Lev Gumilev, Ethnogenesis and Eurasianism

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ABSTRACT


A biographic survey of Gumilev’s life sets his work in a historical context. Gumilev’s background, his personal interests in nomadic history, and the tragic experiences of his life emerge as important factors for understanding his thought.

The three principal concepts of the theory of ethnogenesis are then examined; passionarnost’, ethnos, and phases of ethnogenesis. It is argued that the theory of ethnogenesis at its core is a behaviourist concept of ethnic history.

A comparison with the theories of history of Arnold Toynbee and N.Ia. Danilevskii shows that despite similarities such as a shared anti-cosmopolitan view of history, there are also important differences. In particular, the distinction between social and ethnic history and the emphasis on behavioural, long-term changes distinguish Gumilev’s theory from those of Toynbee and Danilevskii.

Gumilev’s account of Russian history focused on a distinction between Kievan Rus and Muscovite Russia, the role of the Mongols in the formation of the Russian ethnos, and the interpretation of Russian history in terms of phases of ethnogenesis. His views are dominated by a strong anti-Western bias and are not always compatible with the theory of ethnogenesis.

Finally, there is a crucial distinction between Eurasianism and the theory of ethnogenesis. In his works on Russian history, Gumilev developed various aspects of Eurasianism. The theory of ethnogenesis is, however, a radical departure from Eurasian views. It should be seen as a separate theory which stresses non-voluntaristic, behaviourist motives in ethnic history.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

In twentieth century Russia political battles were mirrored by disputes about Russian identity and its place in world history. An original view about Russian national identity was advanced by the intellectual movement known as Eurasianism which first arose in the wake of the national crisis brought about by the Civil War of 1918–21. Eurasian ideas had a new lease of life after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 when questions about Russia's historical destiny acquired a fresh importance. In this context, the thought of Lev Gumilev assumed special significance as the only link between the original Eurasian movement of the 1920s and the neo-Eurasianism of the 1990s.

Gumilev, however, is not only important as a link between these two strands of Eurasianism; he is a significant figure in twentieth-century Russian thought for a number of distinct reasons. First, he created a theory of ethnogenesis, which shifts the focus of historical analysis from class to ethnic factors, and from a rationalist to a behaviourist explanation of history. Second, his work on Russia's relations with nomads forms a basis for a re-examination of popular views about Russian medieval history and strengthens a Eurasian view of Russian history. The popularity of Gumilev's views and their implications for debates about national identity in the former Soviet Union means that his intellectual heritage has more than a strictly academic interest. A study of Gumilev's work can, therefore, lead to a better understanding of the modern history of Russia and its future.
1. Previous works

There has been a wealth of publications on Eurasianism in recent years, in both Russia and the West. There is, however, little literature specifically on Gumilev; even in Russian there is only a single monograph and a handful of conference proceedings, as we shall see shortly. In English, Naarden is the only scholar to date who has published an article exclusively about Gumilev. Naarden summarises the main areas of Gumilev's work, pointing in particular to the importance of his arguments about the role of nomads in Russian history. Naarden argues that a change of perspective regarding this aspect of Russian history has important repercussions for the whole of Russian history. He also shows that Eurasianism is important in contemporary Russia as a potential alternative to Marxist ideology, making Gumilev's work important outside the academy as well as within it. Naarden's article is therefore an important contribution to the study of Gumilev's thought. As an article, however, it is necessarily lacking in detail.

Marlène Laruelle has published two articles in French on Gumilev. Her first article gave an overview of Gumilev's thought and was similar in format to Naarden's work. Laruelle, however, conducts a more detailed study of Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis. In particular, she criticises Gumilev's theory on a number of points, and links it with nationalist ideological projects of the 1990s.

A number of Laruelle's arguments are disputed in this thesis. First, she wrongly identifies Gumilev's project with those of Soviet social scientists. Their respective approaches were mutually exclusive because Gumilev emphasised the emotional aspects of ethnic behaviour while the Soviet view was based on a materialist conception of history which maintained the supremacy of rational acts. Because of this misidentification, Laruelle also claims Gumilev's theory is a deterministic theory of history, another point that I disagree with.

It is true that Gumilev's view of human nature, particularly in its ethnic aspects, presupposes a degree of non-voluntarism, but as I argue later, this by no means entirely

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1 B. Naarden, "'I am a genius, but no more than that.' Lev Gumilev (1912–1992), Ethnogenesis, the Russian Past and World History" (hereafter, 'I am a genius'), Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas, 1, 1996, pp. 54–82.

excludes human free will. The central argument about the theory of ethnogenesis advanced in this thesis is that Gumilev saw what he called 'ethnos' as a behaviourist rather than a biological phenomenon, a crucial distinction necessary for grasping his theory correctly. Once this idea is explored, it will become clear that it is inappropriate to view the theory of ethnogenesis as biologistic.

I have dwelt on Laruelle’s views in detail because they represent general misconceptions about the theory of ethnogenesis. The theory of ethnogenesis is anti-contractarian in its spirit. Gumilev stressed non-voluntarist, behaviourist factors in the formation of ethnos instead of the idea of agreement, which presupposes deliberation. In this way Gumilev’s theory is at odds with the ideas of such important figures in Western thought as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

To disciples of a rationalist brand of Enlightenment, Gumilev’s ideas of history and human nature seem deterministic and even fatalist. But a divergence of opinion about the relation between the emotions and reason – the real focus of Gumilev’s theory – is not a new one. The eighteenth century Scottish philosopher David Hume, a representative of a more sceptical and historical style of Enlightened thought, argued that ‘Reason is, and ought to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.’

Gumilev’s views on history and ethnicity have more in common with Hume’s maxim than with the claims of those who would maintain the absolute supremacy of reason in human affairs. This is why Laruelle’s assumption – that a theory which emphasizes factors other than those relevant to rational choice is necessarily a deterministic theory – is unsound.

Laruelle’s second article focuses on Gumilev’s relation with the Eurasians. On the basis of her research into Gumilev’s correspondence with P.N. Savitskii, one of the founding fathers of Eurasianism, she argues that there was no continuity between Gumilev and the original Eurasians. In contrast, she argues that Gumilev’s ideas were an

inspiration for the nationalist movements in the Turkic republics of the former Soviet
Union and the neo-Eurasian movement in Russia.

Laruelle was the first to formulate this important question of Gumilev’s relation to
the original Eurasians. I accept and develop her idea that the theory of ethnogenesis was a
radical departure from the ideas of the original Eurasians. In contrast to Laruelle,
however, I argue that Eurasianism was an important part of Gumilev’s thought and that
his links with the original Eurasians were an important element of his intellectual life.
There is, nevertheless, a crucial distinction between the theory of ethnogenesis and his
Eurasianism.

Hildegard Kochanek5 has published an article in German which focuses on the
scientific value of the theory of ethnogenesis and its relation to neo-Eurasianism. She is
highly critical of the theory of ethnogenesis which, in her view, gives precedence in
history to deterministic factors over human choice. In her view, this was the main reason
why Gumilev’s theory became popular with the new right in Russian politics and
resonated with theories championed by the right in Western Europe. For her, Gumilev’s
thought is a combination of Soviet modes of thinking and European right-wing ideology.
Kochanek’s work has reinforced the perception of Gumilev’s work in the West as
primarily an ideological project of Russian nationalism.

The theory of ethnogenesis is considerably more complex than is allowed by
Kochanek. Gumilev emphasised that various factors were at play in history including
geography and ethnic pre-history as well as a special factor which influenced long-term
behavioural trends called passionarnost.6 As I argue in this work, there is, moreover,
room for free will in the theory of ethnogenesis where moral and legal responsibility
applies. With regards to Gumilev’s popularity among Russian nationalists, I argue that
this popularity is least of all based on the theory of ethnogenesis. The real cause of
Gumilev’s notoriety as an inspirer of nationalistic sentiments among Russian intellectuals
is his Eurasian views, which form a distinct area of his thought.

6 There is no obvious English translation for this term; its meaning will become clear in the explication of
it.
Russian publications about Gumilev are more numerous. Since 1992, there have been annual conferences on Gumilev's intellectual heritage and some conference papers have been published. There are three main themes pursued in these papers. First, there are attempts to develop various aspects of Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis. Second, there are efforts to apply Gumilev's ideas to current political issues. And third, there are applications of his Eurasian ideas to current ideological projects. The general trend is to implicitly accept Gumilev's ideas and apply them to particular needs of the day. There is, therefore, a lack of a critical approach to Gumilev's ideas in those works.

