



**SOCIALIST REALISM AND ETHNOGRAPHY:
THE STUDY AND REPRESENTATION
OF SOVIET CONTEMPORANEITY
IN ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUMS
IN THE 1930S**

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Abstract: The paper addresses the influence of socialist realism on the research and representation of Soviet contemporaneity in ethnographic museums in the 1930s on the basis of a case study of The State Museum of Ethnography in Leningrad. A comparison of museum ethnography at the time of 'cultural revolution' and mature Stalinism reveals an array of features pointing to the impact of socialist realism. The Soviet historical narrative was embedded into museum displays, in some cases transformed into fictionalised biography. 'Leading' and 'distinguished' districts, collective farms, plants and people replaced 'average' ones in their roles of typical objects of fieldwork study and exhibition representation. Avant-garde design was replaced by socialist realist designs; life groups with picturesque backdrops became the constructive and conceptual dominants of exhibitions. Socialist construction was displayed not only by flat paper materials (photographs, diagrams, slogans, etc.) and collections of industrial objects, etc., but also by paintings, graphics, sculptures, and folk decorative arts. The making of politically appropriate displays presupposed a powerful interweaving of science and ideologically inspired art throughout all phases of preparation: from fieldwork to the mounting of the exhibition in the museum. As a result, in the second half of 1930s ethnographers were no longer able to study contemporaneity as such; rather, they were expected to investigate 'the green shoots of the future in the present'.

Keywords: socialist realism, cultural revolution, ethnographic museum, history of ethnography, ethnography of contemporaneity.

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Socialist Realism and Ethnography: The Study and Representation of Soviet Contemporaneity in Ethnographic Museums in the 1930s

The paper addresses the influence of socialist realism on the research and representation of Soviet contemporaneity in ethnographic museums in the 1930s on the basis of a case study of The State Museum of Ethnography in Leningrad. A comparison of museum ethnography at the time of 'cultural revolution' and mature Stalinism reveals an array of features pointing to the impact of socialist realism. The Soviet historical narrative was embedded into museum displays, in some cases transformed into fictionalised biography. 'Leading' and 'distinguished' districts, collective farms, plants and people replaced 'average' ones in their roles of typical objects of fieldwork study and exhibition representation. Avant-garde design was replaced by socialist realist designs; life groups with picturesque backdrops became the constructive and conceptual dominants of exhibitions. Socialist construction was displayed not only by flat paper materials (photographs, diagrams, slogans, etc.) and collections of industrial objects, etc., but also by paintings, graphics, sculptures, and folk decorative arts. The making of politically appropriate displays presupposed a powerful interweaving of science and ideologically inspired art throughout all phases of preparation: from fieldwork to the mounting of the exhibition in the museum. As a result, in the second half of 1930s ethnographers were no longer able to study contemporaneity as such; rather, they were expected to investigate 'the green shoots of the future in the present'.

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'Modern Russia, obviously, is full to the brim with unusual new content. It is sloughing its skin painfully and with difficulty, like an aged snake. But the bright and curious colours of renewal are everywhere showing through the dull scales of the past,' wrote V. G. Bogoraz in his introduction to the collection *Old and New Lifestyle* [Tan-Bogoraz 1924: 7]. This sort of 'revolutionary' view that divided reality into the old and the new, the backward and the progressive, was being actively put forward by state propaganda, and found support among scholars sympathetic to the Soviet regime. In the first ten years after the revolution a particular tendency in Soviet ethnography took shape, which might be called at different times the study of the new way of life, of the building of socialism, or the culture and life of collective farmers / workers or, finally, the study of contemporaneity. This was usually understood as research into the new forms of social life and culture of the socialist period which were appearing under the influence of the policies of

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the Soviet state, and also of harmful survivals from the past, so that they could be eradicated as soon as possible.¹

Throughout the whole history of Soviet ethnography discussions about the study of contemporaneity and the forms of its representation continued, changing depending on the political environment and the current requirements of the ideology. After the end of the Second World War there was a further surge in interest in the ethnographical study of contemporaneity, against the background of the ongoing campaign of the ‘struggle against cosmopolitanism’. At this time, the leadership of the Institute of Ethnography openly declared that ethnography should keep up with socialist realist literature in its research into contemporaneity. In particular, S. P. Tolstov, the director of the Institute, called upon ethnographers in 1949 to follow the example of such writers as T. Z. Semushkin and G. D. Gulia, whose works described Soviet man overcoming the survivals from the past and conquering his / her class enemies [Alymov 2009: 13]. P. I. Kushner, the leading ideologist of the study of contemporaneity, proposed that ethnographers should arm themselves with the concept of ‘typicality’: ‘In the report of the Central Committee of the CPSU at the nineteenth Party Congress, G. M. Malenkov touched upon the problem of “typicality” in literature. The conclusions that he drew are applicable not only to literature — in any case, they should be accepted by ethnographers in their research. That which is typical is that which expresses with the greatest fullness and acuity the essence of a phenomenon’ [Kushner 1953: 24]. Accordingly, the foremost collective farms with well-established business practices, developed mechanisation, and the conditions for improving the material condition of the life of the collective farmers and their cultural development were acknowledged as ‘typical’ — suitable for the study of the effect of collectivisation on the culture and way of life of the population [Ibid.].

The first researcher to pay attention to the connection between ethnography and socialist realism was Yuri Slezkine [Slezkine 2017: 346–63]. In his opinion, the fact that ethnography turned towards socialist realism and contemporaneity at the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s was not only a politically motivated move, but also a reaction against the crisis of ethnography in the 1930s: the painful Marxification, the repression of ‘bourgeois’ scholars, and the conversion of ethnography into ‘the theory of primordial communism’ [Slezkine 1993; 2017: 291] (see also: [Solovey 1998; Novozhilov 2012: 91]). Postwar ethnography took up the subject of the ‘great journey’, which by then had already been present

¹ In the 1920s the study of the new way of life also included the influences of the revolution and the Civil War, with particular attention paid to the influence of the city and of capitalism on the countryside.

in literature for twenty years. The subject of the ‘journey’ from the dark, backward, and elemental past into the bright, progressive and conscious future came to determine the structure and contents of ethnographic works. Peoples, according to Slezkine, became in the works of this time analogues of the positive heroes of socialist realist literature [Slezkine 2017: 358].

Maya Haber’s work on the search for the ‘typical’ Russian collective farm by Kushner and his colleagues [Haber 2014] (see also: [Alymov 2010]) has led her to the conclusion that socialist realism served as an instrument for identifying, categorising and classifying the objects of study. Ethnographers saw their task as not only describing, but also changing reality: they were ‘social engineers’ with the aim of making the life of the collective farm more like the socialist realist ideal of it disseminated in the media and in fiction. In this context Haber reads Kushner’s report of his 1951 expedition as a socialist realist text which has as its subject the conflict between the principled scholar-protagonist and his backward bureaucrat-antagonists who fail to understand the importance of his research and put obstacles in his path.

