

The Heterogeneous Temporalities of Russia's Colonialism

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70733/xvrutohkn25s>

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Abstract

This article discusses the temporalities produced by museum representations of Indigenous people. I use three objects from the museum collection as “interscalar vehicles”—an amphibious plane, a bronze sculpture, and a carved tusk—to understand Russian settler-colonialism temporalities. Using objects as starting points allows me to connect museum representations with more comprehensive Russian colonial histories.

When I arrived in St. Petersburg to do research for this article, the first thing I saw was the long line of police officers, police vans, and snow ploughs blocking the main street. As I was trying to get to the museum, I walked along the street surrounded only by police, no civilians in sight. Instead of a colorful variety of hats and winter coats usually seen on a cold sunny day, I could only see black face-covering masks, bulletproof vests, and batons, ready to use their force on anyone in their way. At the same time, a friend messaged me that she could not meet for a chat. She felt anxious because of the police searches happening in activists' houses on that day. I could not go anywhere and felt frustrated and scared, but most of all, I felt tired from the constant police interference.

The police state is everywhere: from street cameras to public Wi-Fi logins, with threats to give away any user data to the local authorities if necessary. It feels that even when police officers are not visible, they are ways lurking around the corner.

Although police violence in contemporary Russia remains omnipresent for practically everyone, with arrests and home searches intensifying in recent months, it remains racialized, illuminating Russia's position within relations of coloniality. For example, it is unlikely that I would experience random document checks, because I am white and would not be perceived as a subject of constant surveillance by the police. Also, being a white queer female, I would less likely experience police brutality and/or racialized slurs, either at a protest or simply walking around the city.

Racialization provides a counterpoint to some of the theorizations of Russian colonialism, which tend to see oppression as a homogeneous experience, not conditioned by race. One example is the concept of “internal colonization,” as it has been developed by Alexander Etkind, who describes it as violence, that is equally

experienced by “Russians, Tungus, Finnish and Jewish people.”^[1] It is ironic how Etkind uses the word Tungus, which is an umbrella term, used to describe “several peoples who speak closely related languages of the Tungus-Manchu family,” and includes Eveni and Evenki peoples.^[2] For Russian speakers, the word Tungus is associated with a quote from an Alexander Pushkin poem:

Rumor of me shall then my whole vast country fill,

In every tongue she owns my name she'll speak.

Proud Slave's posterity, Finn, and-unlettered still

The Tungus, and the steppe-loving Kalmyk.^[3]

Eveni and Evenks were considered “unlettered” or “wild,” as Piers Vitebsky explains, because “[t]hey had Asiatic faces, spoke a strange language, and were unbaptized. [...] And what was later to become most problematic for the Soviet regime, they were nomadic.”^[4] This contextualization reveals the othering of non-Russian people, a central component of the colonial violence enacted by the Russian, and later Soviet state.

Race is “not only a matter of ideology, beliefs, and statements” but “also becomes transparent in practices, in the way things are organized and done.”^[5] This definition allows for the perception of race not in biological terms, such as skin color, but rather as a mode of power, creating a difference between human and non-human.

This difference is central to coloniality, which involves “a cognitive model, a new perspective of knowledge within which non-Europe was the past, and because of that inferior, if not always primitive.”^[6] It emerges as the “underside of modernity [...] firmly linking colonialism (understood here as the conquest of land and the violence against both the Natives and the slaves) and capitalism in the 16th century.”^[7] This perspective also introduces a linear temporality, a perception of time that privileges capitalist progress and that forms the basis for the differentiation between “primitive” and “developed” nations. One example is the perception that building a factory or a power plant makes a territory and people living on it more advanced.

Russia has a dual position within the global relations of coloniality:

The Russian/Soviet Empire, on the one hand, strove to build its own separate variant of globality/modernity an Orthodox kingdom and, later, a Soviet world (although the basis for this seemingly different model was still western in its origin). On the other hand, the concrete strategies of building Russian/Soviet modernity had to be attuned to the western one as it has always been a dependent and mimicking modernity.^[8]

According to this explanation, the Indigenous people living within Russia's borders are subjected to the multilayered relations of coloniality. There are currently 40 Indigenous groups of people living within Russia's

borders, as recognized by the Russian State, but there are more, as some communities are still fighting for recognition.^[9] In this essay, I understand indigeneity as the self-identification of communities and persons, which emerges from the relations to the soil, water, and one another.

