

## HUNTERS AND GATHERERS IN THE MODERN WORLD



# HUNTERS AND GATHERERS IN THE MODERN WORLD

Conflict, Resistance, and Self-Determination



*Edited by*

Peter P. Schweitzer, Megan Biesele  
*and* Robert K. Hitchcock



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*To the memories of*

**Linda J. Ellanna**

1940–1997

*and*

**Aleksandr I. Pika**

1951–1995



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## PREFACE

This book had its genesis at the Seventh International Conference of Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS 7), which was hosted by the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, Russia, from 18–22 August 1993. The co-organizers of the conference were Dr. Victor Shnirelman of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, and the late Dr. Linda J. Ellanna of the Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Fairbanks. The conference convener was Dr. Valery Tishkov, Director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences. Dr. Richard Lee of the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, was a co-chair of CHAGS 7.

Financial support for the conference was provided by the Division of Polar Programs of the U.S. National Science Foundation and the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. The Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow; the Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska; and the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, provided both logistical and financial support for the conference and the publication of the abstracts and sets of papers presented at CHAGS 7. In addition, we would like to thank the conference staff, Irina Babich of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and Tracie Cogdill of the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The organizing committee for CHAGS 7 included Pierrette Désy, University of Quebec; Linda Ellanna and Peter Schweitzer, University of Alaska Fairbanks; Robert Hitchcock, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Richard Lee, University of Toronto; Victor Shnirelman and Valery Tishkov, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Moscow; Eric Alden Smith, University of Washington; and Polly Wiessner, Max Planck Institute for Human Ethnology. Symposia co-chairs included Zoya P. Sokolova, the late Aleksandr Pika, Sofia Maretina, Victor Shnirelman, and Sergei Arutiunov of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences; Tim Ingold of the University of Manchester; and Robert Hitchcock, Eric Alden Smith, Pierrette Désy, and Polly Wiessner.

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## INTRODUCTION



*Robert K. Hitchcock and Megan Biesele*

The world's hunting and gathering peoples have been the subject of intensive study and debate for well over a century. Today, at the beginning of the third millennium, those populations who have relied on wild plant and animal products for their livelihoods are actively engaged in interactions and debates with the governments of the states in which they live and with a variety of international organizations, both indigenous and nonindigenous. There is a worldwide movement among hunter-gatherers and other indigenous peoples aimed at promoting their basic civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights (Anaya 1996; Barsh 1996; Durning 1992; Hitchcock 1994; Lee and Daly 1999; Maybury-Lewis 1997). The actions taken by hunter-gatherers and those who represent them and advocate on their behalf have served to place indigenous peoples' rights firmly on the international agenda.

Hunters and gatherers have been the subject of anthropological study and debate as long as the discipline of anthropology has been in existence. At the time European colonization began in Asia, the Americas, and Africa in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, approximately a third of the world's people were foragers. Over the past five hundred years, the percentage of the world's population that forage for a substantial portion of their living dropped precipitously, in part because of the actions of states and because of changes in population density, economic opportunities, and state and international social and economic development policies.

The modern anthropological appreciation of hunting and gathering societies received significant impetus in April 1966, when seventy-five scholars from various parts of the world met at the University of Chicago at the "Man the Hunter" Conference (Lee and DeVore 1968). Twelve years later, the First Conference on Hunter-Gatherer Studies (CHAGS 1) was held in Paris, France (June 1978). This meeting included scholars

from a dozen countries, one of whom was an indigenous Siberian, then the Dean of the Faculty of the University of Yakutia (Leacock and Lee 1982). A second CHAGS meeting was held in Quebec in 1980, and it, too, included representatives from hunter-gatherer societies, several of whom were Inuit.

The next two CHAGS meetings were held in Europe, one in Bad Homburg, Germany (CHAGS 3) in 1983 and the other, CHAGS 4, in London in September 1986 (see Ingold et al. 1988a, b). A major issue raised at the third CHAGS meeting was whether or not the concept “hunter-gatherer” is a valid one, given that these populations had been dominated by more powerful societies and that they were seen as part of a poverty-stricken, marginalized underclass in the societies in which they lived (Schrire 1984; see also Wilmsen 1989). There is no question that hunter-gatherers have been affected significantly by outside forces. In some cases, they became the proverbial “victims of progress,” while others transformed themselves, engaging in activities such as specialized hunting or wild resource collecting, a process seen, for example, among some of the Adivasis (the “Scheduled Tribes”) of India and among Southeast Asian foragers such as those in Thailand, Laos, and Malaysia.

The Fifth Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS 5) was held in the Southern Hemisphere, this time in Australia in 1988 (Altman 1989; Meehan and White 1990). This meeting included a number of Aboriginals, some of whom were working on conservation and economic development issues. CHAGS 6 was held in another hunter-gatherer stronghold, Alaska, in 1990 (Burch and Ellanna 1994). Again, indigenous people, including Inuit, Aleuts, and Alaskan Indians, played significant roles in this meeting. Together, these meetings have provided a series of stimulating discussions of issues relating to hunting and gathering peoples involving both scholars and representatives of hunter-gatherer groups, and they have contributed to important theoretical developments in anthropology and archaeology. Topics such as politics, economics, social organization, gender, symbolism, and ideology were explored in detail.

The Seventh Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, which was held in Moscow in August 1993, was no exception. This meeting had significant representation of members of hunter-gatherer groups, many of them from the former Soviet North, who spoke about their resistance to state oppression and their internal political dynamics. They also outlined their roles in the growing activism of indigenous northern peoples in seeking self-determination and self-representation. This was a historic meeting, as it was the first extensive East-West scholarly exchange in anthropology since the demise of the USSR. There were discussions of the interactions between foragers and modern states, cosmology and worldview, ideology and consciousness. A related, significant area of debate at

the conference was on hunter-gatherer aggression and peacemaking. Identity politics and the struggle for control of the development and political agendas were examined, as were themes that had long been important in various CHAGS conferences, including demography, ecology, and subsistence.

The essays included in this volume represent a sample of the papers that were presented at the meeting. The five major themes into which this book is divided are:

- I. Warfare and Conflict Resolution
- II. Resistance, Identity, and the State
- III. Ecology, Demography, and Market Issues
- IV. Gender and Representation
- V. World-View and Religious Determination

The themes of this volume—conflict, resistance, and self-determination—were echoed in each of the conference thematic sections.

Virtually all of the societies discussed at the conference and in this book have interacted with the state in a variety of ways. Most of them resisted efforts of states to assimilate them, and they sometimes engaged in direct conflicts with state institutions, including the military, and with private companies. An important factor affecting hunter-gatherer societies in the twentieth century has been the market, with efforts to both commercialize and conserve the world's biodiversity having significant impacts on the well-being of hunter-gatherers and other indigenous peoples.

Issues and themes selected for discussion at CHAGS 7 parallel theoretical developments that have given hunter-gatherer research scholarly direction (for a review of trends in the study of hunter-gatherers, see Myers 1988). They also reflect the increasing internationalization of hunter-gatherer studies and the expanding role of scholars from outside traditional Western academic centers in the study and analysis of hunter-gatherer societies. In order to assure smooth and open research opportunities as well as good communication, it was believed to be critically important to establish cooperative links across the international community, especially with researchers from developing countries and indigenous communities.

Ideas observed, tested, or refined with the study of hunter-gatherers have been among the most important areas of anthropological research. These ideas include much of the basis of modern evolutionary ecological theory (e.g., Smith 1991; Smith and Winterhalder 1992), the study of postindustrial societies from a humanistic perspective (Myers 1988: 274–76), and the analysis of the origins and impacts of social complexity (Keeley 1988; Price and Brown 1985).

Despite the long-standing incorporation of all circumpolar hunting and gathering societies into nation-states, the majority of them continue to practice foraging subsistence activities, most often within the social and ideological framework of a foraging ethos. As noted in the chapter in this volume by Peter Schweitzer, the recent opening of the former Soviet Union has added a vast area to international circumpolar research and has opened new venues for comparative studies. Political and social development among hunting and gathering societies of the Far North has a number of exemplary characteristics for other indigenous groups of the world, including land claims, local control of resource development, and subsistence hunting rights (Minority Rights Group 1994; Schweitzer, this volume; Smith and McCarter 1997; Young 1995).

## **Hunters and Gatherers: Definitional Issues**

There are significant differences of opinion about whether or not “pure hunter-gatherers” still exist. On the one hand, there are those who say that there are sizable numbers of people who forage for at least part of their subsistence and income. On the other, there are those who argue that there are no people in the world today who fall into the “hunter-gatherer” category. It is crucial, therefore, that efforts be made to come up with criteria that allow researchers and development workers to determine the degree to which local people are dependent on wild resources. This is important because it will enable agencies and individuals to help promote the rights of foragers and former foragers in regard to (1) access to sufficient food and materials to meet their basic subsistence and material needs, (2) access to resources for purposes of generating income, and (3) access to resources viewed as socioculturally significant, such as wild plants and minerals used in healing rituals and other kinds of ceremonial or ideologically oriented activities.

