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# علم المصريات الروسي (1914-إلى 1945)

*Ivan Ladynin*

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# RUSSIAN EGYPTOLOGY (1914 – 1945)

# علم المصريات الروسي (1914-إلى 1945)

*Ivan Ladynin*

Russische Ägyptologie (1914 – 1945)
Égyptologie russe (1914 – 1945)

*The period from 1914 to 1945 in the history of Russia was marked by a number of drastic changes: World War I, the revolution of 1917 with the civil war that followed, the establishment of a totalitarian ideological rule accompanied by terror, and the participation of the USSR in World War II (the Great Patriotic War). These events deeply affected Russian (Soviet) scholarship, including Egyptology. The tradition of the earlier, imperial period continued until the early 1920s through the research of Vladimir Golenischeff outside Russia and, briefly, through the work of Boris Turaev and his students. This generation of Russian Egyptologists essentially became extinct, and the Egyptological school had to be shaped anew during the time of post-revolutionary reconstruction. This process was influenced in the 1920s by what might be defined as "modernist" trends, but a new standing tradition emerged only in the 1930s, largely due to the efforts of Vassiliy Struve. This scholar of a pre-revolutionary breed combined his good training with a grasp of topical ideology, i.e., the Soviet Marxist historical scheme. This meant a shift in research towards socio-economic issues, though other themes were not ignored. At the same time, the 1930s saw the beginning of research by Yuri Perepyolkin, whose specific method was developed further in the works of the Leningrad/St. Petersburg Egyptological school in the second half of the twentieth century.*

تميزت الفترة من 1914 إلى 1945 في تاريخ روسيا بعدد من التغييرات الجذرية: الحرب العالمية الأولى؛ ثورة 1917 والحرب الأهلية التي تلتها. إقامة حكم شمولي؛ ومشاركة الاتحاد السوفياتي في الحرب العالمية الثانية (الحرب الوطنية العظمى). أثرت هذه الأحداث بعمق على المعرفة الروسية (السوفيتية)، بما في ذلك علم المصريات. استمر تقليد الحقبة الإمبراطورية السابقة حتى أوائل عشرينيات القرن الماضي من خلال البحث الذي أجراه فلاديمير جولنشيف خارج روسيا، وبإيجاز، من خلال أعمال بوريس توراييف وطلابه. لقد فقد هذا الجيل من علماء المصريات الروس في نهاية المطاف، وكان لابد من تجديد مدرسة علم المصريات خلال فترة إعادة الإعمار بعد الثورة. تأثرت هذه العملية في عشرينيات القرن الماضي بالتوجهات "الحداثية" العابرة. فقط ظهر تقليد أكاديمي قوى في الثلاثينيات، ويرجع ذلك إلى حد كبير إلى جهود فاسيلي ستروف. دمج هذا الباحث تدريبه الجيد مع فهم المخطط التاريخي الماركسي السوفيتي، مما يعني حدوث تحول في البحث نحو القضايا الاجتماعية والاقتصادية، على الرغم من عدم تجاهل الموضوعات الأخرى. في الوقت نفسه، شهدت الثلاثينيات بداية بحث يوري بيريولكين، الذي تم تطوير طريقته الخاصة بشكل أكبر في أعمال علماء المصريات في لينينغراد / سانت بطرسبورغ في النصف الثاني من القرن العشرين.

The interval from 1914 to 1945 in the history of Russia was marked by a number of drastic changes that divided it into several diverse subperiods. This timespan comprised World War I; the revolution of 1917 with following civil war that lasted until 1922; the creation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, the Soviet Union) and the post-revolutionary reconstruction of the 1920s; the so-called "Great Crunch" of 1929 to 1930, which brought about the domination of Joseph Stalin and the paramount control of the Communist Party over all aspects of Russian society, including scholarship; Stalin's terror of the 1930s; World War II; and, from 1941, the war of the USSR with Nazi Germany (the Great Patriotic War). Quite expectedly, the development of Egyptology during these years was also marked by more than one trend. At the start of this period, Russian research continued its integration with international Egyptology—an integration successfully begun decades earlier by Vladimir Golenischeff and Boris Turaev; in fact, in the decade of 1910, Turaev's students were set to enter academia as independent actors. The revolution of 1917 was a complex process (for a helpful overview of its background from 1900 to its aftermath in the late 1920s, see Pipes 1995), and its ultimate outcome, the creation of the Soviet state, was by no means predetermined. The outcome was, in fact, due to the ruthless consolidation of power (first, in the metropolitan and industrial regions of the country) by Vladimir Lenin and his partisans (the Bolsheviks, or the Communist Party). However, had they failed to grab the fruits of the downfall of the monarchy in early 1917, it would nevertheless have marked a boundary line in Russian consciousness (as probably would have the victory of the Entente in World War I, if imperial Russia had had its share in it, thereby precluding the revolution). Because pre-revolutionary Russian scholarship was highly traditionalist in its basics—relying first and foremost on the description and formal analysis of evidence, and virtually immune to large-scale theoretical schemes—any development of the late 1910s would have made it more modernized, with new concepts taken from both socialist and non-socialist sources. In reality this meant that Russian Egyptology needed to adapt to a new, ideologically biased system of scholarship emerging in Soviet Russia, and the weight of tradition had necessarily to be reconciled with the value and nature of innovation. In the 1920s the political struggle was much more vital to the Communist authorities than was the ideological conversion of Russian society; thus academia retained its autonomy, and innovative models were a matter of the researchers' own impartial choice. A uniform model, the Soviet Marxist scheme, was not dictated by the Communist ideologists until the time of the "Great Crunch" (for this and other events in Soviet history in the 1930s and 1940s, see Khlevnyuk 2015). Starting in the early 1930s, under Stalin, Soviet society became more traditionalist than it had been shortly after the revolution: cultural continuity with imperial times ceased to be ostracized and became more manifest in the research. However, studies of socio-economic problems, with emphasis on the "class struggle," were more encouraged than other topics.

