

Conference

Anthropology of Siberia in the Late 19th and 20th Centuries: Re-assessing the contribution of a ‘marginal’ field

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Convenors: Dmitriy Funk, J. Otto Habeck, Virginie Vaté

ABSTRACTS

David G. Anderson

Terrestrial and Spiritual Imaginaries in Siberian Land-Rights Discourse

Relationships between people and territory have become one of the defining qualities of international statutes recognizing indigenous rights. While reflecting important legacies and fissures within the colonial situation of the Americas, the land/person equation seems muted in Northeast Asia where declarations of rights focus primarily on culture, sparseness, masterhood, and enskillment. In this paper, based on fieldwork and historical ethnography from Evenkis and Orochens in the Baikal region, I will examine how the relationship between people and space has been represented in early Siberian ethnography. The paper will examine early Evenki-Tungus declarations of occupancy in the Imperial and early Soviet period. It will also look at the wide impact of key collaborations, such as those between the Maksimov family and Prince Kropotkin, on the geographic imagination. The paper will conclude with reflections on the perhaps too-tangible way that imagining the regulation of two-dimensional space has obscured the evocative imagination of hydrological flows, subterranean essences, roads, and destinies in the landscape. It will be argued that these cosmopolitical visions can continue to enrich this discussion internationally.

Dmitry Arzyutov

I Know What You Want – We Know Who You Are: Mediating subjectivities of an Altai shepherd between ‘his’ spirits and early Soviet ethnographers

The history of anthropology traditionally writes as the history of institutions, ideas and anthropologists themselves. The discipline which life trajectories intrinsically intertwine the colonial and the relativistic suffers from the lack of histories from the field, or, in other words, the united histories of ‘us’ and ‘them’. To ease this tension, I offer a microhistory case study from the South Siberian borderlands of Russian Empire and the Soviet Union which deals with the encounters between an Altai shepherd and also shaman, Burkhanist priest, and Soviet activist Kondrat Tanashev and various explorers and field ethnographers. The documented and even fragmentary photographed, filmed and drew life history of Kondrat shows how he performed his subjectivity via various and partly contradictory forms and techniques and how the coming scholars were puzzled to understand them through the structured knowledge of the region and Altai culture. By bringing together the ongoing debates on ‘Soviet subjectivity’ inspired by Steven Kotkin (Igal Halfin, Jochen Hellbeck and others) and anthropological and feministic theories of ‘partible’ person that composed out of relations with other human and non-human persons (Marilyn Strathern), I aim to show the fluidity of Kondrat’s subjectivity which embraced both and, as a consequence, made him a highly contradictory example in the history of shamanism and Altai, in particular. In this article, I specifically focus on the encounters of the two practices of subjectivity and the conflicts and/or junctions they entailed. The paper is based on my long-term archival research in various institutions in Russia and deep ethnographic fieldwork in Altai (2005-2011).

Vladimir N. Davydov, Elena A. Davydova

The Iceberg of Siberian Anthropology in the Museum Context: The loss and rediscovery of ethnographic knowledge

We will employ the examples of recent projects devoted to history of science implemented on the basis of Kunstkamera’s collections. We plan to discuss the temporality of museum work that created the gaps in the anthropological knowledge and made the space of the museum a container of unique materials, which were never processed in their entirety. Distribution of the collections among different institutions during the Soviet period created bureaucratic borders which are rather difficult to overcome in order to investigate the different parts of the collections. The example of such distribution are the materials of S.M. Shirokogoroff, B.O. Pilsudski, G.M. Vasilevich, B.A. Kuftin, M.G. Levin and B.A. Vasil’ev. In this context, we will approach the museum space as a set of archaeological layers where one can see different classificational attempts done under the subjective initiatives dictated by perception of value that particular materials may have in the context of particular epoch. We will also describe the ‘social life’ of doublets and copies which were perceived as something spurious and embodying less value than the “originals” that were registered in the collections. We will give some examples of the exclusion of materials from the scientific archive and collections during the Soviet period and discuss the value of these materials for contemporary researchers.

