

The Turukhansk Polar Census Expedition of 1926–1927 at the Crossroads of Two Scientific Traditions

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Abstract: This article gives an overview of the primary records of the 1926–1927 Turukhansk Polar Census Expedition. The author argues that rather than being an exercise in statistical surveillance, the expedition can be better characterized as a classical expedition of discovery. The article describes the structure of the expedition and the documents that were collected, places the expedition in a history of the surveillance of aboriginal peoples, and presents a research program for re-analyzing the data in light of the contemporary interests of Siberian indigenous peoples.

Keywords: indigenous; census; Evenki; Ket; ethnography; exploration

The Polar Census (*pripoliarnaia perepis'*) of 1926–1927 was a unique scholarly endeavor. When judged against the history of Soviet science and that of the worldwide study of the circumpolar Arctic, no other scientific project then or since has surveyed so many local Arctic communities over such an immense territory with such great detail. Most scholars are not aware that the primary data cards and reports of this census still exist scattered across many regional archives. These primary records paint a rich and intimate portrait of Siberian indigenous minorities and Russians, at a time in their history before the great changes brought on by collectivization and forced resettlement. In this article I would like to introduce to English-language readers the design and scientific context of the Polar Census as a whole, and in particular that of the Turukhansk Polar Census expedition. Here, I will argue that although we can praise this census program today for the quality of its records and its near total representation of the rural population of the Siberia and the Russian North, the significance of the Polar Census lies



actually in its old, somewhat anachronistic approach to surveying people within their home environments. This highly localized, perhaps even unexpected result is more clearly visible within the records of the Turukhansk expedition than with any of the other five census expeditions that took place across the Soviet Union that year.¹ What I will describe as the numerical, non-statistical approach of the Turukhansk enumerators is best understood in the context of a long scientific debate on whether it is possible to represent populations as a single unit (and thus determine their fundamental dynamics) or whether local communities have their own unique dynamics, which to some extent can never be understood or captured by central state powers. This debate on the uniqueness of human experience has come to be important today as many scholars are questioning the value of large-scale, centralized surveys in the Arctic, as in other parts of the world. Although it is clear that the organizers of the Polar Census intended it to be the very first comprehensive, centralized picture of a polar population—and indeed it was represented as such in the few publications that were issued—the primary records tell a different story, one of a very complex and subtle local agenda originating outside the local community of geographers, doctors, and local historians (*kraevedy*) in Krasnoiarsk in the early days of the Soviet period. I will thus conclude that it is possible to read the records of the Polar Census today in two ways: as a very ambitious, naïve, but failed attempt to construct a picture of a polar population or as an equally ambitious but successful attempt to canvass local communities and to portray them more or less in their own terms.

Population Censuses in an International and Historical Context

Over the past ten years, the history of population censuses increasingly has attracted the attention of scholars (Kertzer and Arel 2002; Szreter et al. 2004). For philosophers, historians, and sociologists, the technology of launching a census has become a marker of a qualitative change in the way that governments relate to the people they govern. Recently, some scholars have gone as far to suggest that the way that states count ‘populations’ in the everyday regulation of activity replaces formal political processes entirely (Rose and Miller 1992).

To most people, any population census is simply a technical tool used to build an inventory of human and material resources. Scholars

often use the data in any one census as a background while they put their energy into explaining political, historical, or cultural processes at some other level. I think it would be fair to say that this technical, silent practice of citation is the way that Siberian ethnographers have cited the numeric results of the Polar Census.

Perhaps the most influential work altering our interpretation of censuses was Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1991). Anderson made a very articulate argument that the way people were labeled—imagined—had a great impact on how they came to see themselves. Anderson's insight led very easily into a great debate about the mechanisms whereby states organize people's lives. This debate is associated with the name of the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1979, 1980) and his concept of 'governmentality'. Foucault's radical claim was that political power in the modern era was no longer exercised either through authority or through violence but through the way that everyday life was organized. For the purposes of our argument, it is significant that Foucault saw health workers and the medical establishment as playing an important role in establishing a new worldview wherein people could be seen as 'normal' or as 'deviant' (Curtis 2002; Foucault 1973; Hacking 1990). Through a careful study of historical sources, these scholars demonstrated that the very first attempts to describe mass populations in the nineteenth century were linked to attempts to improve, regulate, and build a new type of person.

For the study of population censuses, the most important implication of this debate is that historians can distinguish two distinct ways of enumerating people. The first is a very old technique dating back to the eighteenth century. Here, states count various types of people and things to get an idea of their 'populousness' (Curtis 2002). This idea of counting people goes to the Latin root of the word 'statistics' which implies that the strength of the state could be evaluated through the study of its resources and people (Hacking 1990). This idea of measuring the 'strength of the state' is undoubtedly what the fieldworkers of the Polar Census meant when they referred to themselves as statistician-enumerators [*statistiki-registratory*]. Indeed, the idea of measuring the vitality and populousness of a people takes on a special resonance when we think of Siberian rural minorities, who are now known by the category of the 'less numerous aboriginal peoples' (*malochislennye korennyye narody*).

The second, similar technique is more recent. It refers to the study of 'populations' as if the people living within a region were more or less interchangeable—as if they were all of one type. Historians date the study of populations to a set of censuses established in Germany

and in Scotland at the start of the nineteenth century and then follow the growth of this idea into the twentieth century.

The study of populations is linked to various new forms of reasoning that we today associate with population censuses. The first is a form of inductive reasoning whereby through counting mass numbers of people, we are able to calculate average figures and mathematical relationships which illustrate the health of the people (Porter 1986). The second is a new attitude to power whereby individual people are not seen as free agents but as only acting according to wider 'statistical laws' that are universally common to a population (Hacking 1990). To use a powerful metaphor from Siberia, one can either look at an aboriginal person as a person from a certain region who manages complex ecological relationships with animals and the land, or one can look at that person as a representative of a 'disappearing nation' (*vymiraiushchaia natsiia*). The first represents more of a geographic or ethnographic intuition. The second represents a governmental, statistical way of viewing the world. Although in any census both types of reasoning can be present, many scholars argue that the more statistical the nature of a census, the stronger its impact on the rights and powers of local people.

Up until now, most philosophers and historians have focused their energy on the study of European censuses. For example, Ian Hacking (1975, 1990) studied the history of the Prussian census. Joshua Cole (2000) studied the French censuses. Recently, there has been an increased interest in Soviet and Imperial Russian censuses (Darrow 2002; Hirsch 2000; Kertzer and Arel 2002). However, as Benedict Anderson (1991) noted, the pioneering surveys of population were not in the European heartlands but instead in colonial regions where European powers tried to measure and control aboriginal peoples. The study of the measurement of people in frontier areas offers a very clear and fresh outlook on the history of social power. To a great degree, the study of this census of the Siberian frontier can contribute to this literature.

The most well-known work on colonial statistical practice comes from the study of the Indian census (Alborn 1999; Cohn 1987; Forster 1973; Peabody 2001). There has recently been a powerful study of how the Australian colonial census 'racialized' the Australian frontier (Watts 2002). The Canadian censuses have also recently been associated with the construction of the complicated relationships that one finds with First Nations people in Canada (Curtis 2002; Neu and Therrien 2003). In all of these cases, the authors focus on how the simple act of counting replaced existing networks of social relationships with a new way of classifying people, often to the disadvantage of aboriginal people.

The example of the Polar Census, I believe, is quite complex and can be used to mediate these prominent international debates. On the one hand, Russian expansion through Siberia can be represented as a colonial history like any other. The categories of the Polar Census do show a strong state interest to count people in order to better regulate their behavior. However, both the Russian Imperial state and the Soviet state built complicated, autonomous social units (*sosloviia*) which, although tied to the central state, always retained an element of freedom. This is very clear in the study of the history of the aboriginal people of Siberia, who well into the Soviet period understood themselves to be part of complex unities such as 'administrative clans'. This contrast is perhaps clearest when we look at the study of the history of Russian America where Soviet historians have long emphasized, correctly, that Russian colonialism encouraged the growth of a creole society and not a racialized frontier as in the United States or in Australia (Fedorova 1979; Okladnikova and Polevoi 1994; Vinkovetsky 2001).

