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## **Government Institutions and Scientific Organizations and their Role in the Ethnographic Study of the North of Siberia in 1920–1930-s.**

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*This article attempts to give an overview of the history of the organization of the ethnographic study of the indigenous people of the North of Siberia in the first decades of Soviet rule. The activities and interconnections of a significant number of scientific non-governmental organizations and government institutions of Moscow, St. Petersburg (Leningrad), Novosibirsk, Omsk, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk and other cities were studied using a wide range of published and archive sources. This research will fill up a number of gaps in the history of the organization of scientific research*

*This work would fill a number of gaps in the organization's history of science in the early twentieth century. In Russia in general, and in the history of ethnography North Siberia in particular, as well as introduce a new scientific revolution material.*

*Keywords: North of Siberia, 1920–1930-s., Ethnography, organization science, Soviet affairs, national policies.*

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### **Introduction**

It is known that the emergence and development of the Soviet ethnography proceeded in line with government policy. Ethnography was at the forefront of solving the accelerated integration of the indigenous population of the USSR in its economic, social and political structure. Not only the scientific public organizations were engaged in an ethnographic

study of the indigenous population of the young state but government institutions also took part in it.

The growing interest towards history of domestic ethnography of the twentieth century leads to historians developing a significant number of its problematic aspects each year. So the topic of the history and activities of the various organizations and institutions in the

1920 – 30's engaged in the study of the country (including ethnography) has already drawn a lot of research. But there are only few specific papers on the subject, and they don't give us the complete picture of the way ethnographic science was organized at that time.

However, it is worth noting a number of important studies. T.D. Solovey, N.I. Gagen-Torn, O. I. Yeremeeva, V.D. Esakov, O.A. Krasnikova, M. Mogilner and others<sup>1</sup> wrote about the work of research institutions and government institutions in Moscow and St. Petersburg (Leningrad) which were studying the country.

History of the organization of the study of Siberia in 1920-30's involved works by A.A. Syrian, L.Y. Kitov, N.A. Tomilov, S.A. Krasilnikov, S.F. Fominyh, V.L. Soskin, A.S. Vdovin, etc.<sup>2</sup> Among foreign researchers is worth mentioning J. Cadiot, T. Martin, J. Slezkina, N.V. Ssoin-Chaikova<sup>3</sup> and works of which more or less dealt with the work of imperial and Soviet scientific public and government institutions.

It should be mentioned that creating a new social-political and economic system in 1920-30's, the Bolshevik government formed a "special type of science" as an element of the system, as for the formidable tasks of a general modernization then put to the country was not possible without the use of a high status scientific knowledge (Solovey, 2004: 145 ).

Changing the connection between the science and the state had started during the First World War, when the "international aspect" of the scientific society has come to depend on the state regulation of international cooperation, as well as the beginning of a gradual integration of the social sciences in the structure of the social state in some "expert and educational" role (Dmitriev, 2007: 13). In the case of ethnography founding of the Russian Imperial ethnographic bureau<sup>4</sup> is an example of that integration.

Speaking of national ethnography which was not properly formed in the early twentieth century: almost not taught in higher educational institutions, and numerous ethnographic institutions were poorly organized, with poor management of personnel and finance. New ethnographic approaches were developed and distributed mainly in the museums (Cadiot, 2010: 136). The Academy of Sciences, for example, had no division of ethnographic profile. Ethnographic divisions existed since the beginning of the century only in the *Kunstkamera* (cabinet of curiosities) at the Russian Museum of Alexander III.

The situation has changed since 1917: Ethnography acquired a permanent status of an independent scientific discipline, was institutionalized and got government support. T.D. Solovey explains this demand for ethnography by the government launch of the "vector of world revolution in the awakening East" in the 1920s. The significant increase in the interest towards the foreign and domestic Asia stimulated the development of the Oriental studies, including ethnographic research. The second factor, in her opinion, was the modernization of the "backward peoples" in the forefront of which is always Ethnography. T.D. Solovey said that at that time there was a "mutual complementarity of science and the new state": the connection with the practice of socialist construction was an important condition for government support, due to which Russian ethnographers were able to implement many plans and ideas, with no significant ideological and political constraints (Solovey, 2004 : 156-157).

Professor of University of California Y. Sliozkin indicates a lack of moral complexities of the researchers of the 1920s regarding their participation in the government's work and relates this phenomenon to the tradition of the Russian liberal intellectuals to consider the

moral and political activity the sacred duty of science. The young government offered the opportunity to spend meaningful reforms, and scientists agreed not really thinking at the time about the Bolshevik political platform. Another reason for the optimism of the Russian ethnographers Y. Sliozkin sees in growing prestige and role of ethnography in the West (Sliozkin, 2008: 175).

Modern French historian Jean Cadiot points on the continuation of the liberal traditions of the Russian intelligentsia of 1900s, linking political activity of the ethnographers of the early twentieth century to their scientific practice: science is considered the best tool for a deep renewal of society and the state. The restrained attitude of researchers towards the idea of autonomy of indigenous peoples and centralization of their management G. Cadiot explains by the trust in the guaranteed help of the government for the “non-Russian” (Cadiot, 2010: 116-117, 118).

According to M. Mogilner, the only alternative to the “social, scientific, political, and, finally, physical marginalization and death” for the scientists of the time was the nationalization of science. The researcher says that the conditions of the strict resource allocation stimulated the urge “to present their discipline as strategically important to the class struggle and socialist construction.” As for the dominance of Ethnography in the human sciences, M. Mogilner explains this fact by the extremely populist nature of ethnography, in which “left-wing researches who had gone through the political exile lead among the representatives of the pre-revolutionary generation” (Mogilner, 2008: 457-459).

In this study we tried to give an overview of the ethnographic study of the northern outskirts of Siberia during the difficult period of the early twentieth century and up to 1930s. It was the time of establishment of Soviet ethnographic North study school, which has a number of specific

features. Thus, the reference to this problem will not only fill the gaps in the history of Soviet ethnography but will also help to understand the origins of its specific character.