V.I. Zateev and N.G. Lagoida have attempted to approach Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis from a more scholarly standpoint in the only Russian monograph on his work to date. There are many useful comments in their book on various aspects of the theory of ethnogenesis, in particular, those pointing to inconsistencies in his different definitions of ethnos.

Lagoida and Zateev have, however, missed the essential distinction which Gumilev made between the ethnic and the social. It is wrong in principle to argue, as they have, that Gumilev underestimated the social aspects of ethnos because for him the ethnic and the social were mutually exclusive concepts. I argue that there is a lack of conceptual links in Gumilev between his idea of ethnos and his treatment of the socio-political aspects of history, but this is not the same as a lack of identification of ethnic and social factors, as Lagoida and Zateev argue.

Their interpretation of key elements in the ethnogenesis theory is contentious. For example, there is a discrepancy between Lagoida and Zateev's description of the phases of ethnogenesis and those given by Gumilev. Historical examples they use are at odds with Gumilev's analysis of history. For example, the co-authors consider the history of Kievan Rus and Russia to be part of the same process of ethnogenesis, which is manifestly not Gumilev's view. Overall, Lagoida and Zateev's work could be seen as

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10 Gumilev kak uchenyi i filosof, pp. 61–63.
11 Gumilev kak uchenyi i filosof, pp. 62–63.
one of the first attempts at a critical scholarly study of Gumilev’s work in Russia, though
great caution must be taken with regard to their interpretation of the theory of
ethnogenesis.

There are however numerous Russian publications which have been unreservedly
critical of Gumilev. Both Soviet and post-Soviet writers have published a number of
articles attacking Gumilev’s approach to ethnic studies. A. Kuz’m in criticises Gumilev’s
view on Russia’s relations with the Tatars as unpatriotic. He also criticises Gumilev’s
theory of ethnogenesis as pseudo-scientific. Panarin and Shnirel’man argue that
Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis was a ‘reconfiguration’ of old Eurasian ideas, that it
had many contradictions and methodological flaws, while at the same time giving
credence to Russian nationalism and anti-Semitism. Lur’e criticises Gumilev’s use of
ancient Russian chronicles, arguing that Gumilev was prone to interpret them in ways
that suited his preconceived ideas. The criticisms of Soviet writers will be discussed in
more detail in Chapter 3.

I have limited the above list to publications which deal with Gumilev as their
main subject. There have been, however, various publications in recent years which make
reference to Gumilev’s ideas. Neo-Eurasian authors in particular use Gumilev’s name to
support their own views without making a critical study of either the theory of
ethnogenesis or its relation to Eurasianism. For example, A. Dugin, one of the principal
ideologists of neo-Eurasianism, includes Gumilev among the number of his ideological
predecessors. Their critics accept as a given the assertion of continuity between
Gumilev and neo-Eurasianism. Accordingly, there is a view that the underlying focus of
the whole of Gumilev’s work was to provide justification for Russian nationalism in its
Eurasian form.

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Gumilev’), Vestnik Evrazii, 3, 2000, pp. 5–37; published in English as ‘Lev Gumilev: His Pretensions as a
Founder of Ethnology and his Eurasian Theories’ Inner Asia, 3, 2001, pp. 1–18.
16 A. Dugin, Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii, Moscow, 1997 (hereafter, Osnovy
Many conflicting claims have been made about Gumilev and his work. His views have been labelled as ‘Russophile’ by some of his opponents, while others have claimed that his ideas gave spurious credence to Russian nationalism. The theory of ethnogenesis has been classified by some as a ‘pseudo-science’ with no practical value, while others have claimed that this was a new, complete and flawless science capable of explaining nearly all aspects of human life and history.

There are four principal views on Gumilev’s work and its importance. Russian nationalists and neo-Eurasians claim that the whole of Gumilev’s thought supports their views. On this view, Gumilev continued to develop the original ideas of Eurasianism in the theory of ethnogenesis and his other works. These were later adopted by the neo-Eurasians so that the whole of his thought laid the groundwork for the Eurasian nationalist project. Accordingly, there is no distinction between Gumilev’s Eurasianism and his theory of ethnogenesis, while historically there is a direct continuity between the original Eurasian movement, Gumilev’s work, and modern neo-Eurasianism.

In contrast, some authors, for example Lagoida, ignore Gumilev’s Eurasian views and concentrate on the analysis of the theory of ethnogenesis in isolation from the rest of his thought.

A different view of Gumilev’s relation to the Eurasians has been put forward by Laruelle. She argues that the whole of Gumilev’s thought was completely distinct from and contrary to the original ideas of Eurasianism. On the other hand, Gumilev’s works served as an inspiration for some of the modern nationalist movements in the former Soviet Union.

Finally, an alternative view has been put forward by Shnirel’man and Panarin. They argue that Gumilev borrowed the ideas of the original Eurasians, but simplified them and made them more rigid to suit his own views. His work gave impetus to a speculative and mystic trend in neo-Eurasianism and created a quasi-scientific platform for ‘ethnonationalism’.

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17 Sh. Rusakov, ‘Ot Rusofobii k Evraziistvu (Kuda vedet gumilevshchina)’, Molodaia Gvardiia, 3, 1993, pp. 127-43.
My views are different to all of the above. In this thesis, I propose the following analysis of Gumilev’s work: There are two distinct areas of Gumilev’s thought: his Eurasian views and the theory of ethnogenesis. They are not consistent with each other. The theory of ethnogenesis is an attempt at finding a fundamentally new approach to the understanding of history and of ethnic identity which stresses the non-voluntarist, emotional aspects of human behaviour. The theory’s potential significance as a behaviourist concept of ethnic identity transcends the circumstances of its creation. In contrast to the ethnogenesis theory, Gumilev’s Eurasian ideas are a variation of a particular view of Russian history; their nature is inseparable from the historical context of twentieth-century Russia. It is therefore necessary to distinguish the theory of ethnogenesis from Eurasianism in order to have an accurate understanding of Gumilev’s thought and the importance of his intellectual legacy.

2. The objectives of the thesis and an overview of Gumilev’s work

Despite the popularity of Gumilev’s ideas in the former Soviet Union, there has been little research on his theory of ethnogenesis and its relation to Eurasianism. The object of the thesis is to give an accurate presentation of these two main components of Gumilev’s thought, the theory of ethnogenesis and Eurasianism, examine the connection between them, and analyze their principal strengths and weaknesses. In this way we may clarify the relation between these two main themes.

So far as its subject-matter is concerned, Gumilev’s work can be divided into three main areas. The first area is the theory of ethnogenesis. The main work which set out the theory of ethnogenesis was *Ethnogenesis and the Earth’s biosphere*.\(^{21}\) Previously, Gumilev had worked out this theory in a number of articles published in various scientific journals over a period of ten years. These articles were posthumously published under the title *Etnosphera*.\(^{22}\) These publications will be the main material in this thesis.

\(^{21}\) Deposited with VINITI in 1979–80 in three parts numbered 1001–79, 3734–9, 3735–79. The work was first published in 1989 as *Etnogenez i biosfera zemli*, Leningrad, 1989 (hereafter, *Etnogenez*). VINITI was the All-Union Institute of Scientific and Technical Information, responsible for storing and make available unpublished works for scientific and specialist reference.

The second area was Gumilev’s synthetic account of Russian history. Unlike the theory of ethnogenesis, he did not combine all of his ideas on this subject in a single volume. *Ancient Rus and the Great Steppe*\(^2\)\(^3\) is the most comprehensive work on this subject. It covers the period from the ninth to fifteenth centuries. *From Rus to Russia*\(^2\)\(^4\) covers the period from the ninth to eighteenth centuries. This book was conceived as a ‘popular’ version of *Ancient Rus* based on his public lectures. The period after the end of the fifteenth century is not, therefore, covered with the same degree of detail as the earlier period of Russian history. Gumilev also published a number of articles in which he set out his version of some of the key events in the history of Russia.\(^2\)\(^5\)

The third area is Gumilev’s work on the history of the Eurasian nomads. Gumilev published four books on this subject.\(^2\)\(^6\) The first\(^2\)\(^7\) deals with the history of the ancient nomadic empire of Khunnu\(^2\)\(^8\) (209 BC – AD 215). The second looks at the history of the nomadic tribes that overran China from the fall of Han Empire (220) to the middle of the sixth century. The third book deals with the history of the Turkic Khanate (546–861). Finally, the fourth studies the history of the Mongols (861–1368). The history of the nomads, Gumilev’s speciality as an historian, lies outside the immediate focus of this thesis.

