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# PRACTICING ETHNOLOGY IN CONTEMPORARY RUSSIA

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*The chapter reviews changing priorities of applied studies in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, presented on the background of institutional developments and changes in public status of ethnology in the country. Special emphasis is given to activities of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (Moscow) in this field and to author's personal experience in practicing ethnology during the last 15 years.* Key Words: Russia, applied ethnology, status, institutions, policy

If one looks at the history and present position of ethnology in Russia, one is certain to be puzzled by a paradox. This long-established discipline, which has accumulated an impressive compendium of data as a result of the efforts of many generations of top specialists, was little known to the general public until the late 1980s. Even now it enjoys limited influence in Russian society. Judging from the number of scholars or research and training centers, ethnology in Russia still falls far behind other social sciences and humanities, such as history, philology, economics, sociology, political science, philosophy, and social geography.

The discipline of ethnology was known as ethnography during the Imperial and Soviet periods. Thematically it more or less corresponds to cultural/social anthropology in English-speaking countries. Scholars, working in ethnology, have been receiving scientific degrees and academic statuses in "history," because in the middle 1930s ethnography was officially designated as its subdiscipline. In the Soviet tradition, physical anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics had been developing as separate disciplines, though close contacts between them and ethnography were always maintained. Nevertheless some scholars worked successfully in several of these disciplines, like late academician Valery Alekseev, who combined research in physical anthropology and archaeology with studies in ethnology and ethnic ecology. In Russia, only physical anthropology maintained rather close institutional contacts with ethnology, so that one can often choose to defend the same dissertation either in "history" (subdiscipline "ethnology, ethnography, anthropology") or in "biology" (subdiscipline "anthropology, human biology").

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Generally speaking, there is no officially or unofficially institutionalized special subdiscipline of applied ethnology in Russia with its own professional organizations, departments or research groups, conferences or regularly held working meetings, uniform terms, research methods and goals, or even discussions of the latter in academic journals. The only exception is a collection of papers (Stepanov 1999), and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow publishes the special series "Issledovania po prikladnoy i neotlozhnoy etnologii" ("Studies in Applied and Urgent Ethnology"), slightly more than 180 issues during 1990–2005, each one being a brochure of some 25–30 pp. long. On the other hand, Russian scholars have done great deal of work in this field.

A good illustration of this situation can be seen in the recent activities of the Association of Russian Ethnographers and (Physical) Anthropologists. It was formed in 1990 as a public professional organization on the initiative of Professor Valery Tishkov, convened six biannual congresses between 1995 and 2005, and became known to all professionals. Some 800 to 900 scholars have been sending their abstracts for the largest congresses, such as those held in Moscow (1999), Omsk (2003), and St. Petersburg (2005). Some 25–45 sections and symposia were working at every Congress, each attracting some 10–30 scholars or even more. Among these, there was only one special session on "Applied Ethnology" at the Moscow Congress in 1999, organized by Mr. A. Karpukhin, Dr. E. Miskova, and the author; the session was composed of only six papers, including three from the organizers themselves. At the same time, many sessions at these congresses were in fact dealing with applied ethnology, especially ethnopolitics, ethnolinguistics, land use practices, and land rights of aboriginal ethnic groups in Siberia and the Far North, with practically no attention to the methodological or ethical issues of the studies that have been done with the prime aim to prevent or induce considerable changes in the lives of many people.

In order to understand this situation better, one can compare "applied ethnology" with, for example, "ethnic ecology," a subdiscipline that is thematically rather close to American cultural ecology or ecological anthropology (Kozlov 1983). During the last decade, the Department of Ethnic Ecology in the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (Moscow) published several collections of papers and organized symposia at the biannual Congresses of the Association of Russian Ethnographers and Physical Anthropologists (a total of five in 1997–2005, each attracting 15 to 20 papers). There is also a series entitled "Studies in Ethnic Geography and Ethnic Ecology" (published in St. Petersburg), and several formally announced ethnoecological sections were held within other conferences. At the same time, numbers of all scholars, including those who work in ethnic ecology only occasionally, have been dozens of times less than those who have been engaged in applied projects.

Consequently, there are no special studies devoted to critical assessment of contemporary applied ethnology in the country. The only exception was a preliminary attempt to review the history of applying ethnological expertise in the USSR/Russia and the situation in this field as it was in the early to middle 1990s (Yamskov, Dubova, 1997). The latter review served as a basis for this chapter, but since this time my colleague and former coauthor, Professor Nadezhda Dubova, was unable to join in revising the paper, the

issues of applying physical anthropology and human ecology were omitted from the following text.

## HISTORY OF RUSSIAN ETHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONS: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The first ethnographic data recorded in Ancient Russia (Kievan Rus') in medieval chronicles began with Nestor's "Povest Vremennykh Let" (A Story about Old Years) in the early 12th century. This tradition survived for many centuries and, in Siberia, it stopped only in the late 17th century with the chronicle written by Semen Remisov.

During the time of Peter the Great, who transformed Russian Tzardom into an Empire and westernized the ruling elite in the beginning of the 18th century, the first scientific expeditions started to work in the country. Invited foreign scholars or Russians, trained in a Western manner, started to collect ethnographic data along with information about mineral resources, physical geography, and so on, mainly at the outskirts of the Empire. The tradition of government-organized expeditions in which both military personnel and civilian scholars took part lasted up to the start of the 20th century in the Far East (Pacific coast) or Central Asia, but the most productive period was in the 18th to 19th centuries.

Peter the Great established the first Museum, "Kunstkamera," in 1714, and the Academy of Sciences in 1724. Both of these were state institutions in St. Petersburg, organizing expeditions and studying and exhibiting the resulting collections, including ethnographic ones. In 1831 Peter's Kunstkamera was divided into seven separate museums, one of them being the Museum of Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences (Stanyukovich 1974). Having gone through many reorganizations, currently it is known as the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) of the Russian Academy of Sciences, being composed of museum and institute, and it comprises the oldest and second largest ethnological research center in Russia.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, a great impetus to the development of ethnography was given by the state-sponsored or private activities of army officers or civilian administrators. They compiled descriptions, often very detailed and accurate, of certain newly acquired territories where they were stationed and of their new neighbors—the local peoples. Ethnographic and folkloristic research among ethnic Russians and other peoples of the European part of the Empire also started in the early 19th century, but mainly due to the efforts of unofficial, well-educated amateurs.