I would encourage readers to think of the Polar Census as an activity that lies at the crossroads of two traditions. As I will demonstrate below, there was no shortage of effort on the part of the Central Statistical Administration to build a governmental, statistical type of monitoring onto the results of the Polar Census. However, there are also many examples of an older type of statistical reasoning, where households were described individually without much concern for how they fit into the larger population.

The Polar Census and the All-Union Census of 1926

Aside from appearing in the footnotes of the works of many Siberian ethnographers, the Polar Census of 1926–1927 is poorly known by demographers and historians. By far the more famous census of this era was the All-Union Census of 1926—the first 'All-Union Soviet census' (Blum and Gousseff 1997; Cadiot 1997, 2000; Hirsch 1997). This first general Soviet census was designed around a very modernist and positivist mood of building a new society with clean new categories that no longer looked backwards to the Tsarist past. Of particular importance was the measurement of a new category of nationality, which no longer made reference to the *iasak*-derived administrative names of the Tsarist state (Hirsch 1997).

What is not often acknowledged is the fact that this first All-Union census was not the only census. There were a number of other partial

censuses, perhaps most importantly the 1920 census, which surveyed individuals and households in various parts of the Soviet Union where Bol'shevik power had been secured (Cadiot 1997). It is also seldom recognized that this Soviet general census came also upon the heels of a series of experiments with the counting of professional categories, economic output, and educational achievement—indeed an entire battery of measurement. At the same time as the general population census of 1926, there was also a 'national economic' census which took place only in the southern and more-or-less easily accessible areas of the Soviet Union.

For reasons which we still understand poorly, the Council of the People's Commissars agreed with the recommendations of many prominent individuals in Moscow that in the polar regions of Siberia, a special household survey should take place, and that the Census of Rural Economy, Industry, and Trade, scheduled for the same year, would be delayed in these regions (TsSU [Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie] 1929: v). More likely than not, prominent actors in this debate were northern ethnographers such as Bogoraz-Tan, as well as officials in the Committee of the North.² The goal of the designers of this special census was to obtain fresh and accurate information to replace the unreliable partial surveys of the Tsarist period:

[If one] were to take the results of all pre-revolutionary research initiatives, upon which many resources were invested, right up until the Sovietization of the Northern Frontier, [one would find that] neither the central government authorities, nor the local ones had any clear understanding of the Northern population. [The same could be said of their understanding of] the economic conditions and social and everyday developmental conditions of the Northern peoples. A special statistical study was needed in order to solve the problem [of how best] to study of the socio-economic status of the population. This was needed in order to develop plans for the development of the economy of Northern regions and in order to regulate the inter-relationship of the native tribes and clans when it came to questions of using pastures, areas rich with lichen [for reindeer], and fishing and hunting areas. (TsSU 1929: v)

The authorities mandated the Central Statistical Administration to design a special Polar Census for the remote areas of Siberia, the definition of which is spelled out in quite specific detail in its published report (TsSU 1929: v).

Although the Polar Census was a complex program, it had two important differences from the general census of that year and to any cen-

was taken after. The first was that the enumerators set as their goal to survey every rural household in the Arctic regions—a stunning logistical feat, which implied that often enumerators spent more than a year searching for and visiting remote communities. The second was that each and every household was surveyed as an organic unit. Not only were basic demographic data collected (as in the general census), but the enumerators strove to describe diet, economy, migration routes, beliefs, and folklore of each community. In addition to the texts and tables, the Turukhansk Polar Census generated a rich store of artifacts and photographs.

It is also important to remember that this was not exclusively a Siberian census. In the southern regions of the Russian North, Siberia, and of the Far East, the general population census and the economic census still took place. The Polar Census was applied to very remote areas in the Russian North, Siberia, and the Far East and also in some special areas with pockets of aboriginal people such as the Tungus populations of what is today Irkutsk *oblast'* (Kopylov 1928; Samokhin 1929).

Although the general economic census of 1926 was not conducted in the Polar regions, a great many questions that were relevant to the study of production and trade were included in the survey instruments of the Polar Census. Indeed this latter aspect made the Polar Census very interesting since the census forms asked very specific questions about the structure of reindeer herding and fur trapping—activities that were unlikely to be surveyed as accurately using the forms designed in the southern agricultural regions of the Soviet Union. The only documents that copy this method today are the surveys of fishing, hunting, and trapping done by newly autonomous First Nation societies who, in Canada at least, have legal obligation to represent the strength of their traditional subsistence activities.

Although both the Polar Census and the general census of 1926 were hallmark projects of a new Soviet state, one should not view them as making a radical break with international practice. As Cadiot (1997) outlines, the measure of mother tongue, spoken language, and nationality fit in with international debates about how best to measure identity in the late nineteenth century. Further, the strategy of surveying a household, rather than a set of individuals, was also a well-documented practice in Central and Western Europe (Darrow 2002; Le Play 1877; Le Play and Silver 1982). Officials from both the Tsarist and the Soviet statistical administrations were active participants in international statis-

tical congresses (TsSU 1926). The central publications of both the general census and the Polar Census were published with French titles and summaries as was the international practice then.

The Instruments of Measurement

A remarkable feature of the Polar Census program was the degree to which the Central Statistical Administration took wide advice on exactly which questions to include in the actual census forms. In the official central publications of the Polar Census, phrases concerning 'local statistical units' appear very often. The official record (TsSU 1929: v–vi) writes of a commission made up of representatives from the Arkhangel'sk, Komi, Ural, Siberian, Yakut, and Far-Eastern statistical administrations who debated various projects for the Polar Census. Our preliminary archival work suggests that the network of consultation was much broader, involving many other professional groups such as geographers, ethnographers, field medical personnel, and representatives of policy-coordinating bodies such as the Committee of the North.

Officially, there were two main instruments of the Polar Census: the so-called *pokhoziaistvoennaia kartočka* (household card) and the *poselennyi blank* (community form). The first was actually a large sheet of paper (roughly A2 in size, folded in half) which contained over 450 columns of questions. Some of the questions demanded answers ordered by year, or by differing measures, which created grids of nested questions within columns. Our rough count is that a single 'card' could carry over 1,600 cells of data, a fact that gave us much grief in designing a computer database. The household card recorded demographic, economic, and trade data for each household, and in part on every individual in the household.

The second, the community 'form', was actually a 36-page booklet (printed on 18 A3-size pages; and again folded into a book form) that solicited a wide range of geographic and ethnographic descriptions in short paragraphs. It surveyed 21 subject areas ranging from climate to lifestyle and customs at the level of the community (*poselenie*). Each subject area was in turn made up of specific questions that directed the attention of the enumerator to describe social elements in the world around him. The community form was cross-referenced to sets of cards with the intention of creating a seamless picture of demography, economy, and society from the level of the community down to the level of

the individual. To my knowledge, there is no other national survey anywhere that has set such an ambitious aim of marking three discrete levels of data for an entire region.

The exact mechanism by which these two forms were devised is still unclear, but there are some interesting clues in both central and regional archives. In the central archive, there is one folder in the records of the Committee of the North dating to 1925 that carries samples of cards and blanks that predate the final approved versions (GARF R3977-1-87). This folder is interspersed with memoranda giving details of debates on certain forms. The document that bears the closest resemblance to the household card is a handwritten spreadsheet submitted to the Committee by the Fifth Medical Research Division of the Red Cross of the RSFSR (GARF R3977-1-87: 18–19). Although it only has 200 columns for data, it has a similar architecture of discrete tables asking for specific numbers and values of equipment, reindeer, fish species, and fur-bearing species. The document bears no clear date, but seems to have been designed for a Red Cross expedition to Turukhanskii Krai in the winter of 1924–25—an expedition that we know did occur (GANO R45-5-7; GARF R3977-1-75: 17–25; Kytmanov 1927, 1930). It is unclear if this exact form was ever used, since we have not found any printed or completed cards of this type. However, there was a model of a so-called lodge (*chum*) card in Turukhansk Territory that made it as far as the typesetters (GARF R3977-1-75: 5–11; KKKM bez fonda ‘Materialy k perepisi’), even if it may never have been used in field conditions (Figure 1). From an international and comparative view, the tight interest of the Russian Committee of the Red Cross in the modernization of census survey techniques overlaps with what historians have widely noted as the prominent role of health professionals in statistical monitoring and analysis (Curtis 2002; Hacking 1990).