Aside from this historical and ideological background, many prerequisites of Egyptological research remained as they had been in imperial times. The well-cultivated isolation of the Soviet state from its "capitalist surroundings" prevented researchers from conducting fieldwork in Egypt more hopelessly than ever (in the early 1930s, Boris Piotrovskiy, a beginner in archaeology, deliberately turned from his study of Egyptian artifacts to those of Urartu, due to the possibility of excavating in Soviet Armenia: Piotrovskiy 1995: 76). This resulted in an increased importance of the Egyptian collections accumulated before the revolution, especially those of the Hermitage at Petrograd/Leningrad and of the State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (the latter being a pre-revolutionary acquisition from Vladimir Golenischeff: Demskaya et al. 1987). Though many scholars were researching Antiquity, Greco-Roman studies continued to predominate, and despite the novel and widespread attractions of ancient Egypt—whose civilization stood in vast contrast to the

more familiar Classical world—there were few professional Egyptologists. Thus, these few scholars could not focus on highly specialized areas of Egyptological research: they had, necessarily, to touch upon general issues of Egyptology, and the whole discipline was therefore more integrated with other fields of ancient history than it was in European scholarship. Notably, though ancient Egyptian language was taught, and separate questions of language were discussed, Egyptology inside Russia/the USSR lacked professional linguists after Golenischeff's departure from Russia in the late 1910s, when he moved to France. As in imperial times, a bulk of competent scholars in the humanities and, importantly, the headquarters of relevant institutions (among them, the Academy of Sciences), were concentrated in the city that was the Russian capital until the spring of 1918—the former St. Petersburg/Petrograd, known as Leningrad from 1924. Most Egyptologists worked there, at the university and the Hermitage, which had continued from pre-revolutionary times (in fact, the majority of them graduated from St. Petersburg/Petrograd University), and also in some newer and more ephemeral institutions. Only solitary researchers in the field worked in Moscow, and in other cities their activities were episodical.

It is hard to say whether official support of Egyptology and, generally, of Near Eastern studies in Russia changed notably for better or for worse after the revolution. Classical education in the *gymnasia* (middle schools providing university preparation) was considered a pillar of conservative order in imperial Russia, but other domains of ancient studies left the authorities indifferent (notably, in 1908 Nicolas II positively refused to buy from his private purse the collection of Vladimir Golenischeff: Ladynin, Izosimov, and Sennikova 2020). Neither were these fields of research a priority for the new Soviet authorities, though Egyptology could foreseeably have been popularized within the ensuing vast post-revolutionary trend of cultural enlightenment. Both before and after the revolution, the promotion of Egyptology in research and teaching remained largely the deed of individual scholars who endeavored to use to that end their positions and the funding that had been allocated to their, essentially non-Egyptological, institutions.

### *World War I, the Revolution of 1917, and Russian Egyptology*

In 1914 Vladimir Golenischeff (1856 – 1947) was the most prominent figure in Russian Egyptology (Demskaya et al. 1987). The descendant of an exceedingly rich merchant-family, and an autodidact in Egyptian language with early experience of extraordinary discoveries (he discovered the texts of both the *Prophecy of Neferty* and the *Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor*, presenting his interpretations of the former in 1875 and 1876 and of the latter in 1881 and 1882), he was a keeper of the Egyptian collection at the Imperial Hermitage, a position he willingly accepted without pay. From 1879 on he traveled regularly in Egypt, where he studied the epigraphy of Wadi Hammamat and Suez for a few seasons in the 1880s but mostly acquired Egyptian antiquities. A catastrophic failure of his commercial enterprises caused him to sell his collection to the Russian state in 1908 and 1909; in 1911 it was placed in the newly founded Emperor Alexander III's Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow (now the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts). After his marriage in 1909 to a French woman, Cécile Mattei, and the sale of his collection and house in St. Petersburg at about the same time, Golenischeff lived for extended periods in France. He made his last trips to Russia in 1914 and 1915, after which he stayed abroad for good: wartime made trans-European travels difficult, and he reasonably expected trouble for himself in his home country after the Bolsheviks' coup-d'état in November 1917. Indeed, it resulted in the deprivation of his income, the solid annual payment of 24,000 rubles he had been receiving for the sale of his Egyptian collection. The cessation of this payment became apparent by February 1918, when Golenischeff addressed a number of his correspondents (among them Alan H. Gardiner, James Henry Breasted, and the widow of Gaspero Maspero), asking for a paid position at any Egyptological institution (Ladynin 2021b: 56-

57; 2021c: 81). Cuts in funding due to the war made his request difficult to accommodate; however, in 1919 Pierre Lacau suggested to him the task of cataloguing the religious papyri at the Cairo Museum (Golénischeff 1927; the second volume of the work remained unpublished: Garnot 1960: 63). Golenischeff worked regularly in Cairo through the 1920s. From 1924 to 1929 he was the first professor of Egyptology at the Egyptian University (now Cairo University), which became a state institution in 1925, when the Wafd Party held office, and was intended, among other things, to prepare an Egyptian faculty of Egyptologists. Golenischeff's tenure, though rather short, was important: some remarkable scholars (Alexander Badawy, Ahmed Fakhry, Labib Habashi) were among the graduates of his courses (Ikram and Omar 2020: 51-53). Not much is known about his later biography: he visited Egypt from time to time but mostly lived in Nice, France, and stayed there from 1940 to 1944, under Vichy rule and the German occupation.