In this way the problem of the influence of socialist realism on Soviet ethnography was stated only on the basis of postwar ethnography. Socialist realism, however, had first appeared in the first half of the 1930s, which makes one think of the possibility that there was such influence even earlier. An examination of museum ethnography on the basis of the State Museum of Ethnography¹ (SME) in Leningrad shows that Tolstov’s and Kushner’s interest in studying contemporaneity and in socialist realism had been prepared for by the whole direction taken by museum ethnography in the decade before the war. At that time socialist realism had already had a significant influence on the practices of the study and representation of Soviet contemporaneity in ethnographic museums. When did the aesthetics of socialist realism penetrate into museum ethnography and how did it manifest itself? How did socialist realist literature and art influence museum ethnography? How did the SME’s fieldwork and exhibits on the building of socialism change during the period of socialist realism? The present work is intended to answer these and other questions.

Socialist realism was recognised as the basic direction of Soviet art in 1932, and its foundational principles were formulated and model works presented to the public in 1933–4. Socialist realism replaced the cultural pluralism of the 1920s and the radical experiments of

¹ From 1902 to 1934 the Ethnographical Department of the State Russian Museum (ED SRM), from 1934 the State Museum of Ethnography, from 1948 the State Museum of the Ethnography of the Peoples of the USSR, and since 1992 the Russian Museum of Ethnography.

the period of cultural revolution (1928–31) [Bullitt 1976; Groys 1992; Paperny 2011]. Following K. Clark, we may say that under Stalin the Soviet Union was aspiring to the utopia of Schiller's 'aesthetic state', that is a state in which the citizens are governed in their actions not by external physical compulsion or laws, but by a sense of beauty, by common aesthetic ideals [Clark 2011: 12]. Close attention to cultural policy on the part of the party leadership and Stalin personally resulted in an interpenetration of ideology, policy and aesthetics. The consequence of their confluence was socialist realism. According to Evgeny Dobrenko, its function was principally to replace Soviet reality with aestheticised copies of it which played the role of socialism as such [Dobrenko 2007]. The illusion of a harmonic unity of all areas of life — the ideal of a totalitarian state — was created by aesthetic means [Günther 2000].

At the same time, the aesthetics of socialist realism have certain recognisable features: a tendency towards romantic heroism, neo-classicism, figurativeness, etc. The principles of socialist realism (party spirit, nationality, conscientiousness, etc.) formulated by Soviet ideologues were to distinguish socialist realism from other tendencies in art (bourgeois, apolitical, etc.), and at the same time blur the boundaries between art and politics and ideology. As a result it is problematic and virtually impossible to make a definite distinction between the influences of ideology and socialist realism on museum ethnography. Ethnography in the museum also depended on Soviet museum practice — a specific embodiment and conductor of the ideology and aesthetic ideals of the period [Reid 2001; Jolles 2005]. Nevertheless I think it possible within the context of the present work to speak of the influence of socialist realism, if it is possible to observe a heightened attention on the part of ethnographers to the sphere of art and an aestheticisation of research, collecting and exhibition work in the spirit of socialist realism.

The three sections of the article will be dedicated accordingly to the exhibition narrative, the principles on which the objects for fieldwork and exhibition were chosen, and the artistic frame of exhibitions and folk art as a means of presenting Soviet contemporaneity. Each section is constructed on the basis of a comparison between museum ethnography of the time of the cultural revolution and that of mature Stalinism, which allows the influence of socialist realism to be drawn more clearly.

The historical narrative and the novelisation of ethnography

The active Sovietisation of museums and other cultural establishments began in 1927. Special commissions, on which representatives of the Party were included, were set up in various institutions to organise the celebrations of the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution,

and their critical outlook usually required the subordination of cultural work to the aims of political propaganda. At the Ethnographical Department of the State Russian Museum (ED SRM) a group of Politprosvet activists found many shortcomings, primarily the absence of any exhibits on the achievements of the Soviet regime. The lack of the necessary resources and poor funding, however, allowed the task of creating a new exhibition to be deferred for a while. The changes mostly concerned how excursions were conducted [Hirsch 2005: 197–204]. As a compromise the museum staff continued to lead excursions through exhibitions which had been created before the revolution and which presented models of the culture of the peoples of the USSR at the turn of the century,¹ but as they did so they expatiated upon the hard life of the people under the tsars and the successes achieved by the Soviet regime. To make the guides' life easier, alongside the thematic material exhibits diagrams were set up showing the Soviet achievements in the same sphere of life. The excursion proceeded from a holder for a glowing pine splinter to the subject of electrification, from the ard and plough to the story of the modern development of agriculture, from the position of women in prerevolutionary times to their position in the present day, and so on [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 232, ff. 26–7].

The break came in 1930, when, at the First All-Russian Museum Congress, a directive was issued that exhibitions should be constructed on Marxist foundations. According to the congress resolution, museums should become a propaganda weapon in the struggle for socialist reconstruction and show 'the dialectical process of the class struggle' [Shangina 1991: 75]. The basic purpose of ethnographical museums in this was defined as 'showing the results of the national policy of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the annihilation of inequality between peoples, the industrialisation of backward regions and the flourishing of national cultures' [Milonov 1930: 4–5]. Soviet museums were to give up systematic ('object-oriented') exhibition in favour of the Marxist principle, i.e. showing historical progress and identifying the 'class reality' of things for the edification of the broad masses of the people.

How these and other somewhat abstract directives were to be put into practice was unclear, and this resulted in a diversity of approaches to the construction of museum exhibitions. In particular, the historical narrative as the foundation for the exhibition plan was not yet a commonplace of Soviet museums. For example, the Leningrad State Anti-Religious Museum proposed to its visitors an introduction to the history of religious ideas (from primitive beliefs

¹ The ED SRM exhibition was supposed to open in 1914, but it remained unfinished because of the war. After part of the collection had been evacuated and returned, the exhibition was put together again and opened in 1923.

to contemporary monotheistic religions) and their social roots. At the same time the Central Anti-Religious Museum of Moscow displayed a synchronic cross-section of various religions and beliefs together with their theatrical unmasking [Jolles 2005: 446–7; Paine 2009].