The Russian Emperor's Geographical Society was established in 1845 in St. Petersburg, and from the start, academician Karl Behr organized there the first official ethnographic research institution in the country, the Department of Ethnography. It became the major coordinating and consultative, publishing, and organizing center of ethnographic research, including state-sponsored expeditions, for the next 50 years.

The Russian Geographical Society and its Department of Ethnography also exists now, organizing symposia and occasionally publishing proceedings or collections of

papers, which are presented at the regular monthly sessions. As in the last two centuries, branches of the Society still are formally surviving in major regional centers of Russia, but now, having virtually no funds and a staff of one or two clerks only, they do not act as real research and publishing centers.

In Moscow, the Society of Amateur Natural Scientists, Physical Anthropologists and Ethnographers was formed in 1863 in the form of a public organization, affiliated with the Moscow State University. It became a fund-raising, coordinating, and publishing center too, though less important than the Geographical Society, and unlike the latter, it ceased operating in 1931. Nevertheless, this Society started the first regular specialized journal in 1889—*Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* (Ethnographic Review). In 1992 the journal *Sovetskaya etnografia* (Soviet Ethnography) was renamed after this predecessor.

Professor Dmitriy Anuchin, famous for his research in geography, ethnography, archaeology, and physical anthropology, established the first training centers in Russia. In 1880 the Chair of Anthropology was established with courses in physical anthropology and ethnography (Tokarev 1966), and in 1884 the Chair of Geography and Ethnography (Markov and Solovey 1990) was established. Both were located at Moscow State University.

The history of Russian ethnology before 1917 was studied in detail by Professor Sergey Tokarev, though he did not cover the problems and areas of applied research (Tokarev 1966). The same is true for many articles on the topic of Russian ethnology, appearing mostly in the continuing series of collections *Ocherki istorii russkoy etnografii, folkloristiki i antropologii* (Essays on the History of Russian Ethnography, Folklore Studies and Physical Anthropology), published by "Nauka" Press in Moscow and Leningrad/St. Petersburg.

During pre-Revolutionary times, Russian ethnology was forming as a discipline with a strongly applied character, as was typical for any colonial power of that time. It was even considered by the officials as a prime source of local-scale economic and geopolitical information. The major focus was on traditional economy and land use, settlement patterns, demography, folk law, beliefs (religion), and folklore of the populations under study. Social and military organization and political, economic, and marital links with neighboring groups also were studied in detail. Starting with the medieval chronicles, special attention was always paid to the folk knowledge of the origins, history, and past migrations of the surveyed populations.

## SOVIET ETHNOLOGY: RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTERS

After the October Revolution of 1917, the first departments of ethnography/ethnology were established in the country, showing the growing importance of the discipline. In 1919 the Department of Ethnography was organized in the newly established Institute of Geography in St. Petersburg (Tokarev 1974). The same year in Moscow, Professor Dm. Anuchin reestablished the Chair of Anthropology (with courses in ethnography) in the "old" university and the new "1st" university was organized with the Chair of Ethnology (from 1922), which transformed into the Department of Ethnology in 1925. Professor P. Preobrazhensky from that department produced the first Soviet textbook, *Ethnology*, published in 1929.

However, the methodological discussions of the late 1920s turned into ideological and finally into political ones in the 1930s. Professor P. Preobrazhensky, who advocated ethnology as a more "progressive" and nearly universal social science with strong links to sociology, strongly criticized the old "czarist" ethnography for its ties with geography. He later lost his case and was jailed and killed and his textbook was forbidden (for more details about those tragic events, see Slezkin 1993). For some time in the early 1930s, there was no training in either ethnography (not to speak about the banned ethnology) or history in the universities, and there were no classes in history in the schools of the USSR (except for the history of the Communist movement or October Revolution.)

In 1934 history courses were reestablished in the Soviet universities, the historical faculties and departments reopened, and ethnography was allowed again, but as nothing more than a specialized part of history. Chairs of Ethnography were organized from the middle 1930s at the Faculties of History in the Universities of Leningrad and Moscow, in the latter by professor Sergey Tolstov in 1939 (Markov and Solovey 1990). Due to ideological reasons, the "old" ethnography had been drastically transformed in its methodology and research priorities and compelled to avoid any methodological links or cooperation with geography (or ecology and environmental sciences, as was the case in the 1970s and early 1980s).

But some professionals continued their work in museums and some state research organizations even during the early 1930s. In Leningrad, in 1933, scholars from the former Department of Ethnography at the Institute of Geography were joined with the research staff of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology and of the former Institute for the Studies of the Peoples of the USSR (the latter was established in 1930 on the basis of the Commission on the Studies of Tribal Composition of Population in Russia and Adjacent Countries that functioned since 1917). Together they formed a new research institution that went through several reorganizations and in 1937 finally became the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences, while the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography was merged into it as its part the same year.

The Moscow Branch of the Institute of Ethnography was formed and headed by Professor Sergey Tolstov in 1942. Soon it became the leading research center in the country, being renamed the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in 1990. In 1992 the Moscow and St. Petersburg branches became independent institutions of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The postwar period saw the gradual spread of research and training institutions from Moscow and Leningrad to provincial centers, mainly during the 1960s and 1970s. Currently, every republic of the Russian Federation has a branch research institute, affiliated with the republican or regional branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences or the Republican Ministry of Education. In every one of 19 such institutes there are departments of linguistics and literature, history, ethnography, and archaeology. In some cases, such institutes have differentiated, but nowhere have independent ethnological research centers appeared.

Major regional centers, such as Vladivostok, Novosibirsk, Omsk, and Tyumen', have the same kind of research institutes as republics, but these regional institutions belong to

the Russian Academy of Sciences. The research institutes usually have up to a dozen or slightly more ethnologists, with about one hundred in St. Petersburg and about two hundred in Moscow. Most of them have scientific degrees and are engaged in academic research. In Moscow and St. Petersburg they are training postgraduate students, and some scholars, purely by individual choice, have an extra job as lecturers in the universities or pedagogical universities. Professional ethnologists also work in many provincial museums that are devoted to local history and geography and usually have ethnographic sections. Often individuals combine work in the local university as a part-time lecturer and work in the museum as a researcher and lecturer, if both exist in the city.

