AFTER CAPITALISM: SOVIET CONSTRUCTION OF THE STATE OF NATURE IN SUB-ARTIC SIBERIA

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In 1921 Lidiya Dobrova-Iadrintseva, an ethnographer and economist, took a steamer that headed down the Yenisei river from the Central Siberian city of Krasnoiarsk. The steamer was to supply the indigenous population of the lower part of the basin with flour, sugar, and hunting equipment — all badly needed after the Russian Revolution (1917) and Civil War (1918-21) shut down most of the northern fur trade. Dobrova-Iadrintseva used this occasion "to make a complete population census and collect data on indigenous economic life" (1925:1). The book that she published, based on this survey, was quickly recognized as seminal in early Soviet anthropology. Contrary to 19th-century ethnographic accounts which analytically separated aboriginal societies from colonial relations, Dobrova-Iadrintseva argued that practices of Russian indigenous administration and fur trade were crucial in the social production of local communities. Thus, instead of looking at the survival of stateless, kin-based communal structures, she analyzed larger systems of inequalities, tax-collecting "districts," and administrative "clans" constructed by the Russian state.

Her project was not just an academic expedition, however, and its anthropological value proved inseparable from its administrative results. The expedition was part of a celebrated (in Soviet literature) emergency food supply delivery to northern aborigines, and it was overseen by the Siberian Office of the Soviet ethnic politics ministry (the People's Commissariat for Nationalities) where Dobrova-Iadrintseva worked. Yet, it is interesting to note such a combination of ethnographic and administrative value of this trip underscores not merely its larger context but also its micro-organization. It is the latter that makes it, in my view, symptomatic of the Soviet power/knowledge operation in the indigenous North. At this level we can see the use of the existing state structures for the purpose of the survey and, more importantly, expansion of these state structures through practices of knowledge. Dobrova-Iadrintseva enclosed her questionnaire with accounting books of the state fur trading co-ops which kept the financial balances of indigenous families and channeled early Soviet help. As nomadic reindeer herders and hunters turned up in trading posts to collect the food rations, these books added information about "the native's family members, his economic well-being, and the migration routes" to the trade balance of each family (Dobrova-Iadrintseva 1925:3).

These survey cards formed one of the first post-1917 regimes of residency for indigenous "tents" (*chumy*).[1] Standardized by the Polar Census (1926-27), they became a matrix for local Soviets and collective farms. In a few years after Dobrova-Iadrintseva's trip, "to keep the lists of tent holders [*chumovladel'tsev*], with a detailed accounting of the reindeer herds" became a task not of the social scientist, but of the new local council — "Clan Soviet" (*rodovoi soviet*),[2] and the social categories employed by this registrar — "administrative clan," "genealogical clan" and, most importantly, "class" — became the terms for Soviet social construction. The ruling class "elements" and their ideologues (shamans) were first accurately listed, with extensive details about their territorial location and lineage connections, then "alienated" (that is, deprived of their voting rights), and eventually purged ("liquidated," *likvidirovany*) — while ethnographers looking at the same collected data engaged in debates over whether the genealogical clan, recovered in its evolutionary purity from the colonial and capitalist yoke, could provide a primitive-communist soil for the Soviet culture.

This essay attempts to theorize the operation of Soviet governmentality in Siberian North. In 1988-89 and 1993-95, I conducted extensive field research among Evenki of the Podkamenaia Tunguska, a tributary of the lower Yenisei river basin. This particular group was not encompassed by Dobrova-Iadrintseva's survey, but its identities and social structures were deeply effected by Soviet

construction for which such expeditions provided a matrix. Households and local Soviets, reindeer-herding "brigades" and collective farms — all these institutions present a microcosm of an ambitious project which makes the Soviet case an example, if not an epitome, of fundamental tendency in modern history and, particularly, modern colonial history — of remaking the state order after science. For James Scott, for example, the Soviet Marxist gaze exemplifies "seeing like a state" — a practice of governance through creation of "legible" units which are structured "in a manner that permits them to be identified, observed, recorded, counted, aggregated, and monitored" (1998:183).