The exhibitions opened at the ED SRM in the 1930s were as follows: ‘The Ukrainian Village Before and After October’ (1931), ‘Peoples of the Sayan-Altai in the Past and Present’ (1931), ‘Byelorussia and the BSSR’ (1933). The Ukrainian exhibition was the first experiment of the collective of the Ethnographical Department in creating a Marxist exhibition. Each subject, in the words of B. G. Kryzhanovskiy, was presented in ‘the evolution not only of the process of production, but also in its historical aspect’ [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 315, f. 14], that is, in comparison of the prerevolutionary with the contemporary. For example, a scene showing the ritual conjuring of the harvest at New Year was opposed to a photograph of the chemical cleansing of grain using formalin [Solovyeva 1931: 150]. The woman question was illustrated in the prerevolutionary section by mannequins in costume grouped around a well, and in the contemporary section by a stand with photographs illustrating Party and Soviet work with women [Ibid.: 151]. One might consider this approach a direct continuation of the experience of the late 1920s of combining an essentially prerevolutionary exhibit with a Soviet propagandist excursion. The Soviet historical narrative in the Ukrainian exhibition was thus fragmented into a mosaic of many individual stories put together to contrast two synchronic cross-sections of culture: ‘before’ and ‘after’.

The exhibition was closed not long after its opening: the Party organs’ opinion was that it idealised village life and failed to reflect the connection between the town and the countryside or the class divisions among the peasantry [Grusman, Dmitriev 2014: 13]. The exhibition showed collectivisation as a purely economic undertaking, ‘the technical transformation of the land area’ [Solovyeva 1931: 151], whereas its role in creating the new man, socialist culture and lifestyle was undervalued. Soviet contemporaneity, displayed through photographs and diagrams, lost out considerably in comparison with prerevolutionary culture, which was represented by the rich material collection and re-created scenes.

The next exhibition, ‘Peoples of the Sayan-Altai in the Past and Present’, was acknowledged to be more successful. The exhibition was presented as a historical succession of stages in the evolution of society from the primordial communist horde to the era of the building of socialism. The designers of the exhibition took account of their colleagues’ mistakes and sharpened the focus on the class struggle, but it was noted as a shortcoming of their work that the

section on the building of socialism was not presented sufficiently completely, and for the most part by means of two-dimensional material [Potapov 1932: 95]. The structure of all the subsequent exhibitions of the 1930s repeated, in general terms, that of the Sayan–Altai exhibition.

At the beginning of 1933 the ‘Byelorussia and the BSSR’ exhibition was opened. Like the Ukrainian exhibition, after the opening it was severely criticised and closed for reconstruction. In 1934, the ED SRM became independent as the State Museum of Ethnography. In the second half of the 1930s the following exhibitions were opened: ‘The Uzbeks’ (1935–6), ‘Karelia and the Kola Peninsula’ (1935), ‘The Russian Inhabitants of the Black Earth Regions’ (1936), ‘The Evenks Then and Now’ (1936), ‘The Chukchi and Koryaks Then and Now’ (1938), ‘The Turkmen Then and Now’ (1938), ‘The History of Russia in the Eighteenth Century’¹ (1938), ‘Jews in Imperial Russia and in the USSR’ (1939), ‘The Peoples of the North Caucasus Then and Now’ (1939). The exhibitions of the second half of the 1930s were on the whole favourably received by the authorities, but in the summer of 1937, after a series of miscalculations came to light, the whole museum was closed for reorganisation of the exhibits and reopened only at the end of the year, under a new director. Judging by the correlation of critical and positive comments, the public preferred the exhibitions of the second half of the 1930s to those of the beginning of the decade [Baranov 2017].

Most of the exhibitions of the second half of the 1930s began with a presentation of the time of the Russian colonisation of the area, feudalism or capitalism of postreform Russia. The sections on the revolutions of 1905 and 1917, the Civil War and the intervention could be transitional towards modernity. All the exhibitions ended with a section devoted to the building of socialism.

Slezkine’s observation about the ethnographic texts of the 1950s is perfectly applicable to the museum exhibitions examined here. It might be said that they embodied the narrative of the ‘great journey’ of a people, corresponding to the ‘founding story’ of the socialist realist *Bildungsroman* [Clark 1981]: the protagonist (the people), naturally inclined to justice and full of creative energy, struggles against an antagonist (‘tsarism’, interventionists, kulaks, and so on), and under the sensitive leadership of the Party solves its labour and social problems (reconstructing the economy, subduing nature, raising literacy levels, and so on), and in the process is ‘re-forged’ as the new man (from a backward tribe into a socialist nation), overcomes harmful character traits (‘survivals from the past’)

¹ An exhibition of the SME’s History and Way of Life Department. In 1941 the department was disbanded and its collections transferred to the Hermitage.

and becomes a mature, responsible personality, a conscientious communist (while retaining its ethnic individuality in the 'national form' of its culture, it acquires 'socialist content'). This was confirmed by dioramas, statistical data and diagrams that declared the hard lot and exploitation of the people under the tsars and the increase in the number of cattle, amount of land sown, harvest yields, construction of factories, upbuilding of national culture, and opening of schools, kindergartens, houses of culture, etc. under socialism. The indicators of the latest five-year plan informed the visitor of the people's inevitable bright future, already 'germinating' in the present.

According to Clark, in the culture of mature socialism the literary biography, be it of real or fictional persons, was the basic means of constructing and representing national history [Clark 2011: 104]. The canonical works of socialist realist literature, accordingly, were constructed around a biographical narrative [Clark 1981]. In this connection it was natural that the protagonist of a museum narrative might be an individual person — a fictional hero whose biography embodied the fate of a people at a particular period (a typical person in typical circumstances). In the second half of the 1930s E. N. Studenetskaya, the head of the Department of the Peoples of the Caucasus, decided to make the excursion more entertaining and gave it a novelised form. The first 'story excursion' was intended for schoolchildren and was called 'The Tale of Little Maikhon'. It told of three generations of Uzbek women from the middle of the nineteenth century to the present: 'The mannequins depicting people in situational scenes and interiors were given names and biographies, and became the characters in the story' [Kryukova, Studenetskaya 1971: 52; ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 479, ff. 1–10]. Maikhon was an Uzbek girl from a poor peasant family, born in the middle of the nineteenth century. Her individual fate was shown as an example of Uzbek life before the revolution. The apotheosis of tsarism was the 1916 uprising, in the course of which Maikhon, by that time an elderly woman, was killed. The contrast of her daughter Hasima's life on the collective farm, and especially her granddaughter's, was drawn in bright colours: 'On each occasion young Maikhon, the granddaughter of the old Maikhon who lived in feudal Bukhara, was given features that brought her close to the viewers; she made parachute jumps, she helped to build the Fergana Canal, she voted in elections to the Soviets, in a word, at the will of the guide she did everything that it was particularly important to tell the audience about at that particular moment' [Kryukova, Studenetskaya 1971: 52].