Chairs of Ethnology are operating at the Faculties of History in the Universities of Moscow, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Omsk, and Kazan' (Republic of Tatarstan) and in a few other places. The staff of these chairs rarely exceeds a dozen or two dozen trained scholars who combine lecturing in ethnology and academic research. Students, training in ethnology, do not have compulsory basic courses in applied ethnology or textbooks in this field.

It has been estimated that the leading training center in the country (Chair of Ethnology at the Faculty of History in the Moscow State University) prepared some 800 graduate and postgraduate students between 1945 and 1990 (Markov and Solovey 1990). This number includes some foreigners and persons from the previous Union Republics. It can be assumed that something like 500–600 of them were graduate students from the Russian Federation. We can add about 150–200 persons, trained during the 1990s to early 2000s, and some more 150–200 persons who got a five-year university education in geography, history, sociology, and other sciences but went for postgraduate studies in ethnography and thus became professionals too. The number of scholars, trained in ethnography/ethnology outside Moscow, is probably slightly less or at best the same. These figures give an idea of the general size of the ethnological community in Russia.

To better understand the very modest position of ethnology in contemporary Russia, it is worth mentioning that there were no faculties or departments of ethnology anywhere in the country before the 1990s. Most provincial and republican capitals had universities with faculties or departments of history and of geography (as a rule) and, often, departments of philosophy or sociology, and, in recent years, of political science. Numerous researchers and lecturers in such disciplines as the history of the Communist Party of the USSR, scientific communism, political economy of socialism, and so on, moved to the political sciences or sociology after the end of the USSR. They have organized many new or enlarged old departments and chairs of social sciences.

On the other hand, in the 1990s newly established non-state commercial universities in several cases started teaching ethnology, cultural studies, or social-cultural anthropology, forming such departments or faculties. It is still not clear what the actual standards of education there are. Practically the only one new center of ethnological education that has already gained good reputation has been organized within the State University for Humanities in Moscow, and mostly scholars from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology read lectures there.

## THE SOVIET PERIOD: APPLYING RESULTS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

Though applied ethnology, as a distinct subdiscipline with its organizations, methods, and aims, had not formed during the Soviet period, the idea of translating research results into practice was always promoted by officials in both the Academy and universities. The section on application was, for instance, an important and unavoidable part of annual reports about one's work that every scholar or lecturer had to submit to the administration of his or her institution.

Generally speaking, Soviet ethnographers acted only as consultants to state officials, producing reports with information and recommendations on special requests, or on their own initiative, but with no influence on the process of policy formulation and decision making. Those few scholars who joined government organizations usually stopped their own research and publishing activities. There were two major exceptions to this rule that made it possible to speak about applied ethnography in a real sense—the work of ethnographers in the North in the 1920s and the Khoresm expedition to Aral basin in the 1950s to 1980s. In both cases, ethnographers were participating in the process of implementation of their recommendations.

In the 1920s the major focus of Soviet ethnography was on the Northern indigenous groups, and many ethnographers played crucial roles in developing alphabets and written (suited for future literature) languages of these groups, sometimes working as teachers themselves. This work was analyzed in a special article (Antropova 1972); a bibliography of some reports of practitioners that were published in the 1920s also is available (see Slezkin 1993). The ethnographers were successful too in such a delicate field as collectivization in the North. By constantly monitoring the actual subsistence economy and migrations, and being able to appeal to top state and party officials, ethnographers did the most to slow down the process, for more than a decade, and to minimize the losses that the people suffered. In the 1970s and 1980s, ethnographers produced many reports, criticizing the state economic and social policies in the North and their effects on indigenous populations. Judging from the role of ethnographers in changing or preserving traditional lifestyles of entire ethnic groups, the Soviet North and Siberia are the most important examples of applying results of ethnographic studies.

The other most important region of the USSR, from the point of view of economic and social consequences of applying results of ethnographic research, has been Central Asia. Here the founder and the first director of the Moscow Institute, Professor Sergey Tolstov, organized after World War II the Khoresm expedition for multidisciplinary research on ethnography, archaeology, and paleogeography of the Aral area. As a result, many formerly irrigated fields were found and some of them, after the information was given to local officials, were re-irrigated and settled again after centuries of being desert pastures. Two decades ago, the now late Professors Boris Andrianov and Alexander Vinogradov, and retired head of the department Professor Larisa Levina, took the lead in discussions and abortive planning (because of the split of the USSR) of measures to ameliorate the severe ecological crisis in the Aral area.

Ethnographers from the Commission on the Studies of Tribal Composition of Population in Russia and Adjacent Countries also played a crucial role in demarcating the boundaries of the republics and autonomous regions when they were formed in the USSR in the 1920s. Actually, the project to create ethnic maps, showing areas settled and used by all ethnic groups of the country, was launched just before the Revolution of 1917. The scholars, who survived and stayed in Russia, were recruited to finish the project and to consult on the new "national" boundaries. But in this politically sensitive field, the decision making remained in the hands of the party and state officials, and the scholars served as consultants only.

For almost the whole Soviet period there were repeated attempts to eradicate the folk or religious ceremonies, beliefs, and practices corresponding to major events of the life cycle and to introduce the new, socialist ones. Especially strenuous efforts were made in the 1930s and in the 1960s and early 1970s. However, no famous ethnographer took part in these actions despite heavy ideological pressure. But research in this field was organized and many scholars monitored the situation in different areas of the USSR and among different ethnic groups, informing the state and communist party institutions.

During the last years of the USSR, when ethnic conflicts started to spread over the country, ethnographers were very active in preparing reports to the Central Committee of the CPSU. Reports were also prepared for the government on the history, present situation, and possible future developments of ethnic contacts in all multiethnic areas, both conflict-ridden and still peaceful. Such reporting on interethnic relations was taking place in the earlier times too, but not on such a large scale.