This study is based on common scientific and historical methods (ideographic, historical, genetic, chronological, etc.).

### **Main propositions**

The leading research institution in Russia was the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS) (successor of the St. Petersburg Imperial Academy of Sciences) from 1917 to 1925. In July 1925 it was transformed into the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. Despite the fact that the General Assembly had expressed a negative attitude toward the revolution, it didn't decline to cooperate with the Academy of Sciences. Especially since the Soviet authorities took notice of its work, recognized the importance of its needs and promised both assistance in the development of the issues of a scientific nature and maintaining the independence of the institution (Esakov, 1994: 126, 129-130). Funding of the Academy of Sciences was entrusted to Narkompros (People's Commissariat for Education) and the Central Commission for improving living conditions of scientists (CCILCS). It should be noted that before the revolution Academy did not have sufficient financing, so the launching of the expeditions had always been very difficult for it, and its large arctic expedition with the participation of its employees were subsidized from other agencies.

Under the Soviet rule Academy of Sciences took an active part in solving social and economic problems of the young state, including those in the study and development of Siberia. This participation involved Commission for the Study of Natural Productive Forces and Natural Resources (CNPF), established in 1915<sup>5</sup> in order to help the country at war in a general mobilization.

Interestingly to point out that at the same time a famous scientist (anthropologist, geographer, ethnographer) D.N. Anuchin already included in CNPF, stood for the foundation of a second similar state commission, but for the study of the actual population of the empire – its most important “productive force” (Mogilner, 2008: 453-454; Solovey, 2004: 141-142). The idea of D.N. Anuchin was implemented in the foundation of the Commission for the Study of the Tribal Population (CSTP), with which CNPF coordinated its research in 1917. CSTP initially existing in the Department of Ethnography of the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (IRGS) goes into the structure of the Academy from 1917. It was headed by Oriental scientist S.F. Oldenburg. Other ethnographers working there were V.G. Bogoraz-Tan, S.K. Patkanov and L.Y. Sternberg. Initially D.N. Anuchin himself was not included in the Commission, apparently because of his disagreements with the capital counterparts (Mogilner, 2008: 459). Subsequently CSTP dealt with all other problems concerning the ethnic structure of the border regions in addition to mapping.

CNPF facing the complete separateness of the work in the North convened a meeting of representatives of scientific societies, institutions and agencies October 15, 1917. The meeting made up the Subcommission on the subject of the study and use of the natural productive forces of the Russian North<sup>6</sup>. But the activity of the Subcommission was soon interrupted, mainly due to lack of financing, and resumed only after the October Revolution, when the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) at the initiative of V.I. Lenin financed CNPF and the Academy of Sciences in 1918. Then, among the fourteen new departments in Subcommission (late April 1918<sup>7</sup>) VIII Department of Research of the North started its work. The first chairman of the department was the President of the Academy of

Sciences and chairman of the Polar Commission, A.P. Karpinskiy<sup>8</sup>.

In the seven years of the existence of the department the most successful were years from 1918 to 1921. Its objectives were: 1) the scientific examination of the natural resources of the North (Arkhangelsk, Vologda, Olonets, Vyatka, Perm provinces and Siberia); 2) the compilation of bibliographic index of literature on the North and Siberia; 3) the integration and coordination of separate work “done by some people and mostly local agencies sometimes simultaneously “; 4)” assistance in writing scientific papers and solving practical problems aimed to raise the cultural and industrial life of the North”<sup>9</sup>.

The important work of the Northern Department was drawing of the Wall map of Northern polar countries and a detailed map of the entire Northern region of Russia from Norway to the Yenisei River and from Svalbard (Grumant) and Franz Josef Land to the latitude of 55 °, and a number of other works.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from this department the research of the North were mainly conducted in the “Department of the White Coal”<sup>11</sup> and “Department of stone building materials”<sup>12</sup> of CNPF and also in the Regular Polar Commission, the Commission of the degree measurements on the islands of Svalbard and in the Commission for the launch of Russian Polar Expedition (the question was raised about the unification of the last three<sup>13</sup>).

The Arctic Commission, as well as CNPF was founded before the revolution in physics and mathematics department of the Academy of Sciences (founded April 30, 1914<sup>14</sup>) to coordinate the research conducted by various departments in the Arctic. The main coordinator of the Commission was a famous geologist, geographer and paleontologist I.P. Tolmachev, and the continuous chairman was Academician A.P. Karpinskiy<sup>15</sup>. Before the revolution, the Commission's work did have the support of

the government and was denied approval of a permanent body of research on Arctic affairs<sup>16</sup>. Despite the difficult conditions of work in 1917-1922s, temporary isolation of the northern areas of the country from Petrograd, loss of its members, the Commission retained its structure and organization and did not stop its work (for example the work continued on development of the final map of the Arctic expeditions).

In 1920s new alignment of political forces had led the Arctic Commission to proving its importance for the country, like many other scientific organizations of that time. It was involved in the fulfilling of foreign policy objectives and in expert evaluation of projects of domestic and foreign expeditions to explore the Arctic territories. Like many other academic institutions at that time the Arctic Commission began its research in the north, which lasted until 1936, almost immediately after the revolution due to financing by the Soviet government.

In 1919, the Commission has united under its leadership the works of academic Russian polar and Svalbard expeditions of the early twentieth century. In 1920 for the first time it was able to equip a unit in the Northern Scientific-fishing expedition; in 1922 the map of the northern Russian Sea to the Bering Strait, showing the routes of all expeditions from 1648 to 1915<sup>17</sup> was printed. Polar Commission also proved itself in organizing and uniting the newly-emerging "Northern bodies" – CNPF North Division, which was mentioned above, and the Commission on the practical use of resources of the Russian North (formed January 30, 1919 in St. Petersburg by the People's Commissariat of Trade and Industry and later renamed the Northern Scientific fishing expedition of the Supreme Economic Council)<sup>18</sup>. With the participation of the Polar Commission in 1920 the General Meeting on the North was convened at the RGS marking the foundation of the future Institute for the Study of the North<sup>19</sup>.