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Patty A. Gray

Exiled from Siberia: Fieldwork conditions in Chukotka in the 1990s

At the 2002 MPI workshop, ‘Who Owns Siberian Ethnography?’, a group of Russian, European, and American ethnographers of Siberia discussed, among other topics, how Russian researchers experienced the sudden influx of foreign researchers in Siberia and how this encounter influenced theory and methodology in the study of Siberia. What they didn’t discuss was how the foreigners experienced each other’s presence in the field, or how local officials reacted to them; nor did they fully explore how researchers of any citizenship interacted with indigenous professional colleagues. Using as a departure point my own case of being banished from Chukotka by the FSB in 2001 (but not learning of it until 2004), my presentation explores issues surrounding fieldwork in Siberia – field access, political conditions, power relations, ethics, epistemological soul-searching – and how these circumstances impacted the research topics that predominated in Siberian studies or, as in my case, influenced the decision to abandon Siberian studies altogether.

Clément Jacquemoud

From Shamanism to Heroic Epic and Play. Some reflections on anthropological research on Siberia in France

This paper will discuss the features and contributions of Siberian studies in France. Despite difficulties in gaining access to ‘the field’ during the Soviet period, French anthropologists managed to conduct research on Northern Asian indigenous peoples. From A. Lewitsky’s (1901-1942) and E. Lot-Falck’s (1918-1974) compilations of the work of Russian researchers on Siberian shamanism (1943; 1953) to R. Hamayon’s theory of shamanism (1990) and to the in-depth study of objects (Delaby 1976; 1997 & 1998) and museography (Lot-Falck 1977; Beffa & Delaby 1999), how can the contributions of French anthropologists to the anthropology of Siberia be assessed? To what extent did R. Hamayon’s analysis of shamanism through heroic epics, theorized as an exchange with ‘supernature’ in hunting societies and as a form of counter-power in pastoral societies (1990; 1994), renew the approach to Siberian shamanism and to shamanism in general? What are the limitations of her work, and how have these limitations affected the studies of R. Hamayon’s followers? In my presentation, I aim to trace the different stages of the constitution of studies on Siberian shamanism in France. I will show that these studies resulted from an uninterrupted and fruitful dialogue between French anthropologists and their colleagues from all countries, including the USSR. I will also explain to which extent the fall of the USSR allowed the renewal of Siberian studies in France, oriented not only towards the link between heroic epic and shamanism (Hamayon 1990; 2001/2 & 2006; Lambert 2002/3), but also towards gender (Vaté 2003) and shamanism as ‘play’ (Hamayon 2012; Lavrillier 2005). I will analyze these different studies in terms of methodology and results, framework and future expectations.

Sergei Kan

Moisei Krol's Return to the Jewish People via Ethnographic Research among the Buryats

Born in 1862 in Ukraine, Moisei A. Krol received a traditional Jewish religious education. However, as a Russian high school student he embraced secular Western culture and a radical *Narodnik* (Populist) ideology. Exiled to southern Siberia in 1890 for anti-government activities, he undertook an ethnographic study of the local indigenous people the Buryats.

Despite his Eurocentric and evolutionist views Krol ended up admiring the Buryats in general and appreciating a positive role of Buddhism in their life, which he compared to a similar role of Judaism in his own people's lives. While delving deep into another people's culture, he developed a much greater appreciation for the values subscribed to by his own parents and other ordinary Jews of Russia. As a result, following the end of his exile in 1895, Krol (a lawyer by training) devoted his entire life to serving various Jewish causes, while also participating in the neo-populist political activities of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. While he did publish a number of important ethnographic works on the Buryats, Krol did not become a professional anthropologist. In this respect his career differed from that of his friends and fellow-Populists Lev Shternberg, Vladimir Bogoraz and Vladimir Jochelson. This paper explores Krol's experience as ethnographer, focusing on his view of the Buryats and the effect of these views on his decision 'to return to the Jewish people'.

Anna Kerttula de Echave

BOREAS and beyond: How the US National Science Foundation affected the development of the anthropology of Siberia

Just as Glasnost' was opening Siberia to Western style anthropological field research and researchers, the US Congress set aside funding for the creation of a US National Science Foundation program dedicated to the social sciences of the Arctic. Through the lens of Arctic anthropology and the personal career of Anna Kerttula de Echave, which has spanned nearly 40 years from research on subsistence in Alaska, to Soviet Chukotka, to an administrative career responsible for the US funding of Arctic social sciences across the globe, this presentation will focus on how US funding, both governmental and non-governmental, affected our understanding of the evolving Russian social system in the North and the Arctic as a whole.