It is extremely difficult to say how many hunter-gatherers there are in the world today. It has been estimated that there are some 400–500 million indigenous peoples, those peoples who are considered aboriginal, native peoples, Fourth World Peoples, or “first nations” (Bodley 1999; Hitchcock 1994; Maybury-Lewis 1997). Some of these groups obtain much of their food and income from wild sources. In India, for example, of the 68,400,000 people considered to be Adivasis in 1991, approximately 1,300,000 people from some twenty-five different groups were classified by D. Venkatesan (personal communication) as hunter-gatherers. Table I.1 contains data on the estimated numbers of hunter-gatherers in the contemporary world. We hasten to point out that the figures presented here are very rough and reflect information obtained from a variety of sources,



**TABLE I.1 Estimated Numbers of the World's Indigenous Peoples Who Are or Were Hunter-Gatherers**

Region	Country of Residence	Estimated Population
Circumpolar Region		
Inuit (Eskimo)	Russia, Greenland, U.S., Canada	100,000
Latin America (total*)		3,500
Ache (Guayaki)	Paraguay	400
Hiwi (Cuiva)	Venezuela, Colombia	800
Siriono (Yukui)	Bolivia	140
Huaorani (Auca)	Ecuador	1,250
Former Soviet Union		
Northern Peoples	Siberia, Russian Far East	200,000
South Asia (total)		2,000,000
Adivasis (foragers)	India	1,300,000
Andaman Islanders	India	600
East Asia		
Ainu	Japan	26,000
Southeast Asia (total)		600,000
Orang Asli	Malaysia	90,000
Penan	Malaysia	7,600
Australia		
Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders	Australia	300,000
Africa (total)		450,000
Batwa (Pygmies)	7 countries in Central Africa	200,000
San (Bushmen)	6 countries in southern Africa	105,000
Hadza	Tanzania	1,000
North America (total)		150,000
Indians, Aleuts	U.S., Canada	90,000
<b>Grand Total (foragers and former foragers)</b>		<b>5,219,500</b>

\*This and other regional totals reflect the hunter-gatherer population for the area, with specific examples of hunter-gatherer groups listed below.

Sources: Data obtained from Barnes et al. (1995); Hitchcock (1994); Kelly (1995); Kent (1996); Lee and Daly (1999); Minority Rights Group (1994); Veber et al. (1993); Young (1995); as well as the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, Cultural Survival, Survival International, and this volume.

including national and local censuses, indigenous peoples' advocacy groups, general works on hunter-gatherers, anthropologists' reports, and data compiled by hunter-gatherer groups themselves. These figures are preliminary and are definitely in need of correction and refinement. We present them here in order to allow readers to have some idea of the range of variation in the distribution and numbers of people who have been classified by themselves or others as hunter-gatherers.

The concept "subsistence" is sometimes defined as "resource dependence that is primarily outside the cash sector of the economy" (Huntington 1992: 15–16). This economic definition is, in many ways, inadequate in the contemporary world context. The vast majority of the world's population is involved at least to some degree in the cash economy. Even if households do not take part directly in cash transactions, they often receive transfers in the form of cash or goods from relatives, friends, the state, or other sources. Subsistence activities link people into a complex network of interactions, reciprocity, and exchanges, some of which are culturally based and others of which are primarily economic in nature. A classic example of this linkage is in the manufacture, exchange, and sale of ostrich eggshell bead necklaces and bracelets that occurs in the Kalahari Desert region of southern Africa, which links people together in a complex system of delayed reciprocity and mutually beneficial interaction. In the Kalahari, the manufacture and sale of ostrich eggshell items is an important source of income for a sizable number of San households, especially for those that are female-headed. It is necessary, therefore, to broaden the definition of a subsistence producer to include those people who obtain wildlife and other wild natural resource products for meeting basic household subsistence *and* income needs.

Subsistence foraging is far more than simply a means of making a living for a segment of the world's population. It is also a complex system of obligation, distribution, and exchange that is crucial to the well-being of both subsistence producers and market-oriented producers. Today, the vast majority of people obtain their food from a variety of sources. In Alaska, northern Canada, and Siberia, the bush is still an important source of food. Yet even in these areas, the majority of people can be described as having mixed economies or diversified production systems. Foraging is a buffering strategy in many areas of the world today that serves as a fallback strategy in times of stress, as in cases where people have been affected by drought or conflict—as has been the case, for example, in Somalia and the Sudan.

Some of the characteristic features of those people who are defined as foragers are as follows: (1) they depend on wild natural resources for subsistence, income, and ideological needs; (2) they use human labor and fire as sources of energy; (3) they are kinship-based societies; (4) they have

common property resource management systems; (5) they have close attachments to land and the resources on that land; (6) they are characterized by sophisticated and complex ideological systems; and (7) they have a world-view that combines both nature and spiritual phenomena.

There have been arguments over the issue of hunter-gatherer subsistence rights, with some people asserting that hunter-gatherers are getting preferential treatment. This argument is made by nonindigenous people in the northern United States (e.g., in Wisconsin and Minnesota and around the Great Lakes) and on the Northwest Coast (Fixico 1998). Certainly, there are cases in which foragers have been given privileges, especially as regards hunting. The Hadza of Tanzania, for example, are allowed to hunt using a Presidential License issued by the president of the country. In Namibia, the Ju/'hoansi San of eastern Otjozondjupa are allowed to hunt for subsistence purposes as long as they use traditional weapons (Biesele and Hitchcock, this volume).

An assumption about hunter-gatherers is that they are self-sufficient societies (i.e., they do not depend on outside agencies for any inputs). In fact, there are few people today who are totally exempt from the market. Some hunter-gatherers have been subsidized by the state, as was the case, for example, with Siberian hunters and trappers under the government of the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. There is also a fairly sizable number of people in the world today who engage in foraging on the larger economy through the collection and recycling of castoffs and other goods.

Some government officials define hunter-gatherers on the basis of the kinds of technology they use or even on the basis of the clothes that they wear. Department of Wildlife and National Parks officials in Botswana, for example, identified people as hunter-gatherers if they used traditional weapons such as bows and arrows or, alternatively, if they were wearing leather breechcloths. The problem with this approach was that those people who wore Western clothing, such as a pair of trousers and a shirt, for example, were subject to arrest for engaging in illegal activities if they were found hunting.

Hunter-gatherers have also been defined as people lacking domestic animals. Such a definition is problematic when one considers that many people who traditionally have been characterized as foragers, including Australian Aboriginals and Kalahari San, engage relatively extensively in livestock-related work on cattle stations and cattle posts, herding cattle and other stock in exchange for payments in kind (e.g., food, clothing, a calf a year) or cash. In Botswana, a significant portion of the national cattle herd is managed and overseen by Kua, Nharo, and other San (Hitchcock 1996). In Kenya, groups such as the Okiek and Dahalo have been able to accumulate sufficient livestock to be identified as pastoralists by government officials (Daniel Stiles, personal communication). It is interesting

to note, on the other hand, that those groups who lose their stock are subsequently identified as hunter-gatherers. Thus, processes of livestock accumulation and loss affect the ways in which people are identified and presumably the ways in which government ministries and other institutions treat those populations.

An examination of the contemporary socioeconomic systems of foragers and former foragers in the contemporary world reveals that a sizable proportion of them are living at or below the absolute poverty level (APL). The APL can be defined as the income level below which a minimum nutritionally adequate diet plus essential nonfood requirements cannot be afforded. Some of the nonfood requirements include matches, candles, and soap. The Poverty Datum Line (PDL), or the “minimum income needed for a basic standard of living,” is used by some economists as a means of determining household socioeconomic status. One way to deal with poverty among groups is to provide commodities to them, a system known as “rationing” in Australia. In Botswana and Namibia, San are provided with drought relief food, and they are allowed to take part in labor-based public works (LBPW) projects in which people are given food or cash in exchange for their labor. In Australia, The Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, which is administered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC), provides grants to Aboriginal community councils, which then use the funds to create jobs in community development. The funds that Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders receive are calculated to be roughly equivalent to what they would get as unemployment benefits or entitlements from the Department of Social Security of the government of Australia (Altman and Sanders 1991). Some foragers and former foragers are uncomfortable with some of these schemes and argue that they should have the opportunity to earn their own subsistence and income rather than depend on what they consider handouts.

One theme of this volume relates to the interactions between foragers and the states in which they live. Some foragers have been fortunate or unfortunate enough to be in areas where mineral and petroleum resources have been found. Aboriginal communities have responded to these discoveries in a variety of ways. In Australia, for example, some groups have opposed mining activities out of hand, whereas others have sought to negotiate with mining corporations in the hopes of receiving substantial royalties. David Trigger describes Aboriginal strategies of resistance and accommodation, focusing his attention in part on the deliberations over the Century zinc mine in northwestern Queensland. While some Aboriginal groups maintain that their relations with the land preclude what they describe as routine commodification, others suggest that mining has its benefits, including jobs and compensation paid to

Aboriginal communities that they can then invest in local development. Clearly, the notions that all indigenous peoples are “one with nature” and that they are generally conservation-minded and broadly opposed to development are not correct in every instance.

There is no question that hunter-gatherers and other indigenous groups have opposed what they have felt to be environmentally destructive projects. The Penan of Malaysia, for example, have blockaded logging roads to prevent commercial timber exploitation by lumber companies, and the Hai//om San have prevented tourists from entering Etosha National Park in order to underscore their land claims in northern Namibia.

Several major events in the past few years have led to a significant increase in interest over issues involving hunters and gatherers and indigenous peoples generally. One event was the recognition of the quincentennial of the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the New World (October 1992), which was protested widely because of what indigenous leaders characterized as the genocidal actions of Columbus and his associates. The United Nations declared 1993 as The Year of the World's Indigenous People, with the theme, chosen by the General Assembly, as “Indigenous People—A New Partnership” (Anaya 1996; Barsh 1996). This was done in part to strengthen both grassroots and international cooperation for solving problems facing indigenous peoples and to attract additional funding for indigenous peoples' projects and activities.

Contributing to the awareness of the importance of indigenous concerns was the role played by indigenous peoples and their supporters at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. The text of Agenda 21, which grew out of the Rio Conference, addressed the importance of having indigenous peoples, among other groups, as active participants in decision-making processes concerning sustainable development. An important theme of Agenda 21 was the crucial importance of broad-based participation in decision-making regarding environmental, economic, and social issues.