In addition to the literature listed above, I must also mention the help given to me by V.Ju. Ermolaev. He was Gumilev’s close associate from the late 1970s, when he was a student at the Geography Faculty at Leningrad University. Later, Ermolaev became the only student who conducted his postgraduate studies under Gumilev’s supervision.\(^2\)\(^9\) He

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\(^2\)\(^3\) L.N. Gumilev, *Drevniaia Rus’ i Velikaia Step’*, Moscow, 1989 (hereafter, *Drevniaia Rus’*).


\(^2\)\(^6\) Gumilev conceived this project as a trilogy – the first two books were written as a single volume, but for technical reasons they were published in separate editions. Nevertheless, Gumilev always referred to his work on the history of the nomads as the ‘Steppe Trilogy’.


\(^2\)\(^8\) There are distinct words in Russians *xyuubi* and *zynubi*, denoting respectively the nomadic tribes of Eastern Eurasia and those which were prominent in the fourth and fifth centuries in Europe. In English the term ‘Huns’ denotes both of these groups. To avoid a possible confusion, I use a transliteration from Russian when referring to the eastern nomads.

was Gumilev’s co-author on several articles,\textsuperscript{30} prepared several of Gumilev’s books for publication,\textsuperscript{31} and compiled a dictionary of special terms for the first full edition of *Ethnogenesis*.\textsuperscript{32}

I met V.Iu. Ermolaev in 2003 on a research trip to St Petersburg and since then we have established a working relationship. In addition to many hours spent discussing various aspects of Gumilev’s theory, he was kind enough to let me use parts of his unpublished book on the theory of ethnogenesis and Russian political culture in the twentieth century. Moreover, through our correspondence, he explained and elucidated numerous aspects of Gumilev’s theory. In addition, he transcribed our interviews and revised the correspondence with a view to publishing it.\textsuperscript{33} I treat Ermolaev’s work as an important addition to Gumilev’s own writings on the theory of ethnogenesis.

Finally, there is plenty of literature on Gumilev’s life. Many distinguished memoirists wrote about Gumilev. Emma Gershtein’s *Memoirs*\textsuperscript{34} are a particularly useful source for Gumilev’s early life. There are several articles by Gumilev himself which deal with various aspects of his biography. In particular, ‘I gave no reason for the arrest’, ‘Laws of Time’, and ‘Auto-obituary, or a biography of a scientific theory’ are among most important sources for the study of Gumilev’s life.\textsuperscript{35} Several authors have done extensive scholarly research on various aspects of Gumilev’s life. For example, ‘I still will be a historian!’\textsuperscript{36} is a thoroughly researched article on Gumilev’s arrest in 1938. Finally, a collection of memoirs and important documents relating to Gumilev’s

\textsuperscript{31}Etnogenez i biosfera Zemli, Leningrad, 1989; *Ot Rusi k Rossi: ocherki etnicheskoi istorii*, Moscow, 1994; Khunnu, St. Petersburg, 1993.
\textsuperscript{32}Etnogenez, pp. 477–81.
\textsuperscript{34}Emma Gershtein, *Memuary*, St Petersburg, 1998 (hereafter, *Memuary*).
\textsuperscript{36}O.V. Golovnikova, N.S. Tarkhova, ‘“I vse-taki la budu istorikom!”’, *Zvezda*, 8, 2002, pp. 114–35.}
biography has been recently published in a single volume under the title of *Remembering Gumilev*. This is currently the single most valuable source for Gumilev’s life.

3 The structure of the thesis

Following this introductory overview of the topic, Chapter 2 surveys Gumilev’s life. It sets his work in a historical context and gives an overview of his research interests and activities. Chapter 3 gives a detailed presentation of the theory of ethnogenesis. First, I look at the intellectual context of the theory of ethnogenesis. Second, principal concepts of the theory are examined, e.g. the concepts of *passionarnost*, ethnos and the nature of ethnic identity, and phases of ethnogenesis. Finally, an overall assessment of the theory of ethnogenesis is given.

Chapter 4 continues the analysis of Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis through a comparison with the theories of history of N.Ia. Danilevskii and Arnold Toynbee. In Chapter 5 I look at Gumilev’s views on Russian history. I focus on Gumilev’s arguments for a distinction between Kievan Rus and Muscovite Russia and the role of the Mongols in the formation of the Great Russian ethnos. I then look at Gumilev’s interpretation of subsequent Russian history through phases of ethnogenesis. Chapter 6 examines the relations between Gumilev and the Eurasians. I look at the areas of continuity between Gumilev and Eurasians and assess their intellectual links. Finally, in Chapter 7, I summarise the main ideas developed in the thesis and assess future perspectives for work on the subject.

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4 Justification of the thesis

This thesis is useful in several areas. First, it serves as a basis for a further development of the theory of ethnogenesis. For example, by delineating more clearly the ethnogenesis theory from the rest of Gumilev's work, it becomes possible to conduct more focused research on its content without an ideological bias. Second, it helps to advance more comprehensive research into Gumilev's influence in political and ideological areas. In this way, this thesis is helpful for research on contemporary Russian identity in the twenty-first century.

The central idea advanced in this work is that Gumilev created a behaviourist, non-voluntarist theory of history and ethnic identity which is distinct from his Eurasianism. Gumilev's theory challenges the humanitarian school of thought which identifies rationality as the dominant factor in the analysis of human affairs, including history. The theory of ethnogenesis emphasises the non-voluntary, emotional, aspects of human behaviour. It therefore stands outside the mainstream of Western social thought. For example, the influential American philosopher John Rawls built his theory of social justice on a thought experiment which explicitly relied on rationality as the main factor in society.\(^{38}\) Modern political and social theories which emphasise the rational basis of human life stand in opposition to Gumilev's thought. The theory of ethnogenesis is, therefore, an important intellectual paradigm for human understanding. This work contributes to studies of an important representative of Russian intellectual history, helps to clarify important aspects of Russian intellectual heritage, and leads to a better understanding of Gumilev's intellectual legacy.

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Chapter 2

A Biographical Overview

1. Background and Early Life

Lev Nikolaevich Gumilev was born in St Petersburg on 1 October 1912, the only child of Nikolai Stepanovich Gumilev and Anna Andreevna Gorenko (generally known by her pseudonym of Akhmatova). Both his parents were poets, and outstanding young participants in St Petersburg’s cultural ‘Silver Age’ which was then at its zenith: during Lev’s early childhood, visitors to their apartment included many of the leading literary and artistic names of the day, such as Alexander Blok, Vladimir Maiakovskii and Andrei Belyi.

Nikolai Gumilev (1886–1921) was the son of a doctor, his mother coming from a distinguished noble family descended from one of the military heroes of the war against Napoleon. As well as founding the ‘acmeist’ movement in Russian poetry, he was a noted explorer and travel writer, making several journeys to Abyssinia before the First World War. In 1914, he volunteered for the Russian army despite possessing an official exemption on medical grounds; in 1917–18, with the Russian army effectively out of action, he visited Paris and London in an unsuccessful effort to enlist with the Intelligence Service on the Saloniki front. Though an ardent monarchist, he returned to Petrograd (which had just ceased to be the Russian capital) in April 1918, with the Bolsheviks in power and the Civil War at its height.

Anna Akhmatova (1888–1966), the daughter of a Kiev university professor and a renowned beauty, is generally considered to have been the outstanding Russian poetess of her generation. Unlike most talents of the Silver Age, she remained in Russia after the Revolution, and showed great courage by refusing to conform to official Soviet ideology and continuing to give expression to pre-revolutionary cultural values. Her consequent tense relationship with the Soviet authorities was to have a large impact on the life of her only son.
The Gumilev-Akhmatova marriage (1910) was from the beginning a loose one, both parties engaging in outside love affairs. In August 1918, Akhmatova divorced Nikolai Gumilev to contract a brief second marriage to the Assyriologist V. I. Shileiko. Nikolai in turn married A. N. Engelhardt, who bore him a daughter, Elena (1919–42). During this period of domestic as well as civic turbulence, Lev continued to live with his paternal grandmother, Anna Ivanovna Gumileva, who took care of him from his birth. They lived at her house in Tsarskoe Selo outside Petrograd, which contained a fine library and trophies of his father's pre-war travels. Later, owing to the chronic food shortage in the city, they moved to Anna Ivanovna’s country house at Bezhetsk, Tver Province, where Lev remained until 1929.