The origin of the community form is not as clear. However in the same *fond* there is a remarkable 30-page list of ethnographic and geographic questions; two-thirds of which eventually found their way into the final document (GARF R3977-1-214: 61–91; KKKM bez fonda ‘Perepis’). These questions were also signed by the Committee of the Red Cross. The practice of drafting lists of questions is a very old one in Russian social science. It dates back to the instructions and questions given to the first German explorers of Siberia (Khintsshe 2001). Closer to the date, the historian Francine Hirsch (1998: 73–113) has noted an intense overlap between the interest of geographers, *kraevedy*, and ethnographers and the design of the 1926 general census through the use of lists of ethnographic questions.

Figure 1. The First Page of a Draft ‘Lodge’ (*chumovaia*) card.

[illegible]

[KKKM bez fonda 'Materialy k perepisi']

With our present state of knowledge, it is not possible to say that either *kraevedy* or the Red Cross were the authors of the main forms of the census, but one fact seems clear to be true. Although Moscow-based intellectuals may have played a coordinating role, local scholars

had a great input into the design and implementation of the program. Our overview of the archival documents suggest that the group of intellectuals gathered in Krasnoiarsk in 1925 had an extraordinarily powerful effect on the design of the entire Polar Census project.

At the time that the census was conducted, a great effort was made to compile a complete documentary record. The archival records of the Turukhansk census state that each card was filled out in triplicate, with one set sent to the Central Statistical Administration, one set sent to a branch of the Academy of Sciences (most likely the Central Museum of Folk Culture [*narodovedeniia*], which later became the Russian Ethnographic Museum), and one set stored locally.

The official part of the Polar Census campaign was only part of the work of the Turukhansk Polar Census expedition. In keeping with the respect given to local needs, each Polar Census expedition had the right to collect extra material that was of interest to that region. In addition to the two centrally-approved forms, the Turukhansk Polar Census expedition introduced four other types of documentation:

- a Hygiene Card (*sanitarnaia kartochka*) of a single folio that collected information on the diet, hygiene, and health problems of 20 percent of the households.
- a Family Card (*kartochka brachnykh par*), also of a single folio, which solicited genealogical information from couples as well as basic demographic information on the total numbers of children born (some of whom may have died). This was also administered to 20 percent of the households.
- a Trade Card (*torgovaia kartochka*) which, according to archival references, collected more specific data on the trade goods purchased by aboriginal households. Unfortunately we have not found any examples of this card for the Turukhansk region. However, in Ekaterinburg, there survive examples of a card with the same name that holds well over 800 cells of data on the quantities and prices of an entire range of household goods ranging from flour to metallic goods.
- a Community Form for Additional Observations (*dopolnitel'nye poselennye blanki*) of varied length, which solicited detailed ethnographic information in longhand form on such subjects as religious ritual, folklore, architecture, and dress.

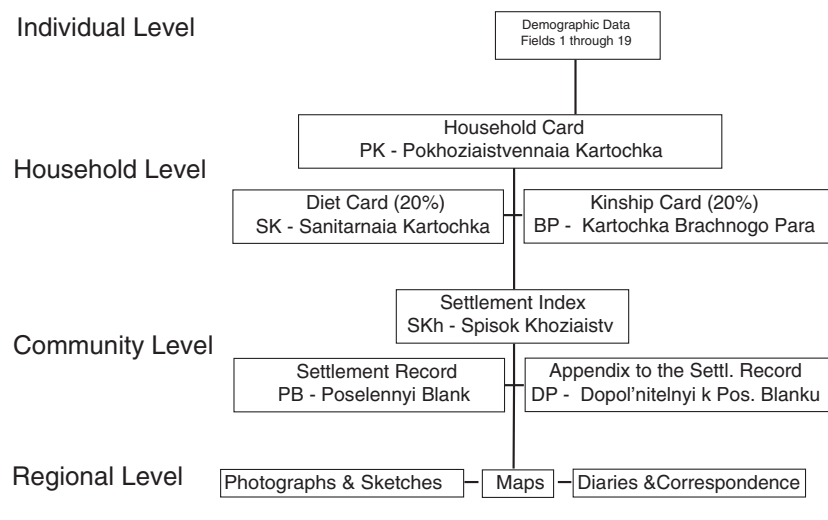
There are also fragmentary archival records referring to a special card documenting diet, and another card recording prices. It is unclear who

exactly requested these additional cards, but it is clear from archived correspondence that the administrators of the Siberian Polar Census placed great importance on filling in these additional forms. Since the leader of the Siberian Polar Census expedition, Adam Kurilovich, later became an important figure in the Soviet trading organizations of central Siberia (GAKK R827-1-18: 2–5), it is not unreasonable to assume that he was one of the important advocates of collecting information on trade. Figure 2 presents a graphic illustration of the interrelation of each document class in the Turukhansk Polar Census expedition.

The statistical forms did not exhaust the documentary record of northern peoples. Each enumerator kept a more traditional ethnographic record of their travels with glass-plate photographs (or, in the case of Andrei Lekarenko, with sketches), travel diaries, and an extensive correspondence with expedition leader Adam Kurilovich. Inasmuch as the statistical forms look towards a governmental view of population, these more traditional ethnographic sources look to an older ethno-geographic representation of the world.

Admittedly the structure of the Polar Census, especially in Turukhansk Territory, was very ornate. But how accurate were the data? The section below lists some of the accusations made against the census workers for mistakes made in recording identity and economic matters. It is true that in published and unpublished records the census

Figure 2. The Interrelationship of Each Polar Census Document and Artefact



workers themselves describe the reluctance of some native people to speak about their herds or about their households. According to the published accounts, the enumerators usually surmounted these fears by making appeals to patriotism (Kurilovich 1999; Nagaev 1927; TsSU 1929). In their letters, the enumerators also mention more specific problems stemming from the complexity of the forms (some of which are reproduced, in Russian, in Anderson 2005). It is quite easy to use data such as these to cast doubt on the validity of the figures and the observations.

The truth of the matter probably lies in between. The material gathered by B. O. Dolgikh (who later became a famous ethnographer), and N. N. Naumov (who became a well-known biologist) not only reads very complete and internally consistent, but the facts and observations recorded also correspond with the fieldnotes of those of us who have later worked in these regions and who have interviewed elders about this period. The work of other enumerators is less detailed and of a more fragmentary nature. From an ethno-historical view, it is very difficult to pass judgement on the entire mass of Polar Census records, but it is certainly true that significant parts of the collection provide very rich and accurate data for large portions of the territory.

The Analysis of the Data in the Late 1920s and Early 1930s

Despite the great complexity of the data, and perhaps because of it, the data gathered by the census enumerators was scarcely analyzed by the statistical agency that ordered it. This fact was mentioned several times by the organizers themselves (GAKK P1845-1-132; Terletskii 1930, 1932). Two interconnected factors explaining this failure are mentioned in the published and archival records. The great wealth of detail would require a huge number of man-hours to analyze it. The state did not make resources available for the analysis of the data at the level of detail that the statisticians had originally intended. There seems to have been also a third factor, which is never mentioned openly. Reading between the lines of published and archival accounts, it seems that the great wealth of detail in the census records provided a picture of social relationships that was far too complex for a state that instead wanted to simplify its understanding of social structure to that of a relation between the wealthy and the exploited. It could be for this reason that the records of this census were for the most part filed away, and with the significant exception of some ethnographic work, forgotten.