Hunter-gatherers and former foragers have sometimes engaged in innovative strategies for promoting conservation and ensuring the long-term survival of ecosystems and sociocultural systems. Australian Aboriginals and Alaskan Native peoples have sought to enter into co-management arrangements with national park managers and government agencies to oversee parks and game reserves. The Ju/'hoansi San of Namibia have established community-based resource management programs that include tourism as a means of generating income while at the same time limiting the number of people who enter their area (Biesele and Hitchcock, this volume). The Ainu of Japan have engaged in cultural revitalization movements that have had as some of their goals self-determination and enhancement of Ainu cultural identity (Irimoto, this volume). The

Evenkis of Taimyr in Arctic Siberia, reported on in this volume by David Anderson, engaged actively in a process of ethnogenesis, utilizing both government-authorized identities and identities as they perceived them themselves in order to achieve their varied objectives. As Anderson notes, the vernacular ideas of “wildness,” in dialogue with local, cultivated identities, suggest a powerful rhetoric of indigenous peoples’ resistance to forces threatening to encapsulate and transform their hunting and reindeer-herding community. The Evenkis act as if they live in what Anderson describes as a “sentient ecology,” in which their actions, motivations, and achievements are understood and acted upon by nonhuman entities ranging from weather to wild and domesticated animals.

The CHAGS conference volumes, including this one, are unique in part because they are not only compilations of analytical case materials but at the same time are summaries of trends in research and anthropological theory. One overarching theme involves the current science/culture controversy. The necessity to understand science as a form of culture is starkly underscored by historical polarities long existing in hunter-gatherer studies, in which, for example, optimal foraging strategy theory has lived side by side (and has often been intertwined) with ideological explorations for some decades. In fact, it may be argued that the relatively small size of the researcher base, along with the particular research questions shaped by holistic strains in these cultures themselves, may have created an early need in hunter-gatherer research culture to resolve disciplinary splits only now being addressed in some other areas of anthropology.

From research questions to methodologies to political concerns, the study of hunter-gatherers reflects this and other cutting-edge aspects of the entire discipline as it approaches the end of the millennium. Some of these concerns were summarized by Annette Weiner in a 1993 presidential address to the American Anthropological Association, in which she called for new interdisciplinary forms of engagement with “postmodern culture.” Weiner urged anthropologists to heed not only the multivocal nature of cultural messages, but also “local and transnational sites, the representations of authors and informants, the changing velocities of space and time, the historical conditions in which capitalism is reshaping global power on an unprecedented scale, and the historical conditions of Western theory and practice” (cited in Franklin 1995).

Weiner’s challenge was taken up by Franklin (1995) in the area of critical science studies, under which rubric the most important organizing features of recent attempts to bridge the gap between Snow’s “two cultures” have been outlined. In this volume, the chapters by Briggs, Griffin, Trigger, Rival, Staniukovich, and Widlok, among others, reflect serious grappling with what Franklin (1995: 166) calls the “knowledge of knowledge, the nature of nature, the reality of reality, the origin of origins, the

code of codes.” Issues of the volume overlap to a great extent with those identified by Weiner and Franklin, as indeed they do with the productions of the informal colloquies on African civil society (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993) now taking place among graduate students and faculty at the University of Chicago. These concerns include the following: age, gender, and changing leadership issues; counterhegemonic moves in identity and assertion of ownership of resources of many kinds; the reproduction and transformation of exchange networks and social equity; competition and consensus in developing states; the performance of identity; and the problematics of collaborative research with former “informants.” These contemporary issues are being used as a lens, looking both backward and forward in time.

Dowson’s chapter on painting as politics among the San of southern Africa voices a rallying cry for the integration of symbolic and political issues in hunter-gatherer studies. It also takes rock art studies out of the impressionistic “never-never land” it too often inhabited, and gives it stature as a meaningful historic study. Showing that the artists who painted prehistorically were negotiating complex power relations humanizes prehistory in a new way—one that will, we predict, be determinative of important future approaches in both history and archaeology.

The chapter on contemporary Jahai of northern Malaysia by van der Sluys similarly pushes on academic boundaries. It presents an anthropological research strategy that grounds analysis in a set of structured ethnographic data concerning a culture’s world-view, and demonstrates the way in which tropical rain forest hunters may be seen to make positive cultural choices based on their core cultural premises and values regarding well-being. In so doing, the study insistently humanizes our view of people who have previously been, like their prehistoric counterparts in Dowson’s essay, relegated by anthropology to an unrealistically “simple” and often rote existence.

## **The Socioeconomic Status of the World’s Foragers**

Of the world’s contemporary population, those designated by themselves and others as hunters and gatherers tend to be overrepresented in the categories of people who lack basic human rights, live below the poverty datum line, and work for others under exploitative or unjust conditions (Ingold et al. 1988a; 1988b; Leacock and Lee 1982; Lee and Daly 1999). They have also been the victims of genocide, ethnocide, and active discrimination in disproportionate numbers (Bodley 1999; Hitchcock and Twedt 1997; Maybury-Lewis 1997). For instance, sizable numbers of North American Indians and Inuit, Latin American Indians, and indigenous peoples elsewhere in

the world have died out as a result of disease after contact with members of colonizing societies.

While hunter-gatherers exist in a variety of situations, many of them do have some similarities in terms of their socioeconomic status. A significant proportion of them are characterized by relatively high rates of unemployment, by low wages and incomes, and by poverty. They are very much affected by changes in prices, as noted in this book by Mitsuo Ichikawa in his assessment of the Mbuti in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and by Volker von Bremen in his discussion of the Ayoréode of Paraguay. Many, if not most, hunter-gatherers experience considerable difficulties in getting access to and maintaining secure control over land, something noted in this volume by Thomas Widlok for the Hai//om of Namibia and Laura Rival for the Huaorani of Ecuador. Olga Murashko points out that one way of handling such complex situations is to employ the concept of an international ethnoecological refuge.

In terms of health, education, and welfare, many hunter-gatherers have moderate to poor health (though this varies considerably), are undernourished or experience seasonal or long-term nutritional stress, have relatively low literacy and education levels, and are characterized by lower degrees of access to social services than the majority of the population of the countries in which they live. A major reason for these situations relates to the ways in which states tend to place emphasis on high population density areas for development investment. States also have certain, often incorrect, perceptions of the lifestyles of hunter-gatherers and other indigenous peoples living inside their borders, so their strategies for promoting social and economic development are not always as effective at enhancing the well-being of local people as they might be. Barry Hewlett's discussion of Baka Pygmies and the perceptions about their development on the part of the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) and various nongovernment organizations (NGOs) underscores the importance of the ways in which hunter-gatherers are viewed and how this affects the kinds of development policies that are pursued.

From the standpoint of demography, hunter-gatherers were generally characterized by low to moderate population growth rates in the past, though these patterns have tended to change over time as a result of sedentarization and other processes (e.g., access to new kinds of foods that contain large amounts of carbohydrates). With increased access to immunization and other medical assistance, hunter-gatherers tend to live longer than they did in the past. In some cases, however, this is offset by new diseases such as HIV/AIDS, which is on the increase among foragers and former foragers, particularly in Africa. Fertility levels are changing, with population growth rates among some former foraging groups ranging from 2 to 3.5 percent per annum. The population pyramids



of hunter-gatherers today thus exhibit a fairly sizable number of young people and older people. The question of whether or not hunter-gatherers are dying out, which is addressed by Dmitri Bogoiavlenskii with reference to Russia's northern indigenous peoples, is an important one. As Bogoiavlenskii's data show, the populations of northern indigenous groups are on the rise, something that is true among many other foragers and former foragers in other parts of the world.

Hunter-gatherers are often exposed to structural violence to a greater degree than members of other groups in the states in which they reside. In some cases, members of hunter-gatherer groups join resistance movements or are incorporated into the militaries of states ranging from Vietnam to India. The degree to which hunter-gatherers and other indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities receive poor treatment is related in part to their sociopolitical status, which generally is at the bottom of a several-tiered system in the countries that they inhabit. Members of hunter-gatherer groups tend to be given harsher jail sentences and fines in court, and in some countries, such as Botswana and Australia, individuals from groups with a history of hunting and gathering tend to be overrepresented in the prison system. In many states in the past, hunter-gatherers did not have the right to represent themselves in court, so they had nowhere to turn if they disagreed with the ways they were treated. As one Kua San put it when she was questioned about the status of her grandparents, "They did not have control over their own lives."

There is growing international recognition of the difficulties faced by hunter-gatherers. Their plight was underscored in 1994 with the killings of sizable numbers of Twa (Pygmies) during the genocidal massacres in Rwanda that led to the deaths of over 800,000 people. Hunter-gatherers themselves have done much to alert the world to what they are facing. At a meeting of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations in March 1996, spokespersons from a number of indigenous groups, including the San of the Kalahari, called for protection of their land and resource rights, and recognition of their cultural and religious rights (Crosette 1996).

Indigenous peoples generally possess ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics that are different from the dominant or numerically superior groups in the countries in which they exist. They tend to have a sense of cultural identity or social solidarity, which many members attempt to maintain. In some cases, members of indigenous groups try to hide their identity so as not to suffer racial prejudice or poor treatment at the hands of others. In other cases, they proclaim their ethnic affiliation proudly and openly. Indeed, an important criterion for "indigeness" is the identification by people themselves of their distinct cultural identity. Most indigenous people prefer to reserve for themselves the right to determine who is and is not a member of their group. A number of

hunter-gatherer groups have sought actively to promote their own cultural identity as a means of enhancing their chances at what they see as cultural survival, one example being the Ainu of Japan.

African and Asian countries tend to take two different positions on the issue of indigenous populations within their territories: (1) they claim that there are no indigenous peoples whatsoever, or (2) they state that all of the groups in the country are indigenous. Botswana, for example, has argued that virtually all people in the country with the exception of Europeans are indigenous, whereas spokespeople for various San groups in the country maintain that only they are indigenous, since they have had a presence in the Kalahari for tens of thousands of years whereas others arrived only in the past two thousand years. Botswana uses a bureaucratic definition to cover resident populations along with others who share similar characteristics of residing in remote areas and being marginal in a socioeconomic sense (Hitchcock and Holm 1993). Multiracial states like Botswana, Indonesia, and Malaysia prefer not to differentiate specific populations that are targets of development programs, in part because they do not wish to be seen as practicing a kind of apartheid or separation on the basis of ethnic identification.