For the exhibition of the peoples of the North Caucasus Studenetskaya devised an excursion called 'A Hundred Years in the Life of Aekhsaer' [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 763]. Aekhsaer, born in prerevolutionary Ossetia, encounters the horrors of tsarism and the feudal system in the Caucasus: as a boy he is taken prisoner during a raid

by Kabardian *uzdeni* (the upper class) and sold into slavery to a Balkar prince; after the emancipation of 1866 he is exploited by the rich. He suffers from legal injustice, and his wife from her lack of rights in patriarchal Osset society. Aekhsaer becomes a worker at the Sadon Mines, makes the acquaintance of Kirov and discusses the mountain peoples' problems with him. During the Civil War he is a brave red partisan. Under the Soviet regime Aekhsaer moves down from the mountains to a new settlement on the plain. His son Chermen becomes the chairman of a prosperous collective farm, and his grandson Beybulat is a tractor-driver.

Similar excursions were devised by other members of the staff of the SME who appreciated Studenetskaya's work. N. A. Fedorova's excursion 'Two Childhoods' was intended for the exhibition on the Russian Black Earth Regions. For the History and Way of Life Department's 'History of Russia in the Eighteenth Century' exhibition the story-excursion 'The Moor of Peter the Great' was devised by N. F. Pantyushkin and 'The History of a Serf Family' by V. B. Kholtsev [Kryukova, Studenetskaya 1971: 52].

The ethnography of contemporaneity in search of the 'typical'

At the end of the twenties and beginning of the thirties ethnography was being switched onto 'Marxist rails' at high speed. One consequence of its active Sovietisation was the requirement for ethnographical study of the contemporary building of socialism. Under the aegis of the Academy of Sciences' Institute for the Study of the Peoples of the USSR, founded in 1930, expeditions to the nascent collective farms were organised. As a result of their field research a series of works were published in the journal *Sovetskaya etnografiya* for 1931–2, as were two collections of articles on 'life and work on the collective farms'. Ethnographers described the vicissitudes of the class struggle and the process of creating collective farms in their dependency on socioeconomic and geographical conditions, and the influence of the collective farm system on the outlook, social relationships, material culture and everyday life of the peasants.

Among the authors published in these collections we shall take note of A. K. Supinskiy and A. Ya. Duysburg, who worked at the ED SRM. After the First All-Russian Museum Congress in 1930, research in Soviet museums was entirely subordinated to exhibition work, and therefore their study of the collective farms was not simply pure research, but had an applied dimension, namely collecting material for the planned exhibition on 'Byelorussia and the BSSR'. Two other authors, A. G. Danilin and V. P. Muratkhan, became employees of the ED SRM / SME several years after the collections had been published.

Let us consider the principles of choice of objects for field research followed by the authors of these collections when they were studying the building of socialism. The choice of a particular region might be based on its typicality for the area or republic. For example, Danilin and his colleagues investigated the Borovichsky District, defined by them as 'average for the Leningrad Oblast' [Danilin 1931: 9]. A. N. Bernshtam and F. N. Shaburov worked in impoverished regions near Samarkand and Ashgabat which were analogous in their characteristics to other suburbs of large cities in the Central Asian republics [Bernshtam 1931; Shaburov 1931]. In other cases they deliberately chose a region that was a long way from the administrative centres. Thus Supinskiy and Duysburg worked in 'the most out-of-the-way and backward part of the Mogilev District' [Duysburg 1931: 179]: they thought that they could show the class struggle more vividly with such an approach.

The choice of particular collective farms for study was also determined on various other principles. E. R. Leper, V. P. Muratkhan, A. G. Danilin and F. N. Shaburov studied a large number of collective farms which were supposed to serve as examples of their basic types: large and small, established in rich or poor settlements, close to towns or distant from them, already working for several years or newly organised, etc. Together they provided the average picture for each region. For example, Leper worked on the collective farms of Podsosenskiy Kust, which, according to her description, were in their composition and economic position 'typical average collective farms' for the Minetskiy District of Leningrad Oblast [Leper 1931: 81]. Other authors preferred a monographic approach and focused their attention on a single collective farm. Thus, Supinskiy and Duysburg based their work on collective farms that were notable for their acute class struggle (the Ilyich collective farm) and international make-up (the Oktyabr collective farm). A special position is occupied by the work of A. N. Kondaurov, who, out of all the collective farms of the Qurghonteppa District of the Tajik SSR, chose the most progressive and, at the same time, 'typical', the Guliston collective farm: 'This collective farm is interesting because it is typical of the collective farms with relocated workers in the said district, and because it is one of the best organised and strongest collective farms in the district; this distinctive feature of it provides material for the most exact conclusions regarding the collectivisation of relocated workers' [Kondaurov 1931: 75].

In their justification of their choice of region and collective farm for their fieldwork, most of the authors in these collections are close to the researchers into the 'new way of life' of the 1920s. In local monographic studies (M. Ya. Fenomenov, A. M. Bolshakov, M. D. Golubykh and others) the object of study is as a rule also the most 'usual' and 'typical' settlements and collective undertakings

in the chosen region [Vernyaev 2005: 37]. Work at the ED SRM was conducted in a similar key. For example the museum expeditions to the Leningrad Oblast in 1932 tried to include in the research a large number of collective farms in the Gdovsko-Chudskoy and Efimovskiy Districts, without concentrating on the strongest and most successful of them [Malinovskaya 1932].

However, there were also researchers who followed the same principles as Kondaurov in their choice of location for their fieldwork. Thus S. G. Grinina, on arriving in Petrozavodsk in 1932, applied to the provincial union of collective farms, where, in conjunction with local agronomists and museum workers, she chose to study the Olonetsky District as the most agricultural in Karelia [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 413, f. 1]. At the Olonets regional union of collective farms Grinina was directed towards the leading Iskra collective farm, the prizewinner both in the sowing campaign and at the regional horticultural show.

It was this principle of choosing an object for field research that was to dominate in future. Behind the different approaches there were different understandings of what was typical. In the case of studies of contemporaneity in the 1920s and early 30s it was usually objects that were statistically average that were considered typical. In Marxist aesthetics and socialist realism it was not the most widespread representatives of their kind that were regarded as typical, but those that expressed its essence most strikingly. A literary character, for example, had to combine personal individuality with general class characteristics. Since the essence of socialism was defined teleologically, as movement towards universal prosperity under communism, then it was the most 'prosperous' and 'progressive' collective farms, factories and people (economically and culturally) that were the most typical.