I would like to point out that James Scott's concept of modern "legibility," as well as other influential insights into operation of such modern governance are not informed directly by historical or anthropological studies of Soviet-type societies. Instead, they draw on cases of Continental state modernity, exemplified by modern France and Foucauldian reading of it, Western colonial modernity exemplified by European oversees empires, and Western natural sciences. The Continental state provides a model for understanding of modern "political technologies" which operate "by taking what is essentially a political problem, removing it from the realm of political discourse, and recasting it in the neutral language of science" (Dryfus and Rabinow 1982:196, Rabinow 1989). In turn, the colonial situation illuminates how such a "neutral language of science" is constitutive of reified cultural differences. The argument is, briefly, as follows. To the extent that these differences were written out of the context of modernity and appeared as timeless givens, they were themselves products of modernity, which both universalizes human nature and, at the same time, ranks its particular manifestations on the evolutionary scale. They are no cultural differences *per se* but differentials in the modern Western chronotope of domination, which is sustained politically by taking its own cultural contingency out of the picture (e.g. Fabian 1983, Comaroff and Comaroff 1991, Cohn 1996). Finally, sciences studies — and, particularly, the work of Donna Haraway — provides a vision of how the Western chronotope of domination operates in making facts of nature, rendering its own vision not simply "natural" as in "true" but also as in "natural law," that is, as what simply exists, as opposed to being a result of theoretical discourse (Haraway 1989, Helmreich 1998).

The Soviet case is, on the one hand, an example of such an operation. After reformers/scholars like Dobrova-Iadrintseva, the Soviet reforms proceeded from the assumption of salience of the Russian state and colonial trade for indigenous social structure and identities. Yet the more aboriginal lifestyles were integrated into the Soviet administrative regime, the more Evenki were identified by the state as existing as if outside the boundaries of the Russian/Soviet society. The more the state administration shaped aboriginal identities, the more it put them in terms of pure "ecological" constraints and structural properties of stateless social formations. The post-Soviet reforms in the North start with an opposite assumption that the ones of Dobrova-Iadrintseva *et al.*, namely, that indigenous cultures are forms of adaptation to natural environment (e.g. Pika and Prokhorov 1994, Khrustalev 1993). And in more recent Soviet/Russian scholarship, the early Soviet contribution to anthropological understanding of colonial situations is considered almost irrelevant, if not at all forgotten.

On the other hand, the Soviet reforms (and, particularly, their early stages) significantly differ from other cases that inform theoretical debates on reification. Soviet social construction is an example of modern power/knowledge regime which driven to its logical and political extreme — to social constructivism. This constructivist drive of the projects like Dobrova-Iadrintseva's presents, therefore, not only an example but also a challenge for these "naturalization" models. First, the Soviet social organization was not a realm of specific social forms simply "found" by anthropologists. Rather, it was a constructivist social field of underlying principles — of abstract notions, categories of analysis that didn't exist in the past but were *made* explicit, and real, by practice of Soviet construction. Secondly, the Soviet reforms were set in an opposition to the operation of Western practices of rule as well as practices of knowledge. Bruce Grant, in his study of

the Soviet policies toward Nivkhi of the Sakhalin Island, provides perhaps the best formulation of this difference, quoting early Soviet ethnographer and reformer Karl Luks:

> We are not doing ethnography in the old sense of the word. All words that end in "—logy" or "—graphy" are bound up in a process or activity, call it what you like, that divides subject from object, "us" (the scholar or researcher) from "them" (the studied, our wards), who in the best instance we "feel for." We want to *erase* this line between subject and object, between us and them. The process of serious native work is really the nativization [*otuzemlivalie*] of you and me, in keeping with the ideas of the party. And gradually, from the first few natives who come over to the Soviet way of life, there will be dozens, even hundreds, and then thousands. The objects of study must become subjects (Grant 1995:77).

Similarly to this project to overcoming the analytical separation of subject and object, the Soviet social construction proceeded through practices of de-reification, that is, through attempts to overcome commodity form that dominated Siberian colonial economy, and reified kinship and gender forms that were seen, by scholars like Dobrova-Iadrintseva, as being implicated in maintaining administrative and capitalist inequalities in Siberia. If current anthropological models of naturalization focus on the operation of power and knowledge in the context of reification, where the embeddedness of this process in social relationships and hierarchies was consistently taken out of the picture, the Soviet power/knowledge regime was built by making precisely these underlying social inequalities explicit. In doing so, the Soviet construction was supposed to move beyond both the old Imperial identity regimes and "bourgeois" practices of knowledge. In this regard, the notion of Sovietization as a practice that going beyond objectivist scientism is striking in comparison with Western anthropological manifestoes of that time.

What is equally striking is, however, that long-term effects of this vision did not diminish at all but, in fact, reinforced the authority of science in Soviet society and in Soviet indigenous policies. And, similarly, cultural differences as objects that are simply found made a remarkable come-back during late socialism. Indigenous social units that were results of a very deliberate social construction acquired features of "natural" entities — such as, for example, "primordial" ethnic groups and other units as if already-existing prior to the Russian Imperial and Soviet regime.

