

Andrei Znamenski
Professor of History
Department of History
znamenski@memphis.edu

PDA Report, 2017-2018 Academic Year

I took this year-long leave to complete two major research projects. The first one is a book chapter "Religious Prophecy and Making of Altaian Ethnicity, 1880s-1920s" that is a part of a collective volume to be published (in English) by Samara University Press (Russia) next year. This comprehensive essay will examine the links between religious prophesy and ethnicity building among nomadic tribes in southern Siberia whose identity was shaped by Tibetan Buddhism and Soviet Communism. In the fall of 2017, I spent October in St. Petersburg (Russia), examining primary sources related to this project at the Museum of Anthropology in St. Petersburg (Russia). In November of 2017, I finished the manuscript of the chapter and sent it to the publisher.

Later in the fall of 2017, I started working on my second project that became an offshoot of my teaching Russian/Soviet history and earlier research into how religions and ideologies shaped the identity of people. It is a book tentatively entitled *Socialism: A History of a Secular Creed*. This project is an ambitious attempt to explore the fate of the sacred in the age of modernity, when declining traditional religions became replaced or complemented by secular ideologies or what some scholars call political religions. Because Socialism, one of these ideologies, came to shape the identity of large groups of people not only in the former Soviet Union and China but also in many other countries, I decided to examine it as a historian of religions. Rowman & Littlefield Publisher gave me an advance contract for this book, expecting me to complete the manuscript in 2019.

Although the comprehensive nature of this project implies researching relevant secondary sources, I did archival work too. The Moscow Archive of Social and Political History (Russia) holds the variety of valuable primary sources on the beginning of the socialist movement in the nineteenth century and on the activities of the Communist International. I spent four months working with the papers of this organization and also locating old photographs to be included into my book. By now, I completed 10 of the projected 15 chapters of the book, and I expect to deliver the manuscript to the publisher in the spring of 2019.

Simultaneously, during my PDA leave, I continued to contribute to professional meeting and conferences. At the invitation of the Department of International Relations at the College of Business and Entrepreneurship (Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski, Poland), I delivered to their undergraduate students three lectures related to the topic of the book project that I am currently working on. On November 20, 2017, invited by the Center for Modernization at the European University (St. Petersburg, Russia), I delivered a seminar talk "Neoliberalism: Social Scholarship, Ideology, and Conspiracy Theory" for their faculty and research associates. Next year, on March 22, 2018, at the American Studies Conference at Samara University, Russia, I gave a conference talk (by skype) on the topic of Multiculturalism in the modern West. Then, on

June 23, I delivered in person an expanded and revised version of the same talk for a conference at the European University, St. Petersburg, Russia.

On December 4, at the invitation of the Department of Ethnology at the Moscow State University (Russia), which became interested in my earlier research related to my 2007 book *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and Western Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 2007), I gave a talk “Mircea Eliade: Shamanism, Traditionalism, and the Ideology of Archaic” at their methodological seminar. On March 22, 2018. Since my research involves the exploration of spiritual dialogues between indigenous people and Western cultures, I was invited by the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Sorbonne, Paris) to take part in an interdisciplinary conference “Language contact and translation in religious context: comparative approaches,” where on May 25, 2018, I presented a paper “In the Beginning There Was No Word’: Spiritual Dialogues between Athabaskan Indians and Russian Missionaries, 1840s-1920s.”

As a member of *editorial boards in two academic journals Siberica: Journal of Siberian Studies and Alaska History*, I continued my work as reviewer of journal submissions. In May of 2018, for *Alaska History*, I reviewed a manuscript submission “Russian America and the USSR: Striking Parallels.” For *Siberica*, I reviewed a submission on Siberian indigenous nationalism archeological science. Furthermore, in February of 2018, I reviewed a book proposal titled *Esoteric Symbolism of Shamanic Trance and Altered States Phenomena* for Cambridge Scholars Publishing. This May, I also served as an outside reader for two senior theses “Transformation of Russia's National Roles: A Constructivist Approach” by V.A. Stepasiuk and “Municipal Policies Toward Historical Landmarks in the City of St. Petersburg” by O.A. Matizova (Department of Comparative Political Studies, St. Petersburg Northwestern Institute of Management). Both students were completing their theses under Dr. Pavel Usanov, my colleague from St. Petersburg (Russia), who invited me to serve as an outside reader.

While in Poland, on the above-mentioned lecture tour, I was interviewed by local Polish TV (November 17, 2017) on the rise of nationalism in current Europe (<http://www.lokalnatelewizja.pl/wiadomosci/14873,andrej-znamenski-z-amerykanskiego-uiversity-of-me>). On July 9, 2018, a BBC reporter interviewed me on US debates regarding affirmative action. The interview was later published on the BBC web site. Recently, in connection with the coming anniversary of the beginning of Second World War (September 1), I was interviewed by the Dobroum YouTube Channel on Stalin and Hitler dictatorships. Last but not least, on March 4, 2018, by Skype I advised two high school students (Teddy Bird, and William Peritz, Western Albemarle High) from Virginia who were working on a video project “The Liberation of Mongolia.” At the 2018 Virginia History Day, this project won a second place and moved on to the National History Day Contest at the University of Maryland in College Park, MD.