I concentrate on Russia's colonialism toward Indigenous people living in the Circumpolar North. This area is the space of ongoing material extraction by Russia, accounting for 80% of its natural gas and 17% of its oil.^[10] Indigenous land is thus an economic resource for both Russian and international corporations, and Indigenous people living within Russian borders are subjected to capitalist extraction of mineral resources, which benefits the Russian state and international companies.

They are simultaneously subjected to control and oppression from the Russian state. One example is the state registry on which all Indigenous people are required to be enrolled. To be considered Indigenous, one needs to provide proof to the infamous State Security Agency, with information of their occupations and location of living, which has to be "traditional," as well as their heritage. These measures extend state surveillance of Indigenous people, but also alienates Indigenous activists, who live in the city, and those who have a "non-traditional" job.^[11]

Another example of colonial oppression by the Russian state is the definition of "indigeneity" in Russian law. First, the category of "Indigenous people" is nonexistent within Russian legislation. The closest category is *korennye malochislennye narody Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation). They are defined as:

peoples living in the territories of the traditional settlement of their ancestors, preserving a traditional way of life and a traditional economic system and economic activities, numbering within the Russian Federation fewer than 50,000 persons, and recognizing themselves as independent ethnic communities.^[12]

This definition introduces categories of space, quantity, and forms of labor. One of the most controversial categories is the question of quantity. The very word *malochislennye* (small-numbered) is a quantitative category, which also has qualitative roots. In the Soviet period, the word with the same linguistic roots, *malye* (small), was used to refer to Indigenous people, signifying their need for paternalistic "protection" and "education" from the Soviet state.^[13]

Contrary to official claims that the number was random, it creates a distinction between those groups that are "Indigenous enough" and those that are "not Indigenous enough."^[14] For example, in Yakutia, Yakuts, who identify as Indigenous, are not recognized by the federal state authorities, while Dolgans are. Thus the legislation also contributes to the segregation of different communities, making solidarity and the collective claims for land rights more complicated, and sustaining colonial extraction.

Those parts of the definition that constitute indigeneity through specific locations and forms of labor, "incarcerate" people not only spatially, within specific territories, but also temporally. The assignment of "traditional economic activities," required to be considered Indigenous, positions Indigenous people within the colonial perception of what counts as "traditional," thus holding Indigenous people in the position of always catching up within linear temporality.^[15]

Although quite productive, the concept of coloniality requires further work to situate it within the Russian context. As Anna Engelhardt has pointed out, the recent interest in postcolonial and decolonial theory within Russian art institutions has led to the understanding of coloniality as solely a “cognitive model,” disconnected from the past and present of colonial oppression and decolonial resistance. The theoretical framework of settler colonialism allows for a rethinking of decolonization by providing situated definitions of colonialism that are not always grounded in European modernity.^[16] It also requires asking the question “Who colonized whom?” by accounting for the specific relations to land, resources, and epistemologies emerging from these relations.

Patrick Wolfe defines settler colonialism as a structural rather than a singular event and argues that settler colonialism is “an inclusive, land-centered project that coordinates a comprehensive range of agencies, from the metropolitan center to the frontier encampment, with a view to eliminating Indigenous societies.”^[17] Settler colonialism enacts various forms of racialized violence, from the creation of war fronts, to surveillance and control to gain the ownership of the land and its resources. Evelyn Nakano Glenn describes the difference between settler colonialism and colonialism as follows: “Settler colonists do not envision a return home. Rather, they seek to transform the new colony into ‘home.’”^[18] This differentiation is productive for the analyses of Russian colonialism as it illuminates the entanglements between the control of land and the extraction of resources with the elimination of the Native. One recent example of the latter is the recent updates to the central Russian Constitution, which describe the Russian language and the Russian people as “state-formational,” thus rendering Indigenous people and their languages nonexistent.