Slava Kovalsky

The Animal of Soviet Tungusic Studies: Ethnographies of non-humans related by humans

In the 21st century human-nonhuman relations have come to play a central role in anthropological projects and ethnographic expositions, especially those associated with the so-called ontological turn. Although one might argue that this prominence is unprecedented, the relations themselves are hardly absent within the discipline's records. The very omnipresence of nonhumans in human life, as both ethnographically exposed and theoretically argued by recent anthropologies, suggests the former's pervasion in any account. Moreover, an account

itself may be seen as a human-nonhuman relation – one, where a human author relates events involving nonhumans. This is particularly the case regarding so called human-animal relations, since even in a historical materialist perspective, dismissive of any being it considers a matter of belief or religion, beings classified as animals are tangible enough to relate.

Drawing on soviet Tungusic studies this presentation discusses ethnographic accounts as both records of human-animal relations and instances of such. Dispersed all over Siberia from the Urals to the Far East of Russia the Tungusic peoples live (the ethnographic present is intended) in a variety of hybrid, multispecies communities (in addition to humans including species such as dogs, reindeer, horses, etc.) or/and ‘neighborhoods’ (Taiga societies, as S.M. Shirokogoroff once versed them, with members ranging from fish to tigers). Under-represented nonhuman ‘compatriots’ of Tungusic peoples nevertheless permeated soviet ethnographies of the latter, transcending existing ethnographic categories. It is as if conducting fieldwork in these communities entails human-animal relations both to be observed and to be partaken by the observer. The latter invites speculation about ethnographer-animal relations behind such ethnographic accounts and the way beings other-than-human might have contributed to a humanist science of peoples.

Art Leete

Finding Temperamental Connections among Finno-Ugric People in Siberian Ethnography at the 19th and early 20th Centuries

By the 19th century, the theory of the relationship among Uralic (or Finno-Ugric) languages was already widely recognised among scholars. Ethnographers also adopted the idea that the common origin of the Finno-Ugric languages results in ontological similarities among the Uralic peoples, indicating a connection between the European and Siberian Finno-Ugrians. This presentation aims to analyse how the Finno-Ugric connection was detected and explained in field ethnographies. What were the specific topics examined by different scholars regarding the Finno-Ugric trope? How did ethnographers establish that the Finno-Ugric relationship underlies similarities in everyday life phenomena? What role did the idea of a shared Finno-Ugric temperament play in these ethnographies?

Elena Liarskaya, Stephan Dudeck

Early Soviet Arctic Social Studies and Ideas of “Salvation” – Practices and Contradictions in Relations with Peoples of the North

We are able to identify in the Leningrad school of ethnography founded by V. Bogoras and L. Sternberg two intersecting ideas of ‘salvation’. One is the idea of salvation of culture originating in the school of Franz Boas and before him, Adolf Bastian, and the second coming from the revolutionary movement of ‘narodnichestvo’ before the Russian revolution (to which the founders of the school belong) is the idea of social salvation and fight against social injustice. Such a combination of ideas couldn’t remain without consequences and led to the emergence of a particular concept of the anthropologist’s mission in the Leningrad school.

Together with this set of ideas how anthropologists should relate to the community under study new practices of interaction with Northern peoples appeared.

Bogoras formulated the idea that his students should become at the same time researchers and ‘missionaries of a new culture’. The Northern Faculty for young students from the taiga and tundra laid the foundation for the education of a native intelligentsia, and functioned at the same time as a laboratory for anthropological research. The question about the positionality of the ethnographer in relation to the field becomes an essential one for this school and researchers did reflect on this intensively not only from an ethical and political but also methodological point of view. We will summarise what we perceive as the main principles of these innovative approaches, trace their roots and look at their practical realisations on examples of Russian as well as some of the last few foreign scholars, who were able to associate themselves with the Leningrad school.

In our paper we will raise the question on the interference between or parallel existence of these two approaches of cultural salvation and social emancipation. We attempt to investigate the relationship between, first, ethnographers’ practices of cultural documentation in order ‘to save culture before it is too late’ and, second, their engagement in what they saw as socially progressive actions to overcome oppression, which necessarily contribute to development and modernisation. We will try to reconstruct their ideas of decolonisation, of collaborative research, of social progress and educational advancement, and of the relation of ethnographic realia and new cultural achievements. What did it mean for the members of this school to emancipate informants from the role of objects and what was the role of the Institute of the Peoples of the North for a reconsideration of the ‘field’ in anthropological research?