I shall give a few examples. In 1934 V. S. Dubov was sent to Karelia to collect material on contemporaneity to be included in the exhibition on 'The Leningrad Oblast and Karelia' that was then being prepared. Out of the regions studied, he paid special attention to Olonets, as the most highly developed in its agriculture. Out of the 'strongest Karelian collective farms' Dubov chose Druzhba, as it was the current holder of the red banner for preparations for the spring sowing [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 481, ff. 1–2].

In 1936 N. P. Grinkova and her colleagues undertook a large two-month expedition to the Voronezh Oblast. Colleagues from the museum had to collect material on the building of socialism for the exhibition on 'The Russian Population of the Black-Earth Regions'. The choice of the Voronezh Oblast was influenced by the fact that 'this province is one of the foremost in the RSFSR in the work of the building of socialism' [Grinkova 1936b: 120]. However, another

important circumstance was that the museum already had extensive collections illustrating the prerevolutionary villages of that area. One of the largest Soviet grain farms in the area, the Vorobyevskiy, which was also known for its theatre and strong Pioneer organisation, was studied. The Red October collective farm in the Berezovsky District attracted the ethnographers' attention for the high level of its cultural activities: a model experimental school, and the first collective farm music school [Grinkova 1936b: 121–2]. Other collective farms were found worthy of study thanks to the presence of an experimental agricultural station, a leading equine stud farm, outstanding sugar beet production, and so on.

The same principle guided the choice of industrial objects. For example, in his 1935 expedition to Karelia, G. A. Nikitin, besides studying 'the best two Veps national collective farms', collected material at the Shoksha quartzite quarries. The choice of this object of research was justified by the fact that objects made out of Shoksha porphyry were well-known: 'Napoleon's sarcophagus in Paris is made out of it, and Shoksha porphyry adorns Lenin's mausoleum' [Potapov 1936: 160].

The choice of province or republic for an expedition was usually dictated by the museum's stated task of studying and displaying a particular people or large subdivision of it, but subsequent choices were partly delegated to the local bureaucrats and cultural workers. Thus a standard expedition began at the provincial or regional capital, where statistical material on the economy and demographics of the region under study was collected in various Soviet establishments.¹ There also, in the process of consultation and reaching agreement, the 'correct' (typical) research objects, which could present the province or republic in the best light, were identified.

The concentric circles of the 'typical' went from the region to the collective farm and ended up with 'distinguished' individuals, shock workers, stakhanovites, award-holders, and so on. For example, among the fundamental task of the Turkmen expedition of 1937 led by M. V. Sazonova and A. S. Morozova were: '1) Observing and recording the life on the leading collective farms of the Turkmen SSR, particular distinguished people in the sphere of agriculture, life at the main industrial enterprises, the cultural growth of the masses, prosperous life; 2) Photographing the distinguished persons and stakhanovites of the country, domestic circumstances characteristic of their prosperity and cultural attainments, clubs, schools, kindergartens, creches, playgrounds, socialist townships and settlements, etc.; 3) Collecting numerical statistical material at the People's

¹ The republican or provincial planning committees, executive committees, people's commissariats, etc.

Commissariats for the last two five-year plans and the prospects for the third five-year plan' [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 598, f. 60].

The poetics of the ethnographers' expedition reports of the second half of the 1930s are close to those of travel literature in its socialist realist variant [Balina 2000]. In this sort of essay the journey to another place (within the boundaries of the USSR) was split in two temporally: one part of the things and people encountered embodied the murky past, while the other represented the progressive future. It was necessary actively to struggle with backwardness in alliance with the progressive. In the same way ethnographers studying the collective farms kept parallel accounts of the 'survivals' and 'new shoots of the future'. Although, according to the official plans, the expeditions were primarily intended to study the building of socialism, the museum workers were also faced with the task of acquiring objects to fill up the gaps in the prerevolutionary material collections. In order to study traditional culture they might deliberately travel to out-of-the-way places far from the administrative centres. For example, in 1935 the expedition led by N. P. Grinkova and N. A. Dyleva worked at two collective farms in the Pinezhsky District. The first collective farm (Sdvig) was 'as indicated by the regional organisations <...> one of the foremost in the region', and the other (1 May) 'one of the most backward' [Grinkova 1936a: 161]. It is telling that for the most part they studied the building of socialism at the first and traditional culture at the second.

Thus the practice of many researchers of the time of the cultural revolution, of studying backward, poor or middling regions and collective farms was in the aesthetics of socialist realism no longer acceptable. In a well-known speech of 1934 Stalin had asserted that the country had 'got rid of its backward and mediaeval aspect' and 'liquidated the parasitic classes' [Stalin 1951: 306, 334]. The understandable reluctance of cultural and scientific workers to contradict the Leader led to a tendency to 'varnish' reality, that is, not to sketch the glowing prospects of poor or uncommitted peasants in the conditions of the 'class war', but to show the achievements in the building of socialism already made, and well-fed and happy collective farmers.

The contents of the museum exhibitions depended on the field material collected. It was the expedition that, in T. A. Kryukova's words, had to give 'a clear illustration, and fill the exhibition with specific, genuine material'. As a result, responsibility for the completeness and scientific value of the exhibition was borne entirely by the people who had done the fieldwork [ARME, f. 2, op. 2, d. 131, f. 3]. In the end, 'typical' objects of field research became representative objects in the museum exhibitions. For example, the Industriya Soviet farm studied by Z. P. Malinovskaya in 1932

had a small subsection of the ‘Karelia and the Kola Peninsula’ exhibition dedicated to it. As the most northerly Soviet farm in the Soviet Union, it embodied the excitement of overcoming nature in the North and the successes of Soviet agronomists and plant-breeders [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 496, f. 20]. In the same exhibition the Karelian logging industry was represented by the Kondopoga Paper and Cellulose Complex, the building of national culture by literature in Karelian published by Kirja publishers, the fishing industry by the Murmansk trawler base, etc.

‘Distinguished’ people, as ‘typical’ Soviet citizens of a particular ethnicity, also became part of the exhibitions. The museum workers collected their (auto)biographies in the field, and then quoted from them in the exhibitions. For example, ‘The Evenks Then and Now’ used portrait photographs of stakhanovite hunters and letters from them in which they ‘warmly thanked the Great Stalin for their happy lives’ and told how they hunted, were raising their level of culture and becoming prosperous [*Kratkiy putevoditel...* 1939: 19].

The subject of transformatory socialist labour creating the new man was also developed using the example of particular outstanding individuals. An extract from a conversation with the decorated section leader Faizulla Yunusov, shown at ‘The Uzbeks Then and Now’, is telling: ‘I want our leaders to know that the old people on the collective farm have grown young again. I’m already 62, but I don’t feel old and I work better than the young men. I’ve only started to like work on the collective farm. How could you like working before, when it was a torment for you and only made other people’s lives better? Our section has brought in a harvest of 5,700 kg/ha. My section’s secret is that we don’t say what the most important work is. All our work is the most important’ [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 479, f. 68].