In these decades Golenischeff's most important research (left unfinished) comprised his studies of ancient Egyptian syntax. Probably as early as 1890 he found himself at variance with the Berlin school of Egyptian philology (Voss and Gertzen 2020) on crucial points: he denied the three-consonant structure of Egyptian verbal roots and the definition of *verba 3ae infirmae* (verbs with weak third radical); the theory that the pseudoparticiple was a remnant of an extinct verbal conjugation, defining it instead as a specific form of ordinary participle; and the qualification of the imperfective and perfective as temporal forms. Judging from his letters, he disagreed that the stem of suffix conjugation was a participle and considered it a substantive (e.g., his letter to Gustave Lefebvre, 14 September 1936, archived in the Centre Wladimir Golénischeff in Paris, shelf mark EPHE_CWG_5GOL/02). Generally, Golenischeff denied the "Semitism" of the Berlin school—that is, the concept of Egyptian as a development of an archaic Semitic language that was brought to Africa by an early migration and subsequently degraded under the influence of local tongues (most clearly demonstrated in Erman [1900], where the Semites were in fact presented as a "cultural race" founding the Egyptian civilization, much in compliance with the self-positioning of Germany under Wilhelm II). According to Golenischeff, the absence of Semitic lexemes in the earliest Egyptian texts, e.g., in the *Pyramid Texts*, deflated such a possibility. Rather, he considered Egyptian not as a derivation of archaic Semitic tongues, but an extremely early offspring of a root common with them; indeed, in so proposing, he foresaw the concept of the Afroasiatic language family.

Good relations with Erman and, perhaps, some underestimation of his own status (he being an independent scholar with no formal Egyptological education) prevented Golenischeff for an extended time from engaging in outright polemics against the Berlin school. The first occasion in which he expressed his views was his publication of *The Tale of the Shipwrecked Sailor* with brief linguistic remarks in the glossary (Golénischeff 1912: 61-64, n. 2; 123-128ff.). In a letter of 25 November 1916 (Centre Wladimir Golénischeff, shelf mark EPHE_CWG_5GOL/02), Édouard Naville encouraged Golenischeff to confront the Berlin school more strongly so as to put an end to its preponderance in Egyptology after the much-awaited German defeat in the war; however, Golenischeff did not share his pathos till the loss of his income in the revolution, which, like many others, he ascribed to German support of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, with its underlying intent to bring Russia under German sway out of World War I (Ladynin 2021c). A brief but strong manifestation of Golenischeff's opposition to the Berlin school was his article of 1922 in the French publication honoring Champollion's discovery (Golénischeff 1922); this opposition would probably have been developed in a major work on syntax he had planned at that time (see his letters to Étienne Drioton of June 1922, archived in the Centre Wladimir Golénischeff, shelf mark EPHE_CWG_5GOL/02, and to James Henry Breasted of 6 December 1922, archived in the James Henry Breasted Papers of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago). Golenischeff's archive in Paris

preserves the manuscript of this work, categorized in sections (*Projet de publication sur la syntaxe égyptienne: Introduction à la syntaxe égyptienne: Adjonction postpositive; Anticipation; Disjonction; Éllipse; Parenthèse; Prolepse; Répétition*; shelf mark EPHE_CWG_5GOL/06-14). Proofs of some sections were printed (possibly in the early 1930s) in the font of the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale. This work was never completed, and an impetus to finalize and publish it after Golenischeff's death (Garnot 1960: 63) achieved no results.

In Russia, Boris Turaev (1868 – 1920) remained the leading figure in academic Egyptology. His earlier research produced a thesis on the cult of Thoth (Turaev 1898). Later, his fundamental *History of the Ancient Orient* (Turaev 1913) was used in university curricula and placed Egyptian civilization in a vast Near Eastern context. In the 1910s Turaev taught at St. Petersburg/Petrograd University. Additionally, at the newly founded Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow he held the position of keeper of Golenischeff's collection and published its artifacts, along with some semipopular books. A real founder of the Russian Egyptological school, he was elected a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1918. However, being a passionate Orthodox, he repulsed the atheistic "socialist" revolution and died in 1920 as a result of not only the privations of the time but also his profound disappointment (Tomashevich 2002).

The revolution rendered extinct a great part of the school shaped through Turaev's teaching: Alexander Kotseyovskiy (1887 – 1919), a researcher of the *Pyramid Texts*; Ivan Volkov (1882 – 1919), a researcher of the cult of Sobek and of the Aramaic documents from Elephantine, and a compiler of an unpublished Egyptian grammar in Russian (Tomashevich 2002: 357-361; Levchenko 2009); and Fyodor Hess (1895 – 1922), a student of Egyptian art (Postovskaya 1961: 26, 28, 52), all perished in these years. The task of preparing an entire faculty of Russian Egyptologists—nearly accomplished by Turaev—had to be undertaken anew after the revolution (see Bolshakov 2020: 354, 360). Symptomatically, Turaev had focused his teaching on ancient Egyptian culture and religion, his chief interests; later, Egyptology re-created under the Soviets exhibited changed priorities.