My purpose in this article is, first, to outline a structure of scientific authority in Soviet reforms, and, secondly, to explore relationships of this structure to the proliferation of naturalized identities throughout Soviet period. My main argument is that the *difference* between constructivist and naturalizing drives in Soviet society forms a relationship, that is, that there is a historical and cultural connection between the two, and naturalization proceeded not by rejection of the constructivist paradigm but, in a large extent, through the constructivist paradigm itself. The Soviet project was "after" reified and naturalized identity regimes in a similar fashion that the 20th-century English kinship was, according to Marylin Strathern (1992), "after nature" in the double sense of being "after" as "moving beyond" and "replication." I will argue that "capitalism" and "nature" formed two related modalities of "wilderness" that the Soviet construction was supposed to overcome, and that these modalities operated as "othering" political technologies within the Soviet society. Of course, the Soviet vision was written over the Russian Imperial chronotope of differences, but it also radically displaced it by introducing a boundary of "socialism" and "capitalism." In this vision, the "bourgeois world" ceased to be an invisible and universal "self" which structures "other" cultures as visible differences in space and time (Fabian 1983). Rather, the "bourgeois world" itself became one of the modalities of the "otherness" which included inside it the rest of the realm of reified identities (feudalism, "primitive society," Orient, *etc.*), to which "socialism" was opposed as a regime of the explication of the "social." I argue that this boundary worked both ways: as de-reifying and reifying in the same go. To use the famous formulation of Frederik Barth, here regimes of differences are constituted by cultural properties of this boundary and not by "stuff" that this boundary encloses (Barth 1969:15). In this essay, I elaborate this further, first, by providing a background regarding indigenous and state identities in the area where I did

field research; then, by outlining my theoretical vision of reification and de-reification in the Soviet context; and, finally, by reading the practices of Soviet social construction from this point of view.

Background: Meanings of State and Indigenity in the Russian North

The name of the Podkamennaia Tunguska river is Russian for "The Stony River of the Tungus." The "Tungus" is an older colonial name for a Siberian hunting-gathering and reindeer-herding people who call themselves Evenki (*pl*. Evenkil), or Ilel/Orochil — "people," or "reindeer people." "Stony" colloquially refers to the rapids that separate most of this "River of the Tungus" from the rest of the Yenisei basin. I did fieldwork in villages of the upper part of this river basin in 1988-89 and 1993-95. These villages are a relatively isolated part of the Evenki Autonomous District. A winter truck route links them to the regional center Baikit, but this route melts with the snow. River boats sail up to the settlement over the rapids only during spring flood; and the only regular, year-round access to the villages is by air. Located within the northern permafrost zone, the area cannot sustain grain agriculture.

Remote as it is, however, this region is no "isolated" site of classical modern anthropology. Long before Cossack bands exerted Muscovite rule over this area in the 17th century, it had been already integrated into tributary conglomerates that thrived on sable fur — the Sub-Arctic currency that still remains in value. The water and sleigh routes of these tributary allegiances gravitated to the south and the south-east — towards the upper Yenisei river and Lake Baikal. The Cossacks switched these allegiances westward, along a thin line of fortresses and winter blockhouses that connected Yeniseisk, Turukhansk and other Russian posts in the Yenisei basin to Moscow and to the European market. Like other indigenous groups of the Sub-Arctic, under Russian rule Tungus formed a social estate of "tributized subjects" (*iasashnye*), that is, suppliers of fur tribute to the Russian Tsar's coffers (Bakhrushin 1955).

Owing to this close interdependency of administration and trade, settlements of the Podkamennaia Tunguska river basin grew from small trading posts of the early 20th century — most of them storages with no permanent residents — into villages of between 300 and 600 inhabitants. As the Soviet "Primitive Production Units" (1920-30s) was re-organized as "collective farms" (1930s-60s) and "state collective farms" (1967-present), their hunters, herders and other "workers" became state employees. Under the current economic crisis, however, state employment no longer provides sufficient monetary income. This crisis illuminates how dependent this area's inhabitants had become on the state sector.

The story of this area is, on the one hand, the one of the Russian/Soviet statehood as a site where meanings of being "indigenous" are culturally produced. It is the story of proliferation of state institutions, infrastructure, and symbols. Within this expanding framework, indigenous identities undergo a transformation from being Russia's "tributized subjects" to Soviet "primitive communists" and "numerically-small people of the North" (see Slezkine 1994 and Grant 1995 for discussion of these categories). On the other hand, however, and the other way around, here "indigenity" is a site where cultural meanings of "state" and "governance" are produced.

