
Review

Past and Future Path of Russian Ethnology: A Personal View in a Global Perspective

V. A. Tishkov[#]

Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
e-mail: valerytishkov@mail.ru

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Abstract—An overview of trends in Russian academic ethnology over the past three decades is provided. This is an analysis of the state of the discipline from the inside, from the point of view of the author, who has been at the center of the scientific and public life of the country for all these years and who, as the director of the RAS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, influenced academic strategy and institutional changes. This is also a view on Russian national ethnology in the context of epistemological shifts and disciplinary changes that have taken place in world sociocultural anthropology and ethnology. The main provisions of this article concern intradisciplinary inertia and the difficult revision of the Soviet legacy; the restrictive impact of dominant public practices on the choice of metatheoretical constructs such as social constructivism in culturally complex societies; the influence of the ideology and practice of ethno-nationalism on the scientific community and the resultant “postcolonial” or aboriginal anthropology; and the combination of ethnographic tradition and new directions in the search for cultural similarities as the antithesis to the traditional obsession with establishing differences. The article analyzes the nation-building project based on a multiethnic civil nation as one of the prospects for the anthropological vision of Russia and the place of scientists in this project. The author evaluates the post-Soviet period as one of the most fruitful in the history of Russian ethnology in terms of the formation of new trends, thematic repertoire, and geography of research.

Keywords: Russian polyethnicity, world anthropology, Soviet and Russian ethnology, RAS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Association of Anthropologists and Ethnologists of Russia, ethnos theory, ethnicity, social constructivism, postcolonialism, indigenism and aboriginal anthropology, ethnonationalism, cultural complexity, nation and nation-building.

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REFERENCE POINTS

In early 2019, a book edited by the Norwegian anthropologist T.H. Eriksen and the Czech ethnologist M. Jacoubek was published [1], dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the publication of the famous collection of articles edited by F. Barth *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* [2]. Both publications are remarkable for the history of world ethnology and social/cultural anthropology: one of them has had a powerful and versatile influence, among other things, on the study of the phenomenon of ethnicity, while the other is an attempt of leading researchers in Europe and America to comprehend the half-century evolution of one of the central topics of our discipline—the topic of ethnicity. As one of the authors of a book on the legacy of the Barth concept and as a veteran of the ethnological guild, I take the opportunity to present some overview

provisions and provide some conclusions about the development of world and Russian ethnographic/ethnological science in the recent past and its possible prospects. Without claiming to be a complete review, the article is, as its title emphasizes, a “personal view” of the issues under discussion.

Since the book edited by Barth and the concept contained in it reached the Russian-speaking reader with a huge delay [3], we can say definitely: the late Soviet ethnography of the era of Yu.V. Bromley and Western anthropological and ethnological studies followed almost nonintersecting courses, at least from the point of view of their theoretical and methodological arsenal. By the way, the American anthropologist K. Verdery wrote about this, recalling the history of joint Soviet–American symposia in Tallinn and New Orleans in the 1980s. These forums were initiated by Gorbachev’s perestroika and were coordinated from the Soviet side by Bromley and from the American side by S. Mintz within the framework of interacademic exchanges of our countries. Here is how Verd-

[#] RAS Academician Valerii Aleksandrovich Tishkov is Academician-Secretary of the RAS Division of History and Philology and Research Supervisor at the RAS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (RAS IEA).

ery describes her impressions of this “meeting” of two schools and ideologies [4, p. 40]:

Although I did not quite realize it at the time—I simply saw the Soviet scholars as theoretically antediluvian, in contrast to us up-to-date young Bartho—Marxists with our situationalism, self-ascription, and political economy—I was encountering one of the great conundrums of social science work: the problematic connection between theory and social ideology.... But now I was facing an interlocutor [that is Yu.V. Bromley—*V.T.*] ... offering a theoretical explanation (his concept of *ethnos*) that was manifestly underpinning an ideology central to holding the Soviet Union together.

“Where did ethnic theory end and ideology begin?” Verdery asked herself. Then she did not have an answer, and only after some time did she see “the clash at that conference as more than simply good vs. bad theory” [4, p. 40].

As a participant in the aforementioned meetings, I was also shocked at one time when I heard from my Western colleagues that “ethnoses do not exist” and that not only ethnicity but even race are social constructions. Even more I was thrown into confusion by the stinging remark of the famous anthropologist E. Wolf after I had read the report of Bromley on contemporary ethnic processes at the International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Zagreb in 1988: “Thank you for the lecture on social racism.” I have not experienced greater shame in my life. The reaction to all these external influences (Western books and approaches, quite friendly discussions with American colleagues) was my conviction that primordialism and sociobiological evolutionism, which flourished in Soviet ethnography, testified to a crisis rather than to triumphant advance of our science. To this was added the influence of the British anthropologist E. Gellner, whose benevolent interest in Soviet social science [5, 6] did not prevent a critical assessment of the theoretical basis of Soviet ethnography.

For all my interest in the then Western approaches to the study of ethnicity, it was clear that the postulates of social constructivism would be difficult to assert themselves on Russian soil, if at all they could be included in the theoretical and methodological arsenal. Even more difficult was the task of separating “national” and “ethnic,” especially the revision of the category *nation* in favor of its civil-political meaning, or at least asserting the possibility of a double interpretation of such a well-known category. My experience of studying the “national question” in Canada [7–9], where the concepts of the common Canadian, regional-ethnic Quebec, and aboriginal nations competed (it was in those years that the movement of “first nations” emerged), also suggested the need to revise one of the fundamental postulates of Soviet social science.

Now, from a distance of almost three decades, we can say that the main obstacle to the modernization of domestic ethnology was not even the “antediluvian primordialism” and evolutionism of ethnos theory but the sociopolitical reality based entirely on the concept of ethno-national state-building under the existing and supremely controlled ethnic nationalism. In a society where ethnic differences play a fundamental role, special practices, factors, arguments, and emotions come into play. Here, special patterns emerge in the behavior of different communities, their elites, and individuals. Here researchers themselves are faced with the temptation to choose between new theories and dominant practice.

