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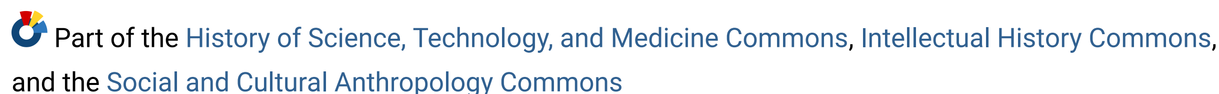
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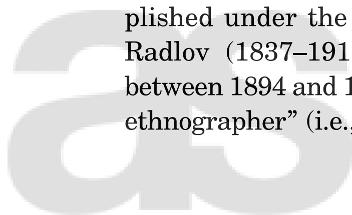
Evolutionism and Historical Particularism at the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography

Sergei Kan

In the history of anthropology, "the Museum Period" has usually been described as extending from the 1840s to the 1890s (Sturtevant 1969:622). However, as George Stocking (1985:8) points out, "from the point of view of both the employment of anthropological personnel and the support of field research, the great period of museum anthropology only really began in the 1890s." The scholarly and the larger public debates surrounding the establishment and the subsequent development of each of the major 19th-century museums reflected both key developments within anthropology in general and within its local variants as well as within the larger ideological and political milieu of the country in question.

While the history of the leading Western European and North American museums is fairly well known to Anglo-American anthropologists (see, e.g., Dias 1991; Freese 1960; Karp and Lavine 1991; Penny 2002; Stocking 1985), Eastern European museums have rarely been the subject of serious discussion within our scholarly community. A good case in point is the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (MAE).[1] Although its roots are in the "Kunstkamera" of the emperor Peter the Great and its original collections were significantly augmented between the 1830s and the 1880s, the MAE did not become a truly comprehensive modern museum of general ethnology (and to a lesser extent, archeology and physical anthropology) until the turn of the century. Much of the work of radically transforming it was accomplished under the leadership of Vasilii Vasil'evich Radlov (1837–1918), who served as its director between 1894 and 1918 and especially its sole "senior ethnographer" (i.e., senior curator), Lev Iakovlevich Shternberg (1861–1927) who joined the MAE's staff in 1901 and remained there until his death. With Radlov being preoccupied primarily with the more practical tasks of lobbying with government officials for more money and space and reporting on the museum's progress to the Academy of Sciences that oversaw it, much of the day-to-day running of the MAE and especially articulating the vision for its development was done by Shternberg.

An extremely erudite and politically engaged public intellectual, Shternberg was one of Russia's leading cultural anthropologists ("ethnographers" in Russian terminology) of the first quarter of the 20th century.[2] While the corpus of his written work is relatively modest (especially in contrast to that of Adolf Bastian or Franz Boas, with both of whom he has been most often compared), his active participation in Russian ethnological societies and scholarly meetings, his key role in developing programs for systematic collecting of museum artifacts and ethnographic data in general, and in training the first generation of professional ethnographers in the pre-1917 Russia and in the USSR made him a major figure in his nation's anthropology, especially in St. Petersburg/Leningrad. Although he was not the only Russian scholar to conduct long-term ethnographic field research in a remote part of the empire, Shternberg was one of the most articulate advocates of "participant observation" (or what he called "the stationary method") and of combining careful fieldwork with the application of theoretical issues. He was also one of the first modern Russian ethnologists to articulate a broad vision of that discipline, one that included the study of culture in evolutionist and cultural historical frameworks and one attentive



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to structural-functionalist dimensions as well as the problems of intercultural relations (e.g., borrowing, diffusion).

Central to Shternberg's anthropology was his life-long commitment to Morganian/Tylorian evolutionism (which he saw as a single theory), even in the face of the mounting criticism of this approach coming from within the Western, and eventually Russian, anthropological traditions (see Artiomova 1991; Stocking 1995). This commitment is particularly peculiar, given Shternberg's close collegiate ties with many Western anthropologists of the anti-evolutionists camp, with Boas being foremost among them.[3] While Shternberg-the-theoretician was a dedicated evolutionist, as a field ethnographer (rather than an armchair theoretician) and a left-wing Russian intellectual of the *Narodnik* (Populist/Socialist) persuasion, he admired the so-called "primitive"[4] peoples' character as well as many of their key social and religious institutions and was not eager to see them disappear in the face of a rapidly advancing civilization, especially in its authoritarian Russian version. Herein lies a major difference between him and a number of Western evolutionist museum curators, such as General Pitt Rivers, whose method of "arranging objects linearly, in terms of externally defined formal or functional qualities" conveyed "an ethnocentric message of conservative evolutionary gradualism" (Stocking 1985:8; see also Chapman 1985). Shternberg's admiration for the members of tribal societies linked to each other by kinship bonds and religious ideology rather than the coercive institutions of a state, brought him closer to such French socialist ethnologists as Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss and even to Boas and the Boasians.[5]

Having found himself almost by accident an employee of the MAE, Shternberg attempted, with all the passion of his character, to put his ambitious and rather contradictory vision of anthropology into practice. In the process, he did accomplish a great deal, particularly in the area of dramatically increasing and diversifying the MAE's collections through expeditions sponsored by both the MAE and other museums, as well as through exchanges with domestic and foreign museums. He was also responsible for offering what amounted to mini-courses in ethnology and museum-collecting to MAE's own curators about to embark on their expeditions as well as the Museum's numerous local "corresponding members" all of whom were encouraged to combine artifact-collecting with ethnographic research. As a Jew and a former political exile, he was prohibited from teaching ethnology in the Russian system of higher education. However, he managed to lecture to university students and public school teachers within the MAE's halls and, after 1917, was instrumental in establishing the first department of "ethnography" at the Leningrad University. Finally, it was largely thanks to his efforts that the MAE's collections became the subject of scholarly research.[6]

After briefly examining the Russian ethnologist's intellectual biography, I focus on the relationship between his ambitious vision of what an "academic museum of general ethnography" was supposed to be and an image of the world's non-Western peoples that he and his MAE colleagues created in their displays. I demonstrate that for a variety of reasons, some of them having to do with Shternberg's own scholarly interests and others with the state of Russian ethnology and the existence of another rival museum in St. Petersburg, a significant discrepancy existed between this vision and reality. Of course, there were also some mundane reasons for Shternberg's inability to put his vision into practice—from the demands of the Museum's academic overseers and budgetary constraints to the lack of a sufficient number of artifacts for representing all of the world's cultures in both "static" and "dynamic" perspectives.[7] In the end, he had to face some of the same "limitations of the museum method of anthropology" that also plagued other museum-based ethnologists, including Boas who, in the early 1900s, chose to leave the American Museum of Natural History for Columbia University (Jacknis 1985).

There are several reasons for exploring Shternberg's ambitious plan for revolutionizing Russia's leading ethnographic museum and his limited success in putting that plan into practice. Firstly, such an exploration sheds light on both the similarities and the significant differences between late 19th and early 20th-century ethnographic museums in the West and in Russia and thus significantly broadens and deepens our understanding of the history of anthropology of that era. Secondly, it serves as a case study of one museum curator's attempt to balance the three major tasks that

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most anthropological museums have always been expected to carry out: research, anthropological teaching, and the education of the general public. These same tasks and especially the need to provide an accurate, effective, and tasteful depiction of unfamiliar cultures without exoticizing them continue to challenge museum curators of today (see Ames 1992; Karp and Lavine 1991).