Alexander Morrison marks the beginning of Russian settler colonialism with the establishment of the “Resettlement Administration” within the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1896, which started the “systematic, technocratic, state-driven” colonial policy.^[19] By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was almost impossible for Indigenous people to avoid the influence of the state or the payment of tributes.^[20] Morrison understands the unfolding of settler colonialism quite literally as the process of “resettlement” of the Russians on Indigenous lands in the nineteenth century. The contemporary relations of coloniality are multilayered, combining the extraction of resources, multiple oppressions of Natives, and a perception of time that sustains material forms of oppression.

To disentangle the relations of coloniality, I ask a speculative question: What would an exhibition of Russian culture from an Indigenous perspective look like? Taking my lead from curator Anne Christian Taylor, I reposition the question as follows: What would an Amazonian group’s exhibition of “Western” culture look like?^[21] The act of repositioning highlights the multiplicity of forms of colonialism, existing both within a Eurocentric world view and outside of it. In this question, the word “culture” is used in a way similar to how Ariella Aïsha Azoulay understands art. As she puts it:

The word *art* as it emerged in the mid- to late eighteenth century was linked to the imperial conquest and mastery of time, as if time were not something shared in common but a divisible thing to be allocated. The mastering of time is a key aspect of imperial violence that separates objects from people and places them in a progressive, linear timeline (“art history” is paradigmatic) in which colonized people and colonizers occupy different positions and roles.^[22]

This quote ties definitions of “art” or “culture” to the colonial conquest and the mastery of both time and space. I argue that, to answer Taylor’s question, one needs to consider the infrastructures of racialization that facilitate the multilayered process of colonial occupation. An infrastructural perspective allows a tracing of the material

process of the production of colonial temporalities, entangled with the colonial extraction of resources and control of both land and Natives.

Infrastructure can be defined in relation to the practices it supports.^[23] Thus, the analyses of infrastructure within settler colonial contexts allow for productive refusal, which “shifts the gaze from the violated body to the violating instruments.”^[24] One possible violating instrument is the museum, which facilitates the formation of an “extractive view” and that “sees territories as commodities” rendering both humans and non-humans as natural resources for material and immaterial accumulation.^[25] It does so by creating a seemingly neutral exhibition space that constitutes a distant and racialized other who can be looked at, but would never be able to return the gaze. This process is conditioned by a reproducible “totalizing grid” dividing things into clear categories.^[26] This categorization also constitutes a subject who possesses an all-encompassing knowledge of the world, looking at it from a god-like perspective

Understood as an infrastructure, the museum also produces a perception of time, which supports the extractive perspective by depriving Indigenous objects of the life worlds that constituted them. As it is impossible to interrogate the museum infrastructure at large, I conduct a form of reverse engineering: I start from objects shown in museums and treat them as “interscalar vehicles,” revealing the multiple temporalities of occupation and racialization facilitated by museum infrastructures. Gabrielle Hecht defines “interscalar vehicles” as “means of connecting scales and stories that are usually kept apart.”^[27] I use three objects a hydroplane, a bronze sculpture, and a carved tusk to understand the temporalities of Russian settler colonialism.

Amphibious Plane: Linearity and Its Discontents



Amphibian plane in the Museum of Arctic and Antarctic, St. Petersburg. Photo: Egor Rogalev

As I enter the Museum of the Arctic, the first thing I see is an amphibious, model SH-2, suspended from the curved ceiling. Facing the museum entrance, with its tail end looking toward the exhibition space, it invites the visitors to follow its lead in exploring the distant frontier of the Circumpolar North. The functional design of an amphibious plane contrasts with the classicist decorations on the ceiling, inherited from a pre-Soviet time when the building functioned as a church. The museum opened in the former church in 1934, during the period of Soviet industrialization. Repressions preceded the opening of the museum when, in 1931, all of the priests and the

other church workers were sent to the Gulag. In 2016, the Russian Orthodox Church demanded the restitution of the building, but the appeal was declined after several court hearings.^[28]



The view of the Museum of Arctic and Antarctic, St. Petersburg. Photo: Egor Rogalev

The museum floor plan still resembles that of an Orthodox church, but instead of icons on the walls of the main round hall, one sees the pictures portraying the brave deeds of explorers. There is a spherical model of the Arctic in the middle of the hall, seen from above. The amphibious plane at the entrance is turned toward this model as if ready to fly over it. The model is surrounded by taxidermies of Arctic animals as well as samples of plants. The exposition paints a picture of the land, uninhabitable for humans, somewhat similar to a distant planet.