At the end we would like to take an outlook on the legacy of the methodological achievements of the Leningrad school. It seems to us, that its approaches lost attention for a long period due to the physical and ideological cut off of their development after the Stalin purges and WWII. We have the suspicion that some ideas just went out of sight and remained dormant without disappearing completely in Soviet anthropology for almost the whole rest of the 20th century. Without providing final answers, we would draw the attention to the fact that questions of decolonisation, collaborative methods and the positionality of the fieldworker are highly topical today in our discipline.

Nadezhda Mamontova

‘There We Need the Editor’s Pencil’: The use of geological maps in the resource exploitation and administrative policy in Siberia in the 1930s

This presentation focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of the history and anthropology of Soviet geology. In particular, it examines the role of mapping and maps in the creation of economic centres in Siberia which were developed around major natural resources deposits. In the 1930s, a great number of ‘special-purpose maps’ showing the industrial properties and possibilities of particular regions and their significance for both the local and all-union economy were created. These maps were instrumental in the establishment and demarcation of economic zones. Research argues that the development of geology as applied science affected the nationality policy regarding the indigenous population in the late 1920s-early 1930s. In

Siberia, a demand for resources and economic growth resulted in a transition from strengthening of the so-called ‘clan-based’ administrative units to the territorial principle of management in the interests of economy. Yet as archival documents demonstrate there was no consensus among geologists concerning the essence of the maps in terms of symbology, colours, structure and interpretation. Some key debates of the Moscow school of geology regarding special-purpose maps will be considered in my presentation.

Dmitriy Oparin

Preservation, Research and Ritualization of Family Histories in Coastal Chukotka

Since 2011, I have been conducting field research in the so called Yupik national villages of coastal Chukotka and trying to understand and describe the present ritual space of this region, ritual practices and perceptions of the locals. Ritual everyday life and ritual knowledge are closely related to the knowledge of the histories of family, clan and tribal group. The report is devoted to different strategies of the local population to research the stories of their families, the variety of forms of visualization and materialization of private memory. I am interested in biographies and social lives of symbolic and memorable items (photographs, old documents, amulets, personal items of deceased relatives). I am also interested in what role Soviet ethnographic, archaeological, historical and bio-anthropological research played in the preservation and construction of private memory, how the field work and published works of Soviet scholars in Chukotka had an impact on the local population, and finally, how the genealogies of Yupik families prepared in the 1970s-80s, saturate the ritual everyday with new ideas and references.

Peter Schweitzer

Siberia as Seen from Vienna: What makes a research tradition?

While it could be argued that the Austrian diplomat Baron Sigmund von Herberstein delivered one of the first bits of second-hand knowledge about Siberia to western Europe in his *Rerum Moscovitarum Commentarii* (1549), subsequent centuries showed little Austrian interest in that part of the world, while Pietists and other German scholars heavily impacted the course of Siberian studies during the 18th century. Austrian interest in North Asia only returned during the first half of the 20th century, primarily fueled by a number of rather different developments. On the one hand, World War I resulted in a number of Austrian prisoners of war held by Russia, and often sent to Siberia. While only few of these prisoners became scholars eventually, the months and years spent in Siberia increased familiarity with the Russian language and with the distant worlds of North Asia. On the political front, this interest was soon thereafter replaced by a socialist longing for the promised land of the Soviet Union, especially as the National Socialists became stronger in Austria and eventually took over the country. On the other hand, the dominance of the so-called Vienna School of Anthropology, a form of Catholic evolutionism in the form of supposed anti-evolutionism, in German-language anthropology and beyond, made the indigenous peoples of Siberia interesting candidates in the search for the *Urkultur*. The author will also attempt to connect his own interest in Siberia, which arose during

the 1980s, with earlier developments. This is not because he sees himself as an heir to Catholic fundamentalism but in order to understand the material and immaterial infrastructures of knowledge production and research traditions.