Shternberg as Jewish Populist

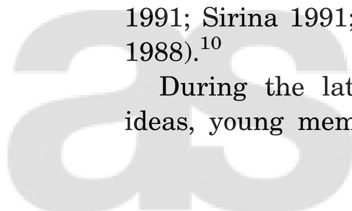
Lev Shternberg was part of a cohort of Russian revolutionary Socialists (known as *Narodniks* or Populists) who in the 1860s–1890s were exiled to Siberia for anti-government activities and became ethnographers there. Born in the Jewish Pale of Settlement in 1861, he retained a life-long concern for the wellbeing of his fellow-Jews and affection for many aspects of their traditional culture.[8] In the wake of the bloody anti-Semitic programs of the 1900s, he joined several Jewish organizations dedicated to the promotion of "enlightenment" among, and the human and ethnic rights of, the empire's oppressed Jewish masses (Gassenschmidt 1995; Haberer 1995; Shternberg 1906a).[9] While attending a Russian-language high school, he became exposed to the works of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and other materialist natural scientists, philosophers, and sociologists, which were extremely popular with young Russian intellectuals in the 1860s–1870s. He also began reading books by the Russian "revolutionary democrats" of the previous generation who, being staunch materialists and progressivists, attacked Russia's conservative political regime and its backward socioeconomic system. Many of these foreign and domestic works shared an evolutionist perspective, which in the Russian context, provided a strong antidote to the government's conservative nationalist ideology sanctioned by the Orthodox Church. The fact that in the Russian intellectual circles this optimistic evolutionist ideology played a progressive role for a much longer period of time than it did in Western Europe helps explain Shternberg's life-long devotion to it as well as the general persistence of evolutionism within Russian ethnology long into the 20th century (Kan n.d.; Kuklick 1991; Sirina 1991; Stocking 1987, 1995; Vucinich 1988).[10]

During the late 1870s, inspired by Populist ideas, young members of the lower middle-class and the intelligentsia began to drop out of universities to "go to the people." "The people" for them meant the Russian peasants, whom they wished to revolutionize through education and political propaganda. Although Shternberg was still too young to join this movement, he helped the Narodniks by running errands for them.[11] Upon graduation from the gymnasium, he enrolled in the natural sciences division of the St. Petersburg University where he attended lectures by prominent natural scientists who introduced him to the latest positivist, materialist, and evolutionist theories. He also joined the student branch of the Populist ("People's Will") organization and was eventually banished from the capitol for playing a major role in a confrontation between the students and the authorities. That same year he was allowed to enroll in the law division of the Novorossiisk University in Odessa. His education there, which included history, philosophy, sociology, and primitive law, was more directly related to his future work as an ethnographer.[12] In Odessa, Shternberg continued his underground activities and was finally arrested in 1886 just as he was preparing for his graduation exams (Haberer 1995:242–251). After spending almost three years in solitary confinement (where he continued reading social philosophers and ethnologists), he was exiled to Sakhalin Island, Russia's infamous penal colony, located near Japan.

Shternberg as Ethnographer and Social Theorist

It is not surprising that in his Sakhalin exile Shternberg turned to ethnography. The same happened to many other exiled Populists who saw their ethnographic work among Siberian natives as both an extension of their earlier interests in the social institutions of the Russian peasantry and as a "socially useful" activity, worthy of an intellectual, that could benefit these exploited ethnic minorities [Russian *inorodtsy*] (Azadovskii 1934; Bogoraz 1927; Kan n.d.; Krol' 1929; Slezkine 1994:113–130; Tokarev 1966:282–364).

Soon after arriving on Sakhalin, Shternberg became interested in the island's main indigenous group, the Gilyak (Nivkh, in modern nomenclature) (Shternberg 1933a:IV). In 1890, having been punished for insubordination and sent to a remote military station periodically visited by the Gilyak, he began a more systematic investigation of their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culture. When the local administration found out about his work, he was asked to compile a census of all the Gilyak families in the northwestern part of the island. Eventually he was allowed to visit the rest of Sakhalin and the lower Amur region to study the Gilyak and their neighbors—the Oroch, the Ainu, the Gol'd (Nanai), and several others. Shternberg's intermittent ethnographic research lasted until 1897 when he was pardoned by the government and allowed to return to Russia.

This research shared several key characteristics with the work carried out by Boas and his students in North America as well as Shternberg's fellow exiles and Jesup expedition participants, Vladimir Bogoraz (Bogoras) and Vladimir Iokhel'son (Jochelson) in Siberia (Freed *et al*. 1988; Kan 2000, 2001, 2006, n.d.; Krupnik 1996, 1998).[13] To begin with, all of them insisted that an ethnographer must be competent in the language of the people being studied and that he or she uses that language in interviewing and collecting native texts. The Russian ethnographer often stated that without a thorough knowledge of the native language, the real life of a native people—especially its psychological aspects—would remain hidden from the ethnographer (Bogoraz 1928, 1930; Shternberg 1900, 1908; Vladimirtsov 1930). Shternberg himself became a fairly accomplished linguist and left behind a substantial body of linguistic analyses, vocabularies, and bilingual texts (see Shternberg 1900, 1908). Like the best of the American anthropologists (e.g., James Mooney), Russian political exiles-turned-ethnographers emphasized the importance of spending a great deal of time among the native people and developing friendly and trusting relationships with them.

At the same time, there were limitations to Shternberg's exposure to the local native cultures. Much of his research involved conducting surveys, which meant traveling from one community to the next and only spending a few days in each village. While useful for collecting kinship terms and demographic data, this method was not particularly conducive to in-depth observation of native religious ceremonies or the minutia of daily life. At the same time, in a typical Boasian manner, he did work for fairly long periods of time with individual informants—collecting linguistic data, recording native texts, and gathering a variety of ethnographic facts. However, in contrast to many of his colleagues in Russia and abroad, Shternberg's ethnographic research, from its early stages, had a strongly topical and theoretical focus with social organization and religion being clearly his main interests.[14]

A description of the Gilyak social organization, which became the subject of Shternberg's first published ethnographic essay, "The Gilyak of Sakhalin" (1893), also contained data on religion, material culture, and other topics. Shternberg-the-evolutionist was thrilled to "discover" among the Gilyak a classificatory kinship terminology that resembled the one reported by Morgan for the Iroquois and some tribes of India. The big difference, however, was that among the latter kinship terminology "no longer corresponds to reality, while among the Gilyak it still corresponds to at least some of its aspects" (1893:7).[15] It is important to mention that during his early years on Sakhalin, Shternberg read Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884) and that it was through Fredrich Engels that Shternberg first became acquainted with Morgan's work.

In addition to his data on marriage and kinship, Shternberg's sketch contained an interesting description of the patrilineal clan, the foundation of the entire Gilyak social order. As a Populist, he was fascinated with the clan and described its social functions (many of which he admired, e.g., mutual help and sharing of resources among clan relatives) and religious symbolism in a style more reminiscent of Emile Durkheim and William Robertson-Smith than Lewis Henry Morgan.[16]

Upon his return from exile, Shternberg became a professional anthropologist. In 1901, with the help of several members of the Russian Academy of Sciences who had been impressed with his linguistic and folkloristic work, he obtained a position at the MAE. In the summer of 1910 he conducted his only post-exile ethnographic expedition, visiting the Gilyak and several other indigenous groups of the Amur River region to collect additional ethnographic data and museum specimens (Shternberg 1933b).

