

INTRODUCTION

Erich Kasten

The idea for this book arose when new editions of earlier classic monographs in northeastern Siberian ethnography were in preparation¹ for which some of the contributors to this volume had written their forewords. On request of the editor they submitted these texts as reprints for this book. In this way, their essays can now be presented here again in a coherent form, whereas they were previously scattered in the above-mentioned new publications of Jochelson's and Bogoras's monographs. These two men, along with Shternberg, made up the so-called *etnotroika* that shaped early Soviet ethnography. More contributions were solicited in order to do justice to Shternberg's significant role in this process and to Bogoras's later far-reaching scientific and educational programs that he launched in Leningrad upon conclusion of his fieldwork projects in northeastern Siberia. Two of these essays, those by Elena Liarskaya and Anna Sirina & Tat'iana Roon, were published in Russian before, and with their English translation they can now reach an even broader international readership. The chapters by Matthias Winterschladen and Sergei Kan were written for this volume in order to round it out in necessary ways.

The authors of this volume review the fascinating and changeable biographies of Waldemar Jochelson, Waldemar Bogoras and Lev Shternberg, with a focus on how they became involved in ethnography towards the end of the 19th century, while spending many years in remote parts of the country as political exiles. The initial aim of their former revolutionary activities was to better the lives of underprivileged people, which was also reflected in the later ambitious community-oriented research programs that they conceptualized at Leningrad State University, until these pioneering efforts were eventually impeded during Stalin's repressions. Consequently, their invaluable scientific legacy encompasses not only the enormous volumes in which they documented the cultures of the peoples of northeastern Siberia—the Yakut, Yukaghir, Even, Koryak, Chukchi and the Nivkh—at the turn of the 20th century, shortly before their lives and many of their unique cultural features underwent rapid transformations during Soviet times. But Jochelson, Bogoras and Shternberg also shaped significantly the emerging Soviet ethnography and had a strong impact on the next generations of scholars in the Soviet Union who worked in this field.

1 http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/bisp_E.html. Another series covers significant monographs by German-Baltic scientists who travelled through Kamchatka in the 18th and 19th centuries (http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/bika_E.html).

In his introductory chapter, *The Forgotten Member of the “Etnotroika?”*, Matthias Winterschladen calls our attention to the fact that Jochelson had for many years not received the attention that he deserved, as Bogoras and Shternberg did, though this has changed, notably since *perestroika*.²

The next section of articles acknowledges Jochelson’s scientific legacy with regard to his monographs on the Yakut, the Yukaghir and the Koryak. But first, Erich Kasten explores in his chapter, *From Political Exile to Outstanding Ethnologist for North-eastern Siberia*, how Jochelson became interested in ethnography towards the end of the 19th century, while spending many years in faraway parts of the country as a political exile. His initial strong revolutionary commitment explains much of his empathetic approach towards indigenous peoples, as well as his fieldwork methods. Some of them pointed the way ahead and became relevant later in more recent ethnographic research. Jochelson incorporated new ideas from American cultural anthropology during his later collaboration with Franz Boas, after which one can notice changes to his earlier fieldwork as well as his ethnographic style and thematic emphasis.

This is shown in even more detail in the following chapter by Erich Kasten and Michael Dürr, *Waldemar Jochelson and the Koryak during the Jesup North Pacific Expedition*. A biographical sketch of his years after the Sibiriakov Expedition reveals the obvious shifts in Jochelson’s methods and in the presentation of his results between his first ethnographic fieldwork and the later Jesup North Pacific Expedition, for which he was recruited by Franz Boas and with whom he continued to work at the American Museum of Natural History in New York until his death. By means of selected themes, Jochelson’s particular ethnographic interests and outcomes are further discussed, such as his assessments of political economy and his investigations into material culture and the arts as well as shamanic performances and other ritual practices.

In his chapter, *Reading the Ethnographic Past in the Present*, Thomas R. Miller focuses on Jochelson’s work on the Yukaghir, based on his two expeditions with them. The author first summarizes the most prominent themes and conclusions that Jochelson drew in his extensive monograph on the Yukaghir and neighboring peoples with whom they closely interacted, such as the “Yukaghirized Tungus.” A particular topic is then more thoroughly discussed—shamans and singing diseases. In contrast to Jochelson’s later descriptions of similar performances by the Koryak, it becomes obvious that he gained more insight into these sensitive issues of indigenous worldviews and ritual practices with the Yukaghir, most likely due to the fact of his deeper immersion and particular ways of collaboration with local experts there.

2 In a forthcoming Russian publication the significant results of Jochelson’s early Sibiriakov Expedition will be compiled and thoroughly discussed: Kasten, Erich, and Anna Sirina (eds.) 2019. *Vladimir Iokhel’son i Sibiriakovskaia (Iakutskaiia) ekspeditsiia (1894–1897 gg.)* [Waldemar Jochelson and the Sibiriakov (Yakut) Expedition (1894–1897)], Fürstenberg/Havel: Kulturstiftung Sibirien [in preparation].