The documents of the 1930s Northern Exhibitions, framing the central hall, contribute to the heterotopic perception of the Circumpolar North.^[29] The illusionary Circumpolar North becomes a space of a heroic time of linear progress, of messiah-like actions of heroes who overcame dreadful conditions.^[30] For example, the amphibious plane was used during the Cheluskin Northern expedition. Headed by Otto Schmidt, it has been glorified by the Soviet State, because although the ship sank, the expedition members continued their work drifting on an ice floe. They and the pilots who saved them were declared “Heroes of the Soviet Union” by the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union.^[31] The museum exposition constitutes other similar figures of giants, carrying the teleological time of conquest on their shoulders.

The museum aims to create a near science-fiction-like image of a conquest of distant worlds. In doing so, it implies a specific form of time: a linear timeline directed toward progress. The latter being understood solely in terms of mutually reinforcing conquest of land and technological progress.

However, contrary to the teleological claims of the total conquest of the Arctic, the construction of material infrastructure required adaptation to the conditions of the environment. As Pey Yi Chu points out, the Soviet scientists used the rhetoric of *osvoenie* and *zavoevanie* (conquest) to obtain more resources for their work, adhering to the Soviet State’s propaganda line, which saw the Arctic as an adversarial entity that needed to be conquered. However, the building process required heavy maintenance. Chu describes one of the forms of maintenance, which secured the railway from *naled’* (icing) on the Amur–Yakutia highway:

One strategy implemented on the Amur-Iakutia highway entailed clearing swaths of land and digging extensive canals or trenches at calculated distances from the road. [...] The goal was to induce the formation of a layer of frozen earth that would become an impermeable barrier to the waters of a *naled'*.^[32]

This strategy was imperfect, requiring ongoing modification and maintenance. These maintenance issues troubled the linear temporality of messianic exploration, introducing repeated routine activities. They had to account for the cyclical times of changing seasonal conditions: canals had to be dug in the warmer seasons so that in “winter the depression, denuded of vegetation and snow cover, froze more quickly and to greater depths from exposure to the atmosphere than did the surrounding land,” preventing the formation of *naled'*.^[33] While the museum infrastructure produced a narrative of a linear temporality of conquest, the material infrastructures of conquest required laborious maintenance, troubling linear time by accounting for the cyclical temporalities of the freezing of land.

Soviet industrialization was mainly achieved through prison laborers, who were brought in from more southern regions. For example, the prisoners who were transferred to the Kolyma River region to build the material infrastructure for the extraction of gold, included Don and Kuban Cossacks, and Russian and Belarusian peasants. The prisoners' labor conditions were so dreadful that only 50% survived during the first year of work.^[34] This did not stop the process of conquest, but slowed it down significantly, creating gaps and frictions, troubling the perception of conquest as a smooth process. Thus a tension emerged: while the museum evoked an image of strong giants conquering the world, they obscured the reality of devastating prison labor.

The museum created a what Rifkin describes as “settler temporality.”^[35] The imagination of effortless movement toward the future, designated solely for white men's able bodies, suggests a temporal perception that is at odds with the conquest's material realities, which comprised a fragmented temporality filled with violence and death. Such conceptions of linear temporality and the subsequent narratives of conquest are based on Indigenous exclusion.

“Old Nenets” Figure: Erasure through Linearity



Fedor Bolotnikov, Old Nenets Man, Museum of Arctic and Antarctic. Photo: Egor Rogalev

Among the scarce reminders of the existence of Indigenous people above the Arctic Circle in the Museum of the Arctic, is a bronze figure, *Old Nenets Man* by Fedor Bolotnikov, portraying a naked man holding a spike. The figure is put on display alongside deer, positioning it as non-human and separate from the vast Soviet industrialization process. In the perception of a white man, reflected in the Museum of the Arctic, a body of a person who does not look like and behave like him does not fit into his world view and is not human.

Unlike prison laborers, Indigenous people were considered unsuitable workers. They did not fit into the heroic discourse of the exploration of remote regions either, and therefore were positioned outside of settler time, in a backward temporality, alienating them from their land.