The activities of Turaev's pupils were mostly concentrated in St. Petersburg/Petrograd. Two exceptions are partly explained by the situation around the civil war in Russia, when scholars were eager to leave metropolitan regions controlled by the Bolsheviks for the periphery, where life was somewhat happier. Kotseyovskiy, who started his career in 1914 at St. Petersburg University, worked during the years 1915 to 1919 at Novorossiyskiy University in Odessa. He defended his M.A. thesis on the *Pyramid Texts* at Kharkov University in October or November of 1919, and died on his way back to Odessa in December of the same year (Levchenko 2009: 418); the cities of Kharkov and Odessa were both held at that time by the anti-Bolshevist Armed Forces of Southern Russia, and the scholar's demise coincided in fact with the collapse of their resistance. A lesser-known pupil of Turaev, Alexey Schmidt (1894 – 1935), who divided his interests between Egyptology and the regional archaeology of Russia, worked at the newly founded Perm' University between 1917 and 1924 (Bogoslovskiy 1968). A plan to start a Russian expedition in Egypt was discussed shortly before World War I, but the war prevented it from being realized (Demskaya et al. 1987: 229-230, 233; Tomashevich 2002: 365-367); not surprisingly, it was not resumed after the revolution, and museums remained the only basis for the research of Egyptian monuments in Russia. Upon Golenischeff's emigration, the Egyptian collection at the Hermitage in Petrograd fell under the direction of Vassiliy Struve, who continued the museum's pre-revolutionary academic tradition. A similar tradition was upheld at the Moscow Museum of Fine Arts by Turaev's student and successor in charge of Golenischeff's collection, Tatiana Borozdina-Koz'mina (1889 – 1959) (Anokhina and Tomashevich 2021). Innovations in the research of museum collections were suggested by Vladimir Vikentyev (1882 – 1960), an autodidact in Egyptology who studied and worked in Moscow. In 1917 he published a

translation and analysis of *The Tale of Two Brothers* (Vikentyev 1917), but he also had a vivid interest in pseudo-philosophic concepts popular in the early twentieth century (such as the anthroposophy of Rudolph Steiner).

A trend patronized by the Soviet authorities after 1917 was reshaping the entire educational and cultural sphere in order to provide wider access to the masses who had lacked educational and cultural opportunities prior to the revolution (Fitzpatrick 1970). Despite the hardships of the civil war, a university reform was launched and various activities popularizing science, the humanities, and art (through public lectures, pamphlets, and translations of literary works) were initiated. An innovative (non-traditionalist, if not properly Marxist) approach was welcomed in these activities, and a number of the Russian intelligentsia joined them gladly (in addition to satisfying their long-standing urge for such innovations, they provided food rations and monetary support in the form of fees paid). So did Vikentyev, who founded in 1918 the Museum-Institute of the Classical Orient, intended to absorb all Oriental antiquities in Moscow. Vikentyev's ambition was to create "a research laboratory and a museum of a new type," where artifacts would be studied in a vast context of analogies outside the Near East in the light of the most modern approaches—approaches not just scholarly, but philosophic and artistic as well. He endeavored to appropriate Golenischeff's collection to his new structure, but it was suggested instead that he take a position at the Museum of Fine Art. Vikentyev probably realized he would not be able to break the conservative, purely academic trend dominant at the Museum; he went on an academic mission to Egypt in the season 1923-1924 and remained there permanently (Tomashevich 2003). With the help of Golenischeff, he began teaching in Cairo at a number of institutions, including Cairo University (ibid.).

Finally, it is important to note two prominent French Egyptologists who left Russia after the revolution of 1917. Michel (Mikhail Vladimirovich) Malinine (1900 – 1977) was the son of the mayor of Moscow. He attended Moscow University in 1918 – 1919 but soon left for Czechoslovakia and thereafter to France. Georges (Georgiy Solomonovich) Posener (1906 – 1977) was born in Paris to a family of Jewish émigrés who returned to Russia in 1917 but chose to re-emigrate in 1921 (Bierbrier ed. 2019: 301, 375). Certainly, the contribution of these scholars belongs to French scholarship; however, Golenischeff's archive in Paris preserves their letters written in Russian in the 1930s and 1940s (shelf mark EPHE_CWG_5GOL/02).

### *"Post-revolutionary Modernism" of the 1920s*

It seemed to many that the Russian revolution opened the way to innovations, and Egyptology, as a rather new discipline, was susceptible to their assimilation, especially with the flow of new scholars graduating from universities in the 1920s. A doctrine affecting the newborn Soviet humanities and specifically the research of archaic cultures was the so-called "Japhetic theory" or "the new theory of language," promoted by Nikolay Marr (1864 – 1934). A specialist in the languages of the Causasus and an able linguist who had had a successful career in imperial times, Marr forwarded an idea that language divergence and migrations were of no importance in the evolution of tongues; rather, he connected each stage of language development with a shift in the socio-economic "basis" of a respective society. Language was thus perceived as a "superstructure" over such a basis. For example, the elusive "Japhetic languages" that Marr thought he discerned in archaic tongues were accorded a specific stage at the cusp of prehistory and history (Tolz 1997: 89-107; Alpatov 2011). Though later the arbitrariness of Marr's theories even led his sanity to be doubted, they were well received by the Soviet establishment due to their pseudo-Marxist flavor. Marr founded the Japhetic Institute (later the Institute of Language and Thought of the USSR Academy of Sciences) in Petrograd/Leningrad, which gave floor both to his adepts and to legitimate scholars. Marr had charisma, and his ideas, though fictitious, met the prevailing trend to surpass the boundaries of traditional textual

research and to attempt the reconstruction of the ancient mentality (vaguely analogous to this perception might be the enthusiasm for structuralism in later twentieth-century Western scholarship). In Egyptology and Near Eastern studies this meant some emphasis was placed on the topics of lexical semantics and comparative religion. Thus, Israel Frank-Kamenetskiy (1880 – 1937), who worked in the 1910s on New Kingdom hymns to Amun, touched upon the problems of the "syncretic" image of god in ancient Egypt; Isaak Livshits (1896 – 1970) explored the semantics of a number of hieroglyphic signs and their conveyance of temporal and spatial notions; and Boris Piotrovskiy (1908 – 1990) took an interest in the semantics of Egyptian denotations of metal (see Postovskaya 1961: 46, 90, 93-95; Miliband 2008: I: 810; II: 148-151, 554-555). The research of these themes in the USSR ceased after Marr's death, and its fruits are unknown outside Russian-speaking scholarship.