In many parts of the world, "indigenouness" has taken on added political and economic significance because it is used to claim title over blocks of land, certain types of resources, development assistance, or recognition from states and intergovernmental organizations. Indigenous groups have pressed hard for greater recognition of their rights, and they have been able to gain at least some control over parts of their original territories in a number of countries. There are still numerous challenges to be faced, particularly since a number of governments have begun to go back on some of the agreements that they have made about indigenous rights, as was seen recently in the case of Brazil.

Indigenous organizations, local leaders, and advocacy groups all maintain that it is necessary to gain not just *de facto* control over land and resources, but also *de jure* legal control. One way to do this is to negotiate binding agreements with states, while another is to seek recognition of land and resource rights through the courts. Indigenous peoples in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand have had some success in gaining state recognition of land and resource rights. There are only a handful of cases in which indigenous groups have gained political power in the countries in which they live, one example being Greenland. Obtaining greater civil and political rights, especially the right to participate in decision-making and policy formulation, however, remains a yet-to-be realized goal for most indigenous peoples.

The various indigenous organizations and their supporters have called for a new approach to political and economic development, one which is

sustainable over the long term. In order for this to occur, however, changes will be necessary in the ways in which decision-making is handled. Indigenous groups and advocacy NGOs have argued vociferously for an approach to development and change that is participatory and equitable—one which “puts the last first.”

## Land and Hunter-Gatherers

Hunter-gatherer societies usually managed their land and natural resources on a communal basis. Under these systems of tenure, land could not be bought or sold, nor could it be pledged as collateral for a loan. Individuals had rights to land and property on the basis of customary law. Thus, hunter-gatherers tended to have *de facto* but not *de jure* rights to land. They had these rights on the basis of their membership of a specific social group. Land was held in the name of that group, and every individual in the group theoretically had the right to sufficient land and resources to support him- or herself.

Property in the form of land among hunter-gatherer societies consists of what one might describe as a bundle of rights. In many cases, the same piece of land can have a variety of claims on it for various purposes. It is not unusual, therefore, to have complex systems of land and resource rights that are spread widely throughout local communities. Overlapping rights and obligations are common in hunter-gatherer systems of resource tenure. Two of the primary factors in resource-related matters among foragers are kinship and social alliances. People are allocated land rights on the basis of group membership or, in some cases, through provision by an authority figure, usually, if not always, in accordance with public sentiment. Methods of obtaining rights to land include inheritance (birth rights), marital ties, borrowing, and clientship, in which an individual enters a patron-client relationship and is given access to land in exchange for his or her allegiance. In some cases, individuals and groups could get land through colonization, the movement into a nonutilized area and the establishment of occupancy. There were also cases in which territorial acquisition occurred through conquest. Land and resource rights could also be obtained through the investment of labor, such as digging a well, building a fence, or clearing an area around a hut.

Land is part and parcel of hunter-gatherer sociopolitical systems, and it is often perceived as a territorial dimension of foraging societies. Local entities have rights over blocks of land (e.g., a band in the case of a mobile desert foraging society, a lineage or other kind of descent group in the case of a complex hunter-gatherer group such as those on the Northwest Coast of North America). Among the Ju/'hoansi of northwestern Botswana and

northeastern Namibia, as noted by Bieseke and Hitchcock (this volume), a band averages around twenty-five to thirty people and resides in and utilizes an area ranging from 100 to 400 square kilometers. Rights in these areas, which are known as *n!oresi* (territories) are handed down from one generation to the next. These areas usually—but not always—contain sufficient resources to sustain a group over the course of a year.

Landlessness was not a major problem in most hunter-gatherer communities, in part because of the distribution mechanisms that existed. Conflicts between individuals and groups did occur in foraging contexts, particularly in those areas in which population densities were high, as was the case in northern California, along the Northwest Coast of North America, and in parts of South Asia. A basic principle involving land matters among foraging societies is that one cannot buy or sell land. There were cases, however, in which people transferred the rights to land to others, sometimes in exchange for goods and services.

A land market did not exist in most foraging societies, a situation which colonial and postcolonial governments wanted to change. A key approach to agricultural and economic development by the state was the privatization of land, a process which, it was argued, would provide individuals with the incentive to invest more labor and capital and, at the same time, to manage and conserve resources. This privatization process has led to the dispossession of hunter-gatherers in places as far afield as Australia, North and South America, Asia, and Africa. The process of land reform was done by declaring areas as *terra nullius* (empty land) (Bodley 1999). This is what occurred in Australia, for example. Another strategy was to declare land as state land, giving rights to the government, which, in turn, ceded portions of the land to private companies and individuals. In all of the cases in which the basis for land tenure was changed, people on that land, some of whom were hunter-gatherers, were dispossessed, and many of them were forced to relocate to new areas.

The common property management systems of hunter-gatherers provided them with a means of ensuring access to resources among group members even in periods of scarcity. At the same time, the communal land tenure systems became the object of attack by colonial and postcolonial governments bent on either creating private land tenure systems or turning the land into state land. British systems of common law saw the abrogation of hunter-gatherer land rights in areas as diverse as Australia, the New World, Africa, and South Asia. The establishment of the Soviet Union saw large amounts of indigenous land turned into state property. Large numbers of foragers were dispossessed as a result of these changes (see Table I.2).

The strategy of removing people from their traditional territories generally was done in most cases without the agreement of the people

**TABLE I.2 Areas Controlled by Indigenous Peoples**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Area (sq. km.)</b>	<b>Percentage of Country</b>
Greenland	2,125,600	100
Papua New Guinea	128,000	97
Ecuador	128,000	45
Sweden	137,000	33
Colombia	260,000	25
Canada	2,221,559	22
Australia	895,000	12
Mexico	169,000	8
Brazil	573,000	7
New Zealand	16,200	6
United States	364,500	4
Costa Rica	1,930	4
India	1,498	<1
Botswana	3,523	0.6
Namibia	6,300	0.08

Note: Data obtained from Bodley (1999); Durning (1992: 24, Table 3); Veber et al. (1993); Young (1995).

themselves. Even in those cases in which people did appear to agree, as occurred, for example, in the United States when treaties were signed (e.g., the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868), the indigenous groups did not concur with the European notion that land would become private and thus off-limits to them for occupancy and use. The widespread process of dispossession and the establishment of native reserves (or, in the United States, reservations) had highly negative impacts on the well-being of hunter-gatherer peoples.

As state-induced settlement occurred, hunter-gatherers responded in a variety of ways. In some cases, they settled on the peripheries of trading stations (e.g., the Hudson's Bay trading posts of North America), forts (e.g., Fort Robinson in western Nebraska), and missions (e.g., the missions of California such as San Juan Capistrano and Santa Barbara). When hunter-gatherer populations had their mobility options limited and as a result became residentially stationary, they had to work out ways to continue to earn a living. In some cases, they worked for other people in exchange for food or cash. In other cases, they intensified their foraging efforts, going on long-distance hunting and gathering trips and procuring large amounts of goods that they either processed for storage or sold. Native Americans on the Great Plains such as the Cheyenne and Lakota, for example, engaged in extended buffalo hunts and sold some of

the produce. Some of them entered into the formal economy, in a number of cases working as soldiers, as can be seen, for example, among the Crow of North America, the Montagnards of Vietnam, and the Kxoe and Vasekele San of Namibia.

A major factor affecting hunter-gatherers and other indigenous groups in various parts of the world was the provision of food and other goods by the state. This provisioning strategy was not always done out of humanitarian concerns; it was also a means of getting people to become increasingly dependent on the state, and of putting them in a position to be more easily assimilated. While the food given to indigenous groups was sometimes the difference between survival and starvation, there were serious costs to the peoples receiving that food, not least of which was the creation of a dependency syndrome in which indigenous people were tied more closely to the state. Household heads lost status, and there were tensions along lines of gender and age within families. Many of the people in the settlements faced severe problems in terms of poverty, hunger, unemployment, restricted housing access, and discrimination. As a consequence, some people migrated away from the relocation areas in order to find employment opportunities and a more satisfactory living situation elsewhere. It was often males who left home in search of new opportunities, leaving behind their wives and children who had to resort to depending on other people for food, income, and labor.

Most hunter-gatherers did not sit idly by while the state took their land or forced them into dependency situations. Australian Aboriginals, for example, fought hard to get recognition of their land and political rights. These struggles resulted in the passage of a major statute, the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976. There were also important court cases, such as the *Mabo* decision of 1992, which recognized native title for the Murray Islanders in the Torres Strait (Young 1995). The Inuit and other First Nations in Canada have negotiated with the Canadian government for recognition of their land rights. One result of these efforts was the declaration of Nunavut (Our Land), a 770,000 square mile area that became Canada's third official territory on 1 April 1999. Hunter-gatherers are now in control of the political process in Greenland, where they are represented in the Greenland parliament.

### **Hunter-Gatherer Political Organization, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution**

Arguments about why hunter-gatherers tend to experience greater degrees of deprivation than many other groups include that they tend to be small in number, live in relatively remote areas in many cases, and have

social customs and traditions that are different from the majority populations of the countries in which they reside. Some hunter-gatherers in the past lived in small, coresidential groups of people known as bands that were widely dispersed across the landscape. The average group size was twenty-five to fifty people, approximately five to six families. These groups were united through bonds of kinship, marriage, friendship, and reciprocity, as outlined in this volume by Laura Rival, Robert Tonkinson, and Jean Briggs. Public policy was a product of extensive consultation and discussion among the members of hunter-gatherer groups. San, Hadza, and Australian Aboriginals tended to be egalitarian in their social and political organization, with individuals having relatively equal access to resources.