This side in the interpretation of the ethnic phenomenon, ignored by theorists of social constructivism, was also noted by Verdery, who studied the connection between ethnicity and nation-building using the example of socialist Romania, which is close to us in terms of experience [10]. Indeed, Barth and his colleagues played an important role in substantiating the interpretation of ethnic identity as a plastic matter, as a tool for organizing social relations, and not as a “innate patriotic feeling.” However, as soon as these identities acquire ideological forms, especially in the course of nation-building, the formation of a nation-state, the whole nature of the study and interpretation of ethnicity changes. “In particular, a huge edifice—The Nation—now stands over our relations with our interlocutors, and they expect us to take it as seriously as they do.... Anger and hurt are the consequence if we continue to view this edifice as ‘mere data,’” Verdery wrote [4, p. 41]. Indeed, as soon as ethnicity acquires some semblance of statist forms, and even more so when it is interpreted in the category of national statehood, as it was in the Soviet Union and is partly preserved to this day in Russia and in a number of other countries, the mobility and permeability of ethnic group boundaries turn into a rigid and insurmountable frame. This rigidity forces the bearers of the “ethno-national” to radical defensive or aggressive actions, up to ethnic violence or self-immolation, as did the Udmurt ethno-activist A.A. Razin in August 2019. Verdery makes an important conclusion, which is also relevant for Russian reality [4, p. 41]:

Both interethnic interactions and the theories generated about them occur in the “situation” of processes forming and maintaining nation-states, processes not reducible to localized interactions across boundaries.... To study ethnic groups and boundaries means to study not just situational strategizing but the formation of ethno-national ideologies, along with the sentiments and affects that accompany them.

It was in connection with this amendment to the theory of social constructivism and B. Anderson’s concept of the nation as an “imaginary community,” which appeared at the same time, that, since the beginning of my directorship at the Institute of

Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences in 1989, efforts have been made to criticize “ethnos theory” and to modernize domestic ethnology, including its name, subject matter, and status. Later, the title of the book was born, *Requiem for Ethnos*, which meant, of course, theory and not ethnic reality itself [11]. It makes no sense to cover the late Soviet period in the development of ethnographic science since enough has been written about it [12–15], and I will only mention still another reference point of our review. Thirty years ago, the journal *Soviet Ethnography* published my article “On New Approaches to the Theory and Practice of Interethnic Relations” [16], which proposed some revisionist theses: the categorical arsenal used by Soviet ethnography in relation to the population of the country and the world is inadequate and politicized; the concept of ethnos is vulnerable and does not reflect the complexity of ethnic reality, both in the historical aspect and in the modern one; the understanding of “national statehood” as a form of self-determination of an ethnonation is unrealizable and conflict prone; and for a polyethnic state such a policy of nation-building poses a serious risk. Yet the most important thing in terms of the urgent changes for me then was the problem of overcoming the disciplinary crisis, about which I wrote in the article “Soviet Ethnography: Overcoming the Crisis” [17].

The further development of events is the subject of this article. I consider it appropriate to recall what S.V. Sokolovskii wrote about the insurmountable pre-determination of the positions of any author when it comes to assessing the state of the discipline: “Either the time is nervous today, or the ashes of old fights have not cooled down yet, but it turns out that we almost never meet unbiased attempts to describe the situation in the discipline outside the biased position of the author himself, which is the position of a presenter” [18, p. 144]. I suspect that I will also fail to be impartial due to my deep involvement in the affairs of national ethnology/anthropology.

A NEW BIRTH OF THE DISCIPLINE OR THE BIRTH OF A NEW DISCIPLINE?

In the late 1980s, I did not have enough outlook and like-minded people to talk about our science as a sociocultural anthropology, but the task of restoring domestic ethnology repressed in the 1930s was formulated quite definitely. The proposed renaming of the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences aroused discussions and objections of traditionalists (A.I. Pershits, V.I. Basilov, V.V. Pimenov opposed this), and V.P. Alekseev suggested limiting the new name to ethnology only. “I will develop anthropology at my Institute of Archaeology,” he told me. “But I would rather leave the word *anthropology* in the name rather than *ethnology*,” I said. Ultimately, Alekseev, as a member of the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences, supported the new name—

Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, and in 1990 the Presidium approved it. This was an important step in the development of our science on the eve of the birth of a new country—the Russian Federation.

It was from that moment when the difficult stage of establishing the new name and the formation of a new understanding of the discipline began. Its completion was evidenced, among other things, by the renaming of our national professional organization four years ago into the Association of Anthropologists and Ethnologists of Russia. Let me remind you that the community, created in 1993, initially received a name more familiar for the then Russian ethnographers and physical anthropologists: The Association of Ethnographers and Anthropologists of Russia. The association today is a radically new community of professionals. Its first congress in Ryazan’ in 1993 gathered only 80 participants, while at the XIII Congress of Anthropologists and Ethnologists of Russia in Kazan’ in 2019 there were already more than 1000 of them, because researchers and even amateurs of all kinds—from traditional healers to social workers—started aligning themselves with our guild. The programs of the recent congresses of the association convincingly testify that, over a quarter of a century, our science has been developing within its modern subject—problem boundaries and that our general disciplinary identity has been established in many respects precisely as anthropologists and ethnologists. The subject matter and interests, as well as the methodology and language of modern science, have radically changed. Less than half of the reports presented in Kazan’ can conditionally be attributed to ethnology, and the rest relate to different areas of social, cultural, and physical (biological) anthropology [19].

There have been significant changes in the guild foundation of the discipline—field research based on the ethnographic method. There are no longer collective ethnographic expeditions, which gave rise to their own professional ethos and even folklore, not to mention the inclusive summer ethnography of field detachments. The last, perhaps, were the group trips of the employees of the Department of the Russian People, who studied the Russians of the Ryazan’ region [20]. Ethnography as such persists but has become more sophisticated, and it does not always focus on the collection of empirical data or artifacts. In recent years, field materials (primarily diaries) have ceased to come to the institute’s archive. A kind of monument to this type of ethnographic data was Z.P. Sokolova’s publication of her collection of field materials and memoranda [21].

An important moment in the formation of the new discipline was the opening in some Russian universities in 2011 of an independent field of study—Anthropology and Ethnology [22]. Following the Russian State University for the Humanities, where the Educational and Scientific Center of Social Anthropology

has been operating for 20 years, 11 higher educational institutions of the country received a license to open a new program. Among them are the Far East Federal (Vladivostok), Kazan' Federal, Omsk, Orel, Tomsk, and St. Petersburg state universities. Educational programs in anthropology and ethnology are being implemented in these universities within specially created subdivisions or at preexisting departments, the name of which contains the term *ethnology* (or *ethnography*). The curriculum of the Department of Ethnology of Moscow State University, although it remains part of the Faculty of History and does not have accreditation in our field, is anthropological according to accepted international standards.

On the way to establishing a specialty so necessary for polyethnic Russia, problems suddenly arose, both subjective (classical history departments do not want to part with ethnography/ethnology, considering it an auxiliary discipline) and of an organizational and bureaucratic nature (the recent campaign of merging departments, faculties, and even universities), making the creation of new departments and, even more so, faculties of anthropology and ethnology practically impossible. Even the existing departments of ethnology were abolished—for example, at Ural Federal University (Yekaterinburg). Of course, it is difficult to consider the formation of the discipline completed without its approval as an independent branch of science with the awarding of the academic degrees of candidate and doctor of anthropology and not historical or biological sciences, as it is today. This seems to be a challenge for the next generation of anthropologists and ethnologists.