This has led to the complete deprivation of legal status of Indigenous people, meaning they have no protection of their land relations. Starting from 1938, they were considered “regular Soviet citizens,” which did not give them any rights, but instead furthered alienation from the land and put the Indigenous people in a position disconnected from state-driven progress.^[36] They were seen as not fit to work in the factories or provide food for the workers, because they were nomadic and could not grow crops. Some of the “regular citizens” also faced deportations and repressions. For example, in 1937–38, nearly all members of Sakhalin Island’s Indigenous population were sent to prison camps.^[37] The imagination of linear temporality thus contributed to anti-Indigenous behavior and oppression. As Rifkin shows, settler temporality is a perception of time, which positions Natives in an inferior position in relation to non-Natives, by way of the notion of “traditional.” As he puts it: “Traditional serves as the opposite of modern, indicating not simply chronological dating but qualities that belong to a different epoch that do not fit the contours of the present.”^[38] The notion of traditional acts as a placeholder to position Indigenous people within what I call “reverse temporalities,” which means that they are excluded from the perception of the present and the future as it emerges from this present, as it is envisioned by settlers.

Exclusionary settler temporalities are often reproduced anew for instance, in Soviet times and after that, in Russia. They act as hauntings that transcend the linear perception of settler temporality, because when they are seen historically, they illuminate the repetition of the logic of colonial oppression. More recent museum representations of Indigenous people often position them within the same reverse temporality. In her case studies of several *kraevedcheskiye* museums the Russia-wide network of museums aimed at the production of knowledge about one’s home area Sofia Gavrilova observes that they put Indigenous people outside of any perception of contemporaneity. For example, Gavrilova describes the Yakutsk *kraevedcheskiy* museum representation of Envenks as follows: “

Overall, the ethnic minorities are represented by twenty-three items, including the Evenk mannequin. It does not represent the present-day lifestyle of the Northern minorities. The viewer is left without any information on how and where the Evenki live today.”^[39]

The more central museums reproduce the same logic. In the Russian Museum of Ethnography, located in St. Petersburg, the exhibition “The Arctic Inhabited land” features clothes and other objects made by Indigenous people living in the Circumpolar North within Russia’s borders. Like the *kraevedcheskiye* museums discussed by Gavrilova, it imagines Indigenous time as alien time, situated outside contemporaneity. One example of such an approach is the description of shamans. It describes shamanism in the past tense, as if it has no place in the here and now: “An arch with the image of deer antlers was fastened to [Selkup] shaman’s headdress. Putting it on his

head, the shaman turned into ‘celestial deer.’”^[40]

The same approach is reproduced in official documents, determining Russian government strategies in the Circumpolar North. The recently accepted “Strategy of Arctic Development” claims that the Arctic contains vast potential for resource extraction and other possibilities for “economic and strategic development,” including the Northern Sea Route, the significance of which “is to grow due to climate change.”^[41] Somewhat contradictorily, the same climate change can, according to the document “cause events, which would create risks for the Russian and international economic system and the environment” as well as the “safety of the Russian Federation.”^[42] Thus it positions the Circumpolar North within the same linear, progress-oriented timeline as the Museum of the Arctic.

The extractive approach of the document is coupled to the peculiar positionality of the Indigenous people. Eugeny Simonov, the coordinator of the “Rivers without Borders” coalition, elaborated on the extractivist roots of the document’s promise to “support Indigenous culture.” Looking at other points in the document, which allocate regions to the extractable resources, he points out that Indigenous knowledges and cultures are seen as another resource required to establish “ethno-ecological tourist clusters.”^[43] Those “clusters” are supposed to operate amid the “growing conflict potential in the region.” In the language of Russian legislation, that means that any protestors, especially those disturbing Russian resource-driven interests, are to be arrested. State violence against Indigenous activists exists in many forms, from firing from jobs to criminal prosecution under false accusations.^[44] However, the document is linked to the perception of Indigenous life worlds as sources of “edutainment” for tourists, positioned within other temporalities.

Smirnov’s analyses reveal that extraction implies not solely the material process of obtaining specific resources; it is also a perspective that renders the Indigenous person as an object for observation, as someone less advanced than a white settler viewer, and for that reason seeming strange and even alien for them. Thus, while settler temporality continues to evolve, racialized exclusion sustains its existence. Anti-Indigenous violence is supported by museum representations, positioning Indigenous people within a racialized, reverse temporality.