By the middle 1980s, writing reports to official bodies on practical issues (i.e., interethnic relations, or social-economic, cultural-linguistic, and medical-demographical problems of certain ethnic groups) was considered one of the major components of professional ethnographic research. Others activities included fieldwork, publication of articles and monographs, or presentation of conference papers. Nevertheless, there is no mention of applied ethnography as a subdivision of the discipline and there are no reviews of the methods or goals of the application of ethnographic research in either of the two postwar Soviet-period textbooks. Both books, however, did refer to fields of applying results of ethnological studies and about their practical importance (Tokarev 1958; Bromley and Markov 1982).

## PRACTICING ETHNOLOGY IN THE LATE 1980S AND EARLY 1990S

The period immediately before and after the split of the USSR should be reviewed separately for many reasons. Democratization made ethnologists far more active, not only in writing reports and providing information and recommendations but also in stressing the need for their active participation in all stages of activities organized by the state, and more likely to change the lives of the ethnic groups they study. The state officials themselves became more interested in joint work with specialists in cases where

public opinion might turn out to be negative and generate opposition in the popular mass media. Ethnic tensions, pogroms, and open conflicts made ethnography/ethnology and ethnologists if not popular, at least known to the public, and the term *ethnicity* and its derivatives occupied newspapers for the first time.

Practicing ethnology in that period could be divided in two parts: (1) planned, but abortive, activities (usually very interesting methodologically) and (2) actions that were fully realized. Among the latter was a completely new development in which professional ethnologists emerged as key political figures or as state officials who continued (unlike in the past) to publish their scholarly works and political manifestos centered on ethnic issues.

Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow also played an important role in the professional careers of well-known political figures. Some of these figures include (1) the late Dr. Galina Starovoitova, member of both the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1989–91) and Supreme Soviet of Russia (1990–93), one of the leaders of democratic opposition, and chief advisor on ethnic affairs to President B. Yeltsin (1992); (2) Dr. Mikhail Chlenov, leader of the Zionist movement of Soviet (Russia and C.I.S.) Jews; (3) Dr. Evdokia Gaer, member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (1989–91) and Parliament of Russia (in the middle 1990s), deputy head of the State Committee on the North (1991–93), and one of the public leaders of indigenous minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East; (4) Professor Valery Tishkov, head of the State Committee on Nationalities' Affairs (1992); (5) late Dr. Arthur Mkrtchyan, first elected president of the self-proclaimed Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (1990); and (6) Dr. Eldar Namazov, advisor on ethnic affairs and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict to the late former President of Azerbaijan Mr. Geidar Aliev during the 1990s.

Actually professional ethnologists were leading consultants on all sides in numerous ethnic conflicts all over the former USSR, thus splitting the professional community itself along ethnic lines. Many consultants finally moved into government to become officials. The Moscow Institute alone provided nearly a dozen officials who worked in various governmental institutions of the Russian Federation.

The consultative activities of academic or university ethnologists gained momentum and gradually turned into constant cooperation with government bodies or officials. It happened mostly because many scholars, who moved to government organizations in Moscow, were maintaining contacts with their former colleagues, including them in various teams of experts working on new prospective laws or concepts of federal policies that touch upon ethnic or cultural issues.

For the first time, ethnologists were able not only to criticize state actions or plans in their unpublished reports but also to play an important role in preventing some of the industrial projects they considered to be potentially harmful to the local ethnic groups. Though the main reasons to stop these projects were financial, articles in professional journals helped to postpone the construction of new electric power stations and water reservoirs in Siberia and Altay mountains (Savoskul and Karlov 1988; Stepanov 1993).

## THE BAIKAL PROJECT: AN EXAMPLE OF ABORTED APPLIED RESEARCH

The last years of the USSR witnessed many abortive projects based entirely, or to a large extent, on applied ethnology, which were terminated due to the political and economic crisis. The author and his colleagues were invited to the Baikal project in 1990 by its Buryat organizers. Originally the preparation of the special Law of the USSR on Lake Baikal, aimed at conservation of this largest reservoir of fresh water on Earth, was accompanied by a large-scale social and ecological development program in the basin of the lake. The idea was to restructure industry and agriculture in order to reduce the pollution. Local Buryat intellectuals seized the opportunity and put forward an idea to achieve both conservation of nature and preservation of the culture and language of the Buryats. Buryats are an indigenous minority ethnic group in the Buryat republic, located on the eastern shores of Lake Baikal. Former pastoral nomads and seminomads, Buryats had been forcefully settled in villages and predominantly Russian towns since the 1930s. Living and working among Russians, they were forgetting their Mongolian language and culture, which had been adapted for pastoralism but not for farming or an industrial lifestyle.

The basic proposition of the cultural-ecological approach to the Baikal project assumed that the Soviet system of collectivized agriculture caused sedentarization of previously unsettled groups. At the same time, local ethnic and culturally distinct components of the rural population were concentrated in and around the largest settlements. The human impact and its environmentally negative results were serious, causing soil erosion of large fields and overstocked pastures and contamination of river and runoff waters by refuse from large animal farms. In order to reduce erosion and pollution, technological innovations (often very expensive) are required, although simple decentralization of the rural population and its activities can help too since it can reduce the impact in crisis areas by removing part of it to presently unused territories. Decentralization of the rural population is simply a partial return to its traditional economic occupations and settlement patterns, including those that are seminomadic. Thus, it would not pose a problem, provided the population still remembers the former lifestyle and is ready to resume it. The portion of the rural population that would return to the traditional life and economy would also preserve its language (Buryats, Evenks) and unique culture (various Russian and Buryats groups) from linguistic Russification and cultural urbanization (Russians) or marginalization (non-Russians).

In the Baikal basin and in the Buryat Republic, the rural population (398,000 persons in 1989) is culturally heterogeneous. Ethnic Buryats (35 percent of the total) still remember well their "tribal" affiliation. The tribes, some of which moved from the steppes of Mongolia two to three centuries ago or from the Siberian woodlands on the western shore of Baikal, differed greatly with respect to the roles of pastoralism, hunting, and farming in their economies. They also differed in the frequency and distance of seasonal migrations and in the animals they were raising (for instance, all had sheep, but only

"Mongolian tribes" had camels). Those groups that formed Buryat Cossack regiments of border guards had a very specific economy and culture too. Evenks (0.3 percent), living in the northern areas, were once taiga hunters with reindeer used for transportation (Soviet Information Center 1990:145).