Worth mentioning that the work of these three organizations (Regular Polar Commission, the North Division of CNPF and the Commission for study and practical use of the Russian North), maintaining close contact with each other since 1919, worked simultaneously and often duplicated each other's work. Due to closer contacts between the Commission of the Russian North and Regular Arctic Commission, the scope of the two organizations was determined more or less accurately, that was the distinction of work of the Northern Division CNPF and Arctic Commission that was difficult<sup>20</sup>. Later, it was determined that the Regular Polar Commission leads all the polar research of Academy of science; North Division CNPF combines all the scientific work in the North of Russia, and also makes its own cartographic, bibliographic and publication work; the Commission of the Russian North conducts research of the resources and trades of the Russian North.<sup>21</sup>

The transformation of the Commission of the practical use of resources of the North on March 4, 1920 in North scientific fishing expedition SEC (Sevekspeditsiya) naturally shifted the focus of the study of natural resources in the North to this state organization: Department of the North CNPF at first had to reduce its work, and in 1925 was made into North Department of the Bibliographic bureau of CNPF.<sup>22</sup>

Sevekspeditsiya, run by the Petrograd branch of the Scientific and Technical Department of the Supreme Economic Council, was an operating body the main objective of which was "the production of scientific and technological research of the natural productive forces of the Russian North (meaning the territory of European and Asian Russia to the north of 60° N latitude) for the purpose of its best practical use, and management of all academic work done by the respective agencies in the field"<sup>23</sup>. The Presidium was placed at

the head of Sevekspeditsiya, the Academic Council supervised all the scientific work. A.P. Karpinskiy<sup>24</sup>, president of the Academy of Sciences, was elected to be the representative. Besides, the Academic meeting in Moscow and executive management of the expeditions in the field were arranged.

The studies of the Northern Scientific-fishing expedition covered the Kola Peninsula (the biggest part of the field work was held there), Murmansk coast, Kemsy and Onega region, the White Sea and the Barents Sea, north-west coast of the White Sea, Novaya Zemlya and Vaigach islands, Pechora district and Ob-Yenisei region<sup>25</sup>. In total, there were about twenty units (North Kola Geological, The soil and botanical Murmansk biotech, reindeer, etc.). There was an Ethnographic unit working with the participation of Professor V.G. Bogoraz-Tan. The unit collected ethnographic and other materials “characterizing the languages and the life Samoyedic people, their trades, handicrafts, etc.”, and its work was illustrated by N.G. Prokofiev, the artist who painted about 70 watercolors and pencil drawings during his stay in the basins of the Ob and the Yenisei rivers<sup>26</sup>.

Enormous contribution to the study and the development of the North of Siberia still continued to make the Russian Geographical Society (RGS) (Vdovin, Prokhorchuk, 2011: 11-12).

During the war and the revolution the organization's work has not stopped, but the position of the RGS and its departments (the number of which was four in Siberia in the early 1920s) then and later was extremely difficult: their activity was partly curtailed; the departments went underground and didn't keep in touch neither with its center nor the Soviet authorities. For example, the Yenisei Krasnoyarsk Territory subunit was able to officially register only in 1921 (Vdovin, Gulyaeva, Makarov, Batashev, Vasiliev, Vydrin, 2001: 7-8).

Siberian departments of the Geographical Society reported to Siberian Department of Education (Sibnarobraz). but generally and in scientific matters, they were under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat of Education and the Central Division of RGS, and had Administrative Department of Sovnarkom and its Research Department constant support<sup>27</sup>. After the restoration of communication with the Central Council of the RGS in 1921, the situation has improved, but problems continued up to 1923. For example, there was a conflict of the Siberian departments of the RGS with Siberian Revolutionary Committee (Sibrevkom), which raised the question of their closing.<sup>28</sup>

Under the Soviet rule the Geographical Society and its departments have experienced more than one reorganization: in 1926 the RGS was renamed State Geographical Society, and in May 1931 – was reorganized into the State Geographical Society of the RSFSR. At the end of 1930, in connection with the release of the East-Siberian region, the Society for the Study of the productive forces of Eastern Siberia (SSES) is founded, consisting of the Mid-Siberian, Trans-Baikal and Troitskosavsk Geographic Societies as its departments. SSES existed until 1931, when it was reorganized into the East Siberian local history society according to the decision of the executive committee of the East Siberian.

Possibly the establishing of the Regular Committee of the North under the Geographic Society in May 1920 was an attempt to fit RGS work to the economic needs of the country, to the general educational work, and to make changes in the old organization according to the new time in 1920s (Danileiko, 2009: 89-90). Little is known about the history of this organization, in contrast to the Committee of the North, established in 1924 under the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee.

The main objective of Committee of 1920 was “acquaintance of all institutions involved in research of the North, with a common set of ongoing and planned by individual agencies actions, and the setting the very close connection between them concerning: 1) surveys of the sea coasts and waterways adjacent to them, and 2) fish, fur, and cattle; 3) forestry, agriculture, mining; 4) economic, statistics and colonization; ... 6) and other related to the study of the Northern Territory. “ In addition the Committee of the North was granted with the “right for the self-initiative in the exploration of the North of Russia, for which purpose it may include and establish new institutions under the Committee.” It should be noted, that the Committee officially received independence as a research institution only in March 1921.

Council Committee was made of the representatives of 13 organizations (RAS, RGS, Main Hydrographic Agency, Military Topographers Corps, etc.): one representative from each organization, and two of the RAS and the Scientific Agricultural Committee. It should be said that in 1921 the Board consisted of representatives of 15 organizations, the representatives of other 18 attended the general meeting<sup>29</sup>.

The Chairman of the Board of the RGS Y.M. Shokal'skiy became the Chairman of the Committee and the Council. Together with the Comrade of the Chairman and a Member of the Council, they formed a two-year Presidency of the Council<sup>30</sup>. Scientific and Executive Office was to be under the Council. Committee of the North had the right to print their own publications, and all materials in case of its closure were to be handed over to the RGS.

Although it was decided to convene the Council Committee of the North, twice a year, in spring and autumn, in spring of 1921 the general meetings was held four times.