In this regard, the Evenki case that I examine illustrates a much broader process of change of meanings of Siberian governance from "tribute" to "science." For much of the Tsarist period (from the 17th to the early 20th centuries), Russian statehood in indigenous Siberia was defined in tributary terms. Aboriginal groups formed a social estate distinguished by a peculiar form of tax — the fur tribute (*iasak*). The term *iasak* belongs to the older Turkic and Mongolian vocabulary of power in which it signifies "tribute" but also "punishment," "law," and "state" — *cf.* the term for the Chingis-Khan's Empire, and for its legal code, *Iasa*, comes from the same root the word *iasak* (Bakhrushin 1955:49 and further). After some 19th-century reforms, but largely in the course of Soviet construction, the meaning of governance changed as new connotations of "law" as "science" — specifically, Marxist social science — replaced the older usage of "law" as "tribute." Soviet social

construction classified its subjects after the Marxist version of "natural history" (the modes of production model) and, also, in accordance with an increasingly institutionalized primordialist view on ethnicity. By looking at how state meaning of being "indigenous" were constructed in the course of the 20th century, I explore the displacement of older tributary and social estate hierarchies of the Tsarist old regime with the global narrative of "scientific" and, therefore, "natural" units of humanity.

Imperial and Soviet Order and Their Forms of Knowledge

Anthropological understanding of such displacements draws on an analysis of distinctly modern discursive and politico-economic reification which is elaborated by classical Marxism and, particularly, by Georg Lukásc (1971) in his treatment of parallels between commodity fetishism in capitalist economy and objectivity in modern "bourgeois" science. Commodity is a social relationship fetishized as a relationship between things; and modern objectivism is a vision in which properties of things that this vision encompasses are seen as "objective," that is, independent of social relationships that enable it. As this vision naturalizes facts that are *socially* made into facts that *appear* simply found, it also makes a capitalist order of things into a natural law. Perhaps most succinctly this analysis is summed up by a 1875 formulation of Engels:

> ...the Darwinian theory of the struggle for existence boils down to ...an extrapolation from society to animate nature of Hobbes' theory of the *bellum omnium contra omnes* and of the bourgeois-economic theory of competition together with the Malthusian theory of population. Having accomplished this feat ...these people proceed to re-extrapolate the same theories from organic nature [back] to history, and then claim to have proved their validity as eternal laws of human society (Marx and Engels, *Collected Work*, Vol. 45:107-8).

There are important differences (both in emphasis and epistemologically) between politico-economic and discursive readings of this transformation. But it is sufficient to reread Lukásc to see how the two are connected. In commodity form, he writes, "relation between people take on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity,' an autonomy that seems so rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people." In a similar fashion, science "is... debarred from comprehending ...the social character of its own material base" as bourgeois scholars "divorce these ...manifestations from their real capitalist foundation and make them independent and permanent by regarding them as the timeless model of human relations in general." And just as labor appears as commodity under capitalism, so "the *contemplative* nature of man makes its appearance" (Lukásc 1971:83, 105, 94-5, 97).

This vision entered Western anthropology in the 1970s, marking a merge of a long-standing anthropological concern with specificity of Western cultural notions on the one hand and a newer interest in effects of these notions had on regimes of differences under Western colonial/nation states on the other. It has proved very productive for understanding a number of contexts (such as, for example, Continental state, colonial situations, and cultural studies of science). What unites further elaboration of this vision is a concern with invisibility of social relationships that enable reification, although this concern is restated with theories of power that significantly modify the classical Marxist paradigm.

For example, after Foucault, Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow (1982) see this invisibility as a feature of larger political transformation from absolutist system, which operates through display of power center, exemplary punishment, and religious sanction, into "the modern condition" in which power is decentered in technologies of "self-discipline." Jean and John Comaroff describe a similar transformation drawing on Gramscian notion of hegemony — "that order of signs and practices, relations and distinctions, images and epistemologies" which is "drawn from a historically situated cultural field," but which "come to be taken-for-granted as the natural and received shape of the world." This transformation is a political process in which "ideology," a form of power relations that

"is directly supported by, [and] in fact, hinges on, the agency of dominant social groups," is made into hegemony that "derives, as if naturally, from the very construction of economy and society" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 23). For Comaroffs, the prime site of this transformation is an expansion of the Western (particularly, British) colonial regimes. In this context, the intended ambiguity of the expression "as if naturally" evokes both a sense of being unnoticed (Bourdieu 1991) as well as the modern Western categories of "nature" as an implicit referent of things that go without saying. In turn, Carol Delaney and Sylvia Yanagisako take the notion of naturalization as far away as possible from this Western (and, indeed, foundational) case for this theory. In their broad vision, naturalization appears almost as a cultural universal: they seek to understand how and why "differentials of power come already imbedded in culture," and how "power appears natural, inevitable, even god-given." This is a vision of culturally-specific "domains" which "usually come with claims of universality" and "with prohibitions against reading across them." Nonetheless they acknowledge embeddedness of this problematic in the modern Western transformation "from order of creation to the natural order," that is, "from religious to scientific sanction" of power inequalities (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995:1, 12, 3-6).