The politics of hunter-gatherer communities were such that individualism was tolerated and, in fact, was admired. Those people who were disruptive or who engaged in socially inappropriate behavior (stealing, fighting, adultery, and abuse) were usually dealt with by peers who intervened to stop fights and who remonstrated with them, urging them to stop acting in negative ways. Those people who continued to act in ways that were disapproved of by other members of their communities were subjected to social pressure, which usually took the form of comments and criticisms made by other members of his or her group. Individuals who continued to act inappropriately were ostracized. If an individual still persisted in unacceptable behavior, he or she might be forced out of the group. In extreme cases, that person might be put to death by other members of the group.

Many hunter-gatherers have customs that help them to avoid situations likely to arouse ill will and hostility among individuals within bands and between bands. These customs include meat-sharing, gift-giving, and extensive public discussion of events and ways to deal with issues of concern to the group. Among many hunter-gatherers, the meat of wild animals is shared among members of a group, usually along lines of kinship and friendship. The distribution is usually overseen by the individual(s) who procured the resource or who manufactured or had possession of the weapon that was used in the kill. Sharing is something that is seen by most if not all hunter-gatherers as an activity that is important to maintaining good social relations among people and to ensuring at least some access to resources among group members.

A prevailing assumption in the past about hunter-gatherers was that foraging communities lacked formal leaders and did not have organized political institutions. Discussions with hunter-gatherers, however, lead to the conclusion that virtually all communities had people whom they respected and whose suggestions they frequently chose to abide by. These leaders made decisions, adjudicated disputes, and represented the

community in discussions with outsiders. In some cases there were groups of elders who formed what might be described as community councils. These people had a significant say in civil matters, such as how to handle disruptive individuals. They were also important in decision-making when people of other communities requested permission to enter their areas in order to use local resources. Complex hunter-gatherer societies—such as the Kwakiutl, Tsimshian, and Bella Coola of the Northwest Coast, as well as some northern California Indian groups—tended to mark their territories and engaged in activities to protect those territories (Kelly 1995: 163). It should be stressed, however, that enhanced territorial behavior was in some cases a response to competition for scarce resources, as was the case, for example, with furbearing animals in Canada.

There has been an ongoing debate in anthropology about war and peace among hunter-gatherers and other indigenous peoples (see, for example, Ferguson and Whitehead 1992; Keeley 1996). Warfare and conflict resolution was one of the themes of the CHAGS 7 conference. While it was noted by contributors to this volume such as Jean-Guy Goulet, Jean Briggs, Marcus Griffin, and Elena Batianova that hunter-gatherers place a high value on maintaining peace and tranquility and have various social and ritualistic strategies for promoting harmony and alleviating conflict, there is also evidence that aggression and conflict has occurred among foragers, sometimes at quite high levels. As Goulet notes, there were conflicting visions of peace and conflict among the Dene Tha of northwestern Alberta. While efforts were made to control hostility, there were socially sanctioned ways in which hostility and aggression could be expressed. Marcus Griffin takes note of rising levels of conflict and murder among the Agta of Eastern Luzon in the Philippines, and points out that violence has increased as the state and other groups have begun to play greater roles in the lives of the Agta. As Leland Donald notes, Northwest Coast hunter-gatherers engaged in conflict, sometimes in efforts to obtain people who would eventually wind up as slaves. Clearly, while hunter-gatherers, like other people, generally eschew violence, they do engage in it, and violence is sometimes viewed as a means, albeit a risky one, of dealing with the state and other agencies that move into hunter-gatherer territories and exploit the resources present there. The archaeological and ethnographic records reveal numerous cases of warfare and conflict, some of which were pursued for material or ideological purposes.

As noted by a number of authors in this volume, a major issue with which hunter-gatherers and indigenous peoples are concerned is that of sovereignty, or, as many indigenous leaders put it, “self-determination” (Anaya 1996; Bodley 1999). An examination of the sociopolitical statuses of indigenous peoples around the world reveals that very few of them are in control of the governments of the countries in which they reside, and



most of them lack political power even at the regional level. A major reason for this situation is that many of them were designated by colonial governments as “wards of the state,” lacking legal rights to participate in political decision-making or to control their own futures.

The past three decades have witnessed an intensification of efforts at both the international and grassroots levels to promote human rights for indigenous peoples, hunter-gatherers, and minorities. Yet these populations continue to be vulnerable to oppression and exploitation. International conventions and instruments on indigenous and minority rights often go unenforced, and, as a result, the members of these groups have their rights violated with impunity by states, international agencies, and private companies and individuals (Hitchcock 1994; Minority Rights Group 1997).

Today, there are literally hundreds of indigenous grassroots organizations and institutions that are seeking to enhance their livelihoods and gain greater control over their areas. Some of them are engaged in sustainable development activities, carrying out ecotourism and rural industrial projects, social forestry programs, and soil and water conservation activities. Indigenous peoples are engaged not only in community-based conservation activities but also in social movements aiming to bring about social and environmental justice (Durning 1992). By doing regional networking and organizing civil demonstrations, native peoples in Australia, Canada, Colombia, Bolivia, and Ecuador have taken some important steps toward gaining government recognition of their land and political rights. They have also formed regional organizations, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, and international organizations like the World Congress of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP). These organizations have played important roles in getting both governments and international agencies to agree on developing policies and programs that are more socially and environmentally sustainable. Indigenous and environmental groups have enhanced their impacts through their collaborative efforts, which ultimately could lead to international recognition of a communal right to a healthy environment.

The right to a healthy environment has been a major concern of hunters and gatherers, who have experienced what they perceive as more than their fair share of environmental disasters and habitat destruction, sometimes at the hands of influential private companies. Such problems occurred in the ecologically rich Oriente region of Ecuador, where the Huaorani live. As Rival points out in her chapter, oil companies, including Texaco and Maxus, have had spills and have left toxic wastes in Ecuador, reducing the quality of life for the people there. Similar problems can be seen for the inhabitants of Prince William Sound in Alaska, where the Exxon Valdez went aground a decade ago. These issues received

considerable attention at the CHAGS 7 conference from the indigenous peoples living in the Russian Far North (which includes Siberia and the regions to the east of the Urals) and the researchers working with them. These peoples, who have been termed the “Numerically Small Peoples of the North,” have been heavily impacted by the expansion of timber, mining, and oil company activities in their areas, especially in the past several decades. Violence, both ritual and nonritual, is on the increase, as noted here by Elena Batianova.

Like many other areas of the world, the Russian Far North has seen the rise of indigenous political and environmental movements. But in the remote, difficult reaches of the Arctic, only the larger-scale industrial investments can turn a profit; hunter-gatherers and other smaller-scale groups tend to have little option but to work for others or to try and survive by foraging and selling their produce to anyone who is fortunate enough to have the cash to buy it. As one member of a Siberian indigenous group put it, “We are living in a land which has been fouled by oil companies, and we are on the verge of starvation while they make huge profits.”

### **Hunter-Gatherers in Russian and Western Anthropology**

The Seventh Conference on Hunting and Gathering Peoples (CHAGS 7) was noteworthy for having been held in Moscow at a time when Russian/Western academic contacts were still relatively few in anthropology. It also added to a short but significant list of international conferences that have given participants from many parts of the world the chance to reflect upon their own academic traditions in the light of very different ones current in Russia. Among these had been the small conference at Burg Wartenstein in 1976, which resulted in the publication of *Soviet and Western Anthropology*, edited by Ernest Gellner (1980), and the larger CHAGS 6 held in Fairbanks, Alaska, in 1990, which brought a substantial number of Russian scholars to the United States for the lively interchange that served as the impetus for the 1993 CHAGS 7 in Moscow.

To put some of the differences in academic traditions into perspective with regard to the present volume, it is worthwhile to look briefly into areas like folklore and historicity (for other subject areas, see Chapter 1 by Schweitzer), and to assess how these developed in the former Soviet Union versus the ways they are regarded by Western anthropological scholarship. The essays in this volume are themselves illustrations of greatly varying attitudes toward the utility of folkloric and linguistic materials in the ethnography of ethnic difference. In particular, we draw attention to the fundamental ways in which Russian and Western anthropology differ as

disciplines. The Russian discipline (*etnografiia*), although institutionally distinct from linguistics, archaeology, and physical anthropology, was always very inclusive in its practice, comprising history, archaeology, and even philosophy, among other fields, within its scope. Perhaps even more importantly, to quote Gellner, *etnografiia* also “reflects or expresses the manner in which the intellectuals of the Soviet Union think about some of the deepest problems within their own society, and about its place in the scheme of things and in world history” (Gellner 1980: ix). Getting enmeshed in the Marxist debates that this comment initiates is beyond the scope of this introduction. But a few relevant remarks may be made about the different attitudes toward cultural studies that are implied, particularly in an area that has long been an uneasy one in the West—that of overlap or collaboration between anthropology and folklore studies.

According to Bromley (1975: 603–4), contemporary ethnic groups manifest their specific ethnic features through “spiritual culture” rather than through material or organizational infrastructure. This “spiritual culture” includes the profound legacy of oral folklore, which extended through all strata of Russian society until far into this century. The techniques of structural linguistic analysis are thus routinely and confidently used by Russian researchers as methods by which ethnographic analogies enter the historical past.

Oral traditions, particularly views of the historical past held by specific peoples, have been the object of extensive methodological writing by Russian scholars. Though there exist similar approaches in Western traditions (e.g., Jan Vansina’s *Oral Tradition: A Study of Historical Methodology*, 1965), it is only recently that Western anthropologists and archaeologists have taken it very seriously, such as in current research being carried out in the Kalahari by Andrew Smith and Richard Lee.

Then there is what Dragadze (1975: 604) calls “the most striking and baffling feature of Soviet anthropology—the historical dimension ... each society ... containing elements of the past and moving towards some new form.” It is clear to a Western folklorist how aptly suited such a perspective is to investigation through structural rules for expressive cultures such as those elaborated by Vladimir Propp in his book *Theory and History of Folklore* (1984). But this perspective has been less clear for Western anthropology as a whole, which has long regarded folklore studies as a kind of stepchild, and finds itself obscurely embarrassed by otherwise “serious” works that rely even to a small degree on folklore methodologies and materials. A persistence of this attitude might cause the enthusiastic Russian use of such sources and approaches to be regarded as quaint or worse; we therefore feel it is important to point out the deep disciplinary precedents for the use of oral ideological materials in the study of cultures.

