

WORLD ROUTES: Arctic workshop of the University of Tartu

28.-29.05, Tartu

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The Department of Ethnology/Anthropology of UT is planning to launch its annual Arctic workshop series. The first workshop is called "World Routes" and is dedicated to the movement in the Arctic.

The Arctic is often seen as an isolated empty area covered with snow. As many of us know, this is not all there is to it. The Arctic has been inhabited not only for centuries but for thousands of years. These inhabitants have been in constantly moving. Starting with the colonisation of the American continent via the Bering Strait to the migration of Filipino and Chinese people to remote Norwegian settlements in modern times. The Arctic has seen many different groups of people come and go. The movement of people in different regions of the Arctic is linked with various environmental factors, changes in the economy, political processes, state policy, and informal networks, to name but a few. Besides that, physical movement is often accompanied with identity shifts, creating of new identities, consolidation of existing ones or adapting to a new identity (*sibiriaki* in Siberia). These multiple factors and different modes of movement and identity change have – contrary to human movement in other continents of the world – received little continuous attention by scholars. While the movement of hunters and herders in the Siberian Arctic is well studied, however different features/aspects of migration caused by the industrial expansion have found less attention than similar processes in the Scandinavian North. From Siberian history we know that there has been many waves of migration and immigration. Throughout history, there has been different migratory waves of people that became later known as 'indigenous', there is a migration of people from European Russia during Tsarist times, in the Stalinist era, Komsomol-led the appropriation (*osvoenie*) of 'vast uncivilised' territories. Later migratory waves included people who came for the 'big buck' and the post-Soviet migration from former Soviet republics, but also Kurds, Chinese, Mongols, etc. Similar movements have taken

place in the Scandinavian and North-American Arctic. While trade routes in the past have been studied by historians there is little systematic and comparative research on trade routes of contemporary entrepreneurs linking for example European Russia and Southeast Asia with different regions of Siberia. On the other hand, there exists little research on what impact for instance has there been on the Inuit cultures the fact that in the modern world that it is impossible to travel from one Inuit-inhabited area directly to another. Instead one has to fly via Copenhagen, Moscow or other regional or national centres. Moreover, the movement of people in the Arctic is often studied as the movement of two separate groups – native and incomer population, but we have to see it as interconnected on different levels.

The workshop wishes to explore these and other aspects of movement. The main theoretical framework of the workshop is that the movement of people in the Arctic, both past and present is multilayered, has complex background and content, and several initiators. We would like to organise a workshop discussing different levels and aspects of movement in the Arctic. Herewith we do not want to limit with one discipline, region, ethnic group or economic form (mode). Beside anthropologists we also encourage contributions from specialists in history, biology, sociology, management studies and so forth. Colleagues just working on their PhD thesis are also welcome to come and discuss their works.

Workshop in Vikerkaare Guesthouse, Tartu, Vikerkaare 40

28.05.2010

Arrival

14-18.00 EAUS (the annual conference of the Estonian Society for the Study of Religions) (in Estonian)

19.00 informal get together with dinner and possible sauna

29.05.2010

20min talk, 30min discussion

Working languages English and Russian

9.30	Art Leete	Welcome note
9.40	Aimar Ventsel	Introduction
10.00	Eva Toulouze	How Christian and Soviet enlighteners coped with nomadism
10.50	Liivo Niglas	Yuri Vella and movement
11.40	Coffee break	
12.00	Art Leete	Barbars' Dreams: Construction of Identity through Rupture
12.50	Aimar Ventsel	Siberia is small: how money and goods travel in and out of NW Sakha
13.40	Lunch	
14.30	Toomas Lapp	Movement in an insular community: the Faeroe Islands' case
15.20	Istvan Santha	Being Local Outsiders: The Study of Chinese Ethos in East Siberia
16.20	Tatiana Bulgakova	Changes in clan spirituality because of recent populace move in Siberia
17.30	Coffee break	
17.50	Final discussion	

Participants

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ABSTRACTS

Being Local Outsiders: The Study of Chinese Ethos in East Siberia

Istvan Santha

During our fieldwork in the Baunt region of the Buryatia Republic, which was initially focused on Evenki, we occasionally became participants in several encounters between Evenki people and local Chinese. Local Chinese, who create a network between Evenki hunters, local illegal gold miners and Chinese buyers are principal economic partners for the Evenki. All economic activity connected with market is linked with local Chinese. These connections were established on various scales from face-to-face exchanges between Evenki and Chinese collectors of fur and gold to million dollar transactions between nephrite miners and Chinese buyers.