Institutional changes include the emergence of more than a dozen new periodicals, as well as the renovation of old scientific journals. *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* has changed its profile significantly and regularly introduces innovative topics and approaches in the field of ethnology and social/cultural anthropology. Moreover, nonethnic anthropological topics have dominated in recent years, and ethnic themes are distinguished by nonclassical perspectives. Let us recall some of the topics in the issues of the journal after it was indexed in the Scopus database in 2011: multiculturalism in the Baltic countries, traditions and traditionality in Russia, aboriginal cultures in the circum-polar North and Siberia in the context of urbanization, identity and conflicts in situations of intraethnic interactions, and race and ethnicity in population censuses. In fact, the journal has moved away from monographic consideration of ethnic groups, updated the language and format of the scientific text, and expanded the geography of authors, including foreign colleagues. The bilingual *Anthropological Forum*, published since 2004 in St. Petersburg, has gained a good international rating. Although its editor-in-chief prefers the no less worthy word *ethnography* to the word *ethnology*, ethnological topics of a theoretical nature, not to mention such priority topics as language and

language policy, folklore and mythology, and the study of religion, are present on its pages. The profile of the new journal *Vestnik Anthropologii* appears more traditionalist, although it attempts (in my opinion, not very successfully) to highlight the topic of “experimental anthropology.”

We do not have statistics on the distribution of ethnologists/anthropologists by areas of scientific interest, but Sokolovskii, proceeding from a quantitative analysis of the topics of publications and mutual citations, has concluded that today the majority of Russian anthropologists work in two weakly connected problem fields. The first is the study of national politics (including the study of conflicts, tolerance, violence, interethnic relations, nationalism and nation-building, identity politics, ethnic categorization, legislative regulation of national policy, etc.), and the second is the study of customs, rituals, mythology, traditional ideas, modern and classical genres of folklore, etc., which is more familiar to ethnography. If we consider the discipline as a single epistemic community, then, according to Sokolovskii, “one can postulate a deep split ... disintegration into essentially two independent disciplines: applied political ethnology, on the one hand, and ethnographic folklore studies, on the other” [18, pp. 163, 164]. It is difficult to argue with this conclusion, because from the point of view of “fields of concentration” and journal citations, this is apparently the case, but behind these large fields there are many not so large “meadows” where our colleagues are successfully working.

However, it is probably premature to talk about the full integration of Russian anthropology/ethnology into the world community. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnographers in the post-Soviet states, most of whom received education and degrees in Moscow and Leningrad/St. Petersburg, created independent scientific communities, established ties with Western anthropologists, and changed research priorities, although they largely retained their primordialist and ethnonationalist orientations. The added powerful tilt towards postcolonialist discourse has become a significant obstacle to maintaining the once close scientific and personal ties with Russian colleagues. Over the same years, a generation of researchers who have gone through school in Western universities has grown up in the post-Soviet space. In addition, foreign anthropologists began to work more actively in the new sovereign states, except for the Republic of Belarus and the countries of Central Asia (the latter reflect the deep tradition of the Khwarazm expedition, which studied the most ancient cultures and civilizations of the region [23]), while Russian anthropologists practically curtailed their projects. Today, perhaps, only in the Baltic and Transcaucasian states can one speak of the presence, in addition to ethnology, of modern sociocultural anthropology as a form of professional identity; young sociocultural anthropologists also appear in Kazakhstan. Naturally, physical

anthropology is preserved everywhere, and it is also strengthened by modern bio–population–genetic research, in which all modern ethnonationalists have a special interest.

The isolation of Russian anthropologists and ethnologists is evidenced by their weak presence at international scientific events and in world scientific periodicals. Russia has lost its representation in the governing bodies of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, and Russian nationals are poorly represented at international congresses. Thus, at the Intercongress in Poznan in August 2019, there were fewer than 20 scientists from our country. The Association of Anthropologists and Ethnologists of Russia at this recent forum proposed to hold the next congress in St. Petersburg. The organization of international scientific forums in our country will have a positive effect on the state of the discipline, as our cooperation with American and European anthropologists once proved useful in the 1970s–1980s.

CONTENT TRANSFORMATIONS

What can be said about the substantive transformation of our discipline, which, in my opinion, lagged behind institutional changes but nevertheless panned out, although not without relapses of past approaches and with obvious metastases of ethnos theory in several other humanities (and not them alone!)? First, the “big theory”—so-called ethnos theory—has become a thing of the past, and with it the reducibility of the discipline exclusively to the study of ethnicity (remember the beginning of all beginnings: “The subject of Soviet ethnography is the study of ethnos”). Russian anthropologists have escaped from the bounds of ethnicity, discovering areas and subdisciplines such as urban, legal, medical, and gender anthropology; the study of subcultures and other culturally distinctive communities; ethological research; etc.

Another “shrine” began to crumble, ethnogenesis, but this is only the beginning of the process, the outcome of which is unclear: the textbook of Alekseev *Ethnogenesis* is absent in the educational mainstream, but *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of the Earth* by L.N. Gumilev is still on the shelves of bookstores among bestsellers and gift editions, and the concept itself is actively used by archaeologists, physical anthropologists, and even more often by the authors of parascientific works and nationalists of all kinds. By the way, the Internet portal *etnogenez.ru*, headed by the passionate orthodox S.V. Drobyshevskii, is very popular with the Russian public, which is reminiscent of the American fascination with the books of Carlos Castaneda 40 years ago, to the great displeasure of professional scientists.

The method of historicism, which S.A. Tokarev called the main one for Soviet ethnography [24], is not

very honored today, although all volumes of the “Peoples and Cultures” series are full of “ethnic history” and “ethnogenesis,” and I as the editor of the series failed to reduce or narrow the ethnogenetic claims of the authors, especially from among “aboriginal” ethnologists. Thus, historical ethnography (S.V. Lur’e and Ya.V. Chesnov even gave it a new name, “historical ethnology” [25, 26]) survived, although the vulnerability of the “history of ethnos” (or ethnic history) was becoming increasingly more obvious. By an incomprehensible irony, medievalists have become its zealous admirers, continuing to stretch ethnic continuity from ancient times to the present day, arguing about the “great migration of peoples,” “extinct ethnic groups,” and “ethnopolitical history” instead of analyzing the drift of ethnonyms and identities. In a recent educational publication on the history of the peoples of Russia, the authors, V.Ya. Petrukhin and D.S. Raevskii, defend with polemical fervor the ethnic basis of the historical process: tribes are called *ethnoses* (in fact, they are most often vassals, *družinniki* [militia—*Tr.*], or local settlement formations without articulated ethnic-group characteristics, that is, culturally distinctive self-awareness) [27, p. 12]:

Since ancient times, every person has certainly felt like a member of a certain set of people who perceive each other as having a common origin and at the same time distinguish themselves from those who belong to other similar sets. Such aggregates are called ethnos or ethnic communities. Any ethnic community is characterized by a number of both objective and subjective characteristics, and the study of such communities is the realm of ethnology.