It is equally important to remember, as Roman Jakobson points out in his commentary on Afanas'ev's *Russian Fairy Tales* (Jakobson 1945), that Russian folktales were first recorded and published, not in their homeland and not in their native tongue, but in English, in English translation. Russian folktales remained unwritten so long in Russian because of the Russian Church's dominance over written literature. This domination extended to all classes, so that oral transmission long remained the only medium for the diffusion of "a copious, original, manifold, and highly artistic tradition" based upon a shared and ancient orality. What brings this reverence for and reliance on folk tradition right up to the moment in the intellectual traditions of the Russian social sciences is the equally strong emphasis in Russian academic life on the integration of what the West would call separate disciplines, including literary studies, history, archaeology, and anthropology.

Aleksandr Nikolaevich Afanas'ev, by education a lawyer, became one of the few scholars in Russian anthropology to play such a profound role in the history of a national culture. But other Russian scholars of oral literature in society—like Meletinsky (1974) and of course Propp himself—have, through their work, profoundly affected the course of analytic trends in Russian social science. The semiotic approaches of structural linguistics have thus become an irrevocable part of the substrate of cultural studies in Russia in a way they have not in Western anthropology in general. There are, of course, exceptions to this statement in various of the European traditions, but overall it may be said that the Western disciplines of comparative literature, folklore, and history (narrowly conceived) have benefited more from the infusion of theory on the rules of cultural creativity and transmission than has Western ethnography up to this point.

In this volume, the contributions of Alekseenko and Kim serve to underscore the expansion of hunter-gatherer study that is possible with the inclusion of cultural detail usually associated in Western anthropology with linguistics and folklore. Alekseenko presents a contextualized account of time in the Ket traditional world-view by showing its embeddedness in details of the Ket bear cult. The cyclicity of time in Ket and other Siberian cultures is closely connected not only to outcomes in the enterprise of hunting but to human relationships with the world of the dead. Amassing such integrated detail allows Alekseenko to approach an area of human life—that of emotional states regarding important rites of passage—that has been rarely touched on in Western anthropology.

Alexandra Kim outlines the linguistic complexities of the life of the soul in Sel'kup conception. Because the spiritual traditions of most hunting-gathering cultures have existed in oral form, they have remained relatively inaccessible to researchers, and in fact have been regarded as

somehow “lesser” than those “great” religious traditions of the world known through texts and codices. Kim’s investigation of the Sel’kup lexicon regarding religious life and its grounding in the Sel’kup physical and social environment is profoundly humanizing in its great detail and etymological connectedness. This chapter also fearlessly opens an enormous cultural question that social scientists have skirted for years—that of abstract ideas. Because this issue is, after all, basic to anthropological inquiry, the essay forms a fitting end to our anthology. It leaves readers with a challenge in world understanding that should stimulate further humanizing research with foragers—and perhaps enable us to better know ourselves.

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## *Chapter 1*

# **SILENCE AND OTHER MISUNDERSTANDINGS**

Russian Anthropology, Western Hunter-Gatherer  
Debates, and Siberian Peoples



*Peter P. Schweitzer*

## **Introduction**

The present book is the first post-*Man the Hunter* volume devoted to the study of hunting and gathering societies that includes a significant number of case studies dealing with Siberian peoples.<sup>1</sup> This fact alone, or— even more so—its novelty, seems to require explanation. In addition, as readers will undoubtedly discover for themselves, the issues addressed and the perspectives chosen in the articles on Siberia differ from what Western anthropology has established as the mainstream treatment of hunter-gatherers over the last thirty years. Thus, this chapter intends to provide one possible reading of these recognizable differences.

As a first approximation to the topic, I want to relate a personal example of how I experienced the unified neglect by Western and Russian anthropology of Siberia, an area that historically was inhabited largely by hunter-gatherers. As a graduate student in the early 1980s, I became intrigued by the growing body of literature on hunter-gatherers but, at the same time, dismayed by the complete absence of Siberian data in these discussions. Arriving in 1986 in Leningrad, eager to work on a dissertation topic designed to partially rectify this situation and expecting to be met cheerfully by Soviet colleagues, I soon realized that hardly anyone among the Siberian specialists seemed interested in my glaringly Marxist-sounding topic “Foraging Modes of Production in Northeastern Siberia.”

It turned out that neither my lack of experience in Siberian ethnography nor the fact that contemporary Siberian peoples could hardly be classified as “pure hunter-gatherers” was responsible for this reserved reception. Instead, over the years I began to realize that differences in research traditions and approaches, some of which I will discuss below, lay at the heart of this failed cross-cultural encounter. To conclude the narrative of my quest for the hunter-gatherer debate in Siberia, my final thesis retained little of the initial “big questions.” Instead, it became an ethnohistoric treatment of a narrowly circumscribed area in northeastern Siberia, with hardly recognizable allusions to Western hunter-gatherer debates in unsuspecting places. This change of mind was to a large degree triggered by my Soviet colleagues, and I never had reason to regret it.

Since I believe that there is more to this story than a private anecdote of scholarly miscommunication, in the following pages I will explore a number of different temporal and topical aspects of several relationships. On the one hand, Western anthropology’s interest and disinterest in Siberian peoples as hunter-gatherers will be portrayed and tentatively explained.<sup>2</sup> More emphasis, however, will be put on illustrating and understanding the relationship of Russian/Soviet anthropology in general, and Siberian studies in particular, to the study of hunting and gathering societies. This “preference” seems to be justified in a publication addressing primarily an English-speaking audience and will be of relevance in contextualizing the Siberian chapters of this volume. Thus, there will be two distinct but related questions addressed in the following pages:

1. Why did Western anthropology neglect data about Siberian hunter-gatherers until the recent past?
2. Why did Soviet/Russian anthropologists working in Siberia rarely, if ever, address issues that had been raised in Western debates about hunter-gatherers?

Both issues/questions have to be put into historical perspective, i.e., before discussing possible reasons we have to locate these tendencies of neglect in time. This chronological view leads inevitably to the present and the future and, thereby, to the question as to how these relations will develop from this point in time.

## **The Roots of Silence**

### *Western Anthropology and the Peoples of Siberia*

A comprehensive treatment that examines if and how non-Russian anthropology incorporated Siberian data is clearly beyond the scope of this

essay; it would require a separate article, if not a book. However, it is possible to make the general statement that pre-twentieth-century scholarship outside of Russia was reasonably well informed about Siberian peoples (many early ethnographers of Siberia were non-Russians, and Germans were especially numerous among them). If we focus our attention on the social/cultural anthropology of the twentieth century, it becomes obvious that the early decades of this century were particularly productive in providing information about Siberia in languages other than Russian. On the one hand, the Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897–1902), under the direction of Franz Boas, resulted in an unprecedented level of Russian-American cooperative research and publications, part of it situated in northeastern Siberia (see, e.g., Bogoras 1904–09; 1910; 1913; Jochelson 1905–08; 1910–26; Laufer 1902).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, a significant number of other researchers (both Russians and non-Russians) made their results of Siberian research available in Western languages (see, e.g., Donner 1933; Findeisen 1929; Lehtisalo 1932; Shimkin 1939; Shirokogoroff 1929; 1935; Steinitz 1938; Zolotarev 1937). Finally, a number of comparative studies, based on Russian and non-Russian sources on Siberia, were published in Western languages (see, e.g., Czaplicka 1914; Hallowell 1926; Harva 1938; Nioradze 1925; Ohlmarks 1939; Stadling 1912). While none of these works consciously addressed issues of hunting and gathering, most of them provided data on the subject.

A cursory look at a few English-language texts (and textbooks) of the time reveals an ambiguous picture. Some authors used Siberian examples extensively in illustrating certain issues of general anthropology (see, e.g., Forde 1934; Lowie 1934). Daryll Forde's *Habitat, Economy, and Society* is particularly relevant for our purposes, since the author's ecological perspective led him to organize his case studies by subsistence categories; under "Food Gatherers" Siberia is represented by the Yukagirs, and the northern Tunguses (Evenks and Evens) figure under "Pastoral Nomads" (Forde 1934). Other contemporary authors, however, completely neglected the available information on Siberian peoples (see, e.g., Radin 1932; Wissler 1929). Most importantly, Julian Steward—who was to become one of the founding fathers of the modern Western discourse on hunter-gatherers—belonged to the latter camp. In none of his writings, including his seminal "The Economic and Social Basis of Primitive Bands" (Steward 1936), could I detect any substantial discussion of Siberian materials.

While before World War II the incorporation, or neglect, of Siberian data seems to have been determined largely by idiosyncratic preferences of individual authors, the situation changed dramatically after the war. Between the 1950s and 1980s, Siberia was almost entirely absent from the indexes of British and American textbooks and of general anthropological

treatises. There are at least three well-known circumstances that might explain the post–World War II ignorance of Siberia:

1. There were hardly any possibilities for Western fieldwork in Soviet Siberia.
2. Very few Western anthropologists spoke or read Russian; thus the available Soviet literature was left unutilized.
3. Cold War attitudes made interest in Soviet Siberia suspicious if it was not directed toward the critique of Communist crimes.