Ethnic Russians (62 percent of the total) in the area are comprised of the following groups: Old Believers (Semeiskie) engaged mainly in farming; Old Settlers (Sibiryaki) who combined farming with hunting; and Russian Cossacks who were engaged in farming and stock-breeding. All these Russian groups had the practice of using an individual seasonal household ("zaimki") in the forest or steppes for winter hunting or feeding and pasturing animals, or for summer plowing of supplementary lands and pasturing animals, in addition to a central home in the village. The other fraction of the rural Russian population—descendants of the migrant peasants of the 1900s to 1910s—had no such distant additional farms located 5 to 15–25 kilometers from the main village.

The traditions of most groups comprising the present rural population of the area make it possible to decentralize the rural population and its activities, revitalizing seminomadic pastoralism among Buryats and extensive private farming based on additional seasonal households among Russians. The problem was, first, to determine the exact nature of the economic, land use, and settlement patterns in certain villages, and among certain ethnic and cultural groups, some 60–70 years ago. The existing ethnographic data, being very rich in reconstructions of "typical" or more developed samples of traditional economic systems and seasonal migrations of Buryats or Old Believers, could not be used for this task. It was not designed to characterize every locality, not to mention specific villages and their major population groups. Second, it was necessary to find out what part of the present population from every ethnic and cultural group wants to, and has the knowledge and skills to, leave large rural settlements. Third, it was essential to work out some recommendations for possible problems related to schooling and medical services for those who would leave existing villages.

Unfortunately, financial problems in the early 1990s made our participation impossible. Colleagues from the Buryat Republic continued work for some time. By the middle 1990s fundamental economic and political changes in the country transformed both social priorities of regional authorities and public opinion. The planned project has been abandoned even in its research part, not to speak about attempts to implement the described social-ecological goals.

Essentially the same projects, though on a much lesser scale, also were launched in Northern Sakhalin among Nivkhs, in Western Siberia among Khanty and Mansi, and in a few other places in the North and Siberia. The idea was to use professional ethnographers, as specialists in the traditional cultures of these peoples, who could provide information about now abandoned hunting and fishing grounds of present indigenous populations, the present economy and culture of these groups, and their ability and desire to move from large modern settlements. The purpose of these projects was to allow populations to resume previous occupations and lifestyles in order to escape

from linguistic Russification and cultural marginalization in predominantly Russian settlements.

## KEY THEMES IN PRACTICING ETHNOLOGY IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA

Generally speaking, since the middle 1990s major areas for applied ethnological projects in Russia have been the following:

1. ethnopolitical studies, especially research in monitoring interethnic relations and tensions and managing ethnic conflicts;
2. studies of ethnic migrations and research in ethnic demography (demographic changes in multiethnic regions), closely related to the former;
3. studies of land use practices in the North and Siberia and of implementation of the rights of indigenous minorities, including social-ethnological assessments of development projects for international and Russian industrial companies or international organizations like the World Bank.

When speaking about major practical results, one should probably start with the works by Professor Valery Tishkov on the Chechen conflict with many critical remarks about what has been done wrong and many recommendations on what could be done and what options still exist (see, for example, Tishkov 2001). But from methodological and organizational points of view, it looks like much less known results of his activities in applied ethnopolitics are even more important. At his Center for the Study and Management of Ethnic Conflicts at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, he formed a network of scholars from most multiethnic regions of Russia and many post-Soviet states, constantly monitoring and analyzing ethnopolitical information and sharing it via electronic mail with the Moscow office. To make different scholars work together and produce compatible analytical papers, the set of social, economic, demographic, environmental, and other sorts of criteria for measuring interethnic tensions and probability of ethnic conflicts has been prepared under his guidance. This "model of ethnological monitoring" has been described in Russian and in English in several publications (see, for example, Kisriev 1999). The results of the work have been published regularly as *Bulletins of the Network of Ethnological Monitoring* (usually six issues in a year) or as separate monographs, devoted to a particular republic or multiethnic province of the Russian Federation (like Kisriev 1999). The information has been provided to the governmental institutions on a regular basis. Many other Russian scholars work actively in this field of applied ethnopolitical studies too, making it by far the most popular type of practicing ethnology.

Studies of ethnic migrations and demographic trends make up another thematic area with really important results, achieved recently in applied ethnology. On the one hand, ethnic aspects of migrations and demography have become focal points of public discussions and political rhetoric, thus requiring scholarly analysis. The reasons are

obvious—it is sufficient to say that in the 1990s Russia ranked third in the world (after the U.S. and Germany) in the total number of immigrants, coming mostly from the post-Soviet states. For more than a decade, ethnic Russians, Mordvins, Udmurts, and most other Christianized ethnic groups in the Volga basin and European North were diminishing in numbers due to low birth rates, while Muslim ethnic groups from the Northern Caucasus were demographically growing fast and migrating to the cities. This created widespread anti-migrant xenophobia, and to some extent ethnonationalistic and even racist sentiments, thus forming a strong demand to study the phenomena and to present advice for authorities on how to deal with such things. Practicing ethnology in this field means not only analyzing these issues and providing such advice but also sometimes taking part as experts in court hearings on alleged public manifestations of ethnic prejudice and ethnically or racially motivated public insults.

On the other hand, for several years Russian authorities were preparing the population census of 2002, and ethnologists played decisive role in working out the documentation. The problems solved, though not exactly in the way the interested scholars recommended, were the following: the form and sequence of questions and the list of ethnic groups, or "nationalities," of Russia. The most controversial was the latter—in fact, ethnologists were helping the authorities to decide what local communities with specific cultural identities should be considered separate ethnic groups ("peoples" or "nationalities"). They were concerned about which groups can register as such and what communities, despite their shared cultural identity and self-name, should be taken as parts of the larger ethnic groups.