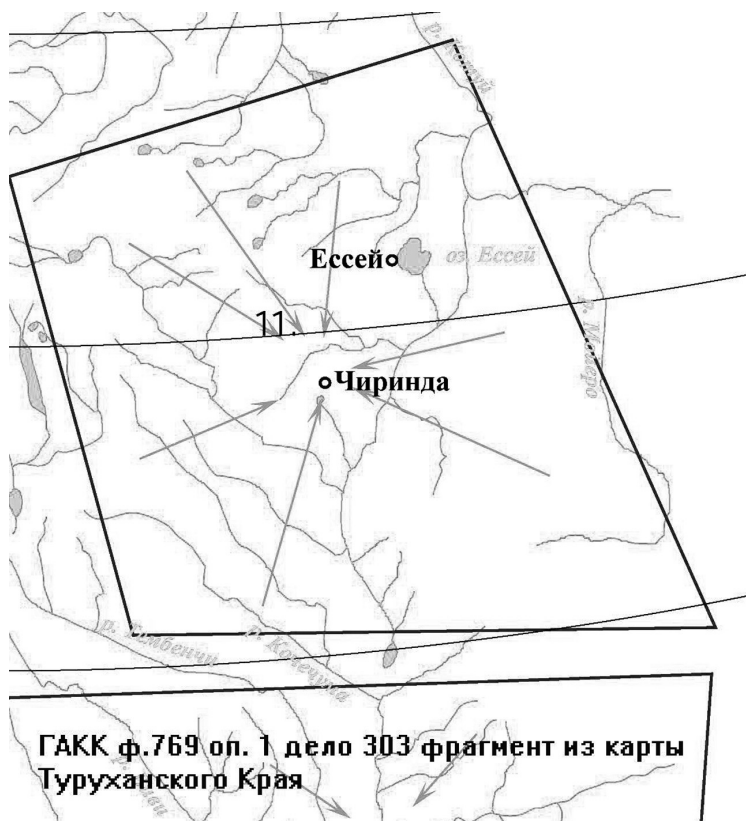
The published and archival literature gives a sketchy outline of how the statisticians had wanted to analyze the results. The introduction to the main central publication, *The Territorial and Structural [gruppovye] Results of the Polar Census*, gives a very clear overview of their analytical strategies (TsSU 1929: viii–ix). The census results were to be used, as the title implies, to identify what would later be called ‘territorial economic units’ in order to understand how economic activity was structured (and hence, how it could be best administered). Second, there was a great emphasis on describing social and economic stratification within Northern households. To a great extent, these two goals are evident in the tables attached to the central publication.

The territorial method was best evident in the organization of the census material itself. The territorial groupings are so similar to those of today that at first glance it comes as a shock to realize that in many cases territorial groupings of cards were imagined for the very first time during this census. The principle that the statisticians used was to identify a more or less sedentary Russian or aboriginal community, and then to affiliate surrounding nomadic households to this single, stable point (Figure 3). This became later known in the ethnographic literature as the principle of territorial ‘gravitation’ (*tiagotenie*) (Dolgikh and Levin 1951) and is more or less today taken for granted.

It is quite striking to witness this process of gravitating households in the original Turukhansk census records. For the most part, for nomadic households living along the Yenisei river, the process was more or less un-controversial since affiliating households to one sedentary community or another might in some cases involve the risk of making an error of 20–25 kilometers. However, for the interior of what is today Ilimpeia District of Evenkiia, Evenki and Yakut households moved huge distances over the course of a year. The ‘settlement’ of Lake Essei, as portrayed in figure 3, is displayed as a community of approximately 30,600 square kilometres. It is quite likely that households living in this area at this time did not see themselves as being affiliated to only one place. However by the end of the 1930s, the administrative net that was built more or less on these census results made affiliations of this type a material fact. Although territorial affiliation at first glance does not seem to be a particularly interesting category, it probably is the most important impact of this census.

The second major category of analysis was social structure, which was cautiously labelled as ‘grouping’ (*gruppovye itogi*). This was a very controversial part of the Polar Census enterprise, and it is safe to say that it was ultimately unsuccessful. I wish to argue that the reason that

Figure 3. The Principal of ‘Territorial Gravitation’ as Illustrated in the Case of the Region Surrounding Lake Yessei



*This figure features a redrafted excerpt from a faded map used for planning the Turukhansk Polar Census in GAKK

it was unsuccessful was that the chief statisticians were unable to make a transition from the study of ‘populousness’ to the governmental study of a ‘population’. I suspect that many were cautiously avoiding making conclusions about class status for fear of what the effects of these conclusions might be on aboriginal people.

In the official documents (GAKK R769-1-304: 61; TsSU 1929: viii), the data from the census was used to group households into

- 1) regions (*regiony*)
- 2) nationalities (*natsional'nosti*)

- 3) settled or nomadic enterprises (*osedlye ili kochevye khoziaistva*)
- 4) main occupation (*glavnoe zaniatie*)
- 5) the degree to which labor was hired (*rasprostranennost' naemnogo truda*)
- 6) the gross product of the household (*razmer valovogo dokhoda*)

For the most part, data for categories 1-5 were taken from the household card and category 6 had to be calculated with data both from the household card and the list of prices in the community booklet.

Of the categories, the most controversial was the last. This category gave some impression of the stratification of households. After a long debate, households were stratified according to their gross income into six income groups measured in annual ruble incomes (TsSU 1929: ix):

- 1) up to 100 rubles
- 2) 101–250
- 3) 251–500
- 4) 501–1000
- 5) 1001–2500
- 6) above 2500 rubles

The heated debates around this decision are documented in the archived correspondence between the central administration and many of the regions (GAKK R769-1-304).

The main complaint of the Turukhansk and the Far Eastern Census expeditions was that a pure monetary value of the household's income was not a very accurate reflection of a household's economic power (*moshchnost'*). They argued that great capital resources could be invested, for example, in a large reindeer herd, the value of which could not be estimated since there was no one who could buy such a large herd. Yet such large herders could influence the lives of many people. Similarly, they argued, very small poor producers might have a high monetary income since they used their homemade skis, or one or two reindeer, to trap fur-bearing animals, which were easily turned into cash (GAKK R769-1-304: 7).

Zhukov and Nagaev of the Turukhansk Polar Census expedition came up with a compromise position for their own territory (GAKK R769-1-304: 7–10v). They argued that the best structural category for nomadic households was one that added together the number of reindeer, the number of nets, the yearly wage earnings of a household, and the monetary value of the household's yearly output. It is difficult to say

where they got monetary values, but judging from the data written on the Turukhansk region household cards, it seems that they took local prices for reindeer, fish, and fur and multiplied this to the numbers of reindeer held or the weight of fish caught. It is possible that other census expeditions came up with similar regional rules of thumb to represent the yearly economic 'power' of households.

It is important to note that in representing the 'main occupation' of a household, the local statisticians were instructed to choose one occupation on the basis of either monetary output or the quantity of output from whichever category—monetary or volume of production—they had the most complete data. The leaders of the statistical administration admitted that this technique was somewhat arbitrary (GAKK R769-1-304: 61).

Researchers today are advised to treat the central data derived from these group categories with great caution. However, if one studies local practices, and the monetary values by which households are coded, the data will show some measure of their participation in a regional hunting and herding economy.

Articles that were published in the years following the Polar Census suggest that the analysis of social structure was widely perceived as weak. In a series of articles published in *Sovetskaia etnografiia*, the results of the census fell under severe criticism. Tan-Bogoraz (1932), who himself was active in the 1897 census, blamed the Central Statistical Administration for making use of local enthusiasts who were not properly trained, a factor that he linked to several serious errors in the Chukotka census (1932: 29–30). He also found specific errors in the representation of nationalities (1932: 31–35). One of the more damning criticisms, though, was aimed at the detail on the household card which, in his opinion, left open too many options to represent illegally traded materials as a type of household production (1932: 36). He also noted that due to the ambiguity noted above, it is impossible to distinguish between the value of products actually sold and those that have some form of barter value (1932: 39–40). Although he forgives the census workers for a job that did not threaten collectivization (1932: 29) he concludes:

In this case, the dominance of a statistical, numerical approach (*schetnyi tsifrovoi podkhod*) in the working of the census gave it a mechanical quality and contributed to a completely useless and endless expansion of the number of cells and tables ... In addition, we have the right to expect that [published] results give us real results as displayed by the numbers (with conclusions to match) and not just tables of raw

materials. The publications of the Household Census of the Polar North cannot be described as their conclusions, but only as their data. It is a task for the future to draw the full economic, class and ethnic significance [from these materials]. (1932: 62)

Similar critiques appeared before and after this debate (Cherniakov 1933; Kononov 1934; Maslov 1934; Sergeev 1933; Skachko 1930). In almost every article, the fact that there was no clear analysis of exploitation or of class status was the main criticism.