The text is also about biological continuity and genetic relationships in ethnic processes. Note that this text with references to the creators of ethnos theory and ethnogenesis, Bromley and Alekseev, was published as a textbook in 2018!

I have considered the bizarre metastases of ethnos theory to other humanities in a recent article [28], and here there is no need to refer to this topic. However, not everything is so gloomy, and one can cite the remarks of another medievalist, P.S. Stefanovich. He writes about a methodological turn in modern medieval studies [29]:

There is a corresponding renewal of the conceptual apparatus: instead of political structures and class or estate self-awareness, they speak more about identity and identification strategies; instead of “tribes,” ethnos, and nations, about ethnicity; instead of ideology and social thought, about discourse and cultural memory Historians should be interested not in ethnos ... but in ethnicity, that is, first of all, in discourses about ethnicity, reflecting the consciousness of ethnic differences and distinctions.

These are belated insights of not so much ethnologists—anthropologists as of their colleagues in the his-

tory department and other humanities, including philosophers [30].

Yet, the birth of a new ethnology or the new birth of ethnology in Russia? Most likely, both, but on condition that “ethnorehabilitation” does not happen, which will be discussed below. *A new birth* because Russia already had ethnology, which was repressed in the early 1930s, including the abolition of the ethnological faculty of Moscow State University and the execution of its dean P.F. Preobrazhenskii [31, 32]. The Stalinist Cerberuses believed that historical materialism was concerned with the theory of human evolution and that it was not “logos” (knowledge) that was better suited to *ethno-* but “grapho” (description). It is *the birth of a new discipline* because over the past 30 years, not only has sociocultural anthropology appeared, but ethnology has also changed. So-called ethnosociology [33] and some other subdisciplines with the constant prefix *ethno-* (“ethnodemography,” “ethnoecology,” “ethnopedagogy,” “ethnoarcheology,” etc.) can be considered the limit of innovations in late Soviet ethnography. In one of the last ambitious projects of Soviet ethnography—the Code of Ethnographic Concepts and Terms (Vol. 2: *Ethnography and Related Disciplines: Ethnographic Subdisciplines: Schools and Trends: Methods*)—there were 17 such “ethnocentaurs,” up to “ethnozoology” and “ethnoart studies” [34].

In the post-Soviet period, so-called *traditional ethnography* has survived, in particular, in the form of a monographic description of ethnic groups (peoples). Here the series “Peoples and Cultures” appears most worthy, within which 36 volumes were published with a historical and ethnographic description of more than 70 large and small ethnic communities in the Russian Federation and other countries of the former Soviet Union (with the exception of Latvians, Lithuanians, Estonians; this was prevented by political and ideological factors, as well as the actual disappearance of classical ethnography/ethnology in these countries). The old schools of ethnography and connections between scientists preserved in the post-Soviet space made it possible to prepare these works jointly, despite new serious differences in approaches to such topics as the interpretation of the imperial period in the history of a particular people, the assessment of the Soviet legacy, and some territorial status issues. Over time, these conceptual differences have increased, and today it would hardly be possible to create common texts in volumes such as *Georgians* or *Ukrainians*. A distinctive feature of this series is that the volumes were prepared mainly by scientists representing the respective peoples and the leading research teams represented by academic institutions acting as coorganizers of these publications. This was impossible in the old days, because in the Soviet “province” had no sufficiently trained personnel, and Moscow–Leningrad ethnographers fully dominated the production of scientific results. For example, the prototype of this series—the

18-volume book *Peoples of the World*—in the 1950s–1960s was written entirely by authors from the “central” institute (the *Kunstkamera* was then the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences).

In the last quarter of the 20th century, cooperation within the framework of the Peoples and Cultures project was completely equal, without Moscow regulations, except for the necessary professional requirements for the quality of texts. Methodologically, the volumes are in line with the mainstream of moderate primordialism, as well as academic (liberal) ethnonationalism, which throughout the world distinguishes both “domestic” anthropology (“anthropology of the fatherland”) and “aboriginal” (native anthropology, anthropology on behalf of minority groups). As the leader of the series (it was initiated by the late Yu.B. Simchenko, who suggested at one time to write a 100-volume series about the peoples of the Soviet Union), I was unable to implement a more modernist version of the texts, presenting, say, peoples as “social constructs” and “nations” as “metaphors” (which was permissible in my own publications). However, the fact that the texts very briefly set out historical and anthropological data (unfortunately, “ethnogenomics” slipped through in some volumes), presented complete descriptions of material and spiritual culture, and also included sections on identity and the ethnopositional situation can be considered a significant achievement. These collective works will represent for a long time the most complete collection of historical and ethnographic knowledge about ethnic communities on the territory of the former Soviet Union. It must honestly be said that the RAS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology received a very prestigious dividend thanks to this project from the work of several hundred Russian and foreign scientists who were not on its payroll. It can be said that this cooperation revealed an indirect recognition of the special role (in the past and perhaps in the present) of the leading academic institute.

At the same time, the new generation of anthropologists/ethnologists, in the conditions of the opened society, took the initiative and received noticeable results in a number of areas, which, in my opinion, surpass the achievements of late Soviet ethnography in many respects.

One of these innovative trends in post-Soviet Russian ethnology was associated with “rebellious ethnicity” and with what came to be called *national movements, interethnic relations, and conflicts*. The topic of conflict ethnicity (unless it was a foreign topic) was not on the agenda of Soviet ethnography, because, as the party documents said, “the Soviet Union has resolved the national question in the form it got from the tsarist regime.” In this area, only “nonantagonistic contradictions” were recognized. M.N. Guboglo initiated a series of publications on the so-called civil

movements in the Soviet republics and in the republics of the Russian Federation, and this series resulted in multivolume publications of documents and studies on ethnonational movements [35]. In parallel with this and in collaboration with American sociologists and political scientists (T. Colton from Harvard, D. Laitin from Berkeley, J. Hough from Duke University), large-scale sociological studies were carried out in Russian polyethnic regions.

My early North American studies and practical experience of participation in the political process, including my work as Minister of National Affairs, contributed to addressing this topic and creating a network community, which included many Russian social scientists, not only ethnographers but also sociologists, political scientists, and psychologists, and which in 1993 was formalized as the Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflict Network (EAWARN is an abbreviation that I coined on the basis of *early warning*). Even a university discipline “ethnoconflictology” with hastily made manuals and an association of conflictologists appeared. The ethnopolitical conflict was on the real agenda of the post-Soviet reality. Almost all open armed clashes, including separatist and pogrom types, took place in a short historical period and did not receive a proper expert explanation. All of them had an ethnic component and were largely nourished by the Soviet ideology of “national (i.e., ethnic) self-determination.” In Russian Chechnya, with the external support of international terrorist forces, a territory of armed separatism not controlled by the central government arose. For domestic ethnology, this was a very alarming challenge requiring an answer. It is not by chance that, at some point in time, the positions of the adviser to the president of the country on interethnic relations and the head of the federal department for nationalities were occupied by the RAS IEA employees. Ethnologists were at the center of the conflict events in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia, and Chechnya.