For instance, especially heated debates have been taking place on the issue of Kryashens (from the distorted Russian word *Kreshchenyi*, meaning baptized) — a Tatar-speaking group belonging to the Russian Orthodox Church — for the last few centuries. Kryashens really have a strong identity, and their leaders started in the 1990s the public campaign to register from now on (and as it was in the 1926 census) as a separate ethnic group, but not as part of the Tatars. Most scholars from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow recommended the federal authorities to accept these claims, while authorities and scholars from the Republic of Tatarstan maintained that most Kryashens have dual ethnic identity and perceive themselves as a culturally specific part of the Tatar people. The 2002 census registered Kryashens as in all the previous censuses, but the problem is how to calculate and publish data regarding whether Kryashens should be listed separately among peoples of the Russian Federation. Or should their number be added to that of the Tatars (as it was done in all previous censuses, except the one of 1926)? It looked as though political considerations would prevail again over ethnological assessment, and officially Kryashens would remain a part of the Tatars. There were many more such cases and other methodological and political problems in preparation of the population census of 2002 (for some details see Tishkov 2003).

Studies of the present position of aboriginal (indigenous minority) communities of the North, Siberia, and the Far East and consultative activities within regional and

federal legislations conducted in order to safeguard their rights make up another major field of current work in applied ethnology. In this case we may probably speak about actual and rather important practical results in institutional development, achieved by professional ethnologists.

First of all, scholars took an active part on all stages of preparing new draft federal laws concerning these peoples. For instance, Professors Zoya Sokolova and Valery Tishkov from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology produced a first draft version of the basic Law on the Rights of Indigenous Ethnic Groups of the North, Siberia, and the Far East that would regulate their land rights, among other things. Later, they reviewed the draft version after its editing and transformation by other experts and officials, thus continuing the work on a permanent basis. Finally, with participation of many other scholars, a set of federal laws was prepared and passed: "On guarantees of the rights of the indigenous minority peoples of the Russian Federation" (April 30, 1999); "On general principles of organizing communities of the indigenous minority peoples of North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation" (June 20, 2000); and "On territories of traditional use of natural resources by the indigenous minority peoples of North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation" (May 7, 2001). In addition, ethnologists were quite successful in incorporating some indigenous rights for traditional use of biological resources into federal laws "On hunting" and "On fishing," while the law "On reindeer-breeding" was still under consideration in the State Duma at the start of the year 2006. General ideas and some information about the debates in this field can be found in some of my previous publications in English (Yamskov 1999, 2001). Unfortunately, adoption of these federal and more detailed regional laws, aimed at safeguarding rights of the indigenous minority peoples of the North and Siberia, failed to resolve the situation. The laws were either not fully implemented or were not covering all the social-economic or cultural problems that these ethnic groups were facing.

The potentially most important aspect of this legislation, judging from the point of view of further development of applied ethnology in Russia, was the federal law "On guarantees of the rights of the indigenous minority peoples." Article 1, part 6, and Article 8, part 6 of the law introduce the term "ethnological assessment" for the first time in Russia, stating that in certain cases it should be unavoidable and compulsory, like environmental impact assessment, and that representatives of indigenous communities have a right to participate in both of them. In 1999 activities started in the State Duma on preparing the draft law "On ethnological assessment," and the federal law "On environmental impact assessment in the Russian Federation" (November 23, 1995) is used as a model for it. Dr. Valery V. Stepanov from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow prepared one draft version in 1998–99 (for details see Stepanov 2002), but during the last few years the work on the law stopped several times, leading to partial loss of documents. At the moment the work is postponed again, but it should be carried on, since one of federal laws now requires that the "ethnological assessment" should be defined in Russian federal legislation. Currently the collective monograph, compiled by Dr. Valery Stepanov (1999), is probably the only book in Russia devoted to methods of social-ethnological and ethnoecological assessments. The latter were developed by

V. Stepanov and the staff of the Department of Ethnic Ecology of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology during the late 1980s to middle 1990s.

Meanwhile, the World Bank's documents concerning the rights of indigenous groups in economic projects are often used as a model by Russian practicing ethnologists and indigenous activists. Many Russian scholars, especially those working in Siberia and the North, have personal experience of work for the World Bank as experts on indigenous communities and thus know about its procedures and internal documents on indigenous policies (see Yamskov 2002). It is hard to underestimate the positive role that this international agency played as a donor of modern concepts about indigenous rights to traditionally used lands and biological resources, as well as ways of organizing and methods of carrying out social-ethnological assessments of the planned economic projects.

In general, the impact of globalization on Russian applied ethnology in the 1990s was mainly manifested by two facts. First, some international agencies (like the World Bank) and transnational oil companies started operating in Russia. They organized social-ethnological assessments of their projects, affecting indigenous minority groups in the taiga and tundra natural zones and thus setting an example for the Russian private and state-owned companies and ministries to do the same. So ethnologists and sociologists found a new sphere of well-paid activities, and many scholars, especially residing in Siberia and the Far East, gained good experience in this field. Second, practically at the same time international aboriginal organizations, activists, and foreign anthropologists started working in the North and Siberia too, thus stimulating activities of the Russian scholars to defend aboriginal land rights through advising on or giving examples in organizing and financing such actions. Other influences of globalization could be hardly seen on the background of such fundamental changes as the end of the USSR (and of serious state support for academic institutions) amid rising ethnic conflicts and inter-ethnic tensions and inflow of migrants from southern republics and states.

It looks like another issue in applied ethnology, gaining momentum right now, in the late 1990s to early 2000s, represents a different case in a sense that methodological or organizational influences from abroad were of minor importance in its emergence and development. It is the study of Islamic fundamentalism (mostly in republics of the Northern Caucasus) in order to understand the social factors helping these Wahhabist communities to attract young people and to involve some of them in terrorist activities. These communities appeared in the early 1990s thanks to Islamic teachers from Saudi Arabia or Gulf states and their generous financial support, while ethnographic research within these communities and publication of its results started in the late 1990s. The research actually deals mainly with the question of why certain persons leave so-called traditional Islamic communities and join the new Wahhabist ones, despite inevitable open conflicts with the local traditional Mullah and their traditionally oriented parents, relatives, and neighbors. What could be done by the local authorities and leaders of traditional Muslim communities to prevent or minimize the number of such events (for example, see Yarlykapov 2000)? As yet, regularly voiced demands of traditional Muslim clergy and of some presidents of republics with Muslim population to ban Wahhabism in the Russian Federation have been ignored by the federal government. They are

contradicting the constitutional rights for religious freedom, as well as freedoms of organizing public associations (including new religious communities), of meetings, and of speech. Nevertheless, the situation in many areas is quite tense, and there were many cases of open violence between "Traditionalist" and "Wahhabist" Muslims. However, in sharp contrast to speeches of some political or religious leaders, issues of preventing the spread of international radical Islamic terrorism do not prevail in such studies, and the problem is usually perceived as a socially and intellectually motivated split within the local Muslim community, though originally initiated by outsiders. Thus speculations about radical Islamic or terrorist dimensions of globalization are usually left outside ethnographic field studies of the phenomena, despite their applied character and strong demand for results from various public figures or institutions.

