (?) *Буні поктади—дорогой мертвых* [Buni Poktadi—by the Road of the Dead]. Mostekhfilm [Moscow Technical Cinema]. Archive: State Cinema Fund of the Russian Federation; b & w, silent (presumably 16 fps).

1930s (?) *От первобытного коммунизма к социализму* [From primordial Communism towards Socialism]. Film, b & w, silent (presumably 16 fps).

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1948 [No title; about the Bear Festival among Mansi in Vezhakory village]. Leningrad: Institute of the History of Material Culture; Archive: Tomsk State University; b & w, silent (presumably 16 fps).