One of the leaders of the Polar Census, Petr Terletskii (1930) defended the results of the census by claiming that its very wealth and detail cannot be easily translated into a class analysis.

With respect to the data of the [Polar] Census it is important to note that they are valid only for individual households. The initiative of the TsSU to use the data of the census in order to understand the presence of collective or antagonistic roots within Northern households has not been accomplished. [Regardless whether] we consider questions regarding collective travel, the catching of fish in collective units [*arteli*], the quality of collective units and other matters such as the presence of conflicts over land due resulting from migrations, fishing, hunting (or other types of territoriality). This remains the case if we look at how production was distributed, or how a household was organized. The data that we collected was simply not analysed. (Terletskii 1930: 43)

In this article, the question remains open whether or not the data could have been analyzed in a more structural manner, if financial support would have been offered. It is perhaps significant of the mood of the time that at the end of Terletskii's article, the editors of the journal placed a 'health warning' at the end warning readers of insufficient attention to class division in the article (Terletskii 1930: 85).

Whatever the reasons for the lack of a full analysis of the data, the needed result of a clear and unambiguous class analysis was provided by the economic census of 1933–34 (Sergeev 1933). The records from the Polar Census were more or less forgotten as the quantity of published articles mentioning the census directly curtailed dramatically after 1934. It is possible that the scholarly memory of the census was further erased by a misleading notation in the catalogue folder in the central archives in Moscow which claims, mistakenly, that the primary data cards had been destroyed (RGAE 1562-1).

Work with the data on the Polar Census continued purely on an individual basis. B. O. Dolgikh, who began his distinguished ethno-

graphic career with the Polar Census, published many works making direct reference to the primary material (Savoskul 2005). Judging from the way that the primary records settled into state archives across the country, it seems that the original forms were consulted widely by territorial formation workers in the 1930s as they were designing collective institutions. Today, most of the census documents can be found in a variety of provincial archives usually held in the *fondy* of the local statistical administration, the Committee of the North, or sometimes that of the local branch of the Geographical Society.

A Program for Re-analysis of the Data Today

Roughly 80 years after the Polar Census expeditions, we look upon these data in a new way. The scholarly interests of historical demographers and of anthropologists are now inverted from those of their colleagues in the 1920s. Since the 1970s, circumpolar aboriginal peoples across the world are enjoying a renaissance of their culture and of traditions. If these data may have been gathered out of a sense of patriotic duty in 1926, these records now serve as important records to a younger generation of aboriginal people now intent on re-learning about their attachments to places and traditions. If earlier enumerators were frustrated by the fact that they were forced to count 'primitive' forms of equipment such as deadfall traps, or nets, today these observations give important clues to the extensiveness and variety of hunting and fishing practice before collectivization. The most valuable data emerge from the very repetitiveness and anachronisms of the data set. If the original enumerators suffered under criticism for the fact that the Polar Census gathered information on several different levels of analysis (community, household, and individual) and also gathered mutually contradictory identity markers (administrative clan, tribal name, Soviet-era nationality), these complicated and intertwined data are exactly what makes this data set unique today.

In this final section, I wish to outline some tentative conclusions that have emerged from a project designed to re-analyze the primary results of the Turukhansk Polar Census. Beginning in 2001, our group of local archivists, post-graduate students, and a group of Canadian, American, and Russian scholars began classifying and digitising the primary data records of this expedition. As this article goes to press, we have located 3,300 of the approximately 4,600 household cards from the Turukhansk census in five archives across Russia.³ The community di-

aries have a better survival rate, with 92 percent of the original material still curated in archives. Roughly two-thirds of household cards have been digitally photographed, catalogued, and entered into a specially-designed database. Using these tools, we hope to write several historical ethnographies of the best-represented regions. We are also extending the project westward to include the records of approximately 2,000 households in Western Siberia, the Urals, and the Kola Peninsula. Although archival searching and digitising is still underway, we are now turning to an analysis of the existing material. The tentative results, presented here, serve as an invitation to other scholars to participate in this program of study.

Historical Demography and the 'Dying-out' of Peoples

The most pressing social issue used to justify the Polar Census project was the perceived 'dying-out' (*vymiranie*) of Siberian native peoples. The endangered quality of Siberian aboriginal demographics was thought to be even more acute in the 1920s due to the dislocations caused by the civil war (which in some places in Central and Eastern Siberia was not resolved until 1925). The damaging effect of the civil war on aboriginal people was directly cited by the Russian Society of the Red Cross for its interest in surveying the aboriginal population (GANO P45-5-7; GARF R3977-1-75: 17–25; Malysheva and Poznanskii 1998). The word *vymiranie* appears in the second sentence of the foreword to the official publication of results of the Polar Census (TsSU 1929: v).

The idea that Siberian peoples have an endangered demographic structure is an old theme in reformist literature. The Siberian regionalists cited this issue as one of their justifications for the creation of an autonomous Siberian *oblast'* (Iadrintsev 1891, 1892). Patkanov (1906, 1911) dedicated his analysis of the results of the 1890 census to this question. The frequency to which this issue was raised locally increased in the decade before the October Revolution (Vinogradov 1907; Makarenko 1908; Mainov 1911; O vymiranii 1916).

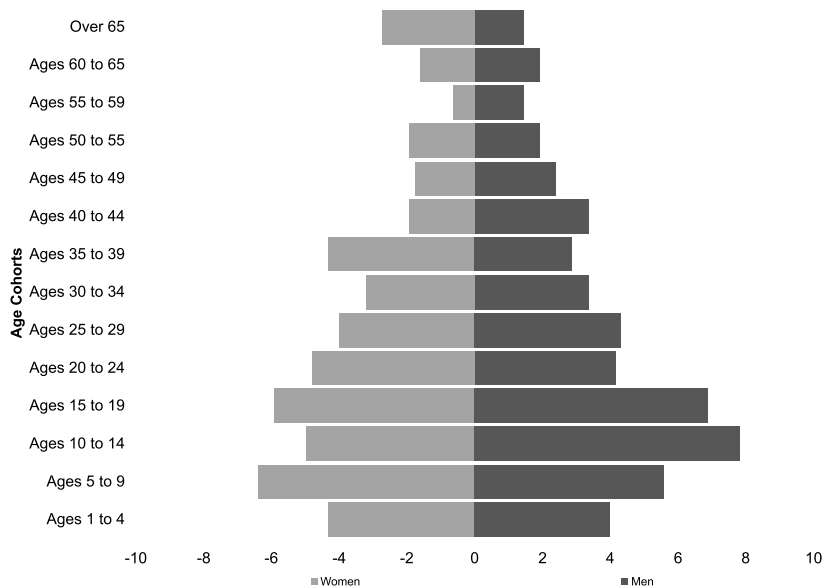
The organizers of the Polar Census were correct in faulting Tsarist officials for never taking a direct interest in the fate of aboriginal peoples, and for not organising a special survey in order to study this particular problem. However, we should be cautious in assuming that this problem was real. In most settler states the world over, the 'discourse' of the dying-out of aboriginal peoples was also once very common in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and many scholars have demonstrated that the issue was often presented in an exaggerated man-

ner. Some have suggested that the idea that aboriginal peoples were just about to disappear justified social policies that dispossessed aboriginal peoples of their territory and livelihoods. In Australia, McGregor (1997) and Markus (1990) have demonstrated a tight link between demographic assumptions and the ‘supplanting’ of aboriginal societies. Similar situations have been documented for Canada (Curtis 2001; Neu and Richard 2003) and Southeast Asia (Brantlinger 2003).

What was the situation in Siberia in 1926? It is a sad fact that the data from the Polar Census, although initially designed to answer this question, was never analysed in a comprehensive way. Petr Terletskii (1932, 1936) wrote two short works that implied that mortality rates were much lower than previously thought and fertility was much higher. In the former work, he implies that the demographic future for aboriginal people in Siberia was quite rosy (Terletskii 1932: 45–61).