Speaking about major areas of applying ethnology, one can also use the series "Studies in Applied and Urgent Ethnology," published by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow, as a source of quantitative information on research priorities in contemporary Russia. Between 1995 and 2006, 104 issues were published, each one being 20–30 pages. It is important to note that 35 papers were authored or coauthored by scholars from other institutions, including visiting researchers or persons who simply sent their manuscripts to the editors (V. A. Tishkov, M. Yu. Martynova, N. A. Lopulenko). So the themes covered in the series characterize academic interests and ideas of what is applied ethnological research of not only the Institute's staff but also a much wider group of researchers and practitioners.

In general, 70 papers from the field of ethnic conflicts and interethnic relations report current ethnopolitical situations in various republics or multiethnic regions of the Russian Federation. They also report on desired linguistic and cultural policies for certain ethnic minorities (except for the indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia) and the development of religions in multiethnic areas and relations between members of different confessions. There were also 16 publications about indigenous minorities of the North, their land use practices, and their social and economic position (Yamskov 1996; Klokov et al. 2001). One issue was devoted to the same problems of the Kazakh pastoralists and another one to social economic changes in several ethnic communities in Moldova. Papers on migrations and demographic trends of certain ethnic groups were published only 15 times, many of them being devoted to preparation or preliminary analysis of the Russian population census of 2002. One author wrote about the present role of folk law on the island of Sardinia.

In my personal experience in practicing ethnology during the same period of 1995–2005, I found that some 20 major unpublished works have been prepared by me, mostly becoming part of jointly authored papers. Among those there are 9 papers on the rights and land use of northern minorities in Siberia, six papers on ethnopolitics, and three on settlement patterns, migrations, and demographic trends in other areas of the country exist. It gives an idea of relative importance and financing of these fields of applied research in contemporary Russia.

Practically all requests for the works of the Russian governmental organizations came to me through the director or deputy directors of the Institute of Ethnology and

Anthropology. In most of those cases, I was paid small bonuses from the Institute's budget or had to perform the work for my basic salary only. For example, I prepared reports such as the following: (1) "Comments on the Analytical Report 'On Revising General Scheme of Population Distribution and Settlement Pattern of the Russian Federation and other Relevant Documentation in Order to Assess Regions' Capabilities to Receive Migrants' " (2002, 57 pp.), prepared in January 2003 for the State Committee of Construction Works; (2) "Proposals about Formulations in the Program of the Russian Population Census of 1999," written in August 1995 for the State Committee on Statistics (the census actually took place only in 2002); and (3) "Comments on 'The Concept of the State Policies towards Nationalities of the Russian Federation,' " prepared in April 2003 for the Minister, Mr. V. Zorin (former head of the Ministry of Nationalities' Affairs and Regional Policies). In all those and many other cases, I worked, for the most part, individually. However, at the same time, two to four of my colleagues were doing the same work, and at the end someone from the administration of the Institute was integrating the papers and preparing the final version of the document, thus formulating position(s) of the Institute on the issue under discussion.

After coauthoring several reports to the Security Council of Russia, in July 1996 I received a request directly from this organization to act as a scientific supervisor, organizing a research group. I would prepare the analytical document "Ethnopolitical and National-Cultural Aspects of the National Security of Russia"; the final text was 540 pages long (including 240 pages written by me personally), and the work was generously paid for by the Security Council itself, though the money was transferred through the Institute.

Works for international organizations were done after receiving personal requests from people whom I knew previously—either my colleagues, inviting me to join their projects, or members of the staff of those organizations. Here bonuses were many times higher and were paid directly in hard currency, while the works in some cases were prepared in English. For instance, I wrote "Commentaries on the Draft of the Revised World Bank Operational Directive No 4.20 'Indigenous Peoples' "(in November 1998, for Dr. Stan Peabody [The World Bank]) and "Commentaries on the Drafts of the World Bank Operational Policies and Procedures No 4.10 'Indigenous Peoples' "(in October 2001, for Dr. S. Artobolevsky [Russian coordinator of the Working Group] and Dr. Stan Peabody). The analytical paper "Social-Cultural Problems of the Aboriginal Peoples of the North and of the Local Populations in the Regions of the Pilot Project on Sustainable Use of Forests" was done in October 1997 (60 pp. long) for the World Bank too, and revised portions of the previous one ("Cultures and Social-Economic Problems of Ethnic Groups, Residing in the Forest Zone of Siberia and the Far East," March 1995, 145 pp.) have been published ("Russia: Forest Policy … ," 1997) in shortened form (see "Annex G. Poverty, Unemployment, and the Social Safety Net in Forest Communities" and pp. 52–54, 83–84; for the list of contributing authors, see p. X). Another work on possible ways to achieve sustainable development of indigenous northern minorities was prepared for the international Advisory Committee on Protection of the Sea (ACOPS) (see Krasovskaya et al. 2000).

These personal remarks, I hope, make it easier for the reader to understand what is considered to be the most accepted kinds of applied ethnological work in contemporary Russia.

### APPLIED ETHNOLOGY IN MODERN RUSSIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The current situation is rather mixed and still uncertain. All the academic, university, and other research and training centers previously discussed continue to function. The end of state control over scientific activities made it possible to organize some new chairs or independent research centers or units, often having the term "ethno-" in their titles. However, in many cases, these new research institutions were created by former specialists in Marxism-Leninism and, as it turns out, they are now a serious competitor for applied projects (Tishkov 1992).