In addition to his museum duties Shternberg became the anthropology editor of the prestigious *Encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron*, for which he also wrote numerous articles on subjects ranging from "animism" to "theories of primitive social organization." His encyclopedia articles, as well as his small monograph *The Gilyak* (1904), which bore

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a resemblance to his 1893 essay but with a much more detailed description of social organization and religion, demonstrated his devotion to evolutionist speculation (though tempered by his admission of the limitations of classical evolutionism), excellent command of the latest foreign and domestic anthropological literature, and an ability to present vividly, compassionately, and insightfully the social and spiritual culture of an indigenous people.[17] While Shternberg always remained a great admirer of Morgan, in his data on Gilyak religion he found confirmation of the ideas of another leading evolutionist, Tylor, particularly his theory of animism and his general schema of the evolution of religion. In the early 1900s Shternberg began attending meetings of the International Congress of Americanists, where he met Boas and other prominent European and American anthropologists and museum curators. Throughout the 1900s–1910s he published several articles on Gilyak and Ainu religion as well as essays on comparative religion and social organization (Shternberg 1906a, 1912b, 1916). However, his major work—a monograph on the Gilyak, commissioned by Boas for the Jesup Expedition series, which he almost completed by the time World War I broke out—did not see the light of day until 1999 (Grant 1999; Kan 2000, 2001; Shternberg 1999).[18] Although no longer actively engaged in revolutionary work, he remained a democratic socialist who maintained close ties with the revolutionary underground, and continued writing in various liberal and leftist Russian and Jewish periodicals on various political issues of the day, including the struggle for self-determination by Russia's ethnic minorities, which he strongly supported (Shternberg 1910).[19]

Compared to the work by most other Russian ethnographers of his era, his 1893 and especially the 1904 ethnographies of the Gilyak, as well as his unpublished monograph clearly stand out—they are vividly written, topically organized, and reveal his admiration and respect for the people whose culture he was describing. At the same time, his work shares many of the weaknesses of the majority of his contemporaries' writing. In addition to being marked by the above mentioned tension between his evolutionist speculation and primitivist rhetoric, on the one hand, and his sympathetic (if somewhat romanticized) portrayal of the Gilyak clan as a smoothly functioning social institution, on the other, Shternberg's account is largely ahistorical, since it ignores the Gilyaks' long-standing contacts with the neighboring Manchurians, Chinese, and Japanese traders and more recently Russian colonial officials, criminal exiles, and other agents of change. Thus, while his journalistic pieces, which appeared in the local liberal press during his exile, contained some strong criticism of the Russians' mistreatment of the area's indigenous population, these issues were barely touched upon in his ethnographic writing. Like his fellow Populist exiles, Shternberg—the observer and social critic—could not ignore the impact of the Gilyaks' more powerful neighbors and colonial masters on their culture. However, Shternberg, as an evolutionist anthropologist, preferred to see them as a relatively pristine relic of an ancient culture (cf. Grant 1997, 1999).[20] Some of the same contradictions marked his writing on the subject of ethnographic museums, which we now turn to.

The MAE's Transformation under Radlov and Shternberg

Peter the Great's Kunstkamera, founded in 1714–1717, was part museum, part "Cabinet of Curiosities," containing haphazardly assembled artifacts ranging from exotic weapons collected in the South Seas to a large teratological collection purchased by the emperor himself in Holland.[21] By the late 1830s it became St. Petersburg's first ethnographic museum, its collection augmented by artifacts gathered during several scientific expeditions sponsored by the Russian Academy of Sciences and around-the-world voyages by the Russian Navy, as well as objects gifted from foreign and domestic donors. In the 1870s, two large systematically assembled collections (an African and a Melanesian one) were added to the museum's holdings (Staniukovich 1978).

By the 1870–1880s, a number of St. Petersburg scholars began discussing the need to systematize the museum's growing holdings. Finally at a joint meeting of the Physical-Mathematical and the Historical-Philological divisions of the Academy, held in 1879, a decision was reached to replace the Kunstkamera with a special "Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography Predominantly of Russia" and to appoint academician Leopold Schrenk (an expert on the geography, biology, and ethnography

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of Russia's Far East) as its first director (Reshetov 1997; Staniukovich 1964:65–66). In the wake of that decision, the Museum received a large ethnographic collection from the Russian Geographic Society as well as several other institutions. Once the entire contents of emperor Peter's "Anatomic Cabinet" and a small archaeological collection were transferred to it, the MAE was finally on its way to becoming a truly comprehensive anthropological museum.

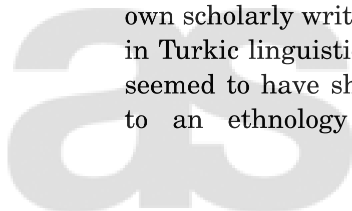
Still missing, however, was a systematic, scholarly classification and display of artifacts. While an attempt was made to divide the entire exhibit into five geographic departments (Russia, Asia, Africa, Australia, and America), this system was not adhered to in any systematic fashion. Thus objects from the same culture could be found in different parts of the building (sometimes divided between the departments of ethnology and archaeology); some artifacts were exhibited according to the material out of which they were made, while ceramic objects were grouped according to size. In some cases a parallel exhibit of a similar types of objects was provided. For example, next to some bronze tools from Siberia, bronze tools from Denmark were being displayed (Russow 1900). Thus, in several sections of the museum a simple typological and even quasi-evolutionist method of displaying artifacts was being used, reminiscent of the Pitt-Rivers Museum or the U.S. National Museum under Otis Mason (Chapman 1985; Jacknis 1985; Van Keuren 1984). In addition, several small topical exhibits were installed as well, such as "Objects of Buddhist Faith" and "Wind Instruments."

Radlov, who became the MAE's new director in 1894, found this inconsistency unacceptable and in the next decade, while the museum prepared for a grand celebration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of St. Petersburg, he had it completely reorganized. Radlov defended his new scientific vision of a modern-day ethnological museum in numerous oral and written presentations to the Academy and the Government (Reshetov 1995; Shternberg 1909; Shternberg *et al*. 1907). From 1901 on he began relying heavily in this activity on the newly-hired Shternberg. Although Radlov's own scholarly writing was limited to specific topics in Turkic linguistics, folklore, and archaeology, he seemed to have shared Shternberg's commitment to an ethnology that combined evolutionism with cultural/historical particularism. In an 1890s memorandum to the Academy he complained that "given its present [small] space and budget as well as a great need for curators and ethnographers plus clerical staff, the Museum cannot fulfill its function of *providing a more or less comprehensive picture of the gradual development of humankind and the diverse cultural situations of the various tribes*" (Staniukovich 1964:78) (*italics mine*).

To a certain extent the MAE director's request was heeded, even though compared to the great European and American ethnological museums of that era, his budget, space, and staff remained modest throughout the pre-1917 era. To solve the problem of the small professional staff, Radlov and Shternberg utilized local scholars on a temporary basis to organize and catalogue collections. Prominent Orientalists such as Sergei Oldenburg and Vasilii Bartold, systematized and analyzed the large Indian and Central Asian collections, while Bogoraz prepared a detailed annotated catalogue for a large collection of Chukchi artifacts recently donated to the MAE by a government official (Bogoraz 1901). Between 1898 and 1902/1903, thousands of objects were catalogued and sorted out.[22] Only once this painstaking work had been completed, could one begin placing collections into cases, following a previously prepared, detailed plan (Shternberg *et al*. 1907:53–54). The new 1903 exposition, which already reflected some of Shternberg's own ideas about ethnographic museums, was organized on the basis of a rather systematically applied geographic/ethnic/linguistic principle. Artifacts were divided by continents and countries, and within the countries they were arranged using the geographic, ethnic, and linguistic criteria. As Shternberg wrote a few years later:

> Whatever the merits of the new exhibit, two things are definite: 1) its systematic and strict adherence to a cultural-ethnic principle of placing the collections and 2) the arrangement of objects within each cultural-ethnic group exclusively on the basis of the similarity of their purpose and role in culture providing maximum systematicity and accessibility for viewing. [1907:53–54]