Foreign examination of ethnopolitical conflicts contained double meanings and had an ambiguous impact. Major scholars, such as D. Horowitz, M. Olcott, M. Balzer and H. Balzer, W. Young, S. Smuha, and E. Yang, as well as conflict management and peacekeeping organizations, such as the Harvard Conflict Resolution Group or the London International Alert sought to understand the post-Soviet reality and assist in resolving conflict situations. In 1993, a small group of experts, including Horowitz and myself, prepared a practice-oriented theoretical treatise on the nature and resolution of conflicts. The document was developed in the town of Kona on the Big Island of Hawaii and was called the Kona Statement. Its first lines clearly state the authors’ methodological position [36]:

Modern science evidences that ethnic or “national” identity is usually a product of a commu-

nity’s political, cultural, religious, and linguistic history, traditions, and conventions—and sometimes inventions—rather than a product of “common origin.” Ethnic identity and the struggle for ethnic self-determination have played two quite different roles in modern history: (a) a major force in the decline of imperialism, totalitarianism, and the expansion of human rights and freedoms, and (b) the source of destructive conflicts, leading to the deaths of millions of people and to huge material losses and serving as a justification for violations of human rights “in the name of the nation” and the imposition of oppressive regimes.

These lines reflect the moderate primordialism of Horowitz [37, 38] and mine as the main authors of the text. Two of my books were written from similar positions and published in Western publishing houses [39, 40], as well as collective works on the topic of nationalism and conflict [41, 42]. There was no scent of militant constructivism in these works, and the situation itself did not allow this either.

In a positive vein, I can note the cooperation within the framework of the Carnegie Moscow Center, where for several years Olcott coordinated with me regular seminars of specialists on ethnic conflicts and interethnic relations. In the 1990s, Professor of Georgetown University M. Balzer helped Yakut ethnologists with foreign internships and began publishing the journal *Anthropology and Archeology of Eurasia: A Journal of Translation*, which published dozens of articles by Russian ethnologists over two decades, undoubtedly raising their qualifications and prestige. I am writing about this to correct the unfair and opportunistic denial by the current propagandists of the usefulness of the then ties with Western science, including grant support.

However, there was an impact of another kind. After 1991, not all Cold War warriors resigned and not all got rid of the ideology of anti-Sovietism with a core Russophobia. The disintegration of the Soviet Union itself along the lines of ethnoterritorial autonomies (union republics) was perceived and justified as a process of the inevitable collapse of empires and as a triumph of self-determination of nations. “Nations speak out” [43] was a popular Western metaphor for defining the then sociopolitical climate in our country. Some Western anthropologists and political scientists from the standpoint of perfect primordialism welcomed and justified radical ethnic nationalism and armed separatism in the Soviet Union and in new Russia if only it was directed against the status quo and the central government. The actions of armed terrorists in Chechnya were interpreted as an uprising of a “primordial nation” and were compared with the behavior of ancient heroes (“Antaeuses with grenade launchers” [44]). These were difficult moments of our dialogue with foreign colleagues, and perhaps this was the beginning of mutual alienation, which continues to

this day. In addition, the camp of deniers of Russia and everything connected with it has been replenished with “new Europeans,” claiming to be interpreters of Russian realities, including the humanities-related studies of Russians. In the European intellectual community, Poles and Balts are the soloists in this part, followed by Ukrainians. Restoring normal scientific interaction and reducing the level of Russophobia are tasks of Russian anthropologists.

Over the past two decades, Russian ethnologists have done a lot of research on *ethnopolitics*, including the regional and local level, and have written many works. Particularly noteworthy are the collective publications based on the results of ethnological monitoring by EAWARN and analytical developments of the Distributed Scientific Center for Interethnic Relations and Religious Issues [45–47]. This topic has become a priority in the Russian republics as well. In this area, we sometimes manage to cooperate with experts from neighboring states [48].

In the same problem field, the study of the classic theme of nation and nationalism, including the so-called *nation-building* and various manifestations of extremist ideology, has developed. Here the main task was to revise the old Soviet definition of nationalism as a form of justifying the domination of one nation over another, that is, an unambiguously negative phenomenon opposite to internationalism (nationalism was called bourgeois, and internationalism was called socialist). One of the ethnological dictionaries of the 1990s gave a more “moderate” definition but linked this category to ethnicity: “Nationalism is a widespread concept that denotes people’s commitment to the interests of their nation (ethnos), its cultural values, etc.” [49]. By this time, books on nationalism by E. Gellner [50] and E. Hobsbawm [51] had already been translated into Russian, but the translation of B. Anderson’s book [52] saw the light of day with a delay of 30 years! Rehabilitation of nationalism as one of the most powerful social theories and practices; recognition of its significance in the history of the formation of modern states, as well as of new states after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia; deciphering its two hypostases—ethnic and civil; and explanation of country and regional variants, conflicting goals and consequences—all this was a difficult intellectual task, the solution of which was undertaken not by historians or political scientists but by ethnologists. Many of my own articles [53–56] and a collective work on nation and nationalism [57] played a role in these revisions, although in the sociopolitical discourse, nationalism remains more a curse than a positive assessment.

A particularly important contribution to the criticism of various forms and complex vicissitudes of ethnic nationalism and radical ideologies was made by V.A. Shnirel’man [58–63], whose fundamental works aroused the very “anger and resentment” (up to law-

suits) of ethnonational activists, about whom Verdery writes. By the way, Shnirel’man, along with me, was included in the list of “100 enemies of the Russian people” compiled by Russian radical nationalists, and Dugin’s Eurasian Youth Union staged a picket at the main building of the Russian Academy of Sciences, where our institute is located, against V.A. Tishkov as an “American spy” who deserves a “10 to 20” prison sentence.