Anna A. Sirina, Semën S. Makarov

New Strokes to the Biography of Vladimir Jochelson and the History of Russian-American Scientific Relations

Thanks to his participation in three major expeditions at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (the Russian Sibiriyakovskaya/Yakutskaya, the American Jesup North Pacific Expedition and the Russian Ryabushinskaya/Kamchatka-Aleutian), Vladimir Jochelson became a unique specialist in the area of poorly studied cultures, languages and dialects of the peoples of North-East Russia. Paradoxically, the field experience of the scholar has not been examined to this day. Jochelson is the author of 12 monographs (excluding reprints) in Russian and English. He went down in history not only as an outstanding scholar, but as a significant figure of his time who, together with Vladimir Bogoraz, embodied Russian-American cooperation over the period of the establishment of national scientific traditions. In August 1922, he left Soviet Russia on a business trip to the United States, but did not return. In the search for an answer to the question of the conceptual foundations of field research in Siberia, that are often derived from American tradition, or more exactly, from the field experience of Bogoraz and Jochelson that was gained on the Jesup expedition, we draw attention to the Sibiriyakovskaya (Yakutskaya) expedition that is little known in the West. We use new documents from the archive of the Institute of Eastern Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences: Jochelson's field diaries of 1895 and 1897. Consideration of these materials allows us to comprehend a number of details in the formation of the 'early' Jochelson in the period of his first lengthy submersion in the field. On the basis of concrete examples, we consider early processes of interaction of the anthropologist with the field and his gradual accumulation of expeditionary experience. These written documents also throw light on particular research presuppositions of Jochelson, specifically, on his views connected to the 'classical' theme of Siberian ethnography: shamanism. We come to the conclusion that the anthropologist who joined the Jesup expedition was an experienced field researcher who had absorbed the multicomponent Russian anthropological and ethnological tradition, having enriched it with ideas of Narodnik ethnography, lengthy field observations, the necessity of studying the language, the method of multisite ethnography and more. At the same time, analysis of 'shaman' texts in Jochelson's diary and subsequent publications (the English language monograph on Yukaghir and its Russian translation) indicate some conventionality in the descriptions of magical practices in Jochelson's works, prompting one to see not so much a detailed depiction of the material world as a typified 'portrait' of an ethnographic phenomenon.

Nikolay Ssorin-Chaikov

Reassembling the Social in Siberian Ethnography

Strathern (1988) has famously argued that ‘society’ as a key anthropological concept is a Western folk category and not Indigenous one, that it comes with overdetermining baggage of Euroamerican pluralist ontologies, and that the ethnography of Indigenous connectedness and sociality requires considerable and critical recalibration of these Western analytics. In this paper, I argue that Siberian Indigenous ethnography critically complements this perspective as it does not just demonstrate the heuristic limits of these Western analytics but also their everyday life in colonial forms of relatedness. In Siberia, ‘society’ was not just (and not so much) a category of ethnographic description as a part of Soviet socialist project of building state order. My case in point is ethnography that I conducted in 1988 focusing on work in Evenki reindeer brigade. I argue that labour and discipline relations in this brigade reveal a peculiar sociality visible in quarrels over how much and how hard reindeer herders were to labour. The paper charts the social (*obshestvennaia*) significance of this labour in the context of Evenki reworking Soviet categories of *obschestvo* and *obschestvennik*. In doing so it demonstrates a critical potential of Siberian ethnographic contribution to the anthropology of invention of society and reassembling the social.

Florian Stammler

Humans and the Environment as Partners in Co-designing Animals in Siberia

This presentation explores the role that the Anthropology of Siberia had and can continue to develop for our understanding of human-animal adaptations to extreme environments on our planet. I suggest that anthropology can benefit more from the rich insights of early ethnographies of *narodnaya selektsiya*. In Soviet agricultural sciences this became the term to describe deliberate breeding efforts by local people in Siberia to enhance the usability of their domestic animals for their livelihoods as well as their capacity to not only survive but produce useful output for their human carers. Ethnographies and folklore of reindeer domestication have highlighted the social contract and the mutuality of this human-animal relation. I show that this mutuality was recognised by Soviet agricultural sciences in their conception of *narodnaya selektsiya*. Moreover, this idea is not limited to reindeer, which is usually seen as the keystone domestic animal for Siberia. *Narodnaya selektsiya* was and continues to be practiced by herders of cattle and horses in the Russian Arctic too, many of whom are not officially considered any more indigenous than the animals that they brought with them from the South when they moved to Siberia. Soviet agricultural administration registered breeds from *narodnaya selektsiya* officially long before western scientists recognised their value, while western scholarship has still a hard time to acknowledge the ethnic input to breeds of domestic pastoral animals in a particular region such as the Arctic. I shall argue evidence from Siberia can contribute to a broader change in paradigms in human-animal adaptation studies that acknowledges more strongly the input of breeders to the genome of their animals. This can lead to the interdisciplinary scientific re-evaluation of human-animal reciprocity in ecosystem anthropology.