‘Picture’ ethnography and the turn to art

The Marxist museum, according to the precepts of the cultural revolution, had not only to supply its visitors with specific information, as prerevolutionary museums had, but also to transform them. The orientation towards the broad masses required new techniques of exhibition that were capable of having an emotional effect on the public, impress and educate them. As Gorky wrote, in order to make ordinary people aware of the achievements of the Soviet regime, they must be told ‘simply, clearly, and with illustrations’ [Gorky 1930: 3]. The *Zeitgeist* in ethnography was well expressed by B. M. Sokolov, the director of the Moscow Museum of Ethnology, in his paper at a conference of ethnographers in 1929. He noted that ‘there was a time when to introduce an illustration or a photograph in our museums was regarded as a glaring breach

of museum practice. Bringing in any sort of map, diagram, model, maquette, cast, dummy, etc. was regarded as something absolutely unscientific' [Arzyutov et al. 2014: 347]. In the new conditions, he said, the museum should cast aside its fear of using ancillary expository methods.

These ideas were a commonplace for Soviet museum practice at the end of the 1920s. Thus K. E. Grinevich called for the organisation of a museum 'that speaks for itself' by means of 'hanging at the entrance to the museum, at the beginning of the viewing, a plan of the rooms of the museum with arrows indicating the direction of the route to be taken through it, by numbering the cases in the order in which they are to be looked at, by means of a system of triple labelling <...>, by means of supplementing the basic material exhibition with illustrative material in the form of plans, drawings, photographs, diagrams, placards, etc. This must all make the museum exhibits easy to see and understand and leave a long-lasting impression on the visitor's brain' [Grinevich 1929: 97].

One of the problems of the 'museum that spoke for itself' was the tendency to 'liberate ourselves from things' and replace them with two-dimensional paper materials [Stanyukovich 1978: 200]. This was particularly relevant to the display of the building of socialism in view of the lack of proper material collections on this subject in the majority of museums. In his survey of the ethnographical exhibitions in the Central Museum of Ethnology and the Moscow Regional Museum, N. A. Shneerson criticised the transition from museum display methods to 'literary' ones: '[O]n the walls (and, as the "last word" in museum technique, on the ceilings) they hang placards, quotations from the classics of Marxism, photographs and suchlike material' [Shneerson 1932: 27]. The ED SRM / SME exhibitions of the 1930s experienced the same difficulties. Supinskiy, interpreting the unsuccessful experience of the Byelorussian exhibition, wrote that the museum had not provided the curators with the necessary tangible material on the Soviet way of life and had allowed 'an excessive enthusiasm for two-dimensional material, which, no matter how it was presented, detracted to a considerable extent from the expected effect' [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 566, f. 10].

To develop the subject of contemporaneity, Soviet museums, as well as two-dimensional material, exhibited industrial collections, and occasionally real machines ['Na novom etape...' 1934: 9]. However, this move, although perfectly justified in museums of technology and industry and in the corresponding sections of local studies museums, did not answer the requirements of ethnographic exhibitions. Thus the industrial collections exhibited at the Byelorussian exhibition of the ED SRM could not, in the critics' opinion, reveal the new man who was striving to create the Soviet

order: 'The designers of this exhibition are mistaken in their assumption that in order to characterise the socialist way of life in the construction of Soviet Byelorussia it is enough to display button factories and knitting mills and so forth. They do not understand that it is not the simple fact of such works' existence that is characteristic of socialist Byelorussia, but that new way of life of the workers both at their workplace and in their social life which can exist only in a country under the dictatorship of the proletariat which is building socialism' ['Na novom etape...' 1934: 8–9].

Another problem for Soviet museums was the transformation of exhibitions into decorative constructions in which artistic design overpowered the museum exhibits. In Shneerson's opinion, museums that had conceded the leading role in exhibitions to artists inevitably descended to spectacular types of display 'where the deciding factor is the external effect, and not the scientifically grounded display of class relations', and turned into 'stage sets' [Shneerson 1932: 28, 30]. I. M. Zykov made similar criticisms of the intrusive 'advertising' decorative design of the 'Giants of the Five-Year Plan' exhibition in the Moscow Park of Culture and Rest 'stuck in the ruts of formalist excesses' [Zykov 1932: 35–8].

This last critical expression is worth considering. Attacks on the artists' designs were often brought about by the presence of avant-garde elements. At the beginning of the 1930s a whole series of exhibitions entirely devoted to criticising avant-garde art were opened at the Russian Museum, Tretyakov Gallery and State Museum of Modern Western Art. At the same time the design of these and other contemporary exhibitions had inherited a great deal from avant-garde design principles. For example, combining on a single surface drawing and text (slogan), exhibiting them together with sculpture and accompanying them with films expressed the constructivist idea of the synthesis of the arts [Jolles 2005: 436; Chlenova 2017].

At the ED SRM exhibition on Byelorussia the large hall devoted to the building of socialism was designed in the constructivist manner, and this was one of the pretexts for criticism. For example, near the entrance to the hall one corner was divided off with plywood stands: 'The left-hand side was a dirty crimson; it was occupied by photographs of counter-revolutionaries and illustrations of the criminal activities of the White bandits. The back wall was black: on this funereal background were mounted photographs of the victims of the White Terror and the revolutionary struggle. The right-hand side was red: it was devoted to the Red Army of the BSSR' [Gagen-Torn 1934: 67]. The designers of this exhibition were not alone in their efforts to make the artistic design relevant and up-to-date. Similar experiments could be noted in other ethnographical

museums, and this provoked severe criticism from I. K. Luppol. He considered that the enthusiasm for constructivist and futurist design in ethnographic exhibitions led to a disjunction between contents and form, which offended the eye and made it hard to take in the material effectively [Luppol 1932: 13]. The stylistic watershed came in 1932, while the Byelorussia exhibition was being prepared at the Russian Museum: constructivism was criticised in all forms of art. The stylistic diversity of the 1920s was replaced by socialist realism. In this sense the artistic design of the exhibition was already out of date when it opened (at the beginning of 1933), and was doomed to be criticised.