However, several counterarguments to these “common-sense explanations” should be raised:

1. The few Westerners who were able to conduct fieldwork in Siberia during the late 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Caroline Humphrey and Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer) were unable to attract a larger anthropological interest in their work before the late 1980s. Balzer’s research among the Khantys especially should have made students of hunting and gathering societies curious about her results.
2. The language argument is not very convincing, because—as we see today—the Russian language is studied when there is interest in Siberia (and, thus, the lack of Russian-language competence is an effect and not a reason of disinterest). There are even a few examples of useful Western articles based entirely on non-Russian sources.<sup>4</sup> Restricting myself to Chukotka for this purpose, three such contributions come to mind (Ingold 1986; Leeds 1965; Libby 1960). Particularly, Ingold’s 1986 article, “Hunting, Sacrifice and the Domestication of Animals,” while almost entirely based on works by Bogoras published at the beginning of the century, is one of the most interesting treatises on Chukchi society. Ingold’s analysis of the differences between reindeer-herding and hunting/gathering Chukchi social and economic relations as expressed through world-view and ritual is compelling. Thus, one dares to wonder what results could have been possible if Western anthropologists had incorporated Russian-language data.
3. The Cold War argument definitely has its strong points. The general political atmosphere certainly led to a level of suspicion and distrust against any information coming from the Soviet Union. However, as the active postwar collaboration regarding questions of the peopling of the New World between North American and Soviet archaeologists and physical anthropologists shows (see Krupnik 1998), these sentiments and attitudes could be overcome when there was recognition of mutual scholarly benefit (especially, after the 1950s).<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in addition to the issues already addressed, we will have to turn to specific aspects of the Western anthropological discourse. Modern Western hunter-gatherer debates effectively got under way during the 1960s. Elman Service's concise summary statement *The Hunters* (Service 1966) not only defended Steward's "patrilocal band hypothesis," but also continued the latter's neglect of Siberia. Wendell Oswalt's technology-centered evolutionary account of hunting, *Habitat and Technology* (Oswalt 1973), displays an "empty quarter" where Siberia is located on its map of cases discussed, while Carleton Coon manages to mention the Chukchis, Koriaks, and Ite'mens a few times, mainly in conjunction with American Eskimos, in his *The Hunting Peoples* (Coon 1971). However, the most influential statement of these years stems from the conference and subsequent publication *Man the Hunter* (Lee and DeVore 1968). Although the entire book does not contain a single substantial reference to Siberian hunter-gatherers, it contains a highly interesting passage explaining why this is the case. "Elder statesman" George Peter Murdock, in his "The Current Status of the World's Hunting and Gathering Peoples" (Murdock 1968: 16) declared:

The non-agricultural peoples of Siberia have long since been converted to a pastoral mode of life in the interior, or, on the coast, have come to depend primarily upon fishing and have adopted a relatively sedentary settlement pattern. The only two Siberian peoples who seem to meet our strict definition of hunters and gatherers are the Ket ... and the Yukaghir.... Both tribes have doubtless been so altered by Soviet acculturation policies that further field work among them is unlikely to yield rewarding results.

Murdock's statement contains three distinct points, which—taken together—eliminate all Siberian peoples from the category of "eligible hunter-gatherers":

1. Many Siberian groups have, long prior to the twentieth century, adopted reindeer herding and are thus pastoralists and not hunter-gatherers. However, Murdock does not mention that interior (or taiga) reindeer herders of Siberia have historically used domesticated reindeer as beasts of burden in hunting pursuits. The herders were in many respects similar to "mounted hunters" (although rather few groups actually rode these animals).
2. Siberian hunter-gatherers, whose subsistence was traditionally based on seasonally sedentary fishing and/or sea mammal hunting, are not "real hunter-gatherers." Murdock's "strict" definition excluded also "mounted hunters" and "incipient tillers," which left him with a short list of "twenty-seven surviving groups of hunter-gatherers" (Murdock 1968: 15).

3. The only two Siberian groups to make it through categories (1) and (2), the Kets and Yukagirs, are finally eliminated because of the effects of Soviet acculturation policies. It should be noted, however, that Murdock's list of twenty-seven contained North American groups, such as the Apache, California Indians, and northwestern Athapaskans, among several others. That the underlying assumption—i.e., that any of these groups was, in the 1960s, less affected by mighty acculturative pressures than the Kets and Yukagirs—could be taken seriously is difficult to imagine, even during the heyday of Cold War distrust against everything Soviet.

While these three distinct criteria seem to address three different realms of taxonomy and definition, points (1) and (2) can be understood as voicing a common concern, namely the definitional boundaries of the hunter-gatherer category. While the statements under point (3) can be criticized easily, the two other points cannot be contested factually. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to question the usefulness of any given definition as a heuristic device. Already the volume *Man the Hunter* violated Murdock's strict definition, e.g., by including articles on Northwest Coast societies and on the Ainus, which, according to point (2), fell outside the range of the permissible sample. Subsequent books and articles on the subject have continued to disregard Murdock's criteria. Not only "sedentary fishermen/sea mammal hunters" outside of Siberia became part of the emerging "hunter-gatherer discourse," but also part-time pastoralists—in obvious violation of point (1)—were included in these considerations (it should suffice to mention the "Great Kalahari debate" and its forerunners). Still, Siberia remained outside of these discussions.

In order to give Murdock's strict definition a positive spin, it might be said that by excluding Siberia, he focused attention on a core group of nomadic, "simple," and egalitarian hunter-gatherers (though the "California Indians" seem somehow odd as a part of this group). At the same time, it becomes immediately obvious that this narrow focus eliminated the possibility of exploring the full range of the "foraging spectrum" (Kelly 1995), something that has become increasingly important in recent years (e.g., Kent 1996; Shnirelman 1992). It seems that this "purist" approach to delineating the boundaries of the category "hunter-gatherer" has to do with viewing hunter-gatherers as "our contemporary ancestors" or "our primitive contemporaries." Murdock himself had given the latter phrase wide recognition by using it as the title for one of his early textbooks (Murdock 1938).

However, it was not George Peter Murdock's evolutionary comparativism that triggered the "new hunter-gatherer debate" of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, it was a broad movement—which hereinafter will be

labeled “neoevolutionism,” which includes “cultural ecology,” “cultural materialism,” etc.—that overcame the cautious Boasian paradigm by proposing a (natural) science perspective on human behavior. One of the implicit or explicit assumptions was that “real” contemporary hunter-gatherers could provide better clues about the “human condition” than other kinds of societies (Lee and DeVore 1968: ix). This perceived possibility called for new “scientific” methods of counting and measuring; subsequently, these data had to be procured anew and could not just be extrapolated from somebody else’s research. The “degree of acculturation” was also a concern, although none of the studies conducted in the 1960s and since were able to pretend that any of the groups under consideration were foragers in a world of foragers. Thus, the experimental and evolutionary aspects of the new approaches disqualified Siberia, either on the grounds of fieldwork access or acculturation.<sup>6</sup>

Instead of presenting a single-factor explanation, we have to conclude the present section by acknowledging a multitude of factors at work. Nevertheless, it seems possible to arrange them somehow hierarchically, thus indicating that they are not of equal relevance in understanding the questions at hand. The fact that World War II seems to mark a dividing line in the Western treatment of Siberia indicates the undeniable consequences of Cold War attitudes on our subject. However, it is impossible to assign all Western anthropologists to the camp of stern anti-Soviet believers (as it is likewise impossible to assume that every Soviet anthropologist was a convinced ideological enemy of the West). Thus, the theoretical and methodological inclinations of the neoevolutionist paradigm have to be given appropriate consideration. I believe that only the combination (and mutual reinforcement) of these two factors can explain most of the neglect under discussion. The other factors mentioned seem to be secondary, that is, they are likely to be effects of the first two. For example, the widespread unwillingness to examine and interpret Soviet sources instead of conducting one’s own fieldwork can be explained by the prevalent distrust of Soviet sources *and* by the long- dominant approach that “real contemporary hunter-gatherers” offer a privileged window into human nature and (pre)history. Ironically, there was a significant number of politically leftist scholars among the American neoevolutionists. Thus, we are confronted with a strange alliance of distrusting anti-Communists and leftist believers in the scientific study of social evolution that succeeded in excluding/silencing a significant number of human societies from the developing hunter-gatherer discourse.

### *Soviet Anthropology and the Study of Hunter-Gatherers*

In the preceding pages, I speculated about reasons why a particular anthropological tradition excluded a certain region of the world, Siberia,

from its discourse. This section intends to tackle the question of why a particular taxonomic device, the category “hunter-gatherers,” was so rarely utilized in another anthropological tradition, the Russian/Soviet tradition. However, after addressing the question from the general perspective of Soviet anthropology, I will also turn to Siberia, since I believe that there were specific reasons at work in excluding Siberian societies from what was the Soviet equivalent of hunter-gatherers.

The chronological aspect of the question under consideration is relatively easy to answer. Starting in the mid-1930s, when Marxist-Leninist dogma became firmly established in Soviet anthropology, the category “hunter-gatherers” rarely was assigned any theoretical significance. Previously, that is, in the general works of early Russian anthropologists from the 1880s onwards (who were mostly evolutionists and/or materialists), the category was used quite frequently as an organizational device in presenting materials from around the globe (see, e.g., Kovalevskii 1906; Kropotkin 1902; Maksimov 1913; Ziber 1883). However, since it made little sense to speak of a hunter-gatherer “debate” or even “discourse” at the time, the use of the term did not necessarily indicate a particular theoretical position. Still, what comes closest to a hunter-gatherer debate of the time, i.e., the deliberations of German/Austrian economic anthropologists about distinct types of hunting societies and on whether pastoralism could have emerged directly from hunting (see, e.g., Grosse 1896; Hahn 1891; Koppers 1915–16), were evidently closely followed in Russia.

The relatively unambiguous timing of the disappearance of hunter-gatherers from Soviet anthropological horizons also provides a straightforward explanation for it: Marxist-Leninist anthropology dismisses the category “hunter-gatherer” as a low-level analytical category (it is just a “mode of subsistence”) and replaces it with the dialectical notions of “mode of production” and “social formation.” The social formation closest in content to the category “hunter-gatherers” is *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* (literally “primordial society”; generally rendered as “primitive society”).<sup>7</sup> *Pervobytnoe obshchestvo* is a category that includes all preclass societies; while many members of the class are hunting and gathering societies, (classless) agricultural societies belong there as well. At the same time, hunter-gatherers with pronounced social and economic stratification are in danger of falling out of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo*.