Now neither Lukásc nor more recent theorists render the processes of naturalization ever completed. Nevertheless, in this discourse the point of visibility of power relations for a theorist coincides with invisibility of the same relationships for subjects under study. Understanding hegemony (with hegemony not necessarily being historically stable) requires a closure of the field of power relations within the analytical gaze of a theorist. For example, in Paul Willis' (1977) celebrated ethnography of socialization of English working class children into working class culture, hegemonic field of power relations appears when readers see what "lads" don't, namely, that their "resistance" to authority is exactly what propels them to subaltern position in class structure.

In such a closure of the field of power relations within the analytical gaze of a theorist there is an important theoretical turn. It distinguishes more recent approaches from classical Marxism — a "romantic view," in the words of Paul Willis, "of the working class cultural forms" which asserts that workers "are experimenting with some kind of future" and "provide concrete outlines for living for when capitalism is overthrown." "If anything," he argues, it is the very "elements" of working class culture "which act... to prevent precisely that" (Willis 1977:122). This approach abandons Marxist teleology of subject, that is, the notion that workers or other subaltern groups are socially positioned to understand how the system works and rebel against it, and that critical theory itself is nothing more than a vanguard of this process. Theoretical impossibility of such a "subject" is an enabling assumption of understanding how the hegemonic reproduction is accomplished — how "becoming subject" turns into a mere "subject effect" in a hegemonic power field. Ontologically, this vision makes power relations into a deep structure which in its most important moments of operation is accessible only to a theorist. Epistemologically, however, effects of this vision are quite different. It demonstrates how historically-contingent moments of reification lead to a rapid proliferation of hegemonic political frameworks.

Jean and John Comaroff show this, for example, by examining a conversation of a Tswana rainmaker and an English medical doctor, recorded by Levingstone. The conversation was about a question if the rain comes due to divine intervention or due to the "medicine" of the rainman. Comaroffs argue that in this argument there was no "European" point of view formally imposed on colonial subjects. However, the conversation shows — and, in fact, provides a medium for expansion of — a hegemonic discursive framework in which "it was precisely the things that marked the Africans as distinct that made them and their world as inferior": "To argue over who was the legitimate rainmaker or where the water came from, for instance, was to be seduced into the modes of rational debate, positivist knowledge, and empirical reason at the core of the bourgeois culture" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:244, 213). The argument installs this discursive framework, which comes with an already-embedded assumption of hierarchies of reasoning. What happens as a result

of this conversation is a reification of *ahistorical* "European" and "non-European" ways — with their hierarchical relationships to one another understood at that *historical* point of colonial expansion as "natural." A moment of such an ahistorical reification is, at the same time, a moment of historically-specific expansion of Western hegemony. This is how Comaroffs formulate this expansion in more general terms:

> hegemony is a product of the dialectics whereby the content of dominant ideologies is distilled into shared forms that seem to have such historical longevity as to be above history... ...and hence to have a capacity to generate new substantive practices along the surface of economy and society. ...[these forms] do not however appear to have any ideological content. They belong to the domain of fact, not value (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:30).

For Comaroffs, who employ the concept of hegemony as a broader social equivalent of the fetishized commodity form, the tension between ontology of "substantive practices along the surface of economy and society" and epistemology of "construction of economy and society" is not resolved, and intentionally so. This tension allows readers ethnographically inhabit this colonial situation — and thus achieve its interpretive understanding. The question of how the theorist is situated in relation to this process remains important, however, particularly once we think of the Soviet case. In contrast to capitalist and colonial expansion of "fetishized" relationships, the Soviet order expanded by creating political hierarchies out of the practices of "de-fetishization" through attempts to understand fetishization processes. As Marylin Strathern (1992:5) puts this in another context, in addition to "describing a process of construction" of reified identities, we need to understand "describing a process of construction" as "itself a construction of sorts."