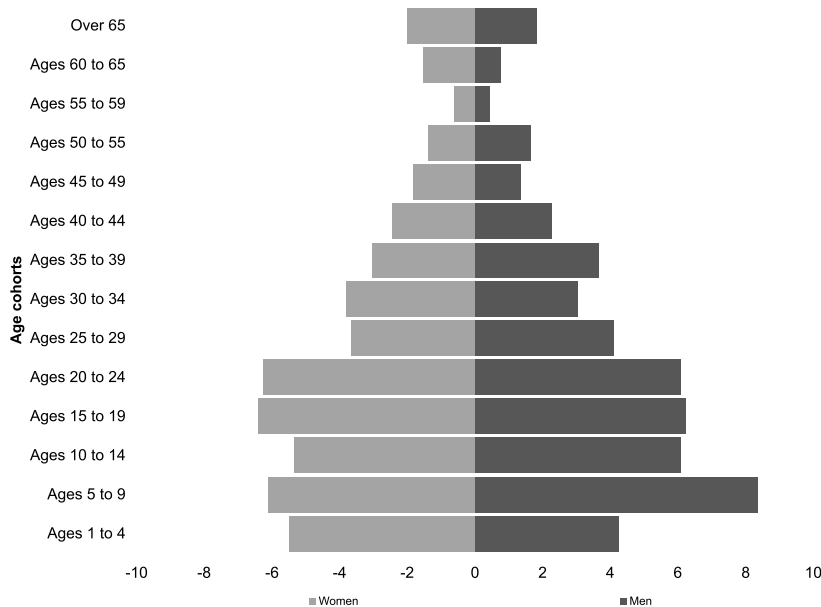
Our own preliminary re-analysis of the data from the census tends to corroborate Terletskii’s early conclusion. Figures 4 and 5 present age/sex pyramids for Ket [Yenisei Ostiak] and Essei Yakut populations from

Figure 4. Age-Sex Pyramid for Kets and Ost’iak-Samoeds 1926–27 (%)



*These data come from a complete collection of household cards where the household head represented himself or herself as “Ket”, “Ostiak-Samoed”, or “Ostiak-Samoed of the Baishensk/Elogoi or Tymusk-Karakansk [administrative] clan” N=625

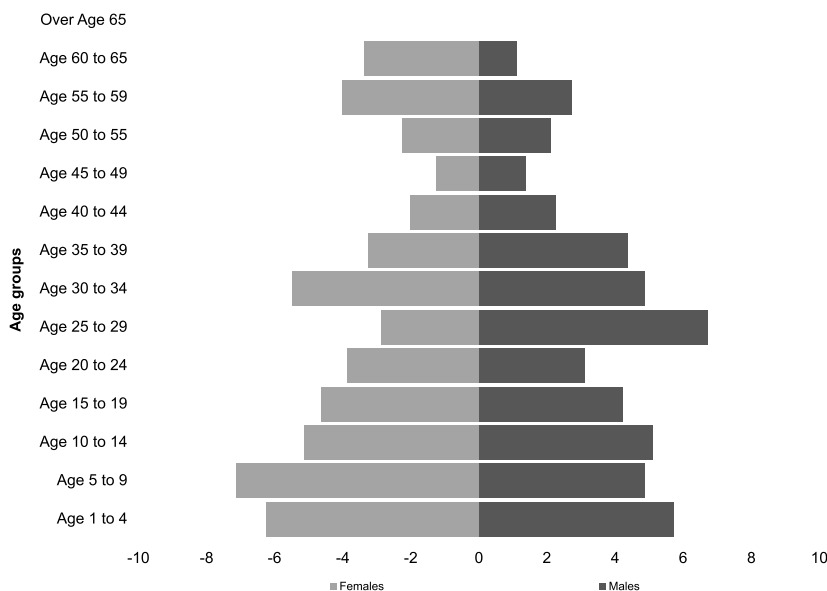
Figure 5. Age-Sex Pyramid for Nationalities Living in the area around Lake Essei 1926–27 (%)



*These data come from a complete collection of household cards representing the settlements of Essei and Murukta N=657

Turukhansk Territory. Both age structures show a vaguely ‘progressive’ structure, with larger numbers of young people than older people. This speaks to the potential for an expanding population, and not the dying out that was hypothesized. It is interesting that if we compare Figure 5 with statistics from the village of Essei in the Evenki Autonomous Okrug in 1991 (Figure 6), the fertility of the population in 1926–1927 is greater than in 1991, after 70 years of Soviet power. It is also striking that the life expectancy of older people in this community is not nearly as long in 1991 as it was in 1926–1927. Results like this lead to the conclusion that life for the contemporary representatives of Siberian native peoples was at least as difficult at the end of the Soviet period as it was at the beginning.

What is also remarkable in both tables is a fertility gap for infants aged 1–4 (for individuals born between 1923 and 1926), which is probably directly due to the effect of the civil war. The end of the Soviet period and the start of *perestroika*, marked out as the generation aged

Figure 6. Age-Sex Pyramid for Iakuts in the Village of Essei 1991 (%)

*Data from contemporary household registries (1.01.1992) N=802

1–4 in Figure 6, shows a similar gap for Essei Iakuts. Both figures 4 and 5 display ‘age-rounding’ for individuals over 50 years of age, probably indicating a large amount of guesswork in trying to estimate the ages of older informants who might not know their own age (Thorvaldsen, personal communication).

The charts also show some regional oddities that we still cannot explain. For the Iakut population of 1927, there are noticeably fewer women than men for the age cohort above 25 years of age (born after 1912). Was there an epidemic at this time? Similarly, for the Ket population of the Yenisei river valley (*beregovye eniseitsy i iuraki*), the ratio of men to women differs widely for the generation of 10–14, 35–39, and 55–59 for unknown reasons.

Our preliminary re-analysis of the demographic data does not show any firm picture of a dying-out of aboriginal people, but the charts do show lives punctuated by difficult circumstances. If anything, the charts call for a more nuanced regional analysis of particular places rather than making any wide-ranging generalization on behalf of an assumedly homogenous aboriginal population.

Kinship, Language and Identity

The second major purpose of the Polar Census as originally planned was to discover the exact identity of nomadic aboriginal peoples and the places where they travelled. According to the American historian Francine Hirsh (1997), the ‘rational’ definition of nationality was one of the main criteria of the 1926 general census. To this end, one of the forms of the Polar Census not only gathered data on the nationality of the head of the household, but also his or her pre-revolutionary identifiers, their own ‘tribal’ name, nicknames, and native language (Figure 7). A much shorter set of national identifiers was also gathered on every individual within the household (making it possible to notice how intermarriage worked in these areas). Ironically, today, it is exactly the descriptive ethnographic quality of this part of the form that makes this census interesting. In the multiple descriptions of identity we are able to imagine the rich and cluttered ethnic universe in which people lived, combining, in everyday life, names and titles that were a mixture of different regimes of both local and state power.

The data on ethnic identity is perhaps the most important legacy of the Polar Census in the literature, although this fact is not known by many people. Today, most Russian ethnographers use as their standard the works on ethnic affiliation and ethnogenesis of Boris Osipovich Dolgikh (1929, 1949, 1960). Sergei Savoskul (2005) argues that Dolgikh’s early interest in clan affiliation started with trying to untangle clan identity in his own work as a census enumerator.

Figure 7. Detail from a Household Card Showing Identity Markers

Фамилия русская	туземная	Тоцангу
Имя русское	туземное	Пойбал
Отчество	Прозвище	Тавринович
Национальность	Племя	Эсеевск. Якут
Родной язык		Якутский
Род (род. совет): назв. админ.	туземн.	Эсеевск. Камыши
Хозяйство: оседлое, <u>кочевое</u> (подчеркнуть)		
Если хозяйство кочевое, то указать места стойбищ:		

This particular card documents a Essei Yakut respondent from ‘Balagan Poibala’ located to the North and West of Lake Essei [NARS R70-1-1004: 26].