On 3 August 1921 Nikolai Gumilev was arrested by the Cheka and charged with 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy' as a member of the Tagantsev group. On 1 September, his name appeared on a list published in Petrogradskaia Pravda of those executed for complicity in the Tagantsev plot. In 1968 the Deputy Prosecutor General told P.N. Luknitsky, a long-time researcher of N. Gumilev's life and poetry: 'We are convinced that Gumilev got involved in this affair by accident...he was a wonderful poet...If this happened now Nikolai Gumilev would not be punished at all'. Nevertheless, Nikolai Gumilev remained posthumously in disgrace for almost the entire remainder of the Soviet regime, only being officially rehabilitated in 1990. By coincidence, Aleksandr Blok, the other outstanding Russian poet of the time, died the same month: but whereas Blok was canonised by the Soviet authorities and his poetry extolled, Gumilev's work was banned.

The death of his father as a victim of the terror had a profound impact on the eight-year-old Lev Gumilev. Though he was not told about it directly, he quickly guessed what had happened from overhearing furtive family conversations. 'My grandmother kept weeping, and the atmosphere at home was desolate...She and my mother were convinced of my father’s innocence, which ...added a bitter twist to their sorrow.' Apart from the trauma of losing a beloved parent, the disgrace of Nikolai Gumilev was to have a permanent effect on Lev's own career.

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There was some talk of Lev returning to live with his mother, but Akhmatova was in the throes of divorcing her second husband and Petrograd was a difficult place to bring up a child; it was finally decided that he should go on living with his grandmother in Bezhetsk. Although Akhmatova sent money for Lev’s maintenance, she only once visited him during the following eight years – in 1925, for one day. This apparent maternal neglect, following his father’s tragic death, left psychological scars on the child. The role of both parents was taken by Lev’s grandmother Anna Ivanovna, who came from a distinguished line of military and naval officers, instilled in him a reverence for both Russian history and the Orthodox Church. In her memoirs, Emma Gerstein, a lover of Gumilev in the 1930s, recalls a solemn parting at her Moscow flat, before Lev’s return to Leningrad where he expected to be arrested: his last words were to beg her to convert to Orthodoxy.\(^1\) M. Ardov recalled that Gumilev was the first convinced Christian he had come across amongst the intelligentsia.\(^2\)

Life in Bezhetsk was not easy. At school, there was official hostility towards Gumilev as the son of a tsarist officer. Nevertheless, he excelled in literature, social science and biology, while physics, maths and chemistry proved difficult and uninteresting subjects for him. He loved reading from his earliest childhood. His favourite novelists included Thomas Main Reid, James Fenimore Cooper, Jules Verne and Jack London; but best of all he enjoyed the historical romances of Alexandre Dumas, Arthur Conan Doyle, Sir Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson. He read Shakespeare’s plays which he found in a local library, and was fascinated by a geographical atlas sent to him by his mother.\(^3\)

Another important influence on Gumilev during his years in Bezhetsk was his schoolteacher A.M. Pereslegin (1891–1973), a history scholar from St Petersburg University who took up his teaching appointment at Bezhetsk in October 1919. Gumilev later said that their conversations not only prepared him for his future university studies but also provided him with a solid understanding of philosophy for the rest of his life. Senin writes that Pereslegin ‘was not just a favourite teacher… but also a wonderful friend with whom [Gumilev] could play chess, listen to music and talk for hours on end.

\(^1\) Memuary, p. 217.
\(^3\) Gumilev, ‘Povoda dlia aresta ne daval’, p. 8.
about literature, history and philosophy. This, in the life of an adolescent boy who had
lost his father and was being brought up by his grandmother, was hugely important for
[Gumilev’s] formation both as a man and a scholar.  

2. The University Years

In 1929 Gumilev moved to Leningrad. He stayed with Akhmatova, who lived at
the time in a wing of the Sheremet’ev Palace (commonly known as the Fountain House,
Fontanka, 34) with her third husband, the art historian N.N. Punin. Punin’s ex-wife and
daughter lived in the same flat. Gumilev slept on an old chest in the long kitchen
corridor. Akhmatova had not published any work since 1925, and while she had been
granted a small pension for her literary achievements, the family depended on Punin for
their livelihood. The arrival of another dependent was not welcomed by Punin, who
made no secret of his feelings. Gumilev recalled how he once overheard Punin saying to
Akhmatova: ‘What do you expect, Ania? I can’t feed the whole city!’ Gumilev
undertook various household duties to justify his presence at the Fountain House, but he
remained in a difficult position.

After his arrival in Leningrad, Gumilev spent a year completing his secondary
education. In July 1930, he applied for entry to Herzen’s Pedagogic Institute to read
German, but was rejected on account of his noble background and lack of work
experience. To acquire experience, he first worked as an unskilled labourer in a tram park
on the outskirts of Leningrad; and from December 1930, he volunteered for a series of
scientific expeditions. In June 1931, he participated in a geological expedition to the
Baikal region of Western Siberia; a year later, he went on a similar expedition to
Tajikistan, his first introduction to the Islamic Orient. During the following two
summers, he joined Bonch-Osmolovskii’s archaeological expeditions to the Crimea, to
excavate the remains of primitive men found in Crimean caves. Gumilev worked on two
more archaeological expeditions in the 1930s, the Manych and the Sarkel expeditions led

Sankt-Peterburgskii universitet, 26 September 1997, no. 18 (3458).
45 N.N. Punin (1888–1953), Professor of Art History at the Russian Academy of Arts in Leningrad, also on
the staff of the Russian Museum, was a noted supporter of the avant-garde movement.
by Prof. M.I. Artamonov\textsuperscript{47} in 1935 and 1936 respectively. Both expeditions were in southern Russia in the area of the ancient Khazars. These expeditions were a formative experience for Gumilev. He matured as a person, got used to physical labour, and acquired a rigorous attitude to science and data-collecting, as well as acquiring first-hand knowledge of many regions of Eurasia.\textsuperscript{48}

Between these expeditions, Gumilev's material situation remained grim. Although he moved out of the Fountain House to a friend's room, he continued to be dependent for his meals (at a time of food shortages and rationing) on Punin and Akhmatova. During the winter of 1933-4, he stayed with the Mandel'shtams in Moscow, where he found some work translating Central Asian poets into Russian. ‘You can imagine how happy I am to be in the very midst of “decent” literature’, he wrote to a friend.\textsuperscript{49} This acquaintance proved to be costly for Gumilev; he was the ninth person out of ten people to whom Mandel'shtam read his fateful poem against Stalin.\textsuperscript{50} Acquaintances like Mandel'shtam were particularly valued by Gumilev as he now wanted above all to be a writer. (Some years later, at Norilsk Labour Camp in 1940, when a poetry competition was organised by the inmates at which Gumilev came second to Sergei Snegov, Gumilev complained that the result was unfair, for he, Gumilev, had no life outside literature, whereas Snegov was a trained physicist.\textsuperscript{51})

Gumilev's love of poetry inadvertently led to his first arrest – on 10 December 1933 at the flat of V.A. Eberman, an Arabic scholar to whom he had brought some of his translations of Persian poetry. Gumilev was released on 19 December 1933 without charge, while Eberman, the target of the NKVD raid, received a five year sentence. In September 1934, Gumilev finally succeeded in enrolling as a history student at Leningrad University and immersed himself in his studies, confident that he faced a brighter future.

\textsuperscript{47} M.I. Artamonov (1898–1972) was a renowned archaeologist and historian, the head of the archaeological faculty at Leningrad University from 1949, and the director of the State Hermitage Museum in 1951–64. One of his principal works was \textit{Istoriia Khazar}, a theme Gumilev was closely associated with.

\textsuperscript{48} Gumilev, 'Povoda dlia aresta ne daval', pp. 10–11.

\textsuperscript{49} Appendix to A.D. Dashkova, 'Lev Gumilev, nachalo 30-kh', \textit{Miera}, 4, 1994, p. 99.

\textsuperscript{50} A.M. Panchenko, 'Idei L.N. Gumileva i Rossiia XX veka', Gumilev, \textit{Ot Rusi do Rossii}, St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 6–12 (p. 8).

3. The Gulag

The future, however, was not as bright as he had hoped. On 23 October 1935, Lev Gumilev and his stepfather N.N. Punin were arrested by the GPU on charges of 'counter-revolutionary and terrorist activities'. The main charges against Gumilev were his acknowledged wish for a replacement of the Soviet regime by a monarchy, and his authorship of the poem 'Egbatana' in which he parodied the popular reaction to the death of Kirov. This poem (to quote Gumilev's own words) 'tells how Gorpag, the satrap of the city of Egbatana, dies, but the inhabitants of the city do not mourn his death. The great Tsar orders the display of Gorpag's body, but the inhabitants still do not weep. Then the Tsar orders the execution of a hundred citizens, and after this the whole city laments.'52 In addition, Gumilev admitted reading to a close circle of friends Mandel'shtam's poem against Stalin 'My zhivem pod soboi ne chuia strany' [We live without feeling the country under our feet]. By the standards of the time, these charges were serious enough to carry the prospect of a harsh sentence.