Within each exhibit case, or within a group of cases, an attempt was made to depict each individual culture in its entirety by focusing on both the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subsistence activities and material culture, on the one hand, and artistic and religious phenomena, on the other. (Social organization was obviously more difficult to portray). Much of the exhibit did not seem to differ greatly from such MAE's counterparts as the Berlin Museum fur Völkerkunde or the American Museum of Natural History (both of which Shternberg visited in the early 1900s). However, despite the application of this ethnogeographic principle of displaying artifacts at the new exposition, some attempts to demonstrate the evolution of artifacts and ideas underlying them were also made. According to a 1904 MAE guide (Staniukovich 1964:92), within [some of?] the cultural-ethnic groups, objects were often placed in such a way as to demonstrate development from the simple to the more complex.[23] In addition to cases with artifacts, the exhibit utilized large photographs of people and scenery as well as skillfully painted panoramas (copied from ethnographers' photographs) depicting native life (e.g., a Gilyak bear festival). A substantial number of mannequins were also used to display costumes and enliven the exhibit.[24]

One major change introduced by Radlov and Shternberg in 1903 was to drop the words "Predominantly of Russia" from the MAE's name. The reasons for this were both political and intellectual. In the early 1900s preparation was underway for establishing a new museum, aimed at showcasing the fine arts, crafts, and folk culture of the peoples of the Russian Empire, and especially its dominant Slavic ones. This was a museum in the European Völkerkunde, tradition with a strong nationalist/imperialist agenda further underscored by the fact that it was to be a memorial to the life and reign of the recently deceased emperor, Alexander III.[25] Threatened by a new and much better endowed museum, the MAE leaders insisted on a fundamental difference between a territorial/national museum and a cosmopolitan, universal, and academic one.[26] This is how they articulated it in a 1903 memo (written by Radlov with almost certain input from Shternberg):

> The goal of an Academic Museum is to build an exhibition illustrating the evolution of human culture from the prehistoric period to the highest cultures of the modern day, using ethnographic materials from the various tribes and peoples. Since exhaustive material could not be found in the culture of a single people or even a group of peoples, no matter how numerous it might be . . . , a museum of scientific ethnography (which is what an academic museum must become) is obligated to embrace the entire world. Only by using the materials from the peoples of the entire world, would the Museum be able to demonstrate all of the stages of the development of human society. If that is done, its exhibits would be able to give the viewer a fairly complete idea of the development of culture and a true conviction about the psychic unity of mankind and the uniformity of the laws of its development.
>
> An Academic Museum must judge the objects it collects exclusively from the point of view of their relative importance for a scientific construction of the picture of the evolution of culture; as a result, some numerically small people that might have a special importance from an ethnographic point of view could be represented in this museum in a much more detailed manner than the more advanced peoples who have a less importance for ethnography.
>
> In a territorial museum the degree of attention devoted to a particular people should be proportionate to its population size, historical role in the life of the country, the degree of development of its culture, etc. Hence an academic museum has to direct its attention mainly at the primitive [*pervobytnye*] peoples, while the Russian Museum—at the ethnography of Russia's more advanced (civilized) [*kul'turnye*] peoples, and first and foremost, the Slavic ones. [Archive of the AN, f. 1, op. 1a, 1903, #150, OS, #161, quoted in Staniukovich 1964:87–88]

Shternberg's Vision of an Ethnology Museum

Having protected his museum from its pampered rival and having placed it in a firm scientific footing, Shternberg proceeded to articulate his own vision of an ideal museum of general ethnography.[27] In the remaining portion of this paper I would like to review the main elements of that vision and then briefly compare it with the actual installations created by the MAE in the first two decades of the 20th century.

In his most important essay on the MAE, Shternberg (1912c) emphasized the MAE's three major goals, presenting them in the order of importance. The *scientific* (scholarly) goal was clearly at the top of his list, because the MAE was

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Russia's "only museum of *general* ethnography" (not restricted to any geographic area or topic), and because it was an "*academic*" museum. "The subject matter of such a museum," wrote Shternberg,

> is the culture of all of humankind, from both the static [cultural/historical] and the dynamic [evolutionary] perspectives. Such a museum must not only present a complete picture of separate cultures of a variety of most different peoples but, at the same time, must illustrate all of the stages of the development and spreading of the universal human culture. Hence the territory covered by the MAE's scientific gaze is the entire space occupied by man, and the living object of its study are all of the earth's peoples. [1912c:454]

However, despite his broad definition of the scope of ethnography and ethnographic museums, being realistic, he admitted that this ambitious agenda would be impossible to carry out.[28] As he put it:

> One type of culture that is usually not represented by ethnographic museums, is the modern European one that surrounds us. It is impossible to gather examples of that culture for museums—it is so enormous and diverse; and it is not necessary to do so, since our own social environment is a living museum of that culture, and that rapid process of evolution, which has been taking place in the most resent era, is so colossal that to represent it one would need to use a variety of museums of technology and art. Hence ethnographic museums concentrate on the cultures of the lowest type and on the highest culture of the non-European peoples [e.g., those of the Orient]. Among the cultural phenomena of the European peoples, the Museum is interested only in those that represent anachronistic survivals of the past culture. Such survivals are still plentiful among the peasant cultures of even the most progressive European countries. [1912c:455]

Despite his strong evolutionist rhetoric Shternberg added a note of caution, demonstrating his awareness of the pitfalls of the earlier brand of unilinear evolutionism:

> However in order to establish the process of evolution of cultural phenomena it is not enough to study only the culture of the modern day peoples, even the most primitive ones, since even they are a product of a long process of development from the even more primitive cultural forms of the peoples no longer existing. That is why an ethnographic museum must have a department of archeology within it. [1912c:455]

Finally, he also emphasized the importance of having at least a small department of physical (somatic) anthropology within an ethnology museum, since "ethnology not only classifies cultures but its carriers as well" (1912c:455). A comprehensive three-field museum of this kind was, for Shternberg, "first and foremost, a scientific institute, a laboratory for any specialist studying the history of culture in the broadest sense of the word (or interested in specific ethnographic issues), an institute that is equally important for an ethnologist, an archeologist, and a historian" (1912c:455).

At the same time, being a consistent advocate of the teaching of ethnology at all levels of the educational system and especially the university one, he stressed that the second goal of an MAE-type museum was *pedagogical*. Drawing on his own experience, he argued that it was in front of the museum cases that an ethnology instructor "could use systematically collected materials to illustrate [many of] the issues discussed in the abstract in the classroom" (1912c:455–456).[29]

Without denying the importance of using an ethnographic museum to educate (lit. "cultivate"; Russian *vospityvat'*) the general public, Shternberg placed this task third on his list of the museum's goals. However, the words he chose to explain this task are strong and clearly reflect his progressive and optimistic views, so reminiscent of those of his intellectual predecessors and heroes. The MAE exhibits, in his words,

> provide a vivid picture of the dynamic nature of culture and also acquaint the visitor with ways in which technology, that he uses in his daily life, had been created and has developed over time, how the beliefs and ideas, with which he has been brought up, have been formed in the past, etc. . . . And while presenting to the person's mental gaze the picture of that enormous and difficult journey made by humanity's collective labor, which has made the great accomplishments of today possible, and while demonstrating them through visual materials, the museum should instill in each person a faith in his own strength and the power of reason, and to reveal to him the joyful future

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> possibilities of endless perfection. While broadening his general spiritual horizon, our visitor simultaneously would receive here a visual ethical lesson on the psychic unity of mankind and the law of the cooperation of peoples for the common good. [Ratner-Shternberg n.d.: 169–170; cf. Shternberg 1912c:456]

In the next section of his discussion, Shternberg emphasizes that *the gathering of artifacts* is an ethnographic museum's main task, especially given the rapid "spreading of the European culture to the most isolated and distant corners of the earth which is threatening many primitive cultures with extinction" (1912c:456). His discussion of the actual methods of collecting, which can be mentioned only briefly, is strongly reminiscent of Boas'. Both scholars emphasized the importance of understanding the meaning of each object being acquired and the cultural context from which it comes necessitating the combination of museum collecting with serious ethnographic field research (i.e., "studying each object *in situ*," as Shternberg puts it) (1912c:457). For both anthropologists, an ideal collector was a professional ethnographer with a good understanding of the people whose artifacts he or she was acquiring, or at the very least, an amateur who had undergone some instruction by the museum's ethnologists and/or given a written instruction on collecting prepared by it (see Shternberg 1914).[30]

Having outlined the main goals of an ethnographic museum, Shternberg went on to emphasize the urgency of the task of collecting, especially among the less advanced peoples of the world, "since given the current extent of the spread of European culture to the most isolated and distant corners of the earth, a number of primitive [*pervobytnyi*] cultures are facing extinction; hence museums have to act in a timely fashion to preserve for science the cultural monuments [*pamaitniki kul'tury*] destined for extinction" (1912c:457).