Another important area of modern ethnological research is the study of the phenomenon of *identity*, or what was previously called self-awareness. Ethnic identity—its content, dynamics, relationship with other forms of identity—has become one of the trademarks of our discipline. The influence of the global research context was also noticeable here. Since the 1990s, much has been done by different authors in different countries on the topic of identification boundaries. The American anthropologist E. Cohen showed that cultural boundaries in which identities drift are unexpressed; they are a kind of “gray zones” [64]. The Swede U. Hannerz drew attention to the phenomenon of creolization, when in the process of modern urbanization and global interactions there is a mixing and replacement of cultures [65, 66]. Director of the Max Planck Institute for the study of religious and ethnic diversity S. Vertovec put forward the concept of superdiversity, drawing attention to situations where diversity is generally not reducible to group identities, because it is impossible to define even the groups themselves [67]. The concepts of *hybridity*, *bricolage*, and *cultures-in-between* have become fashionable in the world literature, especially in the study of cultural flows and migration influences. All these ideas in one way or another also entered the arsenal of Russian scientists. The works of E.I. Filippova on French anthropology and her translations of French authors were also of great help [68–70]. Notable were joint publications with Belarusian ethnologists on issues of identity and cultural boundaries [71], as well as with Spanish colleagues (mainly from the Basque Country [72]) on regional and cultural identities.

The old concept of “transitional groups” or “marginality” (this is about those who, as it were, made the transition from one ethnic group to another) no longer satisfied Russian researchers. Interest has arisen in complex identities and in culturally complex societies, when complexity is understood not as trivial multinationality and not as some kind of anomaly but as one of the norms of modern human collectives. A difficult turn toward considering the nation as a culturally complex phenomenon is taking place in Russian social studies. This also applies to the interpretation of the Russian people as a *polyethnic civil nation* [73, 74]. The current diversity of research on identity in Russian ethnology is partly reflected in the 600-page publication of the materials of the scientific conference on the ethnocultural identity of the peoples of Siberia and adjacent territories [75].

DIFFICULT FATES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

To replace historicism as a scientific approach and historical materialism as a social philosophy, *social constructivism* has been making its way in Russian social science with great difficulty for three decades. For a long time, it (together with postmodernism) was perceived by many colleagues and ethnoactivists as a disease, as a Western infection, contrary to the state interests of Russia (see S.E. Rybakov's articles in *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* in the 1990s and his book on "ethnos philosophy" [76]). As one of the officials of the Federal Agency for Ethnic Affairs of the Russian Federation (by the way, a former employee of the RAS IEA) said recently, "Tishkov and his team are constructivists, and we need primordialists in government." This was said after the brilliant scientific works published over the past 20 years on the problems of ethnicity, on the history of the Soviet project of constructing socialist nations and nationalities and "nation-building"! Suffice it to mention the books and articles translated into Russian by authors such as R. Suny, T. Martin, F. Hirsch, J. Cadio, Y. Slezkine, and K. Humphrey, who could not but influence the understanding of the history of the "national question" in the Soviet Union. I wrote about the complex vicissitudes of parting with ethnos and establishing the constructivist paradigm in Russia in a book dedicated to the 50th anniversary of Barth's collection *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries...* [77].

However, little by little, the concept of identity and its complex mobile nature is displacing ethnos and its carriers ("ethnophores") in Russian ethnology. Since the 2000s, the concepts of "imaginary communities" and "ethnicity without groups" have appeared in scientific texts at least at the level of ritual references. However, *groupism* itself, as R. Brubaker outlined it [78], has not been overcome, and it still flourishes, especially in "regional" science and among our neighbors in the former Soviet Union. By the way, criticism of ethnos theory and movement beyond the narrowly defined subject of ethnography/ethnology faced stubborn resistance not only among Russian provincials. Leading professors at Moscow State University (Pimenov, Yu.P. Polyakov, and others) held the old position for a very long time, which was recorded even in the "Soros" version of the university textbook *Ethnology*, and even the enlightened A.A. Nikishenkov, Head of the Department of Ethnology in 2006–2013, was powerless to resist them. In St. Petersburg, L.R. Pavlinskaya and other employees of the *Kunstkamera* continued to glorify Gumilev's passionarity and superethnicity and other Eurasian civilizational dust, while the philosopher and culturologist I.L. Nabok, who fostered students from among the small people groups of the North, for a good decade gathered noisy conferences at St. Petersburg State University under the provocative name "Reality of

Ethnos." In Novosibirsk, "ethnophilosophers" Yu.V. Popkov and E.A. Tyugashev published a periodical on the ethnography of the peoples of Siberia, the paths of which was aimed at defending ethnos theory and condemning constructivism. Ethnophilosophers and, of course, ethnonationalists especially rejected the concept of a civil nation, because they presented it not as a form of identity consolidating cocitizenship but as a collective body with a set of objective characteristics and cultural homogeneity. In the newest Novosibirsk edition on ethnocultural identity, we read the following [79, p. 14]:

The idea of the Russian nation as a legislative basis for the state ethnic policy cannot act as a consolidating principle for Russian society, a conceptual basis for the formation of civil unity It should be admitted that the constructivist position in the understanding of the nation, which is defended by V.A. Tishkov, is limited.

The author, along with other supporters of the interpretation of the nation exclusively in the ethnic sense, at the same time unpretentiously refers to R. Brubaker and even S. Huntington—to work under a quite clear title, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*. That is, the heterogeneous American people, torn apart by ethnoracial problems, has a national identity, while the Russian people cannot have it: we only have "multinationality" and "friendship of peoples." This intellectual collision of the dispute about "what a nation is" seems to me to be the main theoretical and methodological challenge for Russian social science.

Sometimes the opinion is expressed that, under my influence, constructivism has been aggressively established in our science over the last quarter of a century. This is not at all the case, because the constructivist vision of ethnicity was not at all dominant in the RAS IEA in conditions of academic freedom. In contrast to the 1980s, when almost every article in the journal *Sovetskaya Etnografiya* began with a reference to Bromley's books, the main feature of the last three decades has been the encouragement and approval of methodological pluralism. This attitude has justified itself, turning into a whole library of fundamental works, and it must be preserved in the future. However, there are also "red lines" in our scientific debate that should be mentioned.

Relapses of the organistic vision of ethnogroups with uncritical obeisances to the "founders of the ethnos" and supporters of fundamental group differences can still be found today. Even among seemingly well-educated colleagues, there is, if not nostalgia for the past "big theory," then at least a desire to get it out of criticism. Thus, D.V. Arzyutov and S.S. Alymov, together with D. Anderson and other coauthors, outwardly dispassionately outlined in a recently published book the essence of the idea and theory of ethnos, revealing the "true roots" of this idea and theory back

in the second half of the 19th–early 20th centuries in the works of such champions of Little Russian (Ukrainian) ethnodistinctiveness as N.M. Mogilyanskii and F.K. Volkov (the first wrote only a couple of weak articles, and the second was engaged only in ethnic cartography). The authors see the objective of their book in “trying to show, on the basis of archival sources and ethnographic examples, how physiological and symbolic arguments are combined within the framework of ethnos theory” in the hope of “establishing the ‘foundation’ of ethnos theory, setting forth the long and detailed history of social conditions that predetermined the birth and growth of this idea” [80, pp. 3, 4]. It seems to me that it is not very correct to link the emergence of the concept of “ethnos” with the sociopolitical history of the Russian Empire, or to connect the Sino–Manchu subjects to the argumentation. In addition, the fundamentality of the theory itself is exaggerated by the authors. In fact, the ethnic version of nationalism and “folklore” developments had deeper roots, especially in Eastern Europe, and Mogilyanskii and Volkov are random figures here. Ethnonationalism made itself felt in the era of the Xinhai Revolution, on the banner of which six stars were depicted—the symbols of the main ethnic cultures (communities), but this had nothing to do with ethnos theory and the deeds of its supporters from the circle of S.M. Shirokogorov. *Vestnik Anthropologii* already published a critical response [81] about the fake attribution to Shirokogorov of an active political role in the revolutionary events in the Far East at the beginning of the 20th century, and even more so during the period of emigration to China.

