

**Survey of Fieldworkers to Siberia
concerning connections and collaboration in fieldwork**

from David Koester

**in preparation for the Workshop,
“Who Owns Siberian Ethnography?”
Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology
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My topic for the seminar is “collaborating with local communities.” It occurred to me that it would be useful for all of us if I could provide some general information about the scope and nature of collaborations that have been undertaken. If you can spare a few minutes, I would much appreciate it if you could answer some or all of the questions on the survey below and send your response to me (ffdck@uaf.edu).

This survey could take anywhere from 15 minutes to about an hour to complete, depending on which option you choose. In the multiple choice version, I’ve tried to give a number of simple, multiple choice questions that would allow you to answer quickly. I have tried to phrase the questions so that personal identity won’t matter. If, however, you want to answer but would like to keep some or all of your answers confidential, please let me know. I only plan to use the results for my presentation. I’ll check with respondents if it looks as though the results would be useful for future publication.

There are three ways to do this survey. You can answer the two questions at the beginning in short narratives. This way you won’t be trying to fit your answers into the multiple answers of the survey form. The second way is to answer the survey questions, which will help to provide a comparative framework. Finally, you can do both, which would, of course, provide the most information.

If you have MS Word, the easiest way to complete the survey would be to type your answers in the attached text and send it back to me as an attachment. You can also respond to the e-mail text version and send that back. You can also print it out and mail it to me at:
Department of Anthropology, University of Alaska Fairbanks, PO Box 757720, Fairbanks,
AK 99775-7720 USA.

You can see my answers to these questions at
<http://www.faculty.uaf.edu/ffdck/assets/Survey-DK.pdf>

Option 1 Narrative Answers

1. Please describe the general features of your fieldwork: where, when, how long, with whom.

I worked primarily in Tigilsky raion and resided for most of the time in the village of Kovran. Kovran is the only village in Kamchatka in which the majority of the population is Itelmen. I also worked in other villages that were historically Itelmen, in the Soviet-built village of Ust Khairiuzova and in raion, oblast and okrug capitals, Tigil, Palana and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky. I began research work in 1992, did a year-long stint in 1993-94 and returned most summers until 1998. I have not been back since December of 1999.

2. Describe two or three primary contacts with whom you worked and the nature of your work together or collaboration. These contacts can be individuals or organizations (and you may describe more than three if you feel that that is necessary for balance). It would be very helpful to know how you met the person and the person's social position in the community that made it appropriate (or inappropriate) for him or her to work with you, as an outsider.

My primary collaborator in general was an Itelmen woman with a higher education who had lived in an urban environment most of her life. I got to know her first because she had been a mountain climber and also because she was interested in Itelmen cultural issues. I have collaborated with her in organizing conferences, giving papers and community projects. I provided her with various forms of equipment (copier, helped get a grant computer, etc.). In Kovran I had one primary host, a school teacher. I worked with her on school related projects and learned most about who was who in town. Her connection was that she was the English teacher in town and was originally one of the founders of the cultural restoration council.

I also worked with another teacher whose connection to me came about because she was very involved with cultural revitalization and also that she had some American ancestry. She worked with me in conducting fieldwork and helped to make connections with others. I provided her some financial assistance and equipment.

Finally, I had an extended working relationship with an elder woman whose life history I (and a graduate student) recorded.

Option 2 Shorter answers

1. Where did you make your first contacts for your fieldwork?

- (1) at your home institution
- (2) in your home country (outside your home institution)
- (3) in Moscow
 - a. Governmental-political institution
 - b. Academic institution
 - c. Personal contact
 - d. Other _____

- (4) directly in the capital city of region where you worked (specify) _____
- (5) directly in the village where you worked (specify) _____

2. Where did you work Kamchatka _____
and what was the geographical span of your fieldwork area(s)?

- (1) Multi-oblast'
- (2) Oblast'
- (3) Okrug
- (4) Raion
- (5) Villages
- (6) Village(s) and regional (oblast', okrug' ...) capital
- (7) Other (e.g., ulus) _____

3. What percentage of your time did you spend in the following locations?

urban environment __30%__
small village __65%__
other __5%__ (specify) *tundra, forest, tabun*__

4. What was the ethnopolitical span of your fieldwork?

- (1) primarily one ethnic group,
- (2) multiple ethnic groups
- (3) a geographical *area* with a historically (if not now numerically) predominant non-Russian ethnic group
- (4) a geographical *area* with several ethnic groups
- (5) other _____

Please give a brief description, especially if there is particular ambiguity to choosing a category above.