Better noticed was an occasional contribution to Egyptology by a Classicist of non-conformist character, Solomon Lurye (Salomo Luria) (1890 – 1964). Lurye received excellent training in Greek philology and history under Sergey Zhebelev, the leading epigraphist at St. Petersburg/Petrograd University before the revolution; however, his origins among the discriminated Jewish minority and his socialist views caused him to reject the imperial establishment and to welcome the revolution that achieved its overthrow (especially the pre-Bolshevist stage in early 1917). In the 1920s Lurye vehemently opposed Struve's theory of the "social revolution" in Middle Kingdom Egypt, discussed below. Using the ethnographic method of British anthropologist James Frazer and the so-called "theory of rudiments" developed by his teacher, Tadeusz Zieliński, also a Classicist (Almazova and Ladynin 2021), he argued that the Middle Kingdom texts *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* and *The Prophecy of Neferty* had no historical content and reflected mythological *topoi* of the "world upturned" and regular rituals based on them, similar to the Roman Saturnalia (Luria 1929). In much the same way Lurye denied the biblical historicity of Israel's stay in Egypt (Luria 1926). Lurye's perspective is considered pioneering in its "non-historicist" reading of *The Admonitions of Ipuwer* (Enmarch 2008: 5-6), though one should note that he worked with translations only. In fact, Lurye foresaw the hypercritical trend that arose in reaction to the traditional "literal" perception of ancient narratives, a trend that revealed itself by the mid-twentieth century in Classical studies and some decades later in Egyptology and Near Eastern studies. Notably, Lurye's break with traditional method was highly conscious: he clearly wanted to separate himself from its roots in imperial academia and from its continuation (by his opponent Struve) after the revolution (Ladynin 2021a).

As for sociological Marxism, its effective reception in Soviet Egyptology grew among the Egyptological Circle, a semi-official society housed at Leningrad University from 1927 to 1930 (Bolshakov 2014). Officially it united all Soviet Egyptologists and some Assyriologists, but the bulk of its members were young Leningrad scholars headed by Isidor Lurye (1903 – 1958) and his wife, Militsa Mathieu (1899 – 1966). The interests of both scholars were defined in the 1920s and endured over the following decades. Lurye was a dedicated Communist and a revolutionary insurgent in the civil war; he researched ancient Egyptian law (Lurye 1960; German translation: Lurje 1971), technology, and some aspects of terminology closely related to Marr's postulates (see Postovskaya 1961: 84-85, 124-125; Miliband 2008: I: 831). He was willing to combine the Marxist concept of "socio-economic formations" with the cyclist schema of German historian Eduard Meyer (1855 – 1930), who considered the societies of ancient Egypt and the Near East, as well as of archaic Greece, to have been feudal (Meyer 1895). Lurye's view of Egypt as part of the feudal socio-economic formation of the ancient Orient is well manifested in his Russian publication of the Old Kingdom immunity decrees: references to some points in Meyer's *Geschichte des Altertums* gained there even more importance than the Egyptian sources themselves (Lurye 1939, referring to Meyer 1913; Ladynin 2019c: 438-439). While making use of this concept, so influential in

contemporary world historiography, Lurye at the same time satisfied the specifically Soviet demand for sociological themes. In the 1930s the definition of Egyptian society as feudal became a sort of heresy, but Lurye did not relinquish it.

Militsa Mathieu (Bolshakov 1996; 2020: 362-363) shared the creeds of her husband, but her major interest was Egyptian culture and the social conditions of its development: she studied art (Mathieu 1947a), the function of ritual (her argument for the reading of the *Pyramid Texts* from entrance to funerary chamber was that it should follow the course of procession inside the pyramid: Mathieu 1947b), and the Egyptian system of kinship (similarly to Lurye's research, her ethnographic parallels were congenial both with trends of world scholarship and with Engels's writings on the genesis of state: Mathieu 1936).

A remarkable person inside the Egyptological Circle of the 1920s was Dmitriy Olderogge (1903 – 1987). His brief notes on the administration of the Old and Middle Kingdoms foresaw the comprehensive analysis of titles, which came to be accepted as a research method in world Egyptology by the mid-twentieth century; he also seems to have been skeptical of modernized definitions of Egyptian society (such as Lurye's "feudalism"). He left Egyptology after only a short period, shifting his focus to African studies (Postovskaya 1961: 44-45; Ladynin 2019c).