Nikolay Vakhtin

How and Why Could Bogoras Avoid Evolutionism?

In this paper, I would like to comment on the topic that the organizers formulated as 'Transnational moments in the anthropology of Siberia'. Overt cases of transnational cooperation in Siberian anthropology are more or less obvious: people from different 'nations' come together to work in Siberia (compare Schweitzer 2001). There are, however, less explicit cases when ideas, approaches, and theories are imported from one country (in this case, Germany and the USA) to another (in this case, Russia) and influence the development of Siberian studies there. Vladimir Bogoras, a diligent student and a faithful follower of Franz Boas, is an excellent example. To use medical metaphors only too appropriate under current conditions, 'vaccination' of Boasian principles of anthropology (anthropology as an interdisciplinary science based on methodology of natural sciences, lengthy fieldwork with compulsory knowledge of local languages, and the primacy of data over theory) made Bogoras 'immune to the epidemic' of evolutionism that spread over the Soviet Russia in the 1930s. This approach distinguished Bogoras from his friend Lev Sternberg and shaped the former's approach to indigenous people, his position in the Committee of the North, as well as the principles that governed education of young cultural anthropologists within the system of education/research institutions that Bogoras and Sternberg created in the 1920s. Naturally, in the mid-1930s these subtle theoretical differences lost whatever meaning they could have had after this educational/research system was destroyed by the Bolshevik government.

Piers Vitebsky

Who Owns Siberian Shamanism?

The word 'shaman' embodies Siberia's most distinctive contribution to world anthropology. For seventy years, two-thirds of the Arctic became internationally inaccessible, losing the important comparative and theoretical role which the region had played in the Boas era. Yet Siberian 'shamanism' became world-famous at the same time, though until the late 1980s this fascination evolved with almost no fieldwork or dialogue with Russian researchers, as a small number of translations from the huge corpus of Russian texts were recycled to feed a succession of western theological, psychiatric or countercultural tropes (the shaman is mad, or wise, or an environmentalist), removing much that is distinctively Siberian and turning Siberian worldviews into flattened exemplars of a universal archetype.

I shall focus in particular on one unexpected development in the recent opening of Siberia to international contact: a growing interest in comparison with Amazonia. Buddhist Mongolia and Muslim Central Asia formed a continuum with Siberia and were accessible to Soviet scholars. But Amazonia offers an ethnographic universe and a scholarly tradition which are utterly unconnected, yet have fascinating echoes. Earlier debates around shamanism are being fruitfully re-cast in terms of animism, perspectivism, and ontology. This puts a new value on Siberian material for global anthropological theory, while reviving the boldness of Boas' intercontinental approach. Siberian hunters and reindeer herders are keen readers of



anthropology and would surely welcome this new comparative literature if it were made available to them.

Vladislava Vladimirova

Nature Conservation and the Anthropology of Siberia

This presentation addresses the anthropological interest in protected natural territories and the process of nature conservation in the Russian North. This is an underdeveloped area of research with very few publications by anthropologists. I will analyze these publications and situate them within the scarce but well-established scholarship of nature conservation in Russia created by social scientists and historians. I argue that the little interest in nature conservation in Siberia and the North of Russia in 20th and early 21st centuries can be attributed, among other factors, to the success of Soviet authorities following a global tendency in removing indigenous people and histories from protected natural areas. Anthropological interest in protected territories is not that old and can be traced back to the frequent conflicts of interest between indigenous and local communities and the practices, rationales and imaginaries of nature on which the global environmental movement is grounded. In the present, the increased industrial appropriation of and competition for nature in the Arctic is transforming the existing configuration of relations, both through deepened tensions and new alliances between local people and environmentalists. While it is impossible to review all anthropological work on nature conservation in this short presentation, I will introduce a small set of topics with huge relevance to the field in order to argue for the significance of research on nature conservation for the anthropology of the Russian North and Siberia.