5. Was your fieldwork experience in Siberia (mark all that apply)

- (1) doctoral dissertation research?
- (2) post doctoral research?
- (3) other _____?

6. With what organizations or groups did you work? (check all that apply)

- (a) Village council
- (b) Village school
- (c) Internat
- (d) Village clinic
- (e) Regional Native association (in village, raion, okrug, oblast', etc.) Itelmen Cultural Revitalization Council
- (f) AKMNSSiDV (RAIPON) in Moscow
- (g) Kolkhoz – indigenous, single village, multi-village, other
- (h) Sovkhoz – indigenous, single village, multi-village, other
- (i) Governmental cultural office
- (j) Governmental minority affairs office
- (k) Dom kul'tury or local cultural organization
- (l) Rodovaia obshchina
- (m) Other _____

7. Was your work with any of these organizations/institutions collaborative? Please describe briefly the nature of the collaboration.

We (I and two graduate students) worked on a couple of projects with the village school, including evening English classes, presentations at Itelmen language week (their program, we contributed), an exhibition of fieldwork results (our program, they helped and hosted).

I did some work that was with both the village council and the cultural revitalization council, such as publishing a local newspaper

8. Did you contribute monetarily to support public events or public works?

- Grant money yes () no
Personal money yes () no

9. With which/whom of the following individuals did you work (check all that apply for the most important individuals with whom you worked). People can have many roles—please give the community identification or institutional affiliation relevant to your acquaintance with each person. Please specify level, if applicable (e.g., government administrator, raion level).

- (a) primary school teacher (not of native language)
- (b) native language teacher
- (c) secondary school teacher
- (d) higher education teacher (PedUchilishche or higher)
- (e) local native scholar
- (f) local native activist
- (g) shaman
- (h) respected elder
- (i) chinovnik (use this one if you think the person would accept this label)
- (j) government administrator (legislator)
- (k) government administrator (environment, resources, land use, agriculture)
- (l) government administrator (administration, general-e.g., ministry)
- (m) government administrator (cultural affairs)

- ___(n) kolkhoz/sovkhoz (or business derived therefrom) administrator
- ___(o) member of a rodovaia obshchina
- ___(p) kommersant
- ___(q) post-Soviet business person (new business, biznesmen)
- ___(r) KGB/FSB or militsia agent
- ___(s) hospital worker
- ___(t) member of a family (with which you had some relation)
- ___(u) Other _____

10. Was your work with any of these individuals collaborative (co-authored publications, co-organized events, co-designed research, etc.)? If so please describe briefly the nature of that collaboration.

With local native scholar co-organized conferences and events, a few co-authored publications

*With elders worked on life histories, including one very extensive one
More explained above in narrative section....*

11. Do you feel that the types of connections you made in the field either hindered or enhanced the possibilities for collaborating with communities? Explain briefly. (Even if you did not have any intention of collaborating with *whole communities* – however one might try to conceive that as possible – it would be helpful if you could speculate on the possibilities that were offered by the connections you had).

I found that most of the people I worked with—speaking now beyond just the individuals I indicated above—had some political or social connection that made working with certain others complicated. In some cases these complications were because of institutional affiliations (e.g., school, or past party affiliation), but in some cases they were familial or personal. In retrospect I think I was somewhat overreliant on specific individuals as spokespersons for community sentiment. Collaboration worked mostly along lines of the networks of the people I knew well. There were only a few cases in which I developed strong working relationships outside of the networks of the half dozen or so I knew best.