Finally there was the question of exhibiting collections, which for the Russian ethnologist was of utmost importance. Despite Shternberg's evolutionist views, the ideal method of exhibiting he advocated was very broad and comprehensive. In its exhibits, an MAE-type museum had, in his view, to pursue the following goals: 1) to present a picture of the [specific] cultures of the various peoples of the world; 2) to depict the ties between different cultures, the processes of their interaction, migration, and transformation; and 3) to paint a picture of the evolution of the universal human culture in all of its manifestations. Thus only the last of these goals was an evolutionist one; the first one was roughly equivalent to Boas' cultural-historical approach, while the second addressed the kind of issues that both diffusionists and Boasian ethnologists were studying.

To satisfy the first two goals, exhibiting was to be done according to "cultural-historical groups in a geographically-organized order." This way the visitor could familiarize himself with the culture of a people that interested him or her and, simultaneously, could compare it with the cultures of the neighboring peoples and determine their relationship with each other. But to satisfy the third goal, exhibitions had to be organized neither by peoples nor by separate cultures, but by the groups of identical cultural phenomena in the order of their development from the lowest to the highest stage; in this type of installation, objects were to be displayed and grouped typologically without any regard for their origin (Shternberg 1912c:462).

Hence for Shternberg, an ideal ethnological museum had to consist of two major departments, one of which he referred to as "morphological" and the other as "evolutionary" or "typological" (1912c: 462). If the material in the first department had (in a standard fashion) to be divided into continents, countries, and cultural-ethnic groups, in the second one, artifacts were to be categorized according to "the domains of culture," such as material or spiritual. Both of these departments were to be further divided into sub-departments according to specific distinct groups of cultural phenomena (e.g., dwellings, tools and weapons, household items, clothing, etc.), and each of these sub-departments had, in turn, to be subdivided into distinct cultural categories. Thus the department of tools and weapons would have a separate collection of axes, beginning with the Paleolithic ax and ending with "the most highly developed type"—the American one" (Shternberg 1912c:462).

Of course, being a realist, Shternberg immediately admits that his pet project—a department of evolution within the MAE—could only be created in the future, since: "To accomplish this a museum must have a very large space and numerous duplicates of objects, and no museum has it at this time.

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Most museums cannot even display their entire collection in a geographically-ordered manner" (1912c:462).

The paradox of Shternberg's vision was that he never considered how an evolutionary-driven exhibit would depict the development of the two principal aspects of human culture—social organization and religion—that he had always been most interested in and had written most about.[31] It was only in the mid-1920s, when his evolutionist ideas found strong support among the new Soviet ideologues, that he was able to establish a "Department of Typology" within the MAE and produce his first exhibit of the "new" kind. Not surprisingly, it dealt with a rather simple topic, "The Evolution of the Stick." Immediately after Shternberg's death, his students and successors managed to put together a few more special exhibits along the same lines, with titles such as "The Evolution of the Dwelling" or "The Evolution of the Use of Fire." By the early 1930s, however, the new ideological winds began to blow in the Soviet humanities and social sciences, and the MAE could not escape them. While much of its exhibition work continued along the geographical and cultural-historical lines established in the early 1900s, the new special exhibits were now dealing with such topics as "the reactionary essence of Shamanism" and the historical and grandiose transformation experienced by the "backward and oppressed ethnic minorities" of Russia after the "Great October Socialist Revolution" (Staniukovich 1964, 1978).

What the Visitors Saw

Given the fact that until the mid-1920s, the "evolutionary" department remained only a dream, one wonders how the MAE actually portrayed the world's peoples and cultures during the Shternberg era and whether it was able to fulfill its senior ethnographer's goals of portraying the richness of individual cultures as well as the evolution of human culture as a whole, while simultaneously impressing the visitors with the notion of a fundamental unity and equality of all peoples and the inherent value of each culture?

As far as the goal of portraying the richness of a significant number of world cultures, the post-1900 MAE did succeed, even though its coverage was definitely uneven (see below). Since Shternberg's time it has remained the country's only ethnographic museum dedicated to showcasing the peoples of the entire world rather than those of Russia and the neighboring states. As a place for training professional ethnologists and museum curators it was also fairly successful, especially under the Soviet regime, when undergraduate as well as graduate education in ethnology was finally institutionalized and when many of Shternberg's students from the Geography Institute and the Geography Department (*kafedra*) of the Leningrad University worked at the MAE, first as assistants and later as full-time curators. From the 1900s to the 1920s, Radlov's and Shternberg's beloved institution also made significant progress in acquainting ordinary visitors (including public school students, factory workers, and soldiers) with the world's rich "tapestry of cultures." During that era the museum was visited by thousands of people every year and numerous guided tours were offered by its staff. One could conclude that MAE's senior curator's vision was fulfilled at least in part. However, there is also enough evidence to suggest that the impressions taken away from the museum on the Neva by its average visitor were not exactly those that Shternberg had hoped for.

To begin with, there was the obvious problem of the lack of funds and specimens, not to mention various logistical and conceptual problems, impeding the goal of portraying the evolutionary progress of the entirety of humankind. Hence the time-honored and widely used method of exhibiting (in Shternberg's own words) "by cultural-ethnic groups" remained the dominant one. At the same time, I would argue that the overall plan, according to which the MAE portrayed non-Western, and especially pre-state (or tribal peoples), did carry an implicit evolutionist message. Unfortunately for Shternberg this was not exactly the kind of evolutionist narrative that he had hoped for. A number of factors contributed to this.

Firstly, one has to keep in mind that, like all ethnographic museums, especially those that, like the MAE, were not well endowed, could only display a portion of their collection and thus had to make a choice about what their most valuable and attractive specimens were. Secondly, while Shternberg's noble goal was to collect artifacts from all over the world, the MAE collected more intensively in those areas that were more accessible to it (the Russian Empire and neighboring countries)

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and were of greater interest to the museum's director (Central Asia and the Orient in general) and senior ethnographer (indigenous Siberia). Outside of the empire—especially the Americas, Oceania, Africa, and Southeast Asia—the museum had to rely on occasional, small expeditions of its own to acquire representative objects, but more often it relied on expeditions and collecting ventures conducted by other museums (e.g., the Jesup Expedition). The MAE also received examples from outlying territories through gifts by foreign scholars and wealthy Russian travelers or through exchanges with foreign museums. Thirdly, the MAE was trying to conserve its resources by not duplicating too much of the collecting activities of its rival, the Russian Museum, that concentrated heavily on the Russian and other Slavic peoples of the empire and their immediate neighbors within and without the empire's borders.