After becoming independent in 1934, the SME engaged in active expeditionary and collecting work and began to build new exhibitions. In 1935–6 ‘The Uzbeks’ opened, covering three stages of history: feudal, ‘colonial’ and socialist. In showing contemporaneity the curators stressed the practical side of life. There were many scenes showing the productive everyday life of collective farmers in the cotton fields, workers in the sulphur mines at Sho’rsuv and at a textile factory in Tashkent. Domestic and social life were represented by a collective farm worker’s dwelling and a red tea-house. Artists were employed to design the exhibition, and came up with an original project based on picturesque dioramas and murals for the re-created scenes. The large-scale, expressive works by the artists (A. V. Kruchinin, A. I. Zakolodin-Mitin and others) were very effective, although two-dimensional material was also present [Kryukova, Studenetskaya 1971: 42]. When working on the exhibition the museum staff made use of the experience of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography’s exhibition on ‘Eastern Bukhara under the Emirate’ [Stanyukovich 1978: 208].

‘The Uzbeks’ exhibition was pronounced a success, and the design principles developed there repeated with certain variations in all the following exhibitions of the 1930s. The idea of employing artists as designers was an innovation in comparison with the exhibition work of the 1920s, and made the exhibitions brighter and more accessible to ordinary visitors [Kryukova, Studenetskaya 1971: 19]. The picturesque dioramas and murals (pictures and sculptures were also occasionally used), particularly those dedicated to the building of socialism, were both thematically and stylistically executed in the spirit of socialist realism. As an example we may examine the logging scene at the ‘Karelia and the Kola Peninsula’ exhibition, opened at the end of 1935 (artistic design by G. N. Traugot and I. A. Korotkov). There were two mannequins in the scene, depicting woodcutters, a Karelian and a Canadian Finn, with an American axe and a bow saw, ‘the newest implements for sawing and chopping wood’ [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 496, f. 13]. The Canadian Finn was standing, leaning on his axe, and the Karelian was bending over a felled tree.

The backdrop to the scene was a mural painted by V. V. Pakulin. The artist had depicted timber being loaded onto a lorry with the help of a derrick and a temporary road made of logs passing through a majestic pine forest. The picture clearly expresses the ideas of technology overcoming nature and the laying of the road to the bright future. A panoramic view disappearing into infinity created an effect of sublimity, and the faraway look from above suggests that the work has encapsulated rational inventive thought, the ideology of 'high modernism' [Scott 1998]. The exhibition 'Jews in Imperial Russia and in the USSR' in 1939 may be considered the culmination of the evolution of the design principles outlined above. For the first time the basis for the decorative setting of the exhibition was not formed of murals and dioramas, but wall painting, and drawings, sculptures and easel paintings were also extensively used [ARME, f. 2, op. 5, d. 48, f. 13]. The instructions for painting the walls of the middle part of the hall devoted to the Jewish Autonomous Oblast set out the artist's task like this: 'To depict contemporary life and living conditions in the Jewish A. O. To give a typical impression of the Jewish A. O. based on studies, documentary drawings and personal observations. The wall-painting should show the most characteristic features and peculiarities of the nature and way of life in the Jewish A. O., conveying as concretely as possible the natural riches and life of the Oblast and achieving a realistic treatment in its depiction of people' [ARME, f. 9, op. 3, d. 4, f. 85]. The orientation towards typicality, realism, and the representation of riches prescribed in the instructions allow it to be said that the curators had a conscious desire to get socialist realist works from the artist.

No fewer than eighteen artists were employed to create the murals, dioramas, maquettes, paintings, drawings and sculptures that were exhibited and used in the design [ARME, f. 2, op. 5, d. 48, ff. 13–4]. Among them S. B. Yudovin, a well-known Soviet artist, occupied a special position, and his sketches were used for many of the elements of the decorative design, maquettes and re-created scenes. Together with employees of the SME he was a member of the commission responsible for accepting the paintings and maquettes, and acted as a consultant. About ten engravings and drawings by Yudovin were shown at the exhibition, including some in the socialist realist style, such as 'The Cruiser "Aurora"', 'On the Neva in October 1917' and 'Presenting the Act for Perpetual Use of the Land' [Ivanov 2010].

The artists' participation in the life of the museum was not restricted to designing exhibitions. They often took part in ethnographic field research, during which they made drawings and sketches from life and conversed with people. For example, the artists G. N. Traugot and I. A. Korotkov travelled to the Kola Peninsula in 1935 as part of a museum expedition. During the two and a half months that

they spent there they made about a hundred studies and drawings [Potapov 1936: 159].

In the second half of the 1930s the museum staff decided to liven up their relatively tedious paper materials and industrial collections in the Soviet sections by showing works of contemporary decorative and applied folk art. Accordingly, whereas, at the beginning of the decade expeditions for representing contemporaneity had largely collected wall newspapers, posters, people's work records and objects reflecting the cycle of industrial production, by the end of it the collections began to accumulate lacquer miniatures, lace work, clay toys, scrimshaw, carpets, and so on. Among such things the museum staff were particularly attracted by items with 'Soviet subjects' — portraits of Lenin, Stalin and the leaders of the Party and government, depictions of the arms of the USSR, hammers and sickles, five-pointed stars, scenes of collective farm life, etc. It was considered that such objects reflected the new prosperous life and were an expression of the people's 'love, trust and gratitude' to its 'leaders' [ARME, f. 2, op. 2, d. 142, f. 21]. To expand the subject of folk art they also collected the costumes of groups of amateur performers.

Objects of contemporary applied and decorative folk art were exhibited in the Soviet sections of the permanent exhibitions and also at temporary exhibitions: 'Examples of the Folk Art of the Chuvash and Mari' (1939), 'Examples of Georgian Folk Art' (1940), 'Arts and Crafts of the Russian North' (1940) and others [Kryukova, Studenetskaya 1971: 89–90]. In the first years after the Second World War, when the permanent exhibitions had been dismantled, there were also temporary exhibitions devoted to folk art [Baranov 2011: 415–7]. They were all based on the SME's usual opposition between prerevolutionary and Soviet times.

What caused this turn towards folk art? When the sections showing the life of various peoples under socialism showed contemporaneity using paper materials and industrial collections, they were all more or less the same [Kryukova, Studenetskaya 1971: 48]. Objects of decorative and applied folk art were much more attractive, did not go out of date from one five-year plan to the next, corresponded beautifully to the formula 'national in form and socialist in content', allowed the life of Soviet people to be aestheticised and presented as fine and devoid of any contradictions or harmful 'survivals'. In this way, the problem of acquiring more objects for the collections was partly solved by 'moving away from the ethnographical profile of the museum towards pure art history' [ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 964, f. 10], which may be assessed as a crisis in museum representation [Baranov 2011: 418].