In assessing the situation of Soviet Egyptology of the 1920s one should note that it was not as closed-off as it would become in the following decades. Scholars were able to make use of the new foreign literature (e.g., the Egyptological Circle had Gardiner's *Egyptian Grammar* at hand shortly after its publication: Bolshakov 2014: 95-96), and it was still possible to publish outside the USSR (e.g., Luria 1926, 1929; Struve 1928a, 1930b). Within the USSR, Egyptological articles were published in the leading Orientalist periodical, *Zapiski Kollegii vostokovedov pri Aziatskom muse Akademii nauk SSSR* [*Memoirs of the Orientalists' Collegium at the Asiatic Museum of the USSR Academy of Sciences*], as well as in the journal *Novyi Vostok* [*New Orient*] and a periodical collection of papers, *Vostok* [*Orient*] (of these, the latter publication was the only one published in Moscow rather than in Petrograd/Leningrad). Additionally, the Egyptological Circle had for a number of years its own typescript bulletin duplicated by means of a hectograph (an apparatus, now obsolete, for copying documents by means of a gelatin plate upon which an impression is made): however primitive, this was better than nothing and had its impact on the small community of scholars. Teaching, like most activities in Egyptology, was concentrated in Petrograd/Leningrad. Perhaps the only Egyptologist of that period outside metropolitan areas was Sergey Donich (1900 – 1958), a keeper of Egyptian antiquities at the Odessa State Historical and Archaeological Museum in the 1920s and 1930s (Tarasenko 2020). A meager attempt to organize was made when the First All-Russian Congress of Egyptologists took place in Moscow in August 1922, in order to commemorate the centenary of Champollion's discovery, but it did not have any lasting effect.

### *Vassiliy Struve, "The Great Crunch," and the Concept of "the Slave-Owning Formation" in the Ancient Near East and Egypt*

Undoubtedly, in the period considered here, the key role in Egyptology and Near Eastern studies in Russia/the USSR was played by Vassiliy Struve (1889 – 1965) (Bolshakov 2020: 360-363). Struve belonged to a family prominent in Russian science of the nineteenth century and studied at St. Petersburg University from 1907 to 1911. Struve's instructor in Egyptology was Boris Turaev, but at the same time he was influenced by Mikhail Rostovtzev (1870 – 1952), the renowned expert in Ptolemaic and Roman socio-economic history, with whom he studied Ptolemaic documentary papyri. As a post-graduate Struve planned a dissertation on New Kingdom administration and in 1914 went to Berlin, as did many of Turaev's other students. His studies there were brief—they began in April and were interrupted in July by the outbreak of World War I—but had a great impact on him (see his Berlin letters to

Golenischeff: Demskaya 1987: 242-252): he not only got to experience Erman's school but also met Eduard Meyer and grasped his cyclist socio-economic schema, i.e., his theory that the "feudal" ancient Orient and archaic Greece developed into the "capitalist" societies of Classical Greece, the Hellenistic World, and the Roman Empire, the cycle of "feudalism" and "capitalism" repeating itself in the Middle Ages and modern times (Meyer 1895; on Meyer's theory and works see Calder and Demandt 1990). In the mid-1910s Struve replaced Golenischeff as keeper of the Hermitage Egyptian collection. In his articles of that time, he drew pharaonic parallels to the Ptolemaic evidence, developing a cyclist theme in which the entire history of ancient Egypt was structured in a sequence of alternating stages of centralization and decentralization. The last shift between stages, according to his framework, took place between the Roman and Byzantine eras, when the Coptic monasteries, like the earlier Egyptian temples, played a disintegrative role as local economic and administration centers (Struve 1917; Ladynin 2016: 78-80).

In these early years of his career Struve developed a strategy he followed throughout his life: to place his research in the context of topical trends, the socio-economic history developed from papyrological data being one such trend in the early twentieth century. It is no wonder that his work was deeply affected by the revolution of 1917, which brought to his attention the *Admonitions of Ipuwer* and the *Prophecy of Neferty* (*Noferrekhu* in the transcription of the time). The basis for his observations were rather new publications of both texts (Gardiner 1909; Golénischeff 1913; indeed, Struve was the keeper of the latter at the Hermitage): he followed Sethe's view, recounted by Gardiner (Gardiner 1909: 18), that the events described in the *Admonitions* (and, respectively, in the *Prophecy*) are those of the late Middle Kingdom and early Hyksos Period. Like Erman in the 1910s (Erman 1912; and see especially the paper written after the collapse of the second German *Reich*: Erman 1919), Struve viewed the texts as descriptions of a social revolution caused by a massive popular uprising (Struve 1925). At first, he did not define his attitude towards this alleged event, though he likely shared Erman's view of it as a catastrophe bringing about a cultural decline; but with the coming of the mandatory Marxist doctrine, he depicted it in the brighter colors of the "class struggle" of the oppressed, caused by their exploitation (Struve 1935; Il'in-Tomich 2016; Ladynin 2021a).

Sociological narrative, including the definition of Egyptian and Near Eastern societies as "feudal," appears in Struve's works of the 1920s (Ladynin 2019a), but his major task was traditional fundamental textual research. Good relations between the Soviet Union and the *Weimarer Republik* allowed for his publishing, in Germany, the Mathematical Papyrus from the Golenischeff collection of the Moscow Museum of Fine Arts (Struve 1930b; in actuality, Turaev started this work, and Struve's assistant at its completion was Yuri Perepyolkin: Ladynin 2016: 74, n. 9). However, Struve's major theme of the 1920s was the Egyptian Late Period and specifically the tradition of Manetho of Sebennytos. His research resulted in a book of eight chapters, of which only two were published (Struve 1928b, 1930a), and several articles appearing until the mid-1940s (see Ladynin 2016: 80-96). Struve's reconstruction of Manetho's biography was impeachable, given that he wished to present Manetho as a contemporary, if not a collaborator, of Alexander the Great, though sources indicated his acme no earlier than the first half of the third century BCE; later Struve attempted to show the advantages of Manetho's chronology over data from the cuneiform and to prove an improbable length for the Amarna Period (about 80 years!). These results proceeded from Struve's erudition in both Egyptian and Greco-Roman narratives paired with a quick mind. Struve's faults would have been easily brought to light in pre-revolutionary scholarship; that they remained unchallenged indicates a decrease in academic discernment in the 1920s. The impact of his research was limited as his work remained unknown outside Russian scholarship and could not continue within it. Better known was Struve's idea that the "era after Menophris" (ἀπὸ Μενόφρεως) attested by Theon of Alexandria was reckoned by the heliacal rising

of Sirius in 1321 BCE, allegedly under Sety I (Struve 1928a; cf. Gardiner 1961: 249).