In her book *After Nature*, Strathern sets out her argument by contrasting her project and David Schneider's *American Kinship* (1968), a classic account of "nature" as a cultural category underlying kinship studies in anthropology as well as Western folk categories of belonging. Schneider's "explication of the folk models of biology ...laid the groundwork for analyses which link ideologies of the 'natural' to systems of inequality" (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995:10). However, Strathern points out important limits to Schneider's approach to naturalization. In her view, Schneider's approach overlooks ways in which practices of "explication" — of "constant opening out of the conventions upon which human endeavor is seen," central to Western discourses — are situated in naturalization processes. What is visible in Western kinship for anthropologists after Schneider, she argues, is visible from the point of view of this kinship's previously taken-for-granted assumptions. The analytical closure of the field of taken-for-granted assumptions serves, therefore, a double purpose. It provides a model for understanding of how "natural" facts are made in an unreflected milieu, and, in doing so, it also provides "an auto-proof of social constructivism." Naturalizing and social-constructivist viewpoint are achieved simultaneously.

This dialectics pervades Strathern's account of a cultural production of English kinship "after" nature in a double sense of moving beyond and replication — of constructivist movement beyond "nature" and replicating it in the same go (Strathern 1992). I argue that the Soviet social construction is also after "nature" as it was after capitalism, in this ironically-double sense of movement beyond and replication. We cannot simply assume that in "staging of the Eurocentric mode-of-production narrative as history," Marxist discourses and political projects "should be seen as an analogue of nineteenth-century territorial imperialism" (Prakash 1997:496). This analogy takes place, but it cannot be pushed too far. Rather, I contend that the Soviet construction was a process of inculcation of categories of "bourgeois culture" through practices that were aimed at a movement beyond them by making the "social" explicit. This break constitutes a new chronotope of differences which is mapped over the Imperial old regime. The Soviet displacement as well as replication of the Russian imperial regimes of differences went precisely through "describing a process of construction" of indigenous social organization in the context of Russian administrative and mercantile inequalities.

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Indeed, Soviet institutions in Siberia were to account for indigenous social organization. However, I argue, this was to happen not by incorporation of reified "Siberian ways" into local Soviets and collective farms, but through the use, in the Soviet construction, of underlying structural principles of these communities which were not necessarily clear to members of these communities themselves. The boundary between "capitalism" and "socialism" is between specific social forms, which were mere "objects" of Imperial knowledge and governance, and underlying principles — abstract notions, categories of analysis that were *made* explicit, and real, by construction of Soviet "subjects." For example, Soviet aboriginal institutions in the 1920s were not indigenous clans but groups formed by genealogical grids and formulas of exchange that were drawn by anthropologists and reformers (Ssorin-Chaikov 1998:126-32).

But how was this explication practice justified? Ready-made socialist forms did not exist within the capitalist political economy as capitalist ones did within the feudal formation from the Marxist point of view. Socialist social forms were made real by practice of explication. This practice starts with discerning, in the words of Marx, in "commodity fetishism... a purely social relationship of producers to their collectivity," but it proceeds by positing this purely social relationships as an explicit principle of a new society. Socialism constitutes, therefore, a second historical break with nature, which is the break with the "second nature" in its most naturalized form of market capitalism. Leap forward into new stage does not happen in this case, therefore, as it happened under transition from feudalism to capitalism, that is, by quantity of emerging new class relations turning into quality. Bourgeois revolution, from this point of view, only inaugurated the power of the bourgeoisie which was already gained financially if not politically. Movement beyond commodity is a theoretical movement which makes real out of the most abstract (alienated) development of commodity form.

We can see here a double movement. On the one hand, it is the development of commodity form — to an extent it appears, as Marx put this, as "something completely natural" — that enables the movement beyond it as a recognition of "purely social relationship of producers to their own collectivity." On the other hand, it is this very recognition that completes the making of capitalism into the realm of "blind forces of [second] nature." If in Darwin — as in an intellectual manifestation of the "bourgeois culture" — "the animal kingdom figures as civil society" (Marx and Engels, Vol 48:381), then, as Engels put this, the "conscious organization of social production, in which production and distribution are carried in a planned way, could lift mankind above the rest of the animal world as regards the social aspect, in the same way that production in general has done this for mankind in the specifically biological aspect" (*Ibid*. Vol 49:331). It is useful here to invoke Barth's formulation here once again: identities of "capitalism" and "socialism" are defined here by the boundary between them. "Blind forces" of the second nature here constitute a jungle where, "in the midst of contingencies," there stand "plans" as "rational and poetic monuments," as the architect Le Corbusier (1964) put this.