Carved Tusk: Extraction

The perception of Indigenous art in Russia has been produced from the center through several museum rooms in Moscow and St. Petersburg, filled with identical glass displays of ivory carvings. They look a bit like transparent caskets, holding traces of Indigenous culture. Starting from the 1930s, these tracings were aligned with the settler perception of how Indigenous culture should look.^[45] Around this time, “professional artists” and ethnographers started to work with “masters” from Chukotka and other parts of the USSR. In 1933, artist Alexander Gorbunkov was sent to work as a consultant on *khudozhestvenno-kustarnye promysli* (art and handicraft). The main objective of his work was to facilitate *osvoenie sovetskoi kultury* (mastery of the Soviet culture) by the Indigenous people. Soviet art historian Tamara Mitlianskaya claims that Indigenous art “was losing its magical features, but was enriched with new forms and content.”^[46]

One example of this “new content” is the carving by Mikhail Vukovol portraying the Cheluskin saga. The carved tusk portrays the map with a route of the Cheluskin ship, its sinking as well as life in the camp, the arrival of a bear to the camp, and the process of saving the sailors. According to Mitlianskaya, the plane with the brave Cheluskin ship saviors flew over the Ulen village where the artist lived, so he was a “witness” of some sort of this

historical event. This positioned an Indigenous Chukchi person as a witness to the unfolding of the heroic history of the Soviet State.^[47]

The history of colonial exploration, immortalized by an Indigenous author, is an emblematic example of what was supposed to be “national in form, Soviet in content.” According to this formula, starting from the 1930s, the “national” (non-Russian) cultures were supposed to reflect the positive influence of the Soviet State as well as glorify its leaders.^[48] After Stalin’s death in 1953, some of the ethnographers’ and folklorists’ approaches were publicly criticized, yet they mostly remained the same; the only change was a replacement of the name “Stalin” with “Lenin” in published works. During the public criticism of the construction of what folklore was supposed to be, one of the scientists confirmed that the All-Union-House of Folk-creation in Moscow had created guidelines for folk art.^[49]

One of the examples of Stalinist-in-content is the work by artist Roshlin (Mitlianskaya only mentions his surname). He is referred to as one of the first Chukotka artists to depict Marx, Lenin, Kalinin, and Stalin on the wider sections of tusks.^[50] In folk tales, Lenin’s and Stalin’s arrival was often portrayed as if it was an arrival of a spirit. These stories fitted into a wider network of Soviet-crafted folklore. One of its persistent forms was *noviny* songs about Soviet progress and the magnificent figure of Stalin.^[51] One of the stories, written by Pomor storyteller Marfa Kriukova, described the Arctic exploration, comparing Stalin with prince Vladimir and portrayed him assigning various tasks to scientists.^[52] Similar creations were published in the collection *Creative Works of the Peoples of the USSR* in 1937. For example, a song, allegedly translated from the Saami language went as follows:

If Stalin and Voroshilov say: the war has come.

And the enemies will want to take our land away we will all go to war.

We will take the riffles, start shooting, we will defend our tundra.

[...]

We will bring guns, ammunition, food,

The deer will help us by giving meat and skin.

We will help the Red Army with our deer.

We will defeat white enemies.^[53]

We will defeat our land, our lakes, our deer.^[54]

However, the same Saami people who allegedly composed the song, faced political repressions from the Soviet

State. By 1947, 118 Saami people had been executed or sent to prison camps. Nearly the whole population of the Kola peninsula was murdered. Not all accusations are recorded, but they include “espionage,” “counterrevolutionary agitation,” as well as “organization of terrorist actions.” Those accusations facilitated the construction of a racialized other that was situated as being against and outside the Soviet State, and eased the process of land conquest by eliminating the Native population.^[55]

Vokulov’s carving of Cheluskin epos fits into a wider network of “Soviet in content” objects, which supported the imagined temporality of progress. Another artwork by the same author portrayed Lenin’s visit to Chukotka. Mitlianskaya quotes the folklore story, which allegedly inspired the artwork: “The flares of the Northern Lights lit the sky, the Chukchas heard the voice of a strong man from Moscow. This was the voice of Lenin.”^[56] On carved tusks, listeners, as well as deer and huskies, surround the small figure of Lenin in a monument-like pose.