They were devoted to the work in the area of the Murmansk railway, North Colonizing Expeditions of the People's Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem) and the Bureau of the survey of wagon roads in the north, of the North Research fishing expedition SEC and the work of the Geological Committee, as well as the specific question of the role of the “Museum and exhibition of the North.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, we can see that the organization in 1921 covered only the parts of the Russian North.

In the same year the Council Committee of the North managed to begin its publishing: “Essays on the history of the colonization of the North”, “Russian North, its colonization – land life”, the first two issues of “Committee of the North reference book”<sup>32</sup> were sent to the press. A number of other works were preparing to publish.

Serious financial problems began for the Committee in 1922, having a particularly strong negative impact on publishing: stopped the production of “Committee of the North reference book”, a few completed monographs on the North were put away. The Committee only managed to publish the second edition of “Essays on the history of the North and Siberia colonization”<sup>33</sup>. In spite of this, the organization's work has covered the Eastern Siberia in 1922: started the development of the eastern sea route to the mouth of the Lena River and land routes in Lensky region, the economic ties between the sea and the land, which was formed on the base of research materials of the Main Hydrographic Department. The Russian North remained in sight.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, the staff of the Committee developed North Study courses, which were supposed to be organized in several universities in Petrograd. From 1923 we haven't detected any information about the fate of the organization, most likely, the Committee ceased to exist (Danileiko, 2009: 92-93).

Along with the central organizations local organizations and institutions studied and Developed Siberia. Common Siberian coordinating center was in the city Novonikolaevsk. The issue of establishing a research organization arose after the transformation of the city in the regional center in 1925 (renamed Novosibirsk). In January 6, 1925 the Siberian Research Society was set up by a group of researchers from Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Omsk and Irkutsk. V.D. Wegman was elected the Chairman of the Society. In December 1926, it was renamed the Society for the Study of Siberia and its productive forces (SSS)<sup>35</sup> (Kitova, 2007: 13) (S.A. Krasilnikov points to other dates of the existence of the Society: Spring 1925 – Spring 1931<sup>36</sup>). The structure of the SSS included Siberian universities, territorial and regional museums, and departments of the RGS and some economic organizations. The Society had “study of Siberia and parts of it, both by its natural resources, and by the population and its culture” as its main objective. Wishing to combine the scientific research institutions, organizations and individuals, the SSS had as its objective the coordination of the work by establishing its Bureaus “in the larger centers, proven themselves in research work.” The objectives of the Bureau were: “assisting to the scientific organizations in economic and cultural development, establishing contact between local research organizations and identifying the scope and nature of the research produced, and so forth”<sup>37</sup>.

The organizational structure of the SSS has changed along with the complexity and extension of the problems: originally there were three section (socio-economic, small nations and the natural sciences), later the General Science Department of five sections appeared (geological, geographical, botanical, zoological, soil-science) and the Division of human studies with anthropological and ethnological, archaeological, historical, medical, literary, artistic and economic

sections, which later became an independent department, the latest to set up were the Bureau of Local History and the Bureau of Expeditions which later became the key elements of the organization<sup>38</sup>. The Society was eliminated in 1931, and its functions were transferred to the West-Siberian Bureau of local history and the Academic Committee under the regional executive committee<sup>39</sup>.

On April 25, 1929 Mid-Siberian State Geographical Society informs the Committee of the North that the Society has taken over the functions of the Krasnoyarsk Bureau of Research Society in Siberia<sup>40</sup>.

We must also mention another agency – the Research Institute of Siberia (RIS) in Tomsk (February 1919 – July 1, 1920) (The registers of the meetings ..., 2008: 5), which set the task of systematic theoretical and practical study of nature and life in Siberia for the rational use of resources of the region, its cultural and economic development (Vdovin, 2009: 169). The Local branches of RIS “to coordinate the field work” were established in Krasnoyarsk and other cities of Siberia. But the proposal to set up the Yenisei department had no time to implement (Vdovin, Gulyaev, Makarov, Vasiliev, Vydrin, 2001: 6).

The idea of the RIS organization was firstly expressed in the fall of 1917 during the first Siberian Meteorological Congress in Irkutsk; the organizing committee for convening the members of the Board of the Institute was elected then. But because of the changed political situation in the country only a year later has the work on organizing of the Institute started, when there was a meeting of Tomsk members of the board of the Institute in Tomsk. The Congress for organization of the RIM opened January 15, 1919. Interestingly, the preliminary work on the establishing of the Institute was not only in Siberia, but also in Petrograd: on April 21, 1918, a meeting of the Organizing Committee for



the Institute of Siberia Study was held. It was supposed to set up a department in Petrograd without waiting for the Tomsk Institute. The extension of this organization is unknown. Most likely the plans failed because of the difficult political situation in the country. (Vdovin, 2009: 169).

There were a lot of various problems at the time. Particular difficulties were in that part of research that was initiated by the central authorities and institutions: organizations of Sibkrai (Siberian Region) could neither influence these studies, nor communicate with the central institutions and coordinate the work with them. First of all, we are talking about a central institution such as the Society for the Study of the Urals, Siberia and the Far East, established in Moscow in 1924. Since 1925 the Society was financed by Glavnauka (Main Department of academic, scientific, artistic and museum institutions), which basically funded only the search, mining and industrial construction, so the financing of humanities research was more the methodical one (Kitov, 2007: 12). The organization's perspective was to unite the studies of the eastern regions of the country (North Asia) and the people from the region who have worked and lived in Leningrad and Moscow, as well as those already engaged in research in the area. The societies had a branched structure of sections, also send an expedition to the East, initiated or supported consideration of the development of the eastern regions in the highest state authorities.<sup>41</sup>

The Study of Man and Life Department worked under the Society, joining the researchers working in the field of human sciences: anthropology, ethnography, history, archeology, art, folklore, medicine, demography, and so on (for example, there were anthropological-ethnological and archaeological-historical section (Kitov, 2007: 12)). During 1926-27s the department assisted in the processing of scientific

materials for Siberia collected by its members in previous years: G.P. Sosnovskiy processed paleontological materials from Khakassia; and P.E. Ostrovskiy – diaries of the Uryankhai trip. I.A. Evsenin was the Secretary of the ethnographic section of the Society, doing research of Karagas in Sayan. Moreover the department began to organize ethnological and anthropological office of the Society, a seminar for students, compiling regional studies programs, etc. (Yarkho, 1928: 92-93).