This model of categorization follows rather directly from the writings of Marx and Engels on the nature of the relationship between economy and other aspects of society. More specifically, Rosa Luxemburg, in her critique of Grosse’s attempt to correlate family forms with modes of subsistence, had already stated, “if we only know that a community lives by hunting, herding or agriculture, we still do not know anything about the proper nature of ‘production’ and its relation to other aspects of culture”



(Luxemburg 1925: 108). The particular difficulties that arise when one tries to correlate hunting and gathering with a particular “mode of production” became evident during the 1970s and 1980s, as scholars of hunting and gathering societies informed by Western Marxism provided such attempts (e.g., Ingold 1988; Keenan 1977; Lee 1980).

Thus, it could be argued that Soviet anthropology merely studied hunter-gatherers under a different label from that of its Western counterpart. This is to a certain degree true, since hunting and gathering societies were in no way excluded from the scope of the discipline. They were extensively cited in the key texts about *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* (e.g., Bromlei 1982; 1986; Kosven 1953; Pershits 1982), as examples of a (mostly bygone) chapter of human history. One might expect that this view of hunter-gatherers as representatives of early humanity should have brought Soviet anthropology in close contact with Western neoevolutionists. However, Soviet anthropology generally displayed an ambiguous fascination with neoevolutionism: it was the subject of disproportionately many Soviet reviews, which generally acknowledged its “attempts to overcome the theoretical impasse into which the historical school had led” (Petrova-Averkieva 1980: 53), but at the same time declared that the only real alternative was Marxism.<sup>8</sup> In addition to these general concerns, there were also more specific theoretical reasons for rejecting the new Western approaches to hunter-gatherer studies; among them were the following:

1. By concentrating on the specific qualities of hunting and gathering societies, Western anthropology had to put much emphasis on the “Neolithic revolution” as a dividing line in human history. For Soviet anthropology, on the other hand, still following Engels, the emergence of class relations remained the basic qualitative transition in social evolution.<sup>9</sup>
2. The reemphasis on the study of bilateral kinship systems, beginning in the West in the 1960s and 1970s, threatened the Soviet concept of *rod* (best English translation “lineage,” “exogamous clan,” or—in Engels’s terms—“gens”). The *rod* held a very prominent place in the Soviet theory of primitive society. The assumption that social evolution is characterized by the subsequent stages of matrilineal and patrilineal kinship organization was transformed into dogma in Soviet ethnography since the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> This was to a large extent connected with Engels’s work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (Engels 1972), which gave priority to the notion of “lineage” over the notion of “community” (*Gemeinschaft*), still very much used by Marx.
3. The notion of the “original affluent society,” coined at the “Man the Hunter” conference, is in fundamental contradiction to the

Marxist-Leninist concept of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo*. *Perbvobytnoe obshchestvo* is conceptualized as being unable to produce surplus, due to the low development of the forces of production. The argument of the “original affluent society” threatened the “prime mover” of the Soviet concept of social evolution, which is based on the linear development of the forces of production.<sup>11</sup>

So far, we have established why Soviet anthropology made little use of the analytical concept of hunter-gatherers and have looked at some of the specific reasons that separated it from Western research of the 1960s and 1970s. However, we still have to clarify whether Soviet anthropology merely practiced hunter-gatherer research under a different label. In doing so, I will concentrate on the example of Siberian hunter-gatherers, since they are the prime focus of our inquiry.

One defining characteristic of the Soviet study of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* was that it was not merely one research perspective being investigated by anthropologists working in their regional areas of expertise. This was succinctly stated by Gellner’s dictum that *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* “is an important, restricted and above all heavily theory-loaded term” and “anyone who fails to note this will altogether misunderstand Russian anthropological discussions” (Gellner 1988: 12). In addition, we have to keep in mind that, while most anthropologists at the Moscow Institute of Ethnography were working in regional sectors (e.g., Siberia, Africa, non-Soviet Asia), anthropologists dealing with *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* had no official regional specialization. As a rule, they were theoreticians who made use of data collected by regional specialists, archaeologists, historians, etc. At the same time, regional specialists (of Siberia or elsewhere) were not “authorized” to address the big questions of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* and kept to problems of regional culture history instead. This division of labor, which characterized Soviet science organization but is no longer in place, is still recognizable in many aspects of post-Soviet anthropology.

While the aforementioned applies as much to Africa as to Siberia, there were more specific reasons for rarely combining the category hunter-gatherers (or *pervobytnoe obshchestvo*, for that matter) with Siberia as a region. Most historical, pre-Soviet Siberian societies were classified as belonging to a stage labeled “disintegration of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo*,” which marked the final phases of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo*. Ethnographically, the classical locus of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* has remained Australia and Tasmania throughout the Soviet period. At the same time, contemporary Siberian societies were supposed to be socialist (or, at least, firmly embarked on the way to socialism). Where ethnographic realities had not already prevented anthropologists from putting *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* and Siberia together, political dogma surely succeeded in doing so. Thus,

Siberian societies were both of marginal theoretical interest and inherently dangerous to the student of *pervobytnoe obshchestvo*.

In 1972, an edited volume was published that counteracted much of what has been said above. Entitled *Hunters, Gatherers, Fishermen* (*Okhotniki, sobirатели, rybolovy*; Reshetov 1972), it is, to my knowledge, the only book in the Soviet tradition dedicated entirely and solely to hunter-gatherers. In the introduction (p. 10) there is a specific reference to *Man the Hunter* and *Contributions to Anthropology: Band Societies* (Damas 1969), the basic works of the emerging Western discourse. It also contains five articles on Siberian hunter-gatherers, written by anthropologists with long-time field experience in the area they were writing about (Aleksenko 1972; Khomich 1972; Liapunova 1972; Taksami 1972; Vasilevich 1972). However, with the exception of Vasilevich's article, the Siberian contributions do not differ substantially from other works on Siberia at the time, i.e., they are detailed investigations devoted to particular problems of the culture history of a restricted area. Vasilevich's chapter stands out, since her careful historical analysis leads her to reject an earlier Soviet dictum about the localization of Evenk clans and the prior existence of tribes and phratries among them. In addition, the reader contains one article on the Neolithic of northern Eurasia (Khlobystin 1972), which rejects the then dominant view in Soviet anthropology that the Siberian past (as that of any part of the world) was characterized by matriarchy and matrilineality. Instead, he suggests something like a duolineal totemic organization.

The other parts of the book contain theoretical contributions and case studies from Southeast Asia, Australia, and Africa. Many of them present careful revisions of Soviet representations of hunter-gatherers, without openly criticizing the dominant models. In any case, the volume stands out as a singular event in the history of Soviet hunter-gatherer studies. Instead of speculating which particular academic or political conditions might have enabled its publication, I just want to draw attention to the fact that the volume was published in Leningrad, which was also home to most of its contributors. In contrast, the standard works on *pervobytnoe obshchestvo* were generally produced by members of the Moscow Institute of Ethnography, which also housed the institute's section on theoretical problems.

One author of the volume, Vladimir R. Kabo, has before and since continued to express "dissident" ideas concerning the socioeconomic structure of hunters and gatherers much informed by the Western debate.<sup>12</sup> His major work on the topic *The Primordial Pre-Agricultural Community* (*Pervobytnaia dozemledeľcheskaia obshchina*), published in 1986, gives a good synthesis of his approach. One of Kabo's main arguments runs counter to the Soviet tradition of conceptualizing "primitive

society.” He contrasts the “gens” with the *obshchina* (literally, “community”). The *obshchina*, as used by Kabo, is close to the term “band,” more common in English-language writings on the topic. Without denying the existence of lineages or exogamous clans, he regards the *obshchina* as the basic unit of primitive socioeconomic organization. Thus, Kabo comes close to positions of materialistic Russian ethnographers of prerevolutionary times, like Ziber (1883) and Maksimov (1913), who had little official recognition during Soviet times, as well as to Western concepts putting the “band” at the core of socioeconomic relations.

Kabo characterizes the community as follows (1986: 258–61): it consists of families, economic groups, and task groups; it is connected to a more or less defined territory. The number of the members of a given community depends on various factors: ecology, technology, and social relations. The community is adaptable to various ecological environments. The land and its resources are common property, while personal property rights are exercised on objects of individual use. The division of labor within the community is based on age and sex, with emerging individual specialization, while sharing distributes the products. Various forms of exchange connect different communities or parts of them.

However, Kabo’s book does not deal with Siberian hunter-gatherers. Besides the fact that some of them do not fit his model, there appear to be additional reasons. At the time, Siberia was still under the almost exclusive domain of Soviet ethnographers and was thus also a stronghold of the concept of lineage-based (*rodovaia*) organization. A critical reevaluation of Siberian social organizations might have caused strong opposition to this work. But it should be recalled that there is an earlier article by Kabo, based on fieldwork among the Nivkhs, which can be seen as an application of his theory to a Siberian society (Kabo 1981). He demonstrates that even in this society famous for its lineage-based (*rodovoi*) kinship system, the local group (*obshchina*) is the dominating feature. Kabo’s approach remained rather singular in Soviet anthropology. However, his major book on the topic wasn’t published until 1986, when things slowly started to change. At that point, other books—with similar “hunter-gatherer topics”—started to appear; e.g., one of Kabo’s students, Olga Artemova, published a study on the complex interplay between personality and social norms among Australian Aborigines (Artemova 1987), while Viktor Shnirel’man—who was to become a leading figure in post-Soviet hunter-gatherer research—presented a theoretically sophisticated treatise on the “origins of the producing economy,” that is, he dealt with the “Neolithic revolution” which turned hunter-gatherers into farmers (Shnirel’man 1989). This leads us to the next chapter of Soviet/Western relations regarding hunter-gatherer studies.