Vukovol’s artwork was later mentioned in a poem by Vladimir Tyneskin, who described it as evidence of Lenin’s arrival to Chukotka. He wrote:

What about Lenin? Where is he?

Who would give us the creditable answer?

In the novels,

in legends, in cinema, in Mausoleum?

No, this is all not true

he has been living with us from the earliest years.

Whether or not Illyich visited Chukotka

no one can say.

Yet I know for sure

he is here.

Look at the deeds of our Party,

and you will see,

that Lenin is alive,

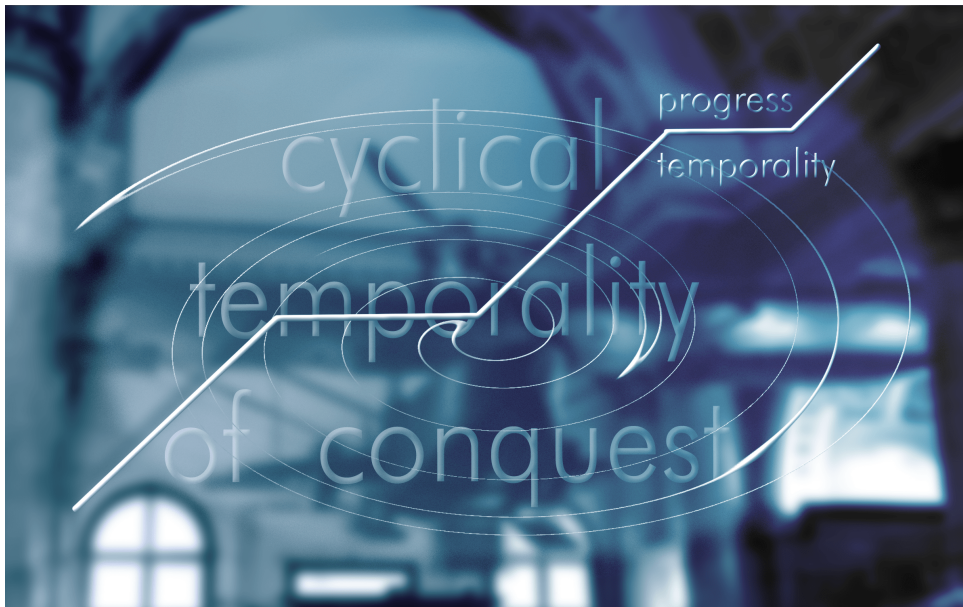
not so far away,

but here!^[57]

Lenin's visit to Chukotka was again reproduced in 1969 by Galina Tynatval. In the carving, he is sitting and talking to people with a couple of seals lying on the ground.^[58] Like a legend, a folk story about Lenin was reproducible and could be slightly altered depending on the storyteller. This reproduction supported the progress-oriented settler time by altering the image of the past and aligning it with the imagination of the communist future to come. The creation of a communist future with folk art operated similar to a process of extraction: it took elements from the Indigenous past and altered it to create a future unintended by the artwork's creators.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, extraction of both mineral resources and Indigenous cultures and anti-Indigenous oppression continued to be reproduced by the Russian authorities. Dolgan activist and educator Zoya Ichin-Norbu discussed the award of the "Polar Star" medal "For the Great Contribution to the Realization of the State Nationalities Politics," as the special medal of the state-controlled Association of *Korennye Malochislennye* (Indigenous) People, as well as others given to local authorities and business owners in Moscow, and the concert by Indigenous collectives that followed the giving of the awards.^[59] As she pointed out, the land was destroyed by extraction of mineral resources, and the people were being alienated from their sacred spaces. The image of Indigenous culture was used to facilitate the corporate and state "moves to innocence," which obscured the destruction of Indigenous land.^[60] They also proposed the vision of the future, including Indigenous people as obedient subjects of state-sanctioned "support," instead of recognizing their political agency.