Anna Akhmatova personally appealed to Stalin for the release of husband and son. 'Iosif Vissarionovich', she wrote, 'I do not know what they are accused of but I give you my honest word that they are neither fascists, nor spies nor members of counter-revolutionary groups. I live a very solitary life in Leningrad and am often ill for long periods. The arrest of the only two people close to me is a blow which I will not be able to bear. I ask you, Iosif Vissarionovich, to give me back my husband and my son, confident that no one will ever regret this.'53 Boris Pasternak also wrote to Stalin asking for the release of Punin and Gumilev. Stalin actually responded, noting on Akhmatova's letter: 'Comrade Iagoda.54 Release both Punin and Gumilev and report to me upon implementation. I. Stalin'55 On 3 November 1935, both Gumilev and Punin were released from prison.

Gumilev only managed to reinstate himself as a student at Leningrad University in 1937; but he worked hard on his course and managed to transfer himself to the fourth

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53 Kozyrev, 'Kak eto bylo', p. 327.
55 Kozyrev, 'Kak eto bylo', p. 329.
year early in 1938. It was at this time that he wrote his first article 'On the order of succession among Turkic peoples' in which he drew parallels with the rules of succession of appanage princes in Kievan Rus. This work shows an already clearly defined interest in nomadic history as well as an unconventional approach to the history of Ancient Rus.

Gumilev himself claimed that his interest in the Eurasian nomads and their history may have sprung from his childhood fascination with the Red Indians in the stories of Fennimore Cooper and Jack London. When he grew up, he realised that Eurasia had its own 'Red Indians', namely the nomads of the Great Steppe. Gumilev was fascinated by these peoples who had built great empires on the Eurasian plains. He noted that there was no proper history of the Eurasian nomads, that this part of world history was still a terra incognita for historians and the public at large: it became his great ambition to write a continuous history of the great nomad empires.

Despite his immersion in history, Gumilev did not have a peaceful life at the university. His independent manners and unconventional views drew him to the attention of the university authorities. A fateful episode took place in 1938:

'Professor Pumianskii [recalled Gumilev] was lecturing on Russian literature when he came to the 1920s and began to mock my father's poetry and personality. “The poet wrote about Abyssinia while he never got beyond Algiers.” I could not contain myself and shouted from my seat “No, he was in Abyssinia and not Algiers!” Pumianskii parried in a condescending manner: “Who is to know better – you or me?” “Me, of course”, – I retorted. Around 200 students in the auditorium began to laugh. Unlike Pumianskii, many of them knew that I was Gumilev’s son...As soon as the bell had rung, Pumianskii went to the Dean’s office to denounce me – and he probably denounced me further afield. At any rate, at the first interrogation in the NKVD’s prison on Shpalernaia Street, the investigator Barkhudarian began the interrogation by reading a detailed account of the incident at Pumianskii’s lecture. As he was reading, he got increasingly angry, and finally started shouting and swearing at me: “You love your father, you bastard! Get up... Against the wall!” He grabbed me by the collar, lifted me from the stool and began savagely beating me up.'

The arrest Gumilev was referring to in the above quote took place on 10 March 1938. He was arrested by the NKVD and charged with anti-Soviet agitation and membership of a ‘Progressivist Party’. It was alleged that this party had a large

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56 Gumilev, ‘Povoda dlia aresta ne davat’, p. 16.
membership among the Leningrad intelligentsia and was working to establish a bourgeois parliamentary democracy in Russia. Later, a conspiracy to assassinate Zhdanov was added.\textsuperscript{57} In September 1938, Gumilev and two of his fellow-students at Leningrad University, who constituted the alleged terrorist cell, were convicted. Gumilev, as the leader of the cell, was sentenced to ten years hard labour, the other two to eight years each. All three of them were sent to work on the construction of the Belomor Canal in Northern Russia. On 17 November 1938, the original sentence was commuted to five years on appeal. In August 1939, Gumilev was sent to serve the remainder of his sentence in Norilsk, Northern Siberia.

The years spent in Norilsk were a terrible ordeal for Gumilev. The harsh climate, hard labour for ten hours a day and his resentment at the unjust sentence combined to make life almost unbearable. 'After Norilsk', he wrote, 'the front line felt like a resort.' The only consolation was provided by the other inmates sentenced under article 58 of the Criminal Code, i.e. political prisoners. Gumilev later wrote that he was able to survive and emerge intellectually enriched only because he was able to find friends in the Norilsk camp, which was full of distinguished scientists, writers, poets and artists - the victims of Stalin's great purges.\textsuperscript{58} Among people particularly close to Gumilev were the astrophysicist N.A. Kozyrev and the scientist and philosopher S.A. Snegov. Gumilev later recalled that, during his conversations with Kozyrev about the nature of the universe and the genesis of the stars, their discussions regarding the fundamental uniformity of the laws of nature suggested to him their application to ethnological processes.\textsuperscript{59}

Gumilev completed his sentence on 10 March 1943, though he remained in the Norilsk region for another year working in the mines. In 1944, after many difficulties, he managed to join the Red Army as a volunteer. N.I. Khardzhiev recalled how he met Gumilev on the way to the front. 'It was in the winter of 1944. With great difficulties we managed to reach the right track. [...] Finally, a soldier jumped off a distant carriage and to our great joy we immediately recognised Gumilev. Right away he began talking about his scholarly interests. One might have thought he was on his way to a symposium rather

\textsuperscript{57} T.A. Shumovskii, 'Besedy s pamiat'iu', \textit{Vspominaia Gumileva}, pp. 87–115 (p. 91).
\textsuperscript{58} Gumilev, 'Zakony vremeni' (see note 35 above), p. 6.
\textsuperscript{59} Gumilev, 'Zakony vremeni', p. 6.
than the front line.'60 I.N. Tomashevskiaia, who also was there, nicknamed Gumilev 'Popryshchin', one of Gogol's obsessive characters, after Gumilev told her about his new discovery which he compared in importance to Marx’s theory of history.61

Gumilev served in the Second Belorussian Front as a private in an anti-aircraft unit, advancing through Western Poland and Pomerania until he finished the war on the outskirts of Berlin. As a former prisoner, he had no right to promotion or military distinction. His life, however, was far better than at Norilsk – 'the soldier's overcoat suits me, the food is plentiful here, sometimes even vodka is available and movement in Western Europe is easier than in Northern Siberia. The most pleasant thing is, however, the diversity of experiences.'62 As a Russian patriot, Gumilev was immensely proud of having served in the Red Army during the great struggle with Germany.

4. The Post-war Respite

In November 1945, Gumilev was demobilised and was able to return to Leningrad. He worked as a fireman in the Institute of Oriental Studies while simultaneously revising for his final university examinations. In March 1946, Gumilev passed the external exams for the completion of his degree at Leningrad University, a remarkable achievement for somebody who had spent the previous 8 years in prison and on active duty in the army: he graduated 12 years after he had first enrolled on the history course at the university and 16 years after completing his secondary education.

In April 1946, Gumilev enrolled as a postgraduate at the Institute of Oriental Studies in Leningrad, beginning work on a PhD thesis on the political history of the First Turkic Khanate. In the summers of 1946 and 1947, he took part in archaeological expeditions to Podol'sk under the supervision of M.I. Artamonov.

As was often the case in Gumilev's life, just when things seemed to be settling down, a new disaster struck. On 14 August 1946, the CPSU's Central Committee issued a decree berating the literary magazines Zvezda and Leningrad for promoting anti-Soviet
works by Gumilev’s mother and M. Zoshchenko. Following the decree, A. Zhdanov, the Party’s top ideologue, delivered a speech to Leningrad’s party activists in which he abused and derided Akhmatova. In 1946, Akhmatova was expelled from the Soviet Writer’s Union, and a complete ban on publication of her work followed. Without an income and with her ration cards revoked, she and Gumilev could only rely on the help of a few courageous friends who dared associate with the disgraced poetess and her son.

At some point in 1947, Gumilev met Natal’ia Varbanets, with whom he had a fervent affair and to whom he intended proposing marriage. But again the year ended badly for him; in December 1947, he was expelled from the Institute of Oriental Studies, despite having passed all the necessary exams and completed his thesis well ahead of schedule. In addition to the difficult situation created by the official ostracism of his mother, he experienced friction with his Institute colleagues: as a result, he received a negative reference from the Institute, which precluded him from defending his thesis at any other academic institution.