In general, we can say that the founding of the Society for the Study of the Urals, Siberia and the Far East, as well as the establishment of several other institutions (Central Bureau of Local History in Moscow (CBLH), the Russian Academy of the History of Material Culture (RAHMC) in Petrograd, etc.) is the beginning of the government policy to ensure the administrative management of public associations.

Nomination of ethnography at the forefront of solving the accelerated integration of indigenous peoples in the economic, social and political structure of the Soviet Union stimulated its nationalization. The study of the northern outskirts of the country preceding the building of socialism was closely connected with the national policy of the Soviet state. This affected not only the inclusion of scientific organizations in the building of socialism, but also included the research component of the work of numerous Soviet central and local authorities in terms of national policy and engaged in implementing this policy of economic and economic development of the border regions of the country.

Since 1917 the People's Commissariat for Nationalities (Narkomnats) was engaged in the national policy of the new state. Comparing with important foreign policy challenges of that time the problems of the North troubled Narkomnats less. Especially as at the moment there was no coherent national policy, and for the next several

years the government had to deal only with its development. In 1920 the Council of Nationalities was formed under Narkomnats, which included representatives of the Volga region, the Urals and Western Siberia. The decision was made to transform the National Commissariats into National departments. Gubnatsy and Unatsy (Departments of Nationalities) have been set up at the provincial and district executive committees. In November of the same year the Siberian Department of National Affairs (Sibnatz) was set up under the Siberian Revolutionary Committee to implement the decisions of the People's Commissariat of Nationalities in Omsk, but actually this department dealt with the growing immigration and led organizational instructing job. Sibnatz had several subsections: organizational-instructing and ethnographer-economic, financial, economic and management of the business, as well as a number of national sub-divisions (including Yakutia and Buryatia). Siberian Council of Nationalities was founded under Sibnatz which was a part of «the national association of the masses, both among themselves and with all the administrative and political bodies of the Soviet rule» (Ustyugov, 1922: 200).

In September 1921 the Institute of plenipotentiary representative of Narkomnats (CEC approved on November 14) was established under Sibrevkom, which was due to “the need to guide and monitor the actual progress of the national policy of Soviet rule in Siberia”<sup>42</sup>. The founding of this Institute was associated with the tendency to the overall expansion of national work in the field.

In order to further study of the non-Russian population departments of nationalities made projects with Sibnatz to launch the research expeditions. Furthermore Gubnats' organized and conducted a one-month training courses for “conscious citizens,” and Soviet workers coming from the most backward nations, also founding

native school, translation committees, etc. (Ustyugov, 1922: 200-201).

In the spring of 1921, after the decision of the Soviet government to reduce state institutions Sibnatz was closed and replaced by the Bureau of Siberian People's Commissariat for Nationalities (including Sibrevkom as the body that does not have the right to vote, but reports directly to Moscow.) All its national subsections were eliminated, and instead Gubupolnomochennye (authorized representative) of the Narkomnatz under Gubispolkom (Provincial Executive Committee) had been appointed; all national departments in the Siberian party committees, and educational institutions were also abolished. Instructing – organizational and ethnographic-economic departments stayed under Sibbyuro (Siberian Bureau). Former employees of the closed agencies became plenipotentiary for the Siberian bureau of the commissariat, but it was soon closed too (May, 1923) (Sliozkin, 2008: 166-167).

After official registration of the USSR in 1922, and the policy of strengthening the unitary state and the ranking nation-building, the problems of the indigenous peoples of the North were considered with more attention. At the beginning of 1922, “Polar managing subdivision of indigenous peoples of the North” was established in the Department of National Minorities of Narkomnats whose objectives included the organization of the management of primitive tribes, a comprehensive study of life and living, and the settlement of a number of economic issues (Sergeev, 1955: 214). The work of the Arctic Department, officially called the Subdivision of the management and protection of fishing tribes of the North of Tobolsk, distributed, first of all on the North of Tobolsk itself: Tobolsk, Berezovsky, Obdorsky Surgut and Tyumen Province districts. Also the work of the Arctic and sub-division covered Narym district of Tomsk province, Turukhan County of the Yenisei

province and Pechiorskiy – Arkhangelsk. It should be noted that the foundation of the Subdivision was held under difficult circumstances, since the People's Commissariat had no information about national minorities of the Arctic North, and with the liquidation of the Tyumen gubernat (Provincial Department for Nationalities) ceased all contact with local organizations and institutions, and in of any problems had to recreate "intercourses with locals"<sup>43</sup>

Evaluating the work of Subdivision in the future, the head of the Department of National Minorities A. Skachko and the head of Arctic Subdivision P. Sosunov, in a memorandum to the Board of the People's Commissariat, noted that at the time of the reductions of Narkomnats functions and the elimination of the lower organization of minorities, The Arctic department "remained as the most hard-working", managed to meet its main objectives, unlike the very Department of National Minorities, whose work was characterized as "very incomplete" work, due to the lack of its representatives in the field<sup>44</sup>. (Skachko, 1930: 5).

In the same note, Skachko and Sosunov foreseeing the ceasing of the "promising national influence on protection of the interests of small tribes of the Tobolsk North", after the expected termination of the Arctic Subdivision which would have followed the liquidation of the People's Commissariat, asked about saving functions of the Subdivision and "attaching it to the relevant bodies of the Central Executive Committee to solve any problems with nationalities in the future"<sup>45</sup>. But the Arctic subdivision still was abolished, and its program laid down the foundations of the work of the Committee of the North.