Heterogeneous Temporalities



Sasha Shestakova, The relations of temporalities, collage

As I have observed, museum infrastructures facilitate several temporalities. Linear temporality is distorted by the material existence of the process of colonial occupation. Cyclical and fragmented temporalities exist alongside an imaginary linear time, crafted by various forms of propaganda. The linear temporal form, as facilitated by the museum infrastructure, emerges from an anti-Indigenous erasure. It is a temporality that reverses Indigenous existence, situating it outside of the idea of time as linear progress, designated for the settler state and capital. The third temporality operates extractively, taking elements from the imaginary of non-modern Indigenous cultures to facilitate settler development. These temporalities do not exist separately, rather, they support and mutually reinforce one another. If an exhibition of Russian culture could be imagined, it would be something like

a kinetic sculpture of the perpetual movement of temporalities of oppression.

In order to account for the multiple temporalities of oppression, one also has to pay attention to the heterogeneity of Native temporalities. Indigenous experience cannot be limited to different forms of racialized violence emerging from settler temporalities. Anna Nerkagi's novel *Aniko of the Nogo Clan* shows Indigenous temporality, which is situated as neither a linear progress temporality nor as a backward position, inferior to the white settlers.^[61] Instead, as Rifkin points out, Indigenous people are situated within heterogeneous temporalities, which are "affected by the settler temporalities, but cannot be reduced to them."^[62] They are not reducible to the "unbroken chain of possession or inhabitation, an uninterrupted line that can be traced from the present into the past" either.^[63] Although Rifkin writes from a different context, his observations are also relevant to the contexts within Russia's borders.

One example of the co-existence of temporalities is the use of both Nenets and Russian languages. Nerkagi writes in Russian but uses the words *savaq* and *yagushka* to refer to pieces of winter clothes. One of the novel's characters, Passa, dreams that young Nenets people would return from the city, learn, and help their families make Chums warmer. However, in Nerkagi's novel, his dreams do not come true. Nevertheless, more recent examples show the heterogeneity of temporalities within strategies of the Indigenous fight for land rights. For instance, the Indigenous association Aborigen Forum used social media for a campaign, "Answer Us, Elon Musk" to create a frame of accountability for the Tesla company, which uses nickel extracted at the expense of Indigenous land.^[64] This example shows that a fractured and heterogeneous temporality, despite being produced by settler colonialism, is already being used by Indigenous people to fight for their land rights.

Paying attention to multiple temporalities of oppression and resistance reveals the entanglement between spatial and temporal sovereignty. Contributing to the ongoing conversation on the decolonization of museums, I argue that decolonization is the process of reclamation of land and the reclamation of temporalities. As I have discussed, a museum possesses temporal authority over indigenous objects. Therefore it is the work of white settlers to question their perceptions of time, taking into account the histories of colonial oppression. A possible decolonized museum would be a place of accountability for destroyed life worlds and stolen objects, with Indigenous temporal sovereignty defining its structure.

The author would like to thank this essay's peer reviewers Professor Madina Tlostanova and Professor Henk Slager for their insightful comments, as well as editor Nick Aikens for his productive input. They would also like to thank PhD supervisor Professor Henriette Gunkel for helping them develop the concepts for this article, and their friend Anna Engelhardt for important conversations and emotional support, as well as their colleague Dina Akhmadeeva for their valuable recommendations.

Footnotes

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legends of an evil sun emperor. However, I am cautious about citing this as it lacks reference to Indigenous sources. They have also discussed how the Soviet State used Indigenous art as a mirror to reflect colonial ideas. See Engelhardt, "The Futures of Russian Decolonisation". Engelhardt criticized the exhibition for the absence of contemporary Indigenous voices in the exhibition and the racist wording used by the curators.. The discussion then continued with the response by Volovod and Diakonov. See Diakonov, Valentin and Volovod, Yaroslav. "Chukotka. Risposta." *Krapiva Journal*. Available at <https://vtoraya.krapiva.org/chukotka-risposta-31-05-2020> (accessed 2021-02-13). This, in turn, was followed by my response, which pointed out that Volovod and Diakonov consider colonialism a finished event rather than a continuous structure. See Shestakova, Sasha. "Menya nikto ne sprashival" (Nobody asked me). Blog entry. *Teletype*. June 4, 2020. Available at https://teletype.in/@vincent_ear/Mnfmkx3el (accessed 2021-02-13).

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