The order in which Shternberg's (1912a, b, c) essay describes the MAE's collections and exhibits by geographical and cultural areas reflects both his own scholarly interests and the strength and weakness of the museum's holdings.[32] He begins by stating that "naturally [!] the best represented in the MAE are the *inorodtsy* [aborigines] of Siberia and Central Asia." Within that body of material, the MAE's "richest and most systematic collection" is the one on the "Paleoasiatic" peoples of Siberia, "those mysterious border-area peoples of Asiatic Russia, completely isolated, from the cultural-ethnic and linguistic viewpoints, from all the other peoples of Asia" (i.e., the Chukchi, the Itelmen, the Gilyak, the Ainu, and several others). Also well represented in the MAE's collection and exhibitions were their immediate neighbors—the Amur River peoples and the various Tungusic tribes of the interior and the Arctic Coast.[33] Other Siberian peoples—those of the Ugro-Finnish language family such as Sel'kup, Khant, Mansi, Saami—were also fairly well represented (1912c:464–465).

Next in centrality came some solid collections from "the most-highly developed cultures of the nomads and part-time agriculturalists, represented by the Turkick peoples of Central Asia and Siberia: Kirgiz, Altais, Yakut as well as Mongols, Buryats, and Kalmyks." Shternberg admits that there were some gaps in his Siberian collection. However, on the whole it "represents all of the types of the lowest-level cultures of Northern and Central Asia," including those of the fishers, hunters, reindeer herders, and nomadic cattle herders (1912c: 464–465).

One phenomenon, well represented by the MAE, that Shternberg was particularly interested in and wrote and lectured a great deal on, was "shamanism and other forms of primitive religion of indigenous Siberians" (1912c:464–465). He was particularly proud of the fact that under his leadership the MAE had accumulated the world's largest collection of shamanic paraphernalia whose symbolic meaning had been interpreted by the MAE's collectors and staff members, thus providing "completely new material for the science of religion." The richness of this collection allowed the museum to install an impressive series of mannequins representing many types of Siberian shamans in an installation labeled "The Shamans' Gallery." This was one case where the MAE was able to depart from a purely cultural/geographic method of exhibiting and created a topical (but not evolutionary) one instead.[34]

Within a fairly large American Department, the best collections also tended to represent the more "primitive" cultures of the hemisphere's two geographical extremes—the far northwestern shore of the Pacific (i.e., Aleuts, Yup'ik Eskimos, Tlingit, etc.) and the inhabitants of Patagonia and Terra del Fuego.[35] In Shternberg's words, prior to and during the Russian-American Company era (when many of those artifacts were collected) these indigenous Alaskan peoples "still fully maintained their old culture of the Arctic Neolithic peoples." The artifacts of the "primitive" South Americans, on the other hand, were, according to him, selected in such a way as to present a comprehensive picture of the most interesting "Paleo-Americans whose daily life (especially their weapons for marine hunting) could be so fruitfully compared with that of the inhabitants of another border area of America—the Eskimos" (Shternberg 1907:64). He goes on to describe (in fewer details) the MAE's relatively small but gradually expanding collections of artifacts from Australia, Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, and the "primitive" cultures of Malaysia (referring specifically to the Karo-Bataks) (Shternberg 1912c:468).

His description of the MAE's holdings and exhibits concludes with a rather detailed review of the artifacts representing "the civilized countries

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of Asia, among which China is represented best" (Shternberg 1912c:469). Due to a long-standing interest among Russian scholars and travelers in South and East Asia, the MAE boasted a rich body of materials on Chinese Taoism and Confucianism as well as Chinese, Japanese, and Indian Buddhism (and Hinduism) and Mongolian Lamaism. While the MAE's Asian collection did contain some objects of daily life, decorative (art) objects and religious artifacts predominated. Thanks to an active participation in the MAE's collecting and cataloguing by several prominent members of the Russian Academy who specialized in Buddhism and Oriental Studies, the museum was able to maintain a special installation on Buddhism.[36] Particularly interesting is the fact that the "Department of Buddhism" housed a number of religious artifacts belonging to the inhabitants of Mongolia and the neighboring Buryatia who had strong cultural links with the indigenous Siberians and whose more mundane possessions were shown in the Siberian installation. The underlying message here seems to have been that by changing from an older shamanic religion to a higher monotheistic one, these peoples had ascended the evolutionary ladder and earned a place for themselves among the more civilized peoples of the Orient.

Given the fact that the MAE visitors had to climb from the first floor where the indigenous Siberians and the American Indians were displayed to the second floor where the exotic, artistically "more refined," and generally more advanced (and largely monotheistic) Asian peoples were the main attraction, it is possible to hypothesize that a subtle evolutionary message was being conveyed to them. What an average visitor did not see at all were his own people—the Slavic inhabitants of the Russian empire. As Shternberg explained, "since the establishment of the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum, the [MAE's] collections of the department of the European Russia and Slavic countries are being added to only insofar as they might provide a source of the necessary comparative materials for the general representation of inter-cultural relations as well as research in comparative ethnography" (Shternberg 1912c:470).[37] Hence it must have been difficult for an average visitor to see the connection between his or her own culture and those of the primitive Chukchi and Tlingit or the exotic Chinese. Except for those fortunate few who heard Shternberg lecture eloquently on the psychic unity of mankind, the inherent beauty and value of each of the world's cultures, and the "survival" of ancient customs and beliefs within the cultures of the modern-day Slavic peasants, the majority of visitors must have walked out of the MAE with a reinforced sense of some fundamental difference between themselves and the non-Russian "Others" who inhabited their country or neighboring ones.

Of course any attempt to interpret "what the visitors saw" is a bit of a guessing game, especially when it comes to an era far removed from our own. Nonetheless it appears that despite Shternberg's impressive ethnological and museological accomplishments, as well as his tireless efforts to use the MAE's collections to educate future ethnographers and disseminate progressive and humanistic ideas, a series of significant discrepancies did exist between his vision and reality. In the final analysis, the MAE exhibits of the 1900s–1920s did not differ that much from typical displays in the major ethnological museums of Western Europe and North America.

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to discuss briefly the place of Shternberg's vision for the MAE in relation to other major programs developed by Russian museum curators and ethnologists in the late imperial period. To begin with, I should point out that while evolutionism remained rather popular among the country's ethnologists, few museum curators advocated arranging specimens according to an evolutionist scheme. The one exception was Ivan Nikolaevich Smirnov, a Kazan University professor of history who specialized in the history and ethnography of the Finno-Ugric peoples of the Volga region.[38] An active participant in the debates preceding the creation of the Ethnography Division of the Russian Museum (mentioned earlier), he articulated an evolutionist agenda for that institution that, in contrast to Shternberg's, was Russian nationalist and politically conservative. Here is one forceful argument put forth by the Kazan ethnologist:

> The Russian Ethnographic museum is being established at the moment when Russia's isolation is ending and when the Russian people is beginning to recognize itself as an increasingly important factor in the history of humankind's culture and civilization. All this imposes a defi-

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> nite and important task on it. The new museum must become a *cheval de bataille* of the Russian ethnography and along with the other cultural undertakings of the Russian people, it must serve one great cause—the establishment of the universal significance of Russian culture. [Smirnov 1901:227]

According to his vision, the new museum's exhibits were to be arranged according to the following scheme. First and foremost, this museum:

> should obviously depict the white race with its representatives: the Slavic peoples (Russians, Poles, Serbs, Bulgarians), the Lithuanians and the Latvians, the descendants of ancient Phrakians (Romanians), remnants of the Iranian world in the Caucasus and Central Asia (Armenians, Georgians, Greeks), etc. The second group should be constituted by the representatives of the yellow race—the Mongols, the Kalmyks, the Buryats, the Chinese, the Manchus. The third one should be composed of the smaller groups—groups of mixed character, as far as their physical type goes, and differentiated from each other mainly according to their language—the Finns (the Finns proper, the Estonians, the Karelians, etc.), the Turkik peoples (Tatars, Chuvash, Kirgiz, Bashkir, Turkmen, Tiurks of Crimea), the Samoeds, the Chukchi, the Ainu . . . . [Smirnov 1901:229–230]

True to his evolutionist thinking, Smirnov also proposed the establishment of a separate department within the new museum, that would illustrate the evolution of human culture as a whole. In this respect, his vision echoed that of Shternberg. However, unlike the MAE curator, "Smirnov attributed the uniformity of evolutionary stages around the globe somewhat more to a few cultures' superiority and influence over others than to the basic uniformity of the human race" (Geraci 2001:173). Although Smirnov represented a minority of Russian ethnologists, his proposal for the new Russian ethnology museum shows that, as in the West, evolutionist anthropology within the Russian context could produce a very conservative agenda.