In principle, attempts to rehabilitate ethnos—even the president of the country has now begun to use this word in Russia—could be considered innocent, if not for some “buts”: is there a risk of embedding ethnological thought in the general conservative turn with its obsession with seeking the norm in the past and abandoning innovative responses to today’s challenges? Is there a risk of preserving the primacy of cultural norms (for example, the “spiritual and moral heritage of the peoples of Russia”) to the detriment of the principles of cultural freedom and cultural complexity? The latter (the phenomenon of cultural complexity) is generally beyond the bounds of “ethnothinking,” because this thinking is involved in types and norms in their pure form: after all, in ethnos theory, there is no place for a Russian Jew or a Tatar–Bashkir, and if there is, then as a “transitional” state and antinorm.

COLLISIONS IN WORLD ANTHROPOLOGY AND RUSSIA

What can anthropologists and ethnologists do in the second quarter of the 21st century and who can be expected to request the result of these sessions? These questions should be answered from two positions: (a) evolution and prospects of world anthropological

knowledge, of which Russian science is a part, and (b) the situation in Russian society and its dynamics, including the top and bottom influences experienced by scientists in their own country.

What content has filled the last 30 years of foreign anthropology? The trajectories of its development were significantly different from those of Russia, despite the seeming opening of borders and free contacts since the late 1980s. This is how D. Comaroff describes this period in his article “The End of Anthropology, Again: On the Future of an In/Discipline?” [82, p. 82]:

...the 1960s and 1970s brought an end to the hegemony of British structural functionalism and U.S. culture and personality, the two enduring orthodoxies of twentieth-century anthropology. Both decomposed under the cumulative insurgency of colonial and post-colonial literary theory, early feminist anthropology, anthropological hermeneutics, various species of Marxism, Derridean deconstruction, and Foucauldian poststructuralism.

Of all the influences, colonial criticism was the most destructive for the old theories, because it proceeded from the fact that the whole structure of anthropological knowledge with its adherence to closed systems and homeostatic models, with its interpretation of the social by analogy with the biological, with its emphasis on reproductive processes and not to dialectics with its innate idealism, was initially vicious. As for the United States, Comaroff believes that here the situation was worsened by the fact that [82, p. 83]

...its ahistorical, apolitical concept of culture were all said to be corollaries of the racialization of difference, not to mention of the radical “othering” ... at the dark heart of the discipline.... It called for a new kind of praxis, another metanarrative to replace the liberal idealism that had entrapped anthropology.

Comaroff believes that a demand for critical theory, for contextuality was formed in world anthropology at that time: less hermeneutics and more materialism, less description and more explanation. However, the debate about the crisis of the discipline gave impetus to a variety of reflections, including those that were associated precisely with the rise of neoliberalism at the turn of the century. This began with the famous *Writing Culture* [83], which spawned anti-metanarrative, anti-authoritative, and ultimately anti-explanation attitudes. The criticism of “ethnographic realism” by G. Marcus, J. Clifford, and other authors who participated in the writing of this book gave rise to a request for “experimental forms of representation” without a big theory. Postmodernism and deconstructionism replaced the old schemes. This scientific passion (which is often called the “writing culture movement”) lasted for about two decades and had a controversial impact on world anthropology. Criticism of the profession from inside and the rejection of the principle of realism paralyzed the production of primary

anthropological knowledge. K.-H. Kohl wrote in the “Introduction” to *The End of Anthropology?*: “Ethnographers became so intimidated by their own hidden prejudices that nothing seemed more difficult than writing down a simple ethnographic sentence” [84, p. 5]. Comaroff pointed out the characteristic features of anthropology, which began to proceed from Geertz’s approach to the interpretation of “culture as text” [85, 86]. First of all, the discipline loses its brand: the ethnographic method with its root basis—the concept of culture, as well as the spatial field contained in it and the comparative analysis of different communities. The loss of the brand was also associated with the destruction of the theoretical arsenal. Representatives of many disciplines (sociologists, political scientists, social psychologists, economists, etc.) showed interest in using the methods of cultural anthropology and began to declare that they also “did ethnography” and field research. The erosion of the concept of culture began, acquiring an all-consuming nature. There was a tendency to reorient cultural anthropology from solving the seemingly outdated colonial tasks to new ones related to business and management in general. Corporate cultures, subcultures, sports culture, media, communications, etc., have become separate research domains. Humanities scholars also designated the field of *national culture* as the culture of state-political communities as opposed to the culture of particular (ethno)communities, which is customary for anthropologists. In the most recent years, the concept of cultural complexity and superdiversity has emerged.

To what extent did all this affect Russian anthropology/ethnology? I think, to the smallest extent, because the translation of C. Geertz’s book *The Interpretation of Cultures* appeared in Russia only 30 years after it had been written, and the book *Writing Culture* was not translated into Russian at all. Only a few authors have discussed and used these concepts at the level of journal articles in *Antropologicheskii Forum* and *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie*. As for the cultural diversity of Russia, the traditional view remained here, and the most debated problems were the adequate fixation of ethnicity in the course of population censuses and a more nuanced presentation of the ethnic and cultural mosaic of the country’s population [87, 88].

Another challenge emerged in world anthropology at the turn of the century. This is an attempt to usurp the right to interpret culture by aboriginal communities—supposedly, bearers of certain archetypes, exclusive “owners” of indigenous cultural brands, holders of patents for the status of “living cultural heritage.” The fact is that, sensing the financial and political perspective of the topic, a considerable number of scientists in the world (Russia is no exception) began to work recklessly on the “legal” and “moral” concept of indigenesness. “Indigenesness” has become a no less influential concept than “minorities” or “ethnos” when it comes to the space of the former Soviet Union.