In 1922-23s Soviet political system was relatively stable, and the acute national question lost its original acuteness. NEP (New Economic Policy) years were a time to implement the outcomes of the resolutions on national politics

approved in 1923. Narkomnats was abolished the next day the new Constitution came into effect (April 1924), and dealing with national problems became the work of the Department of Nationalities of the Central Executive Committee of the RSFSR and the Council of Nationalities of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR (1925-1938).

Significant contribution to the study and development of the Northern outlying districts of the country was made by the Committee of assistance to the Peoples of Northern outlying districts (the Committee of the North) under the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (1924-1935), which was founded to reorganize the life and living conditions of the North in accordance with socialist principles and science. Over the years, this state and social organization was able to influence government policy regarding national-state system of the North, has developed principles and methods of land management on their territory, organized cooperative farms, health care of the population, trade and exchange, etc. Practical aim of studying the indigenous peoples of Siberia, being finally considered as a living culture, led to the appearance of the works of applied ethnographic nature, stimulating the interest towards ethnographic study of the country's outlying districts (Akulich, Syrina, 2009: 340; Singer, 1935: 88-90; Sergeev, 1955 224-227; Skachko, 1930: 5-37; Skachko, 1934, 9-21; Sliozkin, 2008: 176-204).

Committee of the North initially conceived as an advisory body, was to focus its work mainly on economic activities and coordinating working in the field, as well as giving directives to all government and business organizations. It was recommended to use resources of the state apparatus and avoiding, if possible, building of its own administrative apparatus or expanding administrative network in the field<sup>46</sup>. But it was impossible to control the work that wasn't being

done and in the first stages of its existence, the Committee of the North confined itself to describing the general situation with small nationalities in the county.

The systematic work of the Committee began only from the end of October 1924. The so-called Local Committees of the North were organized under the local executive committees, but the financing was minimal: to form committees under Sibrevkome (Siberian Revolutionary Committee), Dalrevkome (The Far East Revolutionary Committee), Urals obliskome (The Urals Regional Executive Committee), the Central Executive Committee of the Yakut ASSR, Executive Committee of the Komi Republic and the provincial executive committees in Arkhangelsk, Yenisei, Tomsk, Irkutsk and Kamchatka provinces (The resolution of the Executive Committee and Sovnarkom of the RSFSR ..., 1925: 103). In April 1926 it was decided to establish local committees under the Body of the Local Committee of authorized representatives. But in the absence of real power and money opportunities Committee of the North still remained very limited.

Since the mid-1930s the Soviet government stuck in administration almost lost its interest toward the national interests of the Siberian peoples. In August 1935, the Committee of Assistance to the Peoples of Northern outlying districts shuts down as "served their purpose." The party and the people considered this national question resolved as it was believed that the North during the Second Five-Year Plan has entered a new stage of historical development, and needs new organizational forms of its development. Instead of the Committee the leading authority on the North was given to a young institution – the Chief Directorate of the Northern Sea Route under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR (the Committee of the North executives were transferred there by the Government).

The period considered is characterized by the close interaction between government and academic organizations on both organizational and practical levels: their activities had to be aimed at addressing common objectives of the new Soviet government. The Commission on the Russian North is one of the examples of such interaction, which included representatives of the Supreme Council of the National Economy, trade, industry, agriculture and education commissariats, Commission for the Study of Natural Productive Forces representatives, Regular Arctic Commission, Geological Committee and the People's Commissariat of the Northern Division of The People's Commissariat of Transport<sup>47</sup>.

We have already mentioned the problems that existed between government institutions and research organizations. A positive example is the joint work of the Siberia Research Society in Novosibirsk and the Bureau for the Study of Productive Forces under the Siberian Planning Commission (Sibplan) to integrate research Siberian Region<sup>48</sup> (Skokan, 1928: 87). Since 1927 this two organizations started to register and coordinate field and stationary researches conducted by separate departments, agencies and organizations in Siberia. SSS and the Research Bureau of the Siberian Planning Commission together released a newsletter "Siberian Studies" under the socio-political edition of "Life in Siberia."<sup>49</sup>

The 1920s was a time of extensive exhibitions, conferences and congresses, organized mainly by the government institutions, with often participation of scientific organizations.

For example, from the 2nd<sup>50</sup> to the 5th of March 1921, the meeting of representatives of the natives of Siberia (All-Siberian Congress of the Provincial Departments for Nationalities) was held in Omsk, convened Sibnatz. The meeting was intended to gather materials for

the rational study of the natives' economic life, along with acquainting the natives with the policy of the Soviet government in general and towards the national question in particular<sup>51</sup>. National Department of Tomsk Provincial Executive Committee called the "The First Non-Russian Congress of Narym territory<sup>52</sup>" on 26-27 December, 1921. The first event of the Arctic Subdivision was the conference of native tribes of the Arctic North on July 15, 1922 in Samarskoye village in Tobolsk district of Tyumen province to draw up a "program of work [for] the protection and management of native tribes ... to improve their cultural and economic well-being ...".<sup>53</sup>

In 1927, according to the resolution of the Commission of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, State Academy of Artistic Sciences (SAAS) were to organize the exhibition of art of the nationalities of the USSR devoted to the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution. Unlike the three previous exhibitions organized by SAAS, this exhibition was to display all the artistic culture of the tribal population of the USSR in general (art, art school, literature and folklore, music, theater and cinema).<sup>54</sup>

By its fifth anniversary (in 1929-30) Committee of the North organized the exhibition reporting the work of the Soviet government and its institutions in the North, the objectives of which were also practical. First of all it concerned the section of handicrafts: the study of what types of trades should be developed and how. All local committees had to participate in the reporting exhibition, for which each of them had a special exhibition committee. It included the staff of the organization department, Turuhansk union, Sibkrayohotsoyuz (Siberian region hunting union), the Committee of the Northern Sea Route, the Geographical Society, Sibstat (Siberian Statistics), the SSS, Sibtorg (Siberian Trade), the Committee of the Siberian North, etc. Also, the publishing plan for the exhibition was

to publish several books: a collection of decrees, regulations, and orders of the central and local government and Party bodies for small peoples of the North, the Party's work in the Far North (studies and materials), economy of small nations, historical review about the natives of the northern outskirts from its conquest to 1917; brochure "Social groups among northern peoples."<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to note that nine central institutions worked in 1926-27s in Siberia, such as: the Academy of Sciences, Geological Committee, Meadow and Hydrological Institutes, the Institute of Experimental Agronomy, the Russian Museum and the Museum of Ethnology, and trusts: Minerals and Rusgrazit (Russian Graphite) (Skokan, 1928: 88).