The general political and cultural context was also pushing them towards folk art. In 1934 Gorky, speaking to the First Congress of

Soviet Writers, had legitimised the study and popularisation of folklore and of 'popular creativity' in a wider sense as the works of the labouring masses. Folk art became the primordial communist prototype for the Soviet art of socialist realism [Yustus 2000]. The book *The Creativity of the Peoples of the USSR*, edited by Gorky and Mekhlis in 1937, was put forward as a model collection of contemporary folklore. This collection contained various types of recent Soviet folklore: tales, toasts, songs, and so on about Lenin, Stalin, the revolution, and old and new life. Besides the texts, the book also contained many photographs of works of decorative and applied folk art (carpets, embroidery, lace, etc.) figuring pictures of Lenin and Stalin, Soviet emblems, and so on, surrounded by traditional ornamentation [Gorky, Mekhlis 1937].

Conclusion

Exhibition work in museums at the time of the cultural revolution was the laboratory in which various methods and approaches to creating a Marxist exhibition were tested. Most of the elements that composed museum ethnography in the socialist realist period can be found in the ethnography and museum practice of the beginning of the 1930s: historical narrative as the basis for the exhibition, field work on the 'foremost' collective farms, colourful artistic design. These principles, however, coexisted with others, and only assumed a dominant position in the middle of the 1930s. The desired influence of socialist realism on museum ethnography manifested itself mostly in their specific development. The historical narrative approached literary biography, and 'new people' (stakhanovites, award-holders) were added to the collective farms and factories as 'typical' objects of field study and display. Avant-garde exhibition design gave way to socialist realism, and art was no longer confined to the decoration of the exhibition and became an exhibit in its own right.

The SME's main exhibition language came to be that of re-created scenes. They had been known before, but it was only in the second half of the 1930s that they became the main constructive elements and semantic cores of all the most important thematic sections of the exhibitions. At the same time, historical narratives were constructed out of series of such scenes (from the interior of a peasant cottage to the interior of a collective farm worker's dwelling, and so on). This sort of scene was supposed to present to the eyes of the visitor a cast taken from a fragment of reality, re-created with scientific accuracy and artistic conviction inside the museum space. Its claim to documentary truthfulness, aesthetic attractiveness and accessibility to the broad masses allowed the re-created scene to fulfil the didactic functions of education and propaganda. Moreover, the process of creating such scenes, from research in the field

to mounting the exhibition, presupposed such an intimate interweaving of science and ideologically-charged art that it makes one speak of museum ethnography as 'socialist realist science'.¹ From this perspective the re-created scenes may be described as socialist realist installations made out of ready-made ethnographical and quasi-ethnographical objects, anthropological mannequins and painted backgrounds. The museum ethnographers, as bearers of the scientific ethos, would hardly have agreed with such an approach, but this sort of interpretation would perhaps have been congenial to the artists who worked on exhibitions in the 1930s.

The change in the principles for choosing objects for study in the field reflected shifts in the ideals about the object field of ethnography. Prerevolutionary ethnography as a rule had worked in 'far-flung corners' a long way from roads and cities, which corresponded to an orientation towards studying the past in the present — 'the living past'. This orientation was dominant for a long time in anthropology abroad [Fabian 1983]. Ethnographers studying the new way of life and the building of socialism in the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s adopted the principle of statistically average typicality and tried to work on average collective farms or else to embrace the whole spectrum of different types of collective farm (both rich and poor). At this period the ethnography of contemporaneity was immersed in the present, in the current moment, for example, it was supposed that there had been no class struggle in the collective farms in the past, nor would there be in the future. By the middle of the 1930s ethnographers came to be guided by the socialist realist principle of typicality and to work on the 'foremost' collective farms and 'foremost' factories and talk to 'distinguished' people. Like artists and writers, the museum staff had to 'write what ought to be as if it were what is' [Sinyavskiy 2003: 165]. In this way, at this stage the basic subject of the ethnography of contemporaneity became the future in the present.

From this perspective one could speak of a gap opening up between museum ethnography and academic ethnography in the 1930s. Within the framework of the latter, museum staff (whether dependent on Narkompros or on the Academy of Science) worked primarily on the history of illiterate peoples and survivals from the precapitalist era. In parallel in their museum activities they worked on displaying the building of socialism in the USSR or of imperialist colonialism abroad [Sanyukovich 1978: 194–217]. We find hardly anything about the ethnography of the building of socialism in the two main sections of the journal *Sovetskaya etnografiya* ('Articles' and 'Materials'), but in the sections 'Chronicle' and 'Expeditions' the subject appears regularly in reports of expeditions and surveys

¹ Such a description does not imply that the ethnographical research on Soviet contemporaneity, field materials and museum collections of the 1930–50s are without scholarly value.

of exhibition work. In this way the study of contemporaneity in the 1930s was pushed to the margins of academic ethnography: exhibitions in museums and short communications in journals, printed in small type. But for the man in the street — and for the Party boss too — it was the museum exhibition, with its accent on contemporaneity, that was the face of ethnography.

Abbreviations

ARME — Archive of the Russian Museum of Ethnography

ED SRM — Ethnographical Department of the State Russian Museum

SME — State Museum of Ethnography

Archival materials

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 232. Protocols of sessions of the bureau of the ethnographical cell. 1927.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 315. Protocols of sessions of the bureau of the ethnographical cell. 1930.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 413. Report on S. G. Grinina's travel to Karelia to collect ethnographical material for the exhibition 'The Leningrad Oblast and Karelia'. 1932.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 479. Articles, notes and copies of documents collected for the exhibition 'The Uzbeks Then and Now'. 1934–5.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 481. V. S. Dubov's report on his travel to Karelia to study the building of national culture. 1934.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 496. A short guide to the exhibition 'Karelia and the Kola Peninsula'. 1935.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 566. Report on the state of ethnographical scholarship with a survey of the exhibition activity of the ethnographical museum.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 598. Protocols of meetings and sessions of the Scientific Council. 1937–8.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 763. Methods developed by E. N. Studenetskaya on the subject of 'A Hundred Years in the Life of Aekhsaer' for the exhibition 'The Peoples of the North Caucasus Then and Now'. 1939.

ARME, f. 2, op. 1, d. 964. Materials (plans, protocols, reactions) for the exhibition 'Folk Art and National Costume of the Slavonic Peoples'. 1947–8.

ARME, f. 2, op. 2, d. 131. T. A. Kryukova's essay on folk art in Voronezh Oblast. 1936.

ARME, f. 2, op. 2, d. 142. Ethnographic essays by T. A. Kryukova on 'Clay Toys from Lipetsk' and by A. S. Morozova on 'New Themes in Turkmen Carpets', etc. 1938.

ARME, f. 2, op. 5, d. 48. 'From Our Experience in Constructing the Exhibition "Jews in Imperial Russia and in the USSR"' (articles by I. M. Pulner and M. I. Shakhnovich). 1940.

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