Having multiple avenues by which to access the identity of nomadic aboriginal people gives historians an important way to understand how state identity regimes work. One of the best-known studies of identity comes from northern Norway, where historical demographers and historians have been debating the way in which the Norwegian state measured and in some cases amended the identity of Saamis, Kvaens, and coastal Norwegians (Hansen and Meyer 1991; Thuen 1987; Thorvaldsen 2004). The conclusion of Hansen and Meyer (1991) was that official census identity represented a very complex assessment of language use and intermarriage made by locally-employed enumerators. The more complex reality of identity can only be understood by carefully disentangling the context of measurement in specific parishes.

As mentioned above, the enumerators of the 1926–1927 polar census came under criticism for having a far too detailed list of identifiers. For our project, we combined the identifiers that were recorded in the cells representing official nationality, tribe, and native language of the household head to get a composite picture of how ethnic identity might be qualified for each household. By collapsing this table, we came up with a set of 60 national identifiers which we used to organize the data. The list might have been thrice the size if we had included clan affiliation. Any scholar wishing to do a detailed regional analysis will soon discover that it is impossible to study any one of these cells in order to understand identity. As a general rule, nationality was only recorded for Russians. Nomadic aboriginal people tended to have their identity recorded either as a ‘tribal’ or a ‘clan’ affiliation. Tribes and clans tended to be grouped together by enumerators by their language use.

The logic of this particular census is very similar to that noted for northern Norway. The complexity of these records also reproduce what historians of science have long noted, that the category of ‘nationality’ in nineteenth-century European censuses was a very untidy compromise between measuring language use and local forms of identity (Cadiot 1997). Much of the richness of this data was left out of the official publications. In the central publications (TsSU 1928, 1929), what we identified in figure 8 as 60 nationalities was distilled down to nine official nationalities for central Siberia. It is to the great credit of the local enthusiasts in Krasnoiarsk and Novosibirsk that they published their own regional publications, which documented ethnic identity in more detail (SKSO 1928).

For future research, we propose to move our studies of ethnic identity away from the head table of the household card, which records the identity of the household head, and instead to examine the way that

Figure 8. Identity Categories in the Turukhansk Polar Census

Belorussians	Ostiak-Eniseits
Beregovoi Eniseitsy - Enesity	Ostiaki
Cherkeses	Ostiaki Loriatskie
Dolgan Odiganskie	Ostiako-Samoedy
Dolgane	Ostiako-Samoedy Baishenskie
Dolgane (Zatundrinskije krest'iane)	Ostiako-Samoedy Eloguiskie
Dolgane Zarechnye	Ostiako-Samoedy Tysko-
Estonians	Karakonskie
Georgians	Poles
Germans	Russians
Hungarians	Samoedy
Iakuty	Samoedy Avamskie
Iakuty Esseiskie	Samoedy Karasinskije
Iakuty Zatundrinskije	Samoedy Khantaiskie
Iuraki	Samoedy Vadeevskie
Iuraki Beregovye	Serbians
Iuraki Khandeiary	Tatars
Iuraki Obdorskije	Tungusy
Iuraki Tazovskie	Tungusy Chapogirskie
Jewish	Tungusy Ilimpei
Keto (Beregovey Eneseitsy)	Tungusy Khantaisko-Agatskie
Khakasies	Tungusy Nizhne-tungusskie
Lamuty	Tungusy Severnye
Latvians	Tungusy Symskie
Lezgins	Tungusy Tazovskie
Lithuanians	Tungusy Turyzhskie
Little Russians	Yakuty Bety
Norwegians	Yakuty Katyginiskie
Orocheny	Yukagir
Ostiak V-Inbatskie	More than one identity

identity is recorded in a more abbreviated but nevertheless complex way at the individual level.

Occupations and Social Structure

The study of identity at an individual level leads naturally into the study of occupations in the data of the Polar Census. Occupations are traditionally understood to be simple skill sets. As Dolgikh (1929) and Dobrova-Iadrintseva (1925) noted at the time, and as I have researched

in my own regional studies (Anderson 2000), identity in this region is tightly interwoven with what one does. In what is today Taimyr and northern Evenkiia, people who tended reindeer would often be recorded as Tunguses even if they spoke Iakut (rather than Evenki).

The household card has several sub-tables recording data at an individual level, which feature information on the occupations of particular people. The vast majority of the data for aboriginal peoples places them as having reindeer herding, hunting, or fishing as their primary occupation. A very small percentage of the individuals had other skills, such as handicrafts and portage (Figure 9). The overwhelming preponderance of traditional skills was remarked at the time of the initial analysis of the data (Terletskii 1932, 1936).

The interesting aspect of the Polar Census occupational data is the number of cases of multiple professions. The original card was designed with one small space to record a person's occupation. In practice, many respondents recorded up to four occupations, which corresponded to a seasonal cycle of work. The data on the whole was better represented for men than for women. Depending on the enumerator, the activity of women was either recorded as a 'housekeeper' or left blank. In the official published results of the census, the statisticians who processed

Figure 9. List of Occupations Declared in the Turukhansk Polar Census

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>N</i>
No profession declared	1811	cook	7
fisher	1322	sled builder	5
hunter	1047	blacksmith	5
reindeer herder		carpenter	5
(and herd owner)	793	hired worker	3
livestock herder	147	boat pilot	2
casual labourer	92	guard	2
hunter and trapper	34	hunter-fisherman	2
housekeeper	33	transport worker	2
agricultural worker (farmer)	31	shaman	1
trapper - promyshlenik	21	translator	1
reindeer transport worker	19	trader (trading company agent)	1
canoe builder	12	laundrer	1
hauler and preparer of wood	12	tailor	1
skin preparer (processing,		shoemaker	1
tanner)	10	stove-builder	1

the data were asked to pick one profession to best represent the most important activity in a region (Terletskii 1932; GAKK R769-1-304: 7–13, 61–64; TsSU 1929). The representation of occupational data was designed by the Central Statistical Administration in order to design special regions of centralized economic activity, and then presumably to make representations about how collectivization and other state policies might be best structured to help this process.

The data on occupations was also cross-referenced to the place a person occupied in the productive process. That is, if the respondent was a reindeer herder, it was important to mark if he was the owner of the herd or just a hired helper. This information could presumably have been used to build a picture of class stratification within aboriginal families. The official publications of the census place the analysis of the class stratification as an important goal (TsSU 1929: v), although, as discussed above, for complex reasons this was not done.

In our preliminary evaluation of these data today, we feel that very interesting conclusions about social structure and about mutual aid can be drawn from the occupational data in the census, but this data would probably lead to a very unsatisfactory class analysis. The fact that multiple occupations are recorded can be linked to the fact that many people performed the role as an independent worker in one occupation, but perhaps a hired worker in another occupation (Thorvaldsen, personal communication). In other words, their place in the production process probably changed by the season as they went from tending reindeer and turned to trapping fur. Further, some Siberian ethnographers have written of the existence of a ‘northern triad’ of occupations in central Siberia consisting of reindeer herding, fishing, and hunting (e.g., Sirina 2002: 93). These data allow us for the first time to actually describe what this northern triad might have looked like, or even how it shifted, across a large territory. Finally, all of the occupational data is listed beside a list of kinship terms within the household. At the very least it is possible to do an analysis of how activity was stratified by gender, but also eventually by inter-relationships.

Economy, Trade, and the Terms of Trade

One of the elements of thickest description in the census material is the description of trade. As discussed above, the intention of the original enumerators was to generate a description of economic activity that would represent the ‘power’ [*moshchnost’*] of economic practice. Through the analysis of the variety of economic activities, the geographers and

economists planning the census hoped to re-organize households into more powerful regional units.

Fortunately for historians and ethnographers today, economic ‘power’ was represented in this census using the older method of counting objects and goods that could be understood to be related to the welfare of a region. The list of trade objects in the household card is stunningly complete, ranging from mammoth bone ivory to different types of fur classes (even including furs from animal species at different ages). A similar exacting inventory is available for consumption goods, hunting and fishing tools, and the sleds, saddles, and boats used for transport. Aside from merely counting objects (or measuring nets), the enumerators often provided rather controversial ruble values for these objects. As outlined above, the grouping of these ruble values in the published literature into national totals is probably not very useful. However, at the level of a set of a few neighboring households, or even a set of households within neighboring communities, the ruble values do give an interesting picture of the value of and variety of activity undertaken by those households at the time they were interviewed.