The Soviet and "the Other"

Now I will briefly summarize the implication of this argument for Siberian indigenous politics. For the purpose of my argument, let me point out three related ways in which the state expanded as a political framework in the indigenous North. The first can be summed up in the words of Caroline Humphrey (1994:24):

> In the Soviet-type command economy, the structure of domination does not consist of a focal nexus surrounded by a subordinated mass; rather, domination resides in a series of equivalent positions in *nesting hierarchies* [italics are mine, N. S.-Ch.], such that a similar domination may be exercised at each level. Even at the bottom, in the remote enclave of some herding collective, the brigadier could subordinate his workers by the same principles, and with the same equivocal relationship to the ideology of "discipline," that obtained at structurally higher levels.

The 20th-century story of the Podkamennaia Tunguska area is to a large extent a story of the proliferation of state collectives and herding and hunting brigades as forms of such nested domination. In addition to this (secondly), the state expanded also as a framework which "ascribes" local identities. The Soviet meanings of being "indigenous" are a case in point that historian Sheila Fitzpatrick recently made about class identity under Soviet socialism. Similarly to the system of Russian Imperial social estates (*soslovia*), she argues, class differences in Soviet society were defined ("ascribed") "in terms of their relationship to the state rather than, like Marxist classes, in terms of their relationship to one another." Identified in this way as "workers," "peasants," "intelligentsiia" — and, I add, "indigenous peoples of the North" — people had different forms of residency, different access to education, consumer goods, and other "rights and privileges" (Fitzpatrick 2000: 39, 37). To put this the other way around, in such everyday practices as work, exchange, consumption, and so on, the state expanded as such an "ascribing" framework.

Yet (thirdly), both these disciplinary ideologies and ascribing practices were products of the Soviet deconstruction of the Russian old regime in terms of Marxist political economy. The Soviet state frameworks also expanded as a means of "rational" management of the economy (if not a complete de-mystification of the commodity form) and making "the social" an explicit principle of new society. It is at this point that the boundary between "capitalism" and "socialism" can be seen as enabling the state expansion.

For example, Soviet ethnographers argued that indigenous kin-based communities were constituted within the larger mercantile and administrative frameworks of the Imperial old regime. Therefore, the Soviet construction was not merely to overcome the fetishized commodity form in the strict capitalist sense of the word, but also kinship and gender inequalities which were mutually constituted with capitalist class relationships (Dobrova-Iadrintseva 1925, Maslov 1934, Nikul'shin 1939). Hunting and herding "brigade" of the Soviet period, therefore, is not merely a work unit, or a Soviet term for nomadic forest camp. It is a social form that replaces older kin-based units, but it does so by substituting an overt kinship form with an explicitly social relationship which leaves the kinship form behind: brigade is a production unit of "socialized" indigenous labor.

Contrary to the naturalization processes in Western and colonial contexts, which operated by depolitization of the hierarchies, the Soviet state and the Soviet episteme expanded by politicization of the boundary between capitalism and socialism. Sheila Fitzpatrick (1999) rightly points out that population by and large saw Marxist sociological method discredited by the violence of the Soviet construction. It was quickly accepted not as a matter of fact but as pure politics, and very important politics. If political authority was gained by de-fetishization, it was much better to de-fetishize, rather than to be de-fetishized.

Stalin's insight that class struggle expands together with the progress of socialist construction put this boundary inside every individual and social setting. But this did not mean that the totalitarian state control successfully penetrated all society from top down. On the contrary: "To the extent that Stalin's state appeared all-powerful," argues Katherine Verdery, "the reason was a pervasive 'privatization' of the instruments of coercion, which — far from being concentrated somewhere at the top — were made available to everyone, through the mechanism of the *denunciation*..." (1991:83). Recent, mostly historical scholarship on Stalinist denunciations supports this argument. This work demonstrates a relative weakness of the state and, at the same time, a relative strength of the culture of statehood, which could be used not simply to govern subordinate groups but also to challenge "the authorities" (Kozlov 2000, Kharakhordin 1999, Fitzpatrick 1999, Kotkin 1995).

Mechanisms of denunciation point not only to a more fact of proliferation of the Soviet governmentality, however, but also to political technologies that construct socialist identity through ascribing "the other." The art of Stalinist identity politics was in "unmasking" this other side, and this art expanded at a very micro-level of Soviet social fabric. In doing so, it presented a microcosm

of the Marxist macrocosm — of its narrative of world history of fetishization and de-fetishization. I argue that it is at the point of visibility of this otherness that "nature" makes its appearance both as an object of the Soviet reforms as well as a result of the Soviet identity ascription. It is this other side of the boundary between "capitalism" and "socialism" that suddenly reveals features of "animal kingdom" in opposition to which the Soviet order acquires legitimacy and meaning.