For all their faults, Struve's works were essential as a bridge to pre-war and pre-revolutionary scholarship both inside and, due to his experience in Berlin, outside Russia. From mid-1910 he taught at Petrograd/Leningrad University, and most newcomers in Egyptology were his students. However, the years 1929 and 1930 saw a dramatic change in Soviet life, labeled "the Great Crunch" in an article by Stalin. The latter's triumph inside the Communist Party enforced the "building of socialism" with the rapid development of heavy industry and the corralling of peasants into "collective farms." This tremendous effort, implemented by means of mass terror, demanded the eradication of any actual or ostensible opposition, especially among the elite and the intellectual class capable of critical thinking: from that time on the humanities were expected to provide a rationale demonstrating the inevitability of socialism. The capitulation of scholarship was achieved with reprisals against members of the USSR Academy of Sciences—mostly the historians—from 1929 to 1931 (Leonov ed. 1993 – 2015), and in the early 1930s the canonic historiographic design of Soviet Marxism was completed. According to the scheme, each major division of history was associated with a specific "mode of production" (Antiquity with slavery, the Middle Ages with feudalism, the modern period with capitalism), and every society was thought to pass through these stages in their ultimate transformation into the "classless society" of socialism and communism. The scheme was backed by the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. Its linearism, however, was overemphasized in comparison to their views, in order to highlight the uniformity of the progress towards socialism, with the "class struggle" between the "exploited" and "exploiters" as its motor. The "modernism" of the 1920s, and the possibility of ideologically unbiased research, ceased.

Struve played an important role in developing this design. He easily grasped the shift in priorities towards socio-economic themes and resumed his early interest in them: by the early 1930s, he was proficient not only in Egyptian, but also in Sumerian and Akkadian, which allowed him to present comparative research of relevant sources. He abandoned the definition of ancient Oriental society as feudal, along with the pseudo-Marxist theory of the so-called "Asiatic mode of production" (which he espoused occasionally in 1931: Ladynin 2019a: 259-261; Bolshakov 2020: 362), and in 1932 and 1933 forwarded a concept of slavery as a basic social structure in Egypt and Mesopotamia throughout Antiquity (Struve 1934). Its point of departure was that social evolution in Antiquity must have been similar in both the East and the West, and therefore "the socio-economic formation" in the Orient was "slave-owning," as it was in Greece and Rome. Still it was clear that, for example, Egyptian society in the Old Kingdom could not be mechanically equated with the different, and much later, Egyptian society in the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods. Here the notion of the ancient Orient as a specific cultural unity, a concept that originated with Struve's teacher Turaev (Turaev 1913), came in handy: for Turaev, this unity preceding the Hellenic culture embraced Egypt and the Near East, but Struve applied it to the entire area from Northeast Africa to the Pacific (Struve 1941; Ladynin 2019b: 804-808). The complex societies emerging here out of late prehistory were defined by Struve as belonging to the earlier stage of societies whose socio-economic basis was "the slave-owning mode of production," a stage whose fully fledged form would be reached in Classical Antiquity: slavery in the ancient Orient was often described as "patriarchal," and the role of rural communities here was stressed.

The concept of "the slave-owning socio-economic formation" in the ancient Orient, including Egypt, was officially recognized, and it influenced research until the end of the Soviet period. In 1935 Struve became a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences; he held several positions (the most important of them at Leningrad University and the Institute of Oriental Studies, Academy of Sciences), which enabled him to hire and train new researchers.

*Soviet Egyptology of the 1930s to 1940s: The Beginning of the Leningrad/St. Petersburg School*

An ideological change during the mid-1930s, both in Soviet academia and in culture more widely, was the return to a more traditional style, which better corresponded to Stalin's personal tastes. After rash experiments in higher education in the 1920s, the standard teaching of history, and Classical and Oriental philology, resumed in universities, and the newly established Institutes of History and of Oriental Studies in the system of the USSR Academy of Sciences served to centralize research in these domains. Continuity with pre-revolutionary tradition (exhibited, for example, in Struve's praises of his teacher Turaev) became more welcome. In 1937 the *Journal of Ancient History* (*Vestnik drevney istorii*)—a new publication, open to Egyptological submissions—was established. Contacts with global research were nonetheless vanishing: Symptomatically, in 1937 Alan Gardiner wrote to Golenischeff that he could obtain from the Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow no response to his questions concerning the Golenischeff onomasticon he was about to publish (*Centre Wladimir Golénischeff*, shelf mark EPHE_CWG_5GOL/01). In fact, however, the remoteness of Egyptology and of ancient studies in general from the affairs of the larger world served in a protective capacity: other humanities suffered much greater losses in Stalin's terror of the 1930s. More people, mostly students of Struve from the 1920s and early 1930s, entered academia and/or began teaching: Georgiy Frantsov (1903 – 1969), whose focus was Egyptian religion and folklore; Igor' Snegiryov (1907 – 1946), who endeavored to continue Marxist research on the archaic mind from Egyptian and African data; Nikolay Sholpo (1903 – 1941), who specialized in Egyptian artifacts and technology; and Revekka Rubinstein (1899 – 1982), who pursued an interest in the *Teaching of Merykara* (Postovskaya 1961: 48-50, 94-95, 126-127, 134-135, 189; Miliband 2008: II: 274-275, 378, 555-556, 678). Many activities ceased, and some scholars perished, in the Great Patriotic War of 1941 – 1945; but the evacuation of the Leningrad scholars brought a number of them, for a time, to Moscow, raising its importance as a center of Oriental research. Until then the only newcomers to Egyptology there were Vsevolod Avdiev (1898 – 1979), who had an interest in the social and military history of Egypt, and Dmitriy Reder (1905 – 1988), who produced a thesis on the Great Papyrus Harris: (Postovskaya 1961: 105, 133-135, 129, 189-190; Miliband 2008: I: 9-10; II: 234-235). These scholars instigated the standard teaching of Egyptology at Moscow University in the 1940s.