The only institution which would employ Gumilev at this time was a psychiatric hospital on 5th Line of Vasilievskii Island, where Gumilev worked as a librarian from February to May 1948. From May to September 1948 he went on another archaeological expedition to the stone kurgans of Pazyryk, in the Altai Mountains, under the leadership of the renowned archaeologist S.I. Rudenko.

In October 1948, Gumilev was finally allowed to defend his thesis at the History Faculty of Leningrad University. This change of fortune was due to the influence of the University Rector, A.A. Voznesenskii, whose secretary was a friend of Gumilev. Voznesenskii listened to Gumilev’s story and said, ‘So, your father is Nikolai Gumilev, your mother is Akhmatova? I see, you were expelled from your postgraduate course after the decree about the journal Zvezda?... I cannot offer you a place at the university, but you can submit your thesis to the Council [at the History Faculty]... Good luck, young man!’

On 28 October 1948, Gumilev successfully defended his thesis The Detailed Political History of the First Turkic Khanate (546–659 AD). According to M.I. Artamonov, Gumilev’s work ‘[possessed] outstanding scholarly qualities and [testified]...
to the author’s uncommon gifts and remarkable knowledge of his chosen field.\textsuperscript{64} Gumilev did not yet have any published works to his name, and hence no reputation in academic circles, but hoped that this would merely be a matter of time.

In January 1949, Gumilev began work at the State Museum of Ethnography as a senior research fellow. His first article was published the same year,\textsuperscript{65} but whatever happiness this brought was marred by yet another arrest, his fourth, on 6 November 1949, following which he was sentenced to 10 years’ hard labour. The core of the prosecutor’s case against him was again based on the 1935 dossier – so that he was effectively arrested three times on the same charges. As he later recalled, ‘No true charges were made against me, for they did not in reality exist. One could even say that the investigators had a certain degree of sympathy towards me. They used to say: “Well Gumilev, what do you expect?” They were convinced that a man with a surname like mine had no chance of remaining free.’\textsuperscript{66}

This time, Gumilev’s situation was further complicated by his mother’s ostracism and the terrible new purges which hit Leningrad in 1949. The many victims of the latter who were known to Gumilev included A.A. Voznesenskii, who had given him the opportunity to defend his PhD thesis: he was executed along with his brother N.A. Voznesenskii, the head of the Gosplan (the central planning agency of the Soviet economy), while Voznesenskii’s son Lev ended up in the same labour camp as Gumilev.

A letter from the prosecutor’s office to K.E. Voroshilov, to whom Akhmatova had appealed in 1954 for the release of her son, summarized the case against Gumilev. It stated that Gumilev had held anti-Soviet views from 1933 under the influence of Punin and the poet Mandel’shtam. He was sentenced for these views to five years in 1938. It was further alleged that he continued to hold anti-Soviet views after his release from prison in 1944, as evidenced by the fact that he had denounced the decree concerning the journals Zvezda and Leningrad, claiming ‘that there was no press freedom in the Soviet

\textsuperscript{64} ‘V Prokuraturu SSSR. Otzyvy uchenyh o L.N. Gumileve’, Vspominiaia Gumileva, p. 332.
\textsuperscript{66} Gumilev, ‘Povoda dla arresta ne deval’, p. 27.
Union, and no place for a real writer as one has to write what one is ordered to, following the official line.\(^{67}\)

These further years in prison dramatically affected both Gumilev’s health and his state of mind. He feared at times that he would not live to see the date of his release; his correspondence is filled with gloom and foreboding. He wrote to Emma Gerstein in December 1955: ‘I am very tired; almost unbearably so...It is as if I use up all my energy just to keep alive and there is nothing left inside me.’\(^ {68}\) The following year, a few months before his final release from prison, Gumilev wrote: ‘One should be able to console oneself by making plans for the future, but I do not even have this, for life [outside prison] has changed unrecognisably, few of my friends remain, and I shall have to start from the beginning.’\(^ {69}\) Gumilev’s resentment was further augmented by his conviction that he was suffering for his mother’s sins. ‘If I wasn’t her son, but a son of a simple woman, I would be, other things being equal, a flourishing professor’\(^ {70}\) confessed Gumilev to Gerstein in March 1955.

One of the amazing facts of Gumilev’s life was his ability to continue his research while in prison. As he wrote in a note of March 1954, addressed to the prison authorities:

‘I have written *The History of the Khunnu* for my own pleasure and the soul’s consolation. *There is nothing anti-Soviet in it.* It is written in the same way as one would write a book for the Stalin Prize, only in a more lively style and, I hope, with more talent than would have been the case with my colleagues the historians. That is why, in the case of my demise, I request that the manuscript should not be destroyed but forwarded to the Manuscripts Department of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Science in Leningrad. With editorial corrections, the book can be published; my authorship can be omitted; I love science more than my own vanity. If the book is not published, I give permission for students and postgraduates to use the material without mentioning my authorship, for science must not suffer. The gothic cathedrals were built by nameless masters; I am content to be a nameless master of science.’\(^ {71}\)

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\(^{67}\) *Memoir*, pp. 348–9.

\(^{68}\) *Memoir*, p. 372.

\(^{69}\) *Memoir*, p. 383.

\(^{70}\) *Memoir*, p. 355.

Gumilev’s widow later described the conditions of Gumilev’s work in prison. ‘He wrote his manuscripts on wrapping paper obtained from the sacks in which the prison’s food supplies were stored. These rolls of paper were brought to ‘the great prisoner’, as the others thought of him; then the sheets had to be dried, and only then was it possible to write on them.’ A fellow inmate recalled that Gumilev had only two books at his disposal – a translation by I. Bichurin, a head of the Russian mission in China in the late eighteenth century, of various ancient and medieval Chinese documents; and a Soviet edition of ancient Chinese chronicles.

In the last three years of Gumilev’s imprisonment, the prison rules were relaxed and the inmates were allowed to receive books from outside. Gumilev began to receive a steady stream of useful material for his research. In January 1958, after his release, he wrote to Gerstein: ‘You can’t imagine how my gratitude to you has grown, thanks especially to the books [that Gerstein and Akhmatova had sent to Gumilev in prison]. If you hadn’t sent them to me then, I would have to buy and read them now’ when he was working desperately hard to complete his own work.

Gumilev was released on 11 May 1956 in the wake of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU at which Khrushchev denounced Stalin’s personality cult. The release order by the state prosecutor stated: ‘I report that the case of 1950 against L.N. Gumilev has been re-examined. It has been established that L.N. Gumilev was convicted on unfounded evidence.’ On his release from prison in 1956, Gumilev was forty-three years old and had spent almost fourteen years in captivity.

5. Rehabilitation

When he arrived back in Leningrad, Gumilev had two books almost ready for publication. The first, *Khunnu: Middle Asia in Ancient Times*, covered the period from the second century BC to the fourth century AD in the history of the nomads of Eastern Eurasia and their interaction with Han China. The second, *Drevnie Tiurki*, covered the

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74 Memuary, p. 321.
75 Memuary, p. 350.
events surrounding the rise and fall of the Turkic empires of Central Eurasia from 546 AD to 861 AD. These works were a logical expansion of Gumilev’s original PhD work. During the years following his release, Gumilev’s overriding pre-occupation was the completion and publication of these works on nomadic history, despite poor health and the impossibility of finding an academic post. *Khunnu*, his first book, was published in 1960 when he was forty-eight years old.

During this time Gumilev started to correspond with Petr Nikolaevich Savitskii, a founding member of the Eurasian movement. The Eurasians, an émigré movement in the 1920s and 1930s, championed a radical reinterpretation of Russian history. In particular, they argued that the Mongols played a positive role in medieval Russia, in contrast with the traditional viewpoint which saw them as a destructive force. Gumilev knew some of their studies of nomads and valued them highly.\(^7\) He was put in touch with Savitskii by M.A. Gukovskii,\(^8\) a distinguished historian at Leningrad University who had been in the same labour camp with P.N. Savitskii in the early 1950s. Gumilev and Savitskii soon developed an intimate friendship. Through Savitskii, Gumilev corresponded indirectly with the American-Russian historian and former member of the Eurasian movement, George Vernadskii, who published a review of Gumilev’s first book, of which Gumilev was immensely proud.\(^9\) In 1966, Gumilev took part in a scientific conference in Prague, where he had a chance to meet Savitskii.

His interest in nomadic studies was crucial to Gumilev’s intellectual evolution. ‘I want to revive the history and culture of the nomads just as the humanists in the fifteenth century revived the forgotten culture of Hellas and later archaeologists resurrected Babylon and the Sumerians’, wrote Gumilev to Savitskii in one of his letters. ‘It should eventually be possible to reconstruct the history of Eurasia with the same [degree of] completeness as exists in the case of the history of Europe and the Middle East. The very idea of Eurocentrism will then be compromised, especially since it has been based to a considerable degree on the fact that little has been known about Asia and Siberia, while

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\(^7\) For a detailed discussion of Gumilev’s relation with the Eurasians see Chapter 6.