There were four research institutes, four universities and twenty museums under the Department of the People's Commissariat. Seven of this museums were at district schools and six had large collections and libraries, and also were engaged into research work (Omsk, Barnaul, Krasnoyarsk, Minusinsk, Irkutsk and Novosibirsk museums)<sup>56</sup>.

The scientific societies also include the four branches of the Russian Geographical Society, two of which were highly specialized (ornithological and natural-testing), also thirteen local history societies (Tomsk, Achinsk, Society for the Study of Siberia in Novosibirsk, Study Group at Tomsk State University and others), and four large public libraries.

Apart from these organizations and institutions the work was carried out by People's Commissariat for Agriculture (Narkomzem) institutions, Resettlement Administration, Committee of the North, under the Superior Council of the People's Economy: Geodesic departments, Geological Committee, trusts Telbesstroy (Telbess Constructing), Sibzoloto (Siberian Gold), Eniseyboloto (Yenisei Gold), Sibslyuda (Siberian mica) and others, as well as

organizations in the Military Department ( local Siberian departments for the safety of navigation, Military Topographic Directorate ) and The People's Commissariat of Transport (Skokan, 1928: 88).

Both research organizations and government institutions, central and local, was carrying out active expeditionary research in 1920-1930-ies in the North of the Yenisei Siberia, performing the same tasks set by the Soviet government.

Thus, it can be concluded that the 1920-1930-ies became a period of formation of the Soviet science as a whole (its structure, development, the system of state financing and regulation), and Ethnography of Siberia in particular. It was an interesting phenomenon of interaction of different spheres: the national policy of the Soviet government, inseparable from the process of socialist construction in the national borderlands and the scientific study of Siberia mobilized the socialist construction. It was believed that assistance to indigenous peoples of the North and to their development is not feasible without careful study of them in the first place.

Until the monopolization of the science by the central government and its rigid bureaucracy in 1930, regulation of local history research by the state resulted in significant acceleration of the process of uniting various institutions and organizations which conducted a comprehensive research of Siberia. Indigenous peoples have ceased to be regarded as primitive, and their culture as a relic. Practical problems led to the appearance of applied ethnographic works (the expedition of scientists from the center, local historians, employees of different organizations, from the museum to the fur and fishing companies, etc.). In addition, in the 1920s important work has done to identify and register all the past and ongoing research, providing a common framework for further research and make the process of Siberia study more integral.

Since the beginning of the "Great Change" many scientific societies, both with the rich pre-revolutionary past and traditions and the new ones founded recently under the Soviet rule, were closed down, which means that, in the Soviet system social research structures were not non-governmental and in reality depended from the authorities almost entirely. The work of government institutions became more controlled and bureaucratic. The Committee of the North shuts down and many expeditions winds up.

In 1936 another improvement of the structure of the Academy of Sciences took place, connected with the adopting of the new Constitution of the USSR and the corresponding transformations of state power: it was decided then to reduce the number of committees either by merging them with the relevant institutions or by direct elimination. This is how the Arctic Commission was shut down due to several factors: the existence of the Main Administration of the Northern Sea Route, the active work of the Institute for the Study of the North at the Supreme Economic Council (now – the Research Institute of the Arctic and Antarctic (AARI)), who led the work in the Arctic, as well as the transition to stationary research. In 1937, the Siberian divisions of the Russian Geographical Society were abolished, and in 1938 – the State Geographical Society itself (reformed into the Geographical Society of the USSR (also All-Union Geographical Society)). The repressions, which started in 1930, affected many researchers of Siberia.

Therefore, we can say that the interest of the Soviet institutions and organizations towards the north of Siberia was determined not as much as by science but economic and political problems. As for the ethnographic research, it was a part of the Soviet nationalities policy. However, this statement is completely true only for the institutions in general: many scientists have used the capabilities of

various institutions and organizations for the ethnographic study of the remote areas of the Yenisei Siberia, the materials collected during their expeditions indicated.

Further research on this topic will help to understand the process of formation of the Soviet ethnography better and fill the gaps in the history of exploration and study of North Siberia.