The end of the 1920s and especially the 1930s saw the beginning of research by Yuri Perepyolkin (1903 – 1982), by far the most prominent figure in the Leningrad Egyptology of his time. His primary research interests were the Amarna Period (e.g., Perepyolkin 1934), a specialization he developed in a series of monographs in the 1960s and 1970s (probably begun as manuscripts in the 1930s and 1940s), and Egyptian society in the Old Kingdom. Unlike most scholars who frequently employed Marxist terms, Perepyolkin followed a method that can be characterized as essentially "non-sociological." His intent was to consider exhaustively all sources of a relevant epoch and to explain them, as far as possible, in their own terms, without affecting the analysis with clichés of the modern mindset. Understandably, the question of how his method originated is somewhat hard to answer: though knowing fundamentally the available Egyptological publications, Perepyolkin seems to have been immune to methodological trends in world scholarship. Probably, his innate common sense aside, he simply followed a sound positivist tradition appropriate to nineteenth-century research and pre-revolutionary Russian scholarship. Perepyolkin sided occasionally with Struve's vision of the ancient Oriental society, not so much because he espoused Struve's theory of slavery, but because he found no proof of the opposing "feudal" concept in the sources of the Old Kingdom (as in Struve 1934: 138-141). Perepyolkin's innovation in the study of that epoch was the extensive use of tomb images and accompanying inscriptions rather than texts alone. An important generalization of his views on ancient Egypt was given in chapters

of a Soviet edition of *The World History*, prepared in the pre-war years. They remained unpublished in their complete original form (see the posthumous edition of the manuscript: Perepyolkin 2000) and, in fact, Perepyolkin's publications at that time were few; nevertheless the method he developed became a cornerstone of the Leningrad/St. Petersburg school of Egyptology—represented from the 1960s to the 1980s by Oleg Berlev and Evgeniy Bogoslovskiy—and endured in the post-Soviet era.

A devotee of Perepyolkin was Mikhail Korostovtsev (1900 – 1980), who entered Egyptology in the mid-1930s, subsequent to, oddly enough, a career as a sea captain. His research interests shifted early on from the social history of the New Kingdom to Egyptian written culture and literature. However, in 1944 his academic career was halted when he was sent to Egypt as an intelligence officer under cover as a journalist. There he made contacts with local and European Egyptologists and advocated for establishing, in Egypt, an agency of the USSR Academy of Sciences with an Egyptological mission—an initiative that could expectedly be welcomed in the course of the war, when the Soviet Union was compelled to demonstrate its openness to the outer world to its Western allies. However, the idea lost any prospect with the start of the Cold War: In 1947 Korostovtsev was extracted from Egypt and sent to a concentration camp on the false charge of treason, to return to academic work only in 1955 (Ladynin and Timofeeva 2014).

### *Concluding Remarks*

The period from 1914 to 1945 saw the perishing of pre-revolutionary Egyptology in Russia and the formation of its radically new Soviet version. The latter was not achieved before the 1930s, in the ambivalent context of a preponderantly Marxist doctrine together with a partial return to traditionalism, and with the great personal efforts of Vassily Struve, an old-school scholar finding an advantageous niche in new circumstances. By that time, the resonating contact between Soviet Egyptology and scholarship abroad ceased. Nevertheless, the encouraged emphasis on socio-economic issues did not eradicate the variety of themes traditionally present in the discipline.

## *Bibliographic Notes*

A directory of the most prominent personalities in pre-revolutionary Russian and Soviet Egyptology is *Who Was Who in Egyptology*, now published in its fifth edition (Bierbrier ed. 2019). An important contribution by Andrey Bolshakov in *A History of World Egyptology* (2020) defines the major trends in the development of Russian Egyptology, with an emphasis on the personalities of Golenischeff, Turaev, and Struve (an impeachable though explainable feature being a concentration on the Egyptology of St. Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad). Necessarily, most works on Russian and Soviet Egyptology are written in Russian; this naturally poses a hardship for many readers. Concise and reliable annotations of most Egyptological publications between 1917 and 1945 are found in Postovskaya (1961). A directory of bio- and bibliographic data for most Soviet Egyptologists is Miliband (2008). It is advisable to see publications authored and co-authored by Olga Tomashevich for the research by Turaev and his students (Tomashevich 2001, 2003; Anokhina and Tomashevich 2021) and by the present author for the research by Golenischeff, Struve, and a number of scholars of the Soviet era (Ladynin 2016; 2019 a and c; 2021 a, b, and c; Ladynin and Timofeeva 2014). Summaries of Russian and Soviet Egyptology, accessible to the non-Russian reader, were made by Alexandre Loktionov (2017, 2019).

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