\(^8\) Matvei Aleksandrovich Gukovskii was the brother of Grigorii Gukovskii, the renowned literary scholar.

the unknown has been deemed non-existent. His specialization in the history of Eurasian nomads was one of the central ingredients in the evolution of Gumilev’s unique view of history. The study of an obscure area remote from traditional historiography required the development of a new conceptual framework for understanding history, and thus played a vital role in his elaboration of his theory of ethnogenesis.

From October 1956, Gumilev worked in the library of the Hermitage Museum, where he was technically listed as a reserve to replace museum employees who were absent owing to sickness or pregnancy. In 1957, he was allotted the first room of his own in a communal flat – flat 218, Moskovskii Prospekt 195. It was only twelve metres square, and one of his neighbours worked as a prison guard.

In September 1959, Gumilev took part in an expedition to the Volga Delta to search for the remains of the Khazars. In August of the following year, he again visited the Delta where he personally discovered the first confirmed remains of a Khazar. In the summer of 1961, he participated in the final archaeological expedition of his career. It covered the Delta and the town of Derbent in Dagestan. In the Delta, he discovered a large Khazar burial site. In Derbent, he studied the remains of a partly submerged medieval Persian fortress. This study helped Gumilev to determine the fluctuations of the Caspian Sea level. On this basis, he constructed his theory of the fall of the Khazars, whose capital city Itil’ was, according to Gumilev, flooded by the Caspian Sea in the eleventh century AD. These findings reinforced Gumilev’s belief in the importance of climatic changes in history.

In September 1960, after the publication of Khunnu, Gumilev was allowed to work as an external lecturer at the History Faculty of Leningrad University. In 1961, he successfully defended his postdoctoral thesis in history. The same year, he finally managed to obtain a permanent academic post at the Geographic-Economic Institute of Leningrad University. In his efforts to secure this appointment he was assisted, as he had been a dozen years earlier, by the University’s Rector, now A.D. Aleksandrov. Gumilev remained at the Institute until his retirement in 1986, his official title at the end of his

80 L.N. Gumilev to P.N. Savitskii, 25 January 1959, Prague, Slavonic Library, Savitskii archive, fo. 22 (hereafter, Savitskii archive).
82 Gumilev’s doctoral thesis was published in 1967 as Drevnie Tiurki, Moscow, 1967.
academic career there being 'senior research fellow'. He was never appointed a professor, and never allowed to work in the Department of History.\textsuperscript{83}

In March 1966, Anna Akhmatova died. Gumilev's relationship with his mother had come under strain during his imprisonment in the 1950s and been broken off completely in 1960. Nevertheless, Gumilev remained the sole inheritor of her literary papers. He wished to deposit the entire archive in the \textit{Pushkinskii Dom} in Leningrad; but Akhmatova's stepdaughter I. N. Punina, who had lived with her until the end, sold part of it before Gumilev could intervene. A long legal battle followed for the restoration of the complete archive to the \textit{Pushkinskii Dom}, which Gumilev finally lost. Gumilev remained, nevertheless, the sole beneficiary of Akhmatova's literary royalties, which provided for some degree of financial comfort in his later years.

In 1966, Gumilev met Natal'ia Viktorovna Simonovskaia, a graphic artist from Moscow. They married in Leningrad on 15 June 1967. She gave up her own career and devoted herself to looking after her husband, giving him a degree of comfort which had been denied to him for most of his life. As one of their friends wrote, Natal'ia Viktorovna gave Lev Nikolaevich an extra decade of life.\textsuperscript{84}

In 1970, the final part of Gumilev's 'Steppe Trilogy' was published\textsuperscript{85} – an account of the rise of the Mongol empire and the reaction to it in Europe and Russia from 861 to 1312 AD. This represents Gumilev's most mature work on the history of the Eurasian nomads, and is so far the only one of his books to have been translated into English.\textsuperscript{86} With its appearance, Gumilev had fulfilled the great ambition of his life to write a continuous history of the nomads up to the thirteenth century AD in which one 'could observe Inner Asia as if it was a newly discovered country, a resurfaced Atlantis.'\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{84} D. Balashov, 'Pamiati uchitelia', \textit{Nash Sovremennik}, 8, 1993, pp. 140–52 (p. 144).
\textsuperscript{87} Gumilev to Savitskii, 11 May 1958, Savitskii archive.
6. The Theory of Ethnogenesis

In 1965, Gumilev published his first article on the theory of ethnogenesis. It was followed by another twenty articles over the next ten years expounding his theory of ethnogenesis, culminating in his major theoretical work *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere*. The origins of Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis, however, go much further back than his bibliography suggests. In December 1968, Gumilev wrote to Pereslegin, his old teacher from Bezhetsk, ‘I’ve completed the third part of my ‘Steppe trilogy’ — *Searches for an Imaginary Kingdom*… it turned out to be a treatise rather than a monograph, but it will be more interesting this way. I also submitted to the journal *Priroda* a huge article ‘Ethnos and ethnogenesis as natural phenomena’. They have accepted it! Both of these were born from our conversations, when you devoted to a silly boy so much time and attention. From 1928, inspired by you, my thought has been working [on these topics].’

Gumilev maintained that he had already outlined certain aspects of the theory of ethnogenesis in his student years. The turning point in the development of his theory occurred in March 1939, when Gumilev was awaiting his re-trial in Leningrad’s prison Kresty. Gumilev recalled how he disturbed his fellow-inmates by shouting ‘Eureka!’ in the middle of the night. ‘The other inmates in my cell, there were about eight of them, looked at me with gloom and thought I had gone mad.’ That night, Gumilev discovered the key element of his theory, the idea of *passionarnost*.

The intuition behind the concept of *passionarnost* was that the underlying cause of the behaviour manifested in ethnic processes was not based on rational deliberation. Instead, it was based on an ability to formulate ideals or goals of various complexities and sustain them for long periods of time, comparable to a person’s lifetime. Gumilev later remarked that ‘I saw that the birth of an ethnos is preceded by the emergence of a certain number of people with a new passionary quality.’ He was convinced that the

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89 Deposited with VINITI in 1979–80 in three parts; first published in as a monograph in 1989 (see note 21 above).
90 Senin, ‘Pereslegin – nastavnik Gumileva’.
prevalent Marxist theory of history as a progressive succession of phases of social order based on economic factors did not satisfactorily explain the nature of ethnic development. Gumilev thought that the global changes in human behaviour which he discovered were a natural phenomenon and, as such, they should be studied by the methods of natural science. 'I understood that the theory was presented to me only in a rough outline, it needed to be expounded and extended in a greater detail.' The founding stone of the theory of ethnogenesis was laid.

A long period of gestation followed the initial discovery of the principle of *passionarnost*. In the 1956, Gumilev responded to Savitskii, who was urging him to write about the theory of history, by saying that 'I do not dare to talk about my conclusions until I receive your response to my specific works as any ideas will hang in the air if they cannot be applied to concrete material. At the moment I am in a hurry to see to completion my history of Middle Asia, which has been written in the last four years. This will give me some assurance for my accuracy and maybe then I will risk proceeding to generalisations.' In the 1960s, Gumilev read V.I. Vernadskii's book about biochemical processes in the biosphere which provided the necessary conceptual framework for his theory of ethnogenesis. With the completion of his major study of the nomads and of the theoretical basis of his thought, Gumilev could finally devote his energies to the systematic exposition of his general theory of ethnogenesis.

At the time when Gumilev began to publish his ideas on the theory of ethnogenesis, there was a debate in Soviet ethnography over the definition of the concept of ethnos. This was a natural context in which Gumilev could expound his own views on the nature of ethnos and its development. Although none were accepted by the leading journals in the field of ethnography, Gumilev managed to publish a series of articles elaborating his theory in *Vestnik LGU* and *Priroda*. As Gumilev's views gained modest publicity, his theory was rebuffed by the official Soviet ethnographic establishment led by Iu. Bromlei, the head of the Institute of Ethnography.

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92 Gumilev, 'Povoda dlia aresta ne davat', pp. 20–22.
93 Gumilev to Savitskii, 3 December 1956, Savitskii archive.
In 1974, in order to facilitate the discussion of his theory, Gumilev presented his theory in the form of a postdoctoral thesis in geography. Despite positive responses from his colleagues at the Geography Institute, Gumilev was refused a second doctorate by VAK. Undaunted, Gumilev employed this failed postdoctoral work as the basis of *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere*. He was not, however, able to publish it in the Soviet Union until 1989. In 1979, frustrated by the impossibility of publishing his work, Gumilev deposited *Ethnogenesis* with VINITI.