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- <sup>3</sup> Cadiot J. Laboratory of Empire: Russia / Soviet Union, 1860-1940. – New York: The New Literary Review, 2010. – 336., Martin T. The Empire «positive activities.» Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939. – Moscow: Russian Politic Encyclopedia (ROSSPEN): Foundation «Presidential Center B.N. Yeltsin, 2011. – 664 p.; Slezkin Y. Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the small peoples of the North. – New York: The New Literary Review, 2008. – 512 p.
- <sup>4</sup> Bureau, which would take up the study of the population of the empire and mapping was designed by Leo Sternberg in 1909, and was a response to the «challenge of national separatism that threatened the integrity of the empire.» Similar functions will initially be fulfilled by the Commission for the Study of the tribal population (CSTP).
- <sup>5</sup> Osipov Y.S. Academy of Sciences in the history of the Russian state: <http://www.ras.ru/about/history/revolution.aspx>
- <sup>6</sup> SSC RF AARI. P – 1797, s. 1.
- <sup>7</sup> According to other documents created in September 1917 (SSC RFFAANII. P – 1771, l.4) and May 1918 (SSC RF AANII. P – 1797, p. 1).
- <sup>8</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1771, p. 27-28.
- <sup>9</sup> SSC RF AANII. R – 1771, p. 28; RFAANII SSC. R – 1797, p. 1-3.
- <sup>10</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1797, p. 4-6, 8-9.
- <sup>11</sup> White coal – figurative expression used to refer to the energy of natural water flows, which technically could be used for hydropower (*translator's note*)
- <sup>12</sup> SSC RF AARI. P – 1797. p. 10.
- <sup>13</sup> SSC RF AARI. P – 1771. p. 8.
- <sup>14</sup> SSC RFAANII. P – 1771. p. 1. In his article Krasnikova O.A. is stating that «the decision of the official establishment of the commission took place only in September 1915».
- <sup>15</sup> Krasnikova O.A. Academy of Science and Research in the Arctic: Polar Commission activities in 1914 – 1936 r.: <http://vivovoco.rsl.ru/VV/JOURNAL/VIET/ARCTICA.HTM>
- <sup>16</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1771, p. 4.
- <sup>17</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1771, p. 4-6.
- <sup>18</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1771, p. 4.
- <sup>19</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1771, p. 4.
- <sup>20</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1771, p. 7.
- <sup>21</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1463, p. 7.
- <sup>22</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1771, p. 30.
- <sup>23</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1463, p. 21,22.
- <sup>24</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1463, p. 22.
- <sup>25</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1463, p. 37.
- <sup>26</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1463, p. 40-51.
- <sup>27</sup> Sorokoletova G.I., Museum and West Siberian branch of the Russian Geographical Society: 1920-1923.: <http://www.sibmuseum.ru/ogik/izvestiya6/Sorokoletova.html>; Annual Report of the State Russian Geographical Society in 1928 – Leningrad, 1929. : Edition GRGO. – Pp. 5 – 8.
- <sup>28</sup> SAKR F. 1380, op. 1, 13, p. 24.
- <sup>29</sup> SARF. A – 2307, op.2, d.352, p. 6, 9, 26, 28.
- <sup>30</sup> SARF. A – 2307, op.2, d.352, p. 10.
- <sup>31</sup> SARF. A – 2307, op.2, d.352, p. 22, 24-25.

- <sup>32</sup> SARF. A – 2307, op.2, d.352, p. 26-27.  
<sup>33</sup> SARF. A – 2307, op.2, d.352, p. 48, 49.  
<sup>34</sup> SARF. A – 2307, op.2, d.352, p. 48-49.  
<sup>35</sup> SANR. F. R – 217, op. 1. on 265 // <http://libinfo.org/index/index.php?id=140145>  
<sup>36</sup> Krasilnikov S. Society for the Study of Siberia from the heyday before sunset (1925 – 1931) // Science in Siberia. – № 19 (2255) – May 12, 2000: <http://www-sbras.nsc.ru/HBC/article.phtml?nid=100&id=14>  
<sup>37</sup> SAKR F., 1845, op. 1, F. 133, p. 23.  
<sup>38</sup> Krasilnikov S. Society for the Study of Siberia from the heyday before sunset (1925 – 1931) // Science in Siberia. – № 19 (2255) – May 12, 2000: <http://www-sbras.nsc.ru/HBC/article.phtml?nid=100&id=14>  
<sup>39</sup> SANR. F. R – 217, op. 1. on 265 // <http://libinfo.org/index/index.php?id=140145>  
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<sup>41</sup> Krasilnikov S. Society for the Study of Siberia from the heyday before sunset (1925 – 1931) // Science in Siberia. – № 19 (2255) – May 12, 2000: <http://www-sbras.nsc.ru/HBC/article.phtml?nid=100&id=14>  
<sup>42</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1449, p. 10.  
<sup>43</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1452, p. 72.  
<sup>44</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1452, p. 77.  
<sup>45</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1452, p. 77-78.  
<sup>46</sup> The meeting of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee on August 25, 1924  
<sup>47</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1463, p. 6.  
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<sup>49</sup> Krasilnikov S. Society for the Study of Siberia from the heyday before sunset (1925 – 1931) // Science in Siberia. – № 19 (2255) – May 12, 2000: <http://www-sbras.nsc.ru/HBC/article.phtml?nid=100&id=14>  
<sup>50</sup> According to Ustyugov from 1st March and lasted for six days. (Ustyugov P. Work among the minorities of Siberia // Life in Siberia. – 1922 – № 4. – P. 200).  
<sup>51</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1883, p. 1.  
<sup>52</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1883, p. 7.  
<sup>53</sup> SSC RF AARI. R – 1883, p. 6.  
<sup>54</sup> SAKR F., 1845, op.1, f. 130, p. 44, 46, 50.  
<sup>55</sup> SAKR F., 1845, op. 1, f. 130, p. 6, 13, 16–17, 45, 129.  
<sup>56</sup> Kitova writes that by the 1930s there were approximately 30 museums in Siberia, and that the first organizations and institutions in Siberia, studying region were more than 50 and (Kitova L.Y. History of Siberian archeology (1920 – 1930): A Study of works from the metal. – Novosibirsk: Publishing House of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the RAS, 2007. – P. 13).

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#### **List of abbreviations**

SARF – State Archive of the Russian Federation

SSC RF AARI – State Scientific Center of Russian Federation Arctic and Antarctic Research Institute

SAKR – State Archives of the Krasnoyarsk Region

SANR – State Archives of the Novosibirsk region

KRM – Krasnoyarsk Regional Museum

KSPU – Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University

## **Государственные учреждения и научные организации и их роль в этнографическом изучении Севера Сибири (1920–1930-е гг.)**

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*В данной статье сделана попытка представить общую картину истории организации этнографического изучения коренных народов Севера Сибири в первые десятилетия советской власти. На основе широкого круга опубликованных и архивных источников была изучена деятельность и взаимосвязь значительного числа научных общественных организаций и государственных учреждений Москвы, Санкт-Петербурга (Ленинграда), Новосибирска, Омска, Томска, Красноярска и других городов. Представленная работа позволит восполнить ряд существующих пробелов как в истории организации науки в начале XX в. в России в целом, так и в истории этнографии Севера Сибири в частности, а также ввести в научный оборот новый материал.*

*Ключевые слова: Север Сибири, 1920–1930-е гг., этнография, организация науки, советское строительство, национальная политика.*

*Работа выполнена в рамках исследований, финансируемых Красноярским краевым фондом поддержки научной и научно-технической деятельности, а также в рамках тематического плана СФУ по заданию Министерства образования и науки Российской Федерации.*

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