Indigenesness is given a universal status at the level of the United Nations and other international organizations. Claims for uniqueness and selfhood and, on this basis, demands for appropriate compensation from the state, put forward by the “aborigines” themselves, are trifles compared to the avalanche of studies, publications, and government and intergovernmental decisions that construct indigenesness and sometimes even indigenous racism. Despite the great and glorious tradition of studying the aboriginal peoples of the North, for Russian ethnology/anthropology, the concept of indigenesness/aboriginality, often understood as the granting of great rights to the “indigenous” in comparison with the “nonindigenous,” is a new topic in the emerging “legal anthropology” [89–92] and a new serious social and political challenge.

WHAT IS ON THE HORIZON?

The current crisis in anthropology (more precisely, talk about a crisis) has little to do with the subject of study—culturally distinctive phenomena and communities with their quite successful variants of combining tradition and modernization, which in classical anthropology were often perceived as antipodes. The crisis is rooted within the discipline. Here is what K.-H. Kohl wrote in the introduction to the book on the future of anthropology [84, p. 4]:

Following the so-called “writing culture debate,” anthropology’s customary approaches and forms of representation have been subjected to a trenchant critique that destabilized the field’s very foundations. What we have come to refer to as ‘othering’ today is viewed as the field’s great fall from grace. With their critiques of their predecessors’ authoritative styles, today’s anthropologists have also undermined their own authority.

Let us also add that postcolonial discourse further contributed to the undermining of classical anthropology.

In conclusion, I would also like to recall one remark of B. Malinovskii: when he came to anthropology, the main attention was paid to differences between people, and scientists neglected the study of basic similarities. I have also repeatedly expressed doubts about ethnologists’ obsession with establishing cultural differences to the detriment of seeking and analyzing similarities. Comparisons are important in our science, but they should focus on similarities, not oppositions. Observing ordinary human communities in theater halls or sports arenas, professional groups, or street gatherings, I am convinced that they are all part of the same Russian people, and they have an order of magnitude more in common than differences. The ethnos of Russian anthropologists (this is where this Greek word denoting any living or dead community belongs!) is no exception. However, its representatives prefer to see and classify compatriots in the plu-

ral—as the “peoples of Russia” and to talk more about “friendship of peoples” and not about a “friendly people.” A. Kuper rightly sees the perspective for future anthropology in shifting attention from the plural to the singular (without denying complexity) [93, p. 75]:

Ethnographers should engage ethnocentric social scientists in discussions about the less familiar social processes and views of the world they have studied. Perhaps as we come to know others better, as people with similar capacities, forming societies of a comparable sort, faced with common dilemmas, we may also understand more about ourselves.

This attitude towards comparative explanations based on the same “included observation” seems to be no less promising than the so-called *multisited ethnography*, which, according to some colleagues, is better suited for analyzing the current world-system reality, the global market, state, and the media. Recall that multisited ethnography, as it was understood by Marcus back in the 1990s, is an interdisciplinary approach that includes media studies, the study of technology, the use of natural sciences, cultural approaches, etc. However, for all the sympathy for free choice of ethnographic sites, the threat of diluting the disciplinary profile and diminishing professionalism should be avoided. In my opinion, interdisciplinarity is possible only with strong disciplinarity; otherwise, we will end up with nondisciplinarity, which is already creeping out of the cracks of the house of humanities-related knowledge in Russia.

If we take modern Russian ethnology/anthropology as a whole, my general diagnosis will be more positive than the conclusions of Sokolovskii about the “illusion of well-being” [94, 95], although much of his criticism is quite justified. It is impossible to agree with his conclusion about the disintegration of the scientific community into two independent disciplines: applied political ethnology and ethnographic folklore studies, with their own research networks, journals, and centers. Both projects, from his point of view, are outdated and lead to a theoretical dead end, dragging anthropology from the world of actual human practices to the intellectually sponsored worlds of “archaic modernity” practices, “with which to enter the post-modern economy of knowledge is an insoluble task” [96, p. 179]:

[The first], in its essence and history of its development, is an imperial project that goes back ideologically to the project of creating the Soviet people or, in modern terminology, the Russian nation. The designation of this project as imperial does not imply criticism in this case but only emphasizes its universalist and anti-communitarian content. The second project, by placing culture (or rather cultures with their special rituals, customs, symbols, folklore) in the focus of their interests, remains the politically most important resource for local nationalisms and is historically

rooted in romantic nationalism of the 19th century (in the Russian case, into the ideology of Narodism).

The author believes that proximity to the ideologies of empire- or nation-building also causes epistemological damage to our mostly descriptive discipline, since it erodes its very foundation, in which facts are endowed with high value. “The inevitable ideological pressure given such closeness draws disciplinary factography into a kaleidoscope of politically biased interpretations, where facts turn into ‘facts’ or ‘so-called facts,’ and the status of fact itself is devalued” [96, p. 180].

Let us face it, this is more than a conclusion, it is a verdict, which, however, I would like to appeal. First, studies of conflicts and tolerance, interethnic relations and methods of their regulation, nation-building and local nationalisms, and the role of power in the organization of culturally complex societies have always been in the focus of sociocultural anthropology and ethnology. For many years, specialized commissions have been operating under the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences; all major scientific centers and universities have research and educational programs on all these topics. In Russia, this scientific topic has been mastered and is also developing under the influence of public demand, of which there is no need to recall. If this were a dead-end scientific pursuit, then it is unlikely two of my monographs on nationalism and conflicts would have been translated and published in prestigious Western publishing houses, and three in China. The books by Shnirel'man on the problems of tolerance and local conflicts, characterized by stunning and reliable factfulness, have been translated and are in demand in Western countries and Japan.

Second, nation-building in the form of a polyethnic civil nation is not an imperial project but, on the contrary, opposes it. Even an imperial project could never have taken place without the participation and assistance of ethnologists/anthropologists. The scientific careers of such luminaries of world anthropology as Malinovskii, F. Boas, Mead, and others, including the Russians N.N. Miklukho-Maclai, A.E. Snesareva, and Ch.Ch. Valikhanov, were most directly associated with empire-building in their own homelands. This did not do any special epistemological damage to the scientific pursuits of anthropologists of past generations. There was no such damage to Soviet ethnography, which compiled empirically verified ethnographic maps and developed the basis for categorizing the population for general censuses or cultural and educational policies. I do not think that modern ethnology (including applied and urgent tasks, which were also born in Russia in the last two decades) is defective due to cooperation with the authorities or with civil society institutions.

It is difficult for me to understand what the “post-modern knowledge economy” is, in which, according

to Sokolovskii, there may be no place for today's Russian ethnology with its "outdated theoretical background"; but I can agree that this background requires constant updating. At least, when the Russian authorities turned to ethnologists, they received useful advice on the preservation and protection of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the Russian people and the settlement of ethnopolitical conflicts.

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SPELL: 1. Belarusian, M.: НЛО - ?, Nre York - ?; извините, но мне кажется неправильно проставлены страницы русской версии прошлой публикации в *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* pp. 72-137 - ????