How do local Chinese, who have the double perspective of being local minorities, form their strategies of communication and business development? If we accept the assumption proposed by Marshall Sahlins that social distance is a factor that determines the character of reciprocity (generalized, balanced or negative) between actors, then we have to explain which kind of reciprocity establishes local Chinese among others as they are both local and foreign at the same time.

The position of Chinese people in Russia was always semi-legal as they were trying to extract the resources of one state and sell them illegally on the market of another state. Chinese people retained this semi-legal position even after the Russian and Chinese border closed. For example, they grew opium or secretly preserved international currency. After the fall of the Soviet Union, local Chinese organized mini mining cartels that survived the global crisis because they were semi-legal and operating without licenses and did not borrowed credits for their promotion. They also sold gold directly to illegal Chinese buyers that bought it at flexible and adequate prices in comparison to legal cartels that were forced to sell gold to the state at the fixed price. Local Chinese were the first to establish business partnerships with new-coming Chinese in the 1990s, partly because of their common historical origin, but also because their shared involvement in illegal practices.

Chinese buyers are still the main collectors of illegally panned gold, fur and musk deer glands. These are important profits for local people, especially for Evenki.

Driving Uazik in Western Siberia

Liivo Niglas

Uazik (popular name for UAZ-452) is a legendary Soviet designed off-road minibus, which is widely used from Russia to Mongolia because it is able to drive virtually any terrain and is easy to fix. Yuri Vella, a well-known Forest Nenets reindeer breeder, poet and activist in Western Siberia, has had Uazik for more than a decade. The presentation tries to show what kind of role the car plays in Yuri Vella's everyday life, how it is adapted into a semi-nomadic reindeer pastoralism and how it serves Yuri Vella's political struggle with the oil company LukOIL. The presentation includes a few video clips, which hopefully helps the audience not only to see how the Uazik is used by Yuri Vella but also to understand how it feels to drive it on the land of reindeer pastures and oilfields.

Movement and enlightenment in the Russian North

Eva Toulouze

In their contacts with aliens, the communities of the Northern natives have often met people who wanted something from them. Their being nomads or semi-nomads usually protected them from insufferable intrusions. But in the two last centuries they had to face different kinds of enlighteners – both Christian missionaries and Soviet missionaries – who were dedicated to the task of changing them very deeply from within. How did these missionaries cope with the fact these people were in motion, alias could escape them quite easily? Did they try to convince them to abandon movement for their sake? Or did they adopt the same kind of lifestyle? How much Christian and “red” missionaries became themselves nomads in the attempt to meet the people they wanted to convince and to “dialogue” with? This paper deals with those questions and reflects on the differences, from this point of view, between the two ideological standpoints.

Movement in an insular community: the Faeroe Islands' case

Toomas Lapp

The ocean can be a linking way or an isolating factor. For the Faeroe Islands, movement is at the origins of their population, but its history has revealed itself surprisingly sedentary. After the Vikings stopped and populated the islands, which were already populated with the famous "Irish monks" – who were also supposed to move in order to get to those desert islands, the Faeroese population has remained stable and stationary? Why? Which are the mechanisms that have dissuaded the population to pursue its once mobile way of life? How the sea is perceived in the archipelago – has it allowed and encouraged the contacts between the islands or, on the contrary, prevented the movement of the Faeroese within their internal space? How commerce and contacts with other powers affected the Faeroese communities? To all these questions this paper is supposed to give an answer based on the analysis of the Faeroese experience throughout the centuries.

Siberia is small: how money and goods travel in and out of NW Sakha

Aimar Ventsel

Siberia is a vast space. In my talk I want to discuss the movement of resources and goods from whole sale markets and centres to a small village. By analysing how goods reach small tundra village, one observes that they travel vast distances and come from various sources. All such goods land in small village shops where they are bought and eventually consumed. Trade networks link various and from the first sight isolated spots. In the talk I argue, that the notion of space is different in Siberia. Kilometres are not that important than the time and costs of moving goods. The relation of time spent for travels and kilometres are different than in the Western space. This all makes movement of goods and money possible in Siberia.