Fortunately, the Russian Museum's main curators, such as Dmitrii Aleksandrovich Klements, Nikolai Mikhailovich Mogilianski, and several others, did not share this nationalist vision. While they agreed with Smirnov that, in contrast to the MAE, the new museum would focus on showcasing the cultures of the tsarist empire (and to a lesser extent the neighboring countries influenced by Russia), their preferred method of arranging museum collections was either by individual peoples/cultures or by geographic areas (in the tradition of Friedrich Ratzel) (Dubov 1998; Mogilianskii 1910, 1914; Shangina 1998). Hence while their own method shared some of the principles followed by Shternberg in organizing the MAE exhibits, they rejected its evolutionist agenda. In the end, despite this disagreement, given the obstacles faced by Shternberg in creating his "department of evolution and typology of culture," the MAE exhibits did not differ that much from those of its rival, the Russian Museum (Changuina 1996).

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Notes

1. A number of Soviet studies of the history of the MAE has appeared over the years. However, written by MAE's own staff members, these works tend to be overly laudatory (Ratner-Shternberg 1928; Reshetov 1995, 1997; Staniukovich 1964, 1978, 1986). All of those written prior to the early 1990s suffer from the ideological constraints of the Soviet-era and none of them try to examine the history of the MAE within the larger context of the history of ethnological museums in general and/or the history of anthropology.
2. This paper is a companion project to a much larger one that details Shternberg's entire intellectual biography (Kan n.d.). For my earlier works on his life and scholarly contributions see Kan (2001, 2002). Major published sources on Shternberg's life are in Russian (e.g., Bogoraz 1927, 1928; Ol'denburg and Samoilovich 1930; Ratner-Shternberg 1928; n.d.; Sirina and Roon 2004), including a somewhat fictionalized and (for political reasons) one-sided biography by one of his former students, Gagen-Torn's (1975). The most detailed (though far from comprehensive) recent discussions of Shternberg's biography and scholarship are by Grant (1999) and Sirina and Roon (2004); see also Brullow-Shaskolsky 1930; Boas 1934; Jochelson 1928; Kagaroff 1929; Krader 1968). A number of his scholarly works appeared in English and German between the early 1900s and 1930 while his monograph, *The Social Organization of the Gilyak*, was finally published in 1999 by the American Museum of

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Natural History (see his bibliography in that book). Shternberg's archive is located in the St. Petersburg's Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Science, where I conducted research in 1998 and 2001. That research was greatly facilitated by the tireless efforts of my friend and colleague, the late Mikhail S. Fainshtein, the archive's associate director.

3. See the Boas-Shternberg correspondence located in the American Philosophical Society and the St. Petersburg Branch of the Archives of the Russian Academy of Sciences. See also Boas (1934) and Shternberg (1926).
4. Shternberg and most other Russian anthropologists of his time rarely used the word *primitivnyi* ("primitive"), preferring a somewhat less "loaded" term *pervobynyi*, instead. The latter is difficult to translate into English, but the closest glosses are "primeval" or "original."
5. Despite some striking similarities in their theoretical positions, Shternberg was not directly influenced by Durkheim and his school.
6. Between 1902 and 1926 he also served as the editor and frequent contributor to the periodic MAE publication, *Sbornik MAE*.
7. Cf. George Stocking's comment that both the evolutionist and the cultural historical programs for exhibiting artifacts in ethnology museums were "frustrated by the pragmatics of museum practice, and by the perhaps inherent contradictions of museum purpose" (1985: 8).
8. Unlike many other Russian-Jewish intellectuals of his era, Shternberg saw Judaism as the core of Jewish culture and as a positive force that had been helping Russia's Jews maintain their ethnic identity.
9. In 1908 Shternberg was among the founders of the Jewish Ethnographic-Historical Society and in the mid-1920s served as its last chair and editor of its journal *Evreiskaia Starina* (Jewish Antiquities). He also edited the program for the first large-scale Jewish Ethnographic Expedition directed by S. An-sky (Shloyme Zanvi Rappaport) that produced a great deal of ethnographic and folkloristic data as well as artifacts that eventually found their way into the Jewish Ethnographic Museum in St. Petersburg (Safran and Zipperstein 2006).
10. His fellow-Populist and future colleague, Vladimir Bogoraz, wrote that in his lectures to university students, Shternberg would often speak of Morgan and Tylor with the same passion with which he discussed the Russian revolutionaries who were the heroes of his youth (Bogoras 1927; cf. Krol' 1929).
11. Shternberg was particularly attracted to political terrorism, which had become central to the ideology of the then recently established populist organization "People's Will" (*Narodnaia Volia*), responsible for the assassination of czar Aleksandr II (Hardy 1987; Offord 1986).
12. However, he always retained a strong interest in biology, psychology, and other natural sciences, especially as they related to human beings (Shternberg 1912a, 1924).
13. The Jesup North Pacific Expedition (1897–1902) was a major anthropological expedition to Siberia, Alaska, and the Northwest coast of Canada. Its purpose was to investigate the relationships between the peoples at each side of the Bering Strait. The expedition was sponsored by industrialist-philanthropist Morris Jesup and planned and directed by Boas. The participants included American and Russian anthropologists and the expedition produced a number of significant ethnographies, as well as valuable collections of artifacts, audio recordings, and photographs (Krupnik 1998; Kan 2000, 2001).
14. As he later wrote, "My previous scientific studies—primarily in the field of the humanities—naturally pushed me into an area that, as it later turned out, was the least studied by Leopold Schrenk, [his main predecessor,] i.e., the domain of social and spiritual culture. I was primarily interested in the organization of the family, the clan, religion, and finally in poetry [folklore] and language. I was particularly interested in the first two and they were the ones I started with" (Shternberg 1908:VIII).
15. Each Gilyak male seemed to have marital (or at least sexual) rights to his older brothers' wives. For Shternberg, this signified that the modern nuclear family of the Gilyak was a more recent development, and the survival of the old system of clan-based marriage, that persists to this day, made the Gilyak system similar to the "Punulua family" (Shternberg 1893:7).
16. His admiration for the Gilyak social order (despite its "primitive nature") is nicely captured in the following sentence from a letter he wrote in 1891 to his best friend, Moisei Krol', a political exile and ethnographer (among the Buryat of Southern Siberia): "Their life is wholesome and full, with the individual and the group being linked together by natural bonds" (Archive of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, f. 242, op. 2, d. 363).
17. *The Gilyak* earned Shternberg a silver medal from the Ethnology Division of the Russian Imperial Geographic Society.
18. While Boas requested a monograph that would cover all of the major aspects of Gilyak life and would thus resemble Bogoraz's *The Chukchi* (1904–1909) and Jochelson's *The Koryak* (1908), which he had already published in the 1900s, Shternberg chose to concentrate on the Gilyak social organization, producing a detailed description of its functioning as well as a reconstruction of its origin and evolutionary development (Grant 1999; Kan 2000, 2001, n.d.; Shternberg 1933b, 1999).
19. This journalistic work, which often distracted Shternberg from ethnological research and writing, was also a necessity, since he could barely support his family on a modest MAE salary (Ratner-Shternberg n.d.).
20. Here is one example of this view, "Despite a long period of submission to the Manchurians and a destructive influence of the vagabond [Russian] population . . . the Gilyak moral order has retained many virtues of prehistoric peoples" (Shternberg 1893:19).
21. For a brief English-language history of the Kunstkamera/MAE, see the museum's web site: http://www.kunstkamera.ru/en/, accessed March 12, 2008.
22. This was done in the following manner: at first according to large geographical areas, then according to specific "cultural-ethnic groups," and finally within each of these subgroups according to "their function within the culture" (e.g., houses, clothing, household objects, decorations, art, religious cult, etc.) (Shternberg *et al*. 1907; Staniukovich 1964).