A well-known example of this is Sergei Eisenstein's portrayal, in his film *Strike*, of sleuths who pretend to be proletarians but in fact report on them for factory management. For a brief moment in this film, they are transformed into what their nicknames say they are ("Fox," "Owl") at the very same time as they dress up as workers to take up their assignment. At that moment they seen by no other characters in the movie — only by the early Soviet *audience* (the movie was made in 1925). I argue that a similar installment of "nature" occurred in indigenous Siberia, and naturalized identities proliferated along-side with Soviet social construction. Let me discuss examples of at least two ways in which "nature" enables the vision of the other side of this boundary, and in which one can also see processual dynamics of identity formation "after capitalism."

One is the Stalinist screening of social origin which becomes increasingly loaded with biological metaphors as "the long 1917" of Soviet construction gets further away from the actual year of October Revolution of 1917, and political economy of class relations are increasingly substituted with a question "What did your parents do before 1917?" For example, a file on one Evenki states that "he sucked the capitalist ideology with the breast milk of his mother" who happened to be from a rich family. It is this symbolic boundary with capitalism that here makes use of a genealogical method, and indeed the files on the rich Evenki read like a kinship study (Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 176-81).

The other example is the construction of space. If we look at Soviet documents in the North, we can see that for a good half of this century every new wave of reforms, and almost every new trip of reformers to the north, are staged as "the first" Sovietisation. Indigenous north goes through standard phases of Soviet history such as establishment of Soviets in the 1920s, collectivization in the 1930s, purges, *etc*. But this way of writing about the North undoes the presence of the Soviet state by identifying forest and tundra on the other side of the boundary with the old regime. It was indeed a very long 1917 if a wife of a Russian official, who came to the north with her husband after the Second World War, told me: "Evenki didn't know any Soviet power until the 1950s."

What I outlined so far is a dialectics of "origin" which became one of the central symbols of Soviet culture — notwithstanding the fact that (and indeed perhaps because) the Soviet system identified itself as an entirely new society. Constructed as a radical break with the past, Soviet society built, however, a systematic technology of accounting and surveillance of "past" social identities. These technologies play a critical role in shaping exactly what this "past" refers to throughout the Soviet period. But I also argue that these technologies are themselves a product of the explication of the "social" as a *process* rather than an achieved state or a stable condition.

 Proliferation of techniques of unmasking, denunciation, and reporting "the other" meant that the Soviet construction was not completed. The Soviet society resembled, in this regard, an ever-lasting construction site in which the frameworks of construction were more important than what was constructed. In fact, we see that throughout the 20th century the "Soviet order" is reality in absentia. Systematicity of political economy of socialism is that of a future-oriented plan. Systematicity of political economy of capitalism is the one of reconstruction. Actually-existing socialism, as a transformation of capitalist political economy into socialist one, is an under-constructed building of sorts which actual mess reproduces the boundary between things "as they should be" and things as they "have been."

It was easy to freeze this boundary, as the Soviet institutions were anything but Le Corbusier's "rational and poetic monuments." Furthermore, it is precisely the failure of actually-

existing socialism to fit its own design on paper that was one of the powerful discursive means to inscribe this boundary. Above, I gave some examples that show the persistence of naturalized identities was attributed to survivals of Russia's capitalist past. After the 1950s, islands of the old regime were transformed in Soviet discourse into "nature" empty of the presence of Soviet "civilization" altogether; the mess of the Soviet social construction has transformed from exemplifying persistent "enemies of the people" to the evidence of incorrigible and, hence, universal "human nature"; and indigenous identities underwent a similar transformation from victims of capitalist exploitation to "endangered species."

This vision takes root as the Soviet construction expands and as it leaves more and more marks of its presence on north-Siberian landscape. My main point is that what makes this space into "state of nature" is not absence of the Soviet state but its politics which inscribe the boundary with "nature" through failures to normalize control over its Northern subjects. *Vis-a-vis* these failures, Soviet social order retained its beauty and coherence on paper by being constantly deferred. Yet — precisely because it was deferred — the problems that development created were constantly taken out of the framework of construction, and *identified* as social reality that existed before the construction has started or before it was completed. To use the terms of Derrida, the *deference* of social order is constitutive of discrete *differences* within the framework of construction, and it is this process of deferral that makes its residue into distinct life forms.

Notes

[1] See also *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Krasnoiarskogo Kraia* (The State Archive of the Krasnoiarsk Province), f. 1845, op. 1, d. 156, 43. This article uses the Russian abbreviations for archival references, such as "f." for *fond* ("collection"), "op." for *opis'* ("inventory"), "d." for *delo* ("file") and "l." or "ll" for *list* or *listy* ("page" or "pages").

[2] *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsiii*, (The State Archive of Russian Federation), f. 3977, d. 23, l. 40.

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