Tat'iana Argounova-Low emphasizes in her chapter on Waldemar Jochelson's monograph, *The Yakut and Continuing Traditions of Ysyakh*, the particular impact that Jochelson's work still has on present-day ritual practices. The descriptions in the monograph confirm the authenticity of Sakha contemporary celebrations. As already indicated by Winterschladen and Miller, Jochelson's attitude towards local people and his documentation of their cultural heritage was always and is even more today acknowledged by the Sakha community.

In his chapter on Bogoras's "classical monograph," *The Chukchee*, Igor Krupnik first reviews his personal background and the course and results of both of his expeditions—the Sibiriakov and Jesup North Pacific—during which he worked closely with his friend Waldemar Jochelson. Just as for Jochelson, Bogoras's later publication of his exhaustive descriptions of Chukchi culture was strongly promoted and supported by Boas. But Bogoras had already become more active in the Bolshevik Revolution than the other two members of the *etnotroika*, which caused some delays in the completion of his *opus magnum*. Krupnik points out a conflict faced by Bogoras during his work was that he presumably felt persuaded by Boas to present the material according to a different template than he might have had in mind himself. This raises the question, if this was the reason he made his local partners in these publications more "invisible," whereas their contribution was still fully acknowledged by him and Jochelson in their letters from the foregoing Sibiriakov Expedition, as already indicated by Kasten in his chapter above. Krupnik also directs our attention to other "invisible" partners, whose role and valuable contribution during the Jesup North Pacific Expedition remain largely unmentioned by both Bogoras and Jochelson—specifically their wives, Sof'ia Volkova Bogoras and Dina Jochelson-Brodskaja.

Elena Liarskaya's chapter, *Penelope's Cloth: "The Bogoras Project" in the Second Half of the 1920s–1930s*, ties neatly into Bogoras's scientific activities after the Bolshevik Revolution at Leningrad State University. Together with Lev Shternberg he established there the so-called Leningrad ethnographic school that became most influential for the next generations of ethnographers in the Soviet Union. Liarskaya analyses key elements of the "Bogoras project," i.e. its structure and Bogoras's principal aims and efforts to realize his ambitious and complex program. Such combined scientific and community-oriented research involving training and participation of local partners was definitively innovative for that time. According to Liarskaya, the "Bogoras project" that he launched with his colleagues worked well until the mid-1930s—and it's probably lucky that Bogoras himself did not experience Stalin's repressions that started one year after his death in 1937, and which severely affected the continuation of his work.

Anna Sirina and Tat'iana Roon provide us in their chapter on Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg, *At the Outset of Soviet Ethnography*, with much information about this outstanding scientist, who became the other prominent founder of the Leningrad ethnographic school. After the preceding chapter on Bogoras it becomes clearer how

they complemented each other in pursuing their tasks. We first learn that Shternberg's personal background was very similar to Jochelson's and Bogoras's, and then about the beginning of his ethnographic work as an exile on Sakhalin, where he developed his fieldwork methods on his own. His research eventually resulted in comprehensive and thorough descriptions of Nivkh culture in particular, corresponding to those by Jochelson and Bogoras on the peoples of northeastern Siberia. The authors follow up with how Shternberg prepared his materials for publication during his work at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography beginning in 1901 and later at Leningrad State University. They portray the new generation of ethnographers that he strongly influenced by his teaching while also carrying out more expeditions in the Amur area. At the same time he was involved in acquiring exhibits for the museum as well as compiling linguistic collections. The authors underline the importance of his friendship with Franz Boas and they touch upon Shternberg's relations with Sergei Shirokogoroff, another prominent ethnographer on Tungus peoples in eastern Siberia. They inform us of the complex network that he was able to establish with other scholars in Leningrad. Furthermore, they discuss the impact of his theoretical studies on relevant ethnological themes at that time.

Closely related to this is the closing chapter by Sergei Kan, *Was Lev Shternberg Just Another Classical Evolutionist?*, in which he challenges the still prevalent understanding that Shternberg was a classical evolutionist. However this may be, his ideas obviously coexisted with those of other scholars who clearly represented different views, and Shternberg was open to modifying some of his positions accordingly. The author reveals that—despite Boas's rejection of Shternberg's principal theoretical conclusions—they had much in common with regards to their methods. In one of his lectures Shternberg gives a definition of culture which is much closer to Boas's views than those of Morgan or Tylor. In other lectures and articles he modified evolutionist theories regarding particular developments in religion. And last but not least, the drastic changes during and in the wake of the Russian Civil War made Shternberg rethink some of his earlier evolutionary judgements.

In this volume a particular emphasis was placed on the comprehensive monographs by Jochelson, Bogoras and Shternberg in English language, but one has to also keep in mind their abundant materials that were published before or at the same time in Russian editions. For this, a forthcoming publication (see footnote 2) will compile and discuss such informative documents with regard to Waldemar Jochelson in order to achieve an even more complete and balanced view of the events.