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23. For example, a model of a simple 18th century Itelmen dwelling was exhibited next to a model of a modern-day dwelling from the same culture, Yakut weapons were arranged in a set from the more simple to the more complex, etc. (Staniukovich 1964, 1978).
24. The *Guide* (1904) for the visitors was quite detailed and scholarly, reflecting Radlov's and Shternberg's scientific approach to ethnographic exhibitions. Thus each section of the *Guide* dealing with a major subdivision of the exhibit opened with a sketch that provided brief information on the local geography as well as the history and ethnography of the tribes, groups of tribes, and specific peoples, displayed in this particular area. The description of the collection itself often included brief comments and explanations, supplemented with references to the works of the ethnographer(s) who had studied the peoples being described and/or had collected) the objects on display.
25. Out of the debates among scholars and government officials about the scope of the new "Russian Museum," a consensus emerged that its Ethnographic Division was to collect artifacts mainly from the inhabitants of the Russian empire but also from the Slavic peoples of the rest of Europe and the populations of other countries "to which Russia's political, economic, and moral influence was being extended" (Staniukovich 1964:87). The irony of this case is the fact that the chief ethnographer of the new museum, Dimitrii Aleksandrovich Klements, was also a former Populist exile who, like Shternberg, became a prominent Siberian ethnographer and, thus, insisted on collecting heavily among that region's non-Russian peoples. It was up to his junior colleagues to conduct collecting expeditions in the European part of the empire (*Materialy po Etnografii Rossii;* Dubov 1998; Mogilianskii 1910, 1914).
26. Unlike the MAE, whose budget came from the Ministry of Finance via the Academy of Sciences—and thus had to compete with several academic natural science museums—the Russian Museum was generously supported by the Ministry of the Imperial Court.
27. He articulated it in his annual reports to the Academy (1904–1924), several guides to the MAE written during that same period, and particularly in two lengthy essays about the Museum's past, present, and future (Shternberg 1912c; Shternberg *et al*. 1907).
28. It should be noted that in his earlier writing on the discipline of ethnography (e.g., his 1904 entry "Ethnography" in the *Encyclopedia of Brokhaus and Efron*), Shternberg offered a narrower definition of its scope "as a science that studies the culture of the people who are not included in the scope of historical research and of historical archaeology, i.e., it studies mainly the primitive [*pervobytnyi*] people and those strata of the civilized [*kul'turnyi*] ones who have maintained the features of primitive life." However, he eventually came to a much broader definition of the discipline as embracing all of humanity in all of the stages of its evolutionary development. In fact, by the end of his life, Shternberg began to argue that ethnography was the most inclusive and comprehensive of all branches of the social sciences as well as the most progressive one, since it did not neglect any people or ethnic group of the world and treated them all as equally worthy of study and respect (Shternberg "Ethnography as a Science and a Subject of University Instruction" [1927]; St. Petersburg Branch of the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences, f. 282, op. 1, ed. kh. 30).
29. In the late 1920s, Shternberg's students recalled his museum-based lectures fondly, emphasizing their professor's unique ability to make even the most mundane artifacts "come alive" (Gagen-Torn 1975; Ratner-Shternerbg n.d.).
30. Of course, this was only an ideal. In reality the MAE was on occasion forced to rely on poorly prepared collectors or accept gifts from wealthy amateur donors whose collections came without good documentation. Since the MAE's funds rarely permitted large-scale expeditions abroad, Shternberg often used his contacts with foreign scholars and museum curators to have them collect for the MAE and/or exchange their duplicates for some unique ones owned by his own museum. In this manner the MAE acquired substantial collections from the Americas, Oceania, Southeast Asia, and elsewhere.
31. Only a couple of Shternberg's publications (1906a, b, 1909, 1931) focus heavily on museum artifacts and even they are concerned much more with ideational culture rather than technology or art *per se*.
32. Thus he always served as the curator of the Siberian Department and for a period of time acted as the head of the American one as well. His Americanist interests developed to a large extent out of his participation in several meetings of the International Congress of Americanists, his close collegial relationship with Boas and his indirect participation in the Jesup Expedition. He shared Boas', Bogoraz's, and Jochelson's interest in the relations between the indigenous Asian and American people occupying both sides of the Bering Strait as well as the intercultural relations within the larger Pacific Rim area that included the cultures he himself specialized in, such as the Gilyak, the Ainu, and several ethnic groups of the lower Amur River (Kan 2006; Krupnik 1998; Shternberg 1929).
33. Especially interesting to Shternberg were a small and "rapidly declining people"—the Karagasy [Tofalary] and their neighbors, the mountain Soioty [Tuva], among whom the MAE conducted a special expedition. Shternberg (1912c:464–465) was particularly proud of the fact that no other European museum had any artifacts from these "unique" ethnic groups.
34. Shternberg pointed out with pride that because of the importance of shamanism as a major form of "primitive religion" (which was still inadequately understood) the MAE's very rich and comprehensive collection on this subject would alone make it a very unique ethnographic museum unrivaled by any other one (1912c: 465).
35. The MAE did have a decent-size collection of North American Indian artifacts, obtained mainly through exchange with several U.S. museums.
36. In Shternberg's words, "the collection of objects of the Buddhist cult constitutes both instructive materials on the history of Oriental art and an useful addition to the museum's rich materials on primitive religion" (1912c: 469).
37. The only cultures of the European part of the Russian Empire that were fairly well represented in the MAE's collection were the more "exotic" Ugro-Finnish people of the Volga region who, despite centuries of intensive contacts with the Russians, had preserved significant

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aspects of their ancient pre-Christian, pre-Russian culture and had also been influenced by their northern and eastern Siberian neighbors (Staniukovich 1977).

38. Smirnov's ethnological theories and conservative ideology are discussed in detail by Geraci (2001).

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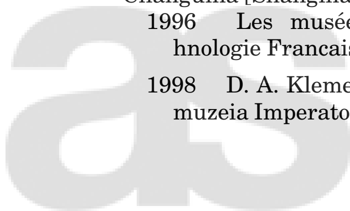
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Abstract

In the 1900s–1920s, Lev Shternberg played a major role in transforming the St. Petersburg Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography into Russia's most comprehensive ethnology museum and a popular site for visitors. As an anthropologist, Shternberg was committed to both a Boasian investigation of individual cultures (and intercultural relations) and classical evolutionism. Hence he believed that his museum had to include displays depicting distinct cultures and culture areas and a separate department illustrating "the evolution and typology of culture." The article examines his work of putting the former part of this vision into practice and the reasons why the latter one failed. [Keywords: Russian anthropology, museum history, history of anthropology, evolutionism, historical particularism]

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