The analysis of trade relationships has been one of the classic foundations on which North American ethnohistory has been built. Pioneering Canadian scholars such as Innis (1970), Ray (1976), and Ray and Freeman (1978) have used the record books of the Hudson’s Bay Company to compare the intake of furs to the exchange of trade goods. Their conclusions have done much to dispel stereotypes that early Scottish settlers simply exploited native peoples, but instead show many examples of complex negotiations—and at times native peoples trading to their own advantage.

Although the Polar Census records only give us data for one year, they are a unique set of records available in the circumpolar Arctic that show trade from the point of view of local households. By matching the count of key trade items such as flour, tea, and ammunition to the output of squirrel, sable, and fish, it is possible to build a picture of the terms of trade. It is most likely that in the original census, trading officials such as Adam Kurilovich were using the price data as a type of intelligence in order to discover how the various competing trading co-operatives were trying to maximize their profit. It is possible to reverse this analysis to using ethnographic intuition, to understand what activities (fishing or fur-trapping) were the most lucrative for native peoples.

Our preliminary analyses tend to confirm the observations made by the Turukhansk enumerators in 1926 that poorer households tended to specialize in high-value activities. A correlation of the number of

reindeer to the type of fish caught, for example, suggest that as the number of reindeer in a household decreases, the volume of high-value 'red' fish types increases. Similarly, the Yakut large-scale reindeer herders of the Putoran Plateau tended to be involved in large-scale fishing (and presumably export) of poorer-quality fish. In analyses of these types, it is also important to control the results by understanding the local ecology. In the case of the Putoran region, it would be difficult to keep herds of reindeer over 500 head in those places where 'red' fish are caught. Thus the results of this census show a tight fit between adaptation, trade, and economic strategy.

Land Occupancy

One of the original goals of the Polar Census was to provide a territorial account of where nomadic households travelled and how their activities 'gravitated' to certain population points. As suggested above, the descriptions of seasonal nomadic routes in the household cards and the long-hand descriptions of trade and travel in the community form were simplified to produce tidy economic territories, which were used to guide collectivization.

It is one of the more interesting potentials of this data that this analytic strategy can be reversed. For example, by using the data recorded in the seasonal occupancy cells on the household card (Figure 10), it would be possible to create land use and occupancy maps for native households much like those pioneered in the Canadian Arctic in the 1970s.

Figure 10. Detail from a Household Card Showing Details of Seasonal Occupancy

Хозяйство: оседлое, кочевое (подчеркнуть)			
Если хозяйство кочевое, то указать места стойбищ:			
Весною.	Летом.	Осенью.	Зимой.
В р. Кайоме	р. Камуках	По реке	В Балагане
между верховьями	(приток	Анжам	на левом
ручья Медвежьей	Медвежьей)		берегу р. Анжам
и Весовой			(верховья).
Из перечисленных стойбищ указать (подчеркиванием) место относительной оседлости.			
Место составления карточки <u>Балаган Тайбана</u>			

This is from the same respondent as in Figure 7 [NARS R70-1-1004: 26].

In the Canadian Arctic, the proof of extensive, long-term land use was a major set of evidence used by First Nations people to defend ownership of their lands in the Canadian courts (Brody 1981; Freeman 1976; Kemp 1981). This was connected to the massive expansion of oil exploration and development companies in the Canadian Arctic at that time. According to Canadian law, native peoples have a right to be consulted about industrial development if they can prove their land occupancy. This led to a series of studies which involved interviewing elderly hunters and mapping out the places that they travelled over the course of the year. These data were compiled on geographic computer systems to produce composite maps of land use for an entire community.

In essence, many of the data recorded during the polar census are of a similar quality. Since computerized geographic information systems were not then available, most of these data remain unused (although I suspect that the officials involved in Territorial Formation of the 1930s consulted it broadly). Today these data could be of extreme value to the various associations of less-numerous native peoples as they face negotiations with oil companies expanding their activity throughout the north of central and western Siberia. The data can prove long-term use and thus implicit long-term rights of families and of nations to land. At the very least, they can be used to win the right to negotiation over the way that compensation could be paid for the use of land to extract petroleum resources.

Conclusion

Never doubt the immense importance of your work. It could be the case that [others] will not value it completely, and not all will believe that we can complete this project successfully. But in the end everything is in our own hands. If we do not conduct our work merely mechanically [*formal'no*]; if we do our work with strength and bravery, we will accomplish exactly what has been expected of us. Only then can we force everyone to value our work by its real value and [by the fact] that it is very important to us. It seems that you have even felt this yourself as you have started to take a stand as an energetic defender of the rights of the peoples of the North. You work for mankind as a whole, and for the native people of the North – and included with this, for the beautiful northern frontier which, I can tell from your letters, you have begun to love.

An excerpt from a letter from the Director of the Turukhansk Census Expedition, A. P. Kurilovich, to the enumerator of the Podkamennaya Tunguska Valley, N. Sushilin. (GAKK R769-1-308: 49)

It is difficult today to imagine a project, like a census, as ever being motivated by a naïve and exploratory spirit of wanting to learn about northern peoples. English language scholarly sources have trained many of us to react to the word 'census' with an immediate suspicion that the exercise carried with it a host of cynical and political motives. This element is present in the history of the Polar Census. It is clear from both the published and the unpublished record that the organizers of both the Polar Census and the general All-Union Census wanted, most of all, to distinguish a picture of a polar population, and then to devise tools to administer and regulate it. However, the endearing feature of this particular census is that by chance or by necessity it incorporated older elements of what we would today label as geography or ethnography, but what was once classified as 'curiosity' (Stagl 1995). The fact that the enumerators of the Turukhansk Polar Census Expedition left us a rich record of ethnic identifiers, and occupational descriptions, condemned the results of their work in the cynical period that followed. However, today it is precisely this legacy that gives us a rich picture of what life was like before it was disrupted by resettlements and collectivization. This ambiguous picture of a quasi-statistical census also gives us cause to reflect on the value of older descriptive techniques that have now been separated out from modern statistical analyses.

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This article is a shorter version of the introduction to a Russian language edited book, which includes a set of analytical articles on the Polar Census and reproduces a selection of ethnographic texts. The volume (Anderson 2005) also includes a printed catalogue of all Polar Census documents discovered in regional archives up to February 2005. A photographic collection made by the enumerators of the Turukhansk census expedition is available online at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/polarcensus>. A public access database of a subset of the collection is available at <http://www.baikal.arts.ualberta.ca/polarcensus>.

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Notes

1. Surveys of the sub-Arctic rural population using the basic instruments of the Polar Census were carried out officially in the following regions: Arkhangel'sk Guberniia, Komi Autononous Oblast', Ural Krai, Sibir' Krai, Dal'ne-Vostok Krai, Iakut Autonomous Republic. Although each region used many of the same forms, there were startling differences in procedures, timing, and techniques in each region.

2. The Committee of the North (*komitet sodeistviia narodnostiam severnykh okraïn pri VTsIke*) (1925–1935) was a special inter-departmental policy group reporting to the All-Russian Central Executive Committee with representatives in each region. The Committee was well known for its populist initiatives supporting Northern aboriginal peoples, such as the creation of literacy in native languages, the funding of nomadic schools, and the design of 'cultural bases' to serve isolated regions (Sergeev 1934; Vakhtin 1994).

3. It is significant that a majority of the missing cards correspond to the Nganasan population of the Taimyr Peninsula and to the Evenki population of what is today the Baikat district of Evenkiia. It is entirely possible that the cards are lying together in some other place in the archive of a scholar who took an interest in these regions.

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GANO *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Novosibirskoi Oblasti* [The State Archive of Novosibirsk Province]
GARF *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [The State Archive of the Russian Federation]
KKKM *Krasnoiarskii Kraevoi Kraevedcheskii Muzei* [The Krasnoiarsk Territorial Museum of Local History]
RGAE *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Ekonomiki* [The Russian State Archive of Economics]

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