The tense competition between professional ethnologists and other social scientists for applied projects in interethnic relations and ethnopolitical studies has been accompanied by a prolonged financial crisis of the state-financed Academy of Sciences and universities. As a result, in 2005 in Moscow the regular fixed salary of a scholar with a Ph.D. and some 10–15 years of professional work was less than 50 percent of the mean salary in Russia and less than 20 percent of the actual mean salary in the city. Thus for those who decided to continue working in ethnology, the most common way to earn additional money is to apply for a research grant, to combine academic research with lecturing, and to join an applied project, specially financed by the state or international organizations, and thus to start practicing ethnology on a more or less regular basis. A majority of young and middle-aged scholars, at least in Moscow or St. Petersburg, have already gained the latter experience.

The typical characteristic of the present situation with applied ethnology in the country is the fact that in the process of reorganization of research activities in the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, started in 2002, there were fixed only 11 general research themes for the coming three years. So every department or laboratory of the Institute has to formulate its own research subtheme within those 11 generalized fields of studies. One of the latter was practicing ethnology, called "Ethnology on the Service of Social Development and Counteraction to Extremism." Ethnic ecology, for example, has been not included in the list. In addition, the project entitled "Social Potential of Historical Disciplines" was launched in the year 2003 by the Branch of Historical and Philological Disciplines of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology joined it, delegating several scholars with experience in applied ethnological studies.

So, from the first glance, it looks like applied ethnology has a bright future in contemporary Russia, simply as one of a few ways to survive as a professional scholar. Besides, for the first time in recent decades, ethnology has gained some prestige and publicity, and government officials have realized its importance and applied potential.

However, three major problems make the future of applied anthropology not so optimistic. First, in the early and middle 1990s the acute financial crisis in the country

caused some applied projects to be canceled, even after some or most of the work had been done. The scholars who were once not paid for jobs they had already done are not very enthusiastic about launching or joining other applied projects. Besides, the number of applied state-sponsored projects is clearly diminishing, while certain reorganization in academic institutes is starting right now. The results are unpredictable, but it is already clear that the coming changes will mean that the scholars have less time for any other work apart from their own research projects, financed through the budget of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Second, the unsatisfactory financial position of many scholars reduced the number of graduate and postgraduate students training in most sciences, including ethnology. The growing total number of graduate students since the late 1990s is due to those studying law, economics, and business management. The outflow of active scholars to private business or government agencies in the early 1990s, combined with the continuing retirement of many others, made the total number of ethnologists shrink. The Institute in Moscow, for instance, lost about 25 percent of its scholars in the middle 1990s.

Third, since 1999 when Mr. Vladimir Putin became president, a new political period has started in Russia, and governmental institutions' demand for applied ethnological studies is clearly declining. For example, a new Ministry of Nationalities' Affairs and Regional Policies in Russia was formed in early 1994 on the basis of the previous State Committee on Nationalities' Affairs that had been enlarged three or four times in 1993. This Committee, existing from the early years of Soviet power, was extremely uninfluential and weak in the 1970s and 1980s. In the early 1990s, however, it started to grow and absorb ethnologists. In the early 2000s this Ministry was closed down. The same was the fate of the Federal Migrations' Service, which was organized in the early 1990s and also closed down, becoming a small department in the Ministry of Interior Affairs. The former State Committee on the North was at first merged with the new Ministry of Nationalities' Affairs and Regional Policies and then disappeared with the latter. These governmental bodies worked in close contact with the Institute and the Chair in Moscow and with professionals in the provinces and republics, being major initiators and funding agencies for projects in applied ethnology.

A decade ago, two scholars from the institute and the university interviewed 13 of the most influential ethnologists in Moscow (ten from the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, three from the Chair of Ethnography) about their ideas on current methods and research priorities and on possible future developments in Russian ethnology. Most of them agreed that studies of interethnic relations and conflicts would remain the most important areas of research due to their applied character and, consequently, be the most probable projects for financial support from the Government (Filippov and Filippova 1993:8, 10). It is interesting to note that, even at this time, the leading scholars said nothing about the need to develop applied ethnology as a certain subdiscipline with its own methods, terms, and well-defined research areas and priorities. On the whole, the experts think that theory and methodology of ethnological research would not be studied in the immediate future at all, or at best would remain outside major discussions. Time proved they were right. There are practically no grounds to speculate about theory

and methods in either academic ethnology or applied ethnology, since we simply lack public discussions, oral or published, on these issues, except for heated debates about the meaning of the term *ethnicity* and about the role that the Soviet theory of "ethnos" has played in helping to understand this phenomenon.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is still hard to make judgments about the future of practicing ethnology in Russia. On the one hand, legislation states that the social-ethnological assessment is an integral part of any economic project that is likely to have an impact on indigenous minorities of the North and Siberia. The State Duma periodically initiates the work on the draft law about this type of assessment. Some publications are appearing regularly, but mainly as short brochures in the series "Studies in Applied and Urgent Ethnology" with a circulation of only 200 copies. Applied projects serve as a source of financial support to a large number of scholars, and both the public and government officials understand the importance of the subdiscipline.

On the other hand, though the financial and economic situation in the country is improving, both the number of projects and the number of scholars involved are diminishing due to institutional changes in the Russian government. There are also no attempts even to review research priorities, methods, and principles or the history of applied ethnology in Russia. Having gone through intensive ideological pressure in recent times, when it was compulsory to pay at least lip service to "Marxist methodology and theory" of the discipline, most Russian scholars are still not inclined to discuss any methodological issues for some time, except for some exotic and radical postmodernist ideas.

Finally, one can see that contacts with international organizations like the World Bank influence Russian scholars greatly at this particular moment, especially in drawing their attention to the methodological and ethical problems of applied ethnological research. Among very few reviews of methods, organization, and thematic composition of applied ethnological research published in Russia in recent years, there were papers about activities of the World Bank (Yamskov 1995, 2002).

Meanwhile the real influence of ethnologists on the lives of ethnic groups in Russia is substantial and rising. Thus practicing ethnology in Russia is steadily growing and it is bound to develop further. We have some ground to hope that after another decade or so one will be able to write about Russian applied ethnology as an institutionalized subdiscipline engaged in serious and regular discussions about both methods and ethics of its activities.

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