In December 1974, V.I. Kozlov, an associate of Iu. Bromlei, published in the leading Soviet history periodical *Voprosy istorii* an article that was highly critical of Gumilev's theory. Kozlov claimed that Gumilev's theory was based on a 'biologism' which 'prevented a true scientific understanding' of important issues in ethnography and 'justified cruel conquests and bloody interethnic conflicts.' It also failed to explain the existence of the Soviet people, Kozlov complained. Kozlov's charges resulted in a virtual ban on Gumilev's publications that lasted thirteen years.

A typical episode was recorded by Gumilev. In 1981, O.K. Dreyer, the editor-in-chief of *Vostochnaia literatura*, accepted a course of lectures by L.N. Gumilev entitled *Narodovedenie*, but returned it to the author after two days and forbade him to come back to *Vostochnaia literatura* until the journal *Voprosy istorii* had published a piece by him.

In total, in the period from 1975 to 1985, only 21 articles totalling 16 quires were published. The total quantity of the rejected works [in the same period] was around 82 quires.

In September 1980, Gumilev published an article in commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Kulikovo. This article presented an alternative to the prevalent view of the relationship between medieval Russia and the Golden Horde by advocating a more favourable perception of the nomad influence on Russian history. In response, in January 1981 the journal *Molodaia Gvardiia* published an article by A. Kuz'min which highly critical of Gumilev and his views on Russian history, accusing

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96 Vsesoiuznaia Atestatsionnaia Komissiia, the main certifying body in the USSR.
97 See note 21, above.
100 Gumilev, 'Epokha Kulikovskoi Bitvy' (see note 25 above), pp. 16–17.
Gumilev of being a Russophobe.\textsuperscript{101} Despite various appeals to the relevant authorities, Gumilev was not allowed to publish his own response to Kuz’min.

Gumilev complained after his final release from prison that ‘It is terrible to talk “into the pillow” and to write without any approval or encouragement. When one does not hear an answer, all efforts seem to be in vain.’\textsuperscript{102} At the end of his scholarly career, Gumilev again faced a virtual intellectual isolation that was very hard to bear. It seemed his ideas about ethnogenesis and its role in history would never be accessible to the public and he would forever remain an unknown outsider in the intellectual life of his nation.

7. Recognition

As perestroika gathered pace, things began to change for Gumilev. In 1987, an appeal to the political section of the CPSU was launched by a number of distinguished scholars and writers including D. Likhachev and D. Balashov. In June 1987, the ban on Gumilev’s work was lifted. In January 1988, Gumilev published ‘Auto-obituary,’ one of his best written pieces, which explained the theory of ethnogenesis, its origins and genesis. The journal 	extit{Znamia}, where the article was published, had a circulation of 500,000, representing a major break-through for Gumilev.

There was a growing public interest in Gumilev and his works. On 13 April 1988, 	extit{Izvestiia}, a leading Soviet newspaper, published an interview with Gumilev.\textsuperscript{104} In his interview, Gumilev talked about the nature of ethnic identity, Eurasianism and argued for a Tatar-friendly interpretation of Russian history. In September of the same year, the journal 	extit{Sovetskaia Kul’tura} published an extensive interview with Gumilev in which he talked about his theory of ethnogenesis, his view of Russian history, the difficulties he came across in trying to publish his works before perestroika, and his experiences of the Stalinist repressions. These became the principal themes of Gumilev’s numerous interviews and articles in the final years of his life.


\textsuperscript{102} Gumilev to Savitskii, 19 April 1961, Savitskii archive.


Public interest at that time can be explained by Gumilev's unusual background and the ideas he was expounding. He was the only son of legendary Russian poets persecuted by the authorities, a victim of repression and an original thinker at a time when the Russians were re-discovering their past and beginning to openly challenge Marxist dogma. The combination of these factors made Gumilev a major intellectual figure of the perestroika years.

The year 1989 saw publication of Gumilev's two major monographs. *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere* set out the theory of ethnogenesis, while *Ancient Rus and the Great Steppe* was a definitive treatise on the relationship between Russian land and the nomads from the ninth to fifteenth centuries. In the same year, his lectures on his theory of ethnogenesis were shown live on Leningrad television.

Such an active life proved too much for the now elderly Gumilev. In 1990, he suffered a heart attack which left him paralysed on his right side; he had to be carried home from the hospital by his friends. Although Gumilev later recovered the use of his right arm, the incident imposed serious restrictions on his ability to work. Nevertheless, he continued to write and give interviews. In January 1991, Gumilev gave an interview to Leningrad's daily *Chas Pik* which repeated the main themes of his thought, presenting a patriotic, Eurasian view of events and opposing the dissolution of the USSR.

In May 1992, Gumilev was admitted to the hospital with heart problems. Several leading Leningrad newspapers were publishing his health bulletins in the few days running up to his death on 15 June 1992. There was widespread public sympathy for him, and many mourners turned out to pay their last respects to the great scholar. Gumilev was buried in Aleksandro-Nevskaia Lavra, near his long-time hero Alexander Nevskii.

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105 *Etnogenet* (see note 21 above).
106 *Drevniaia Rus* (see note 23 above).
107 L. Gumilev, 'Ob"edenittsia chtoby ne ischeznut" *, *Chas Pik* (Leningrad), 14 January 1991.
Conclusion

The main passion of Gumilev’s extraordinary life was ‘science’ - the study of human nature through history, geography and ethnology. An unconventional thinker of rare calibre and a Russian patriot, his tragic experiences could not deter him from what he loved most – writing books and passing his ideas to other people. ‘Our children and our books are our happiness and the path to Eternity’ he once wrote. Gumilev did not, unfortunately, have any children but his books live on and continue to fascinate people.
Chapter 3
The Theory of Ethnogenesis

Introduction

This Chapter examines the theory of ethnogenesis, Gumilev’s main intellectual achievement. It is essential for understanding the rest of his thought. It might seem surprising that a theory about the origins and development of ethnos should have such significance for Gumilev. To understand why it did so, it is necessary to know what 'ethnos' meant for him.

Ethnos, a form of collective existence specific to humans, was one of the unique characteristics which differentiated humankind from other animals, and as such was essential for understanding human nature and history. Ethnos was one of the main factors which formed human perception of the world and behaviour. Given this view of ethnos, answers to such questions as ‘where does ethnos come from’, ‘how does it develop’ and ‘why does it disappear’ held the key not just to problems of ethnology, but to the understanding of human nature itself.

This Chapter begins with an examination of the theoretical background of Gumilev’s theory. In the first section, V.I. Vernadskii’s concept of the biosphere is outlined and its relation to the theory of ethnogenesis is examined. The connections between Gumilev’s ideas on the relations between ethnos and the environment are explored, the distinction between dynamic and static ethnoses is introduced, and the concept of passionarnost’ discussed.

The second section examines Gumilev’s concepts of ethnos and ethnic identity. It looks at alternative theories of ethnos, in response to which Gumilev developed his own theory before examining Gumilev’s definition of ethnos and his concepts of a behavioural stereotype and an ethnic field. Finally, it looks at the hierarchy of ethnic units as presented by Gumilev.

Section three explores the process of ethnogenesis, paying particular attention to phases of ethnogenesis. Section four looks at Gumilev’s understanding of the relations
between ethnic, social, and biological aspects of human nature. In particular, I explore the concepts of the discrete nature of ethnic history and the relations between *passionarnost'* and free will.

1. **Humankind, the biosphere, and *passionarnost'*

The principal postulate of Gumilev’s thought was the inseparability of human nature, including ethnic history, from the natural world. Gumilev took the ‘natural’\(^\text{108}\) to include those phenomena which did not derive from deliberate and rational action of humankind. Natural phenomena were contrasted with products of human activity which were the result of a conscious effort on the part of their creator, for example, artefacts.\(^\text{109}\) This distinction between natural phenomena and artefacts is central to Gumilev’s thought. I will deal with it in more detail below in the discussion of the distinction between ethnic and social aspects of history. Against the background of the above definition of the natural world, it is necessary to look at V.I. Vernadskii’s concept of the biosphere, which was the theoretical framework within which Gumilev developed his own ideas about ethnogenesis. After this, I will examine some central concepts of the theory of ethnogenesis itself, namely the distinction between dynamic and static ethnoses and *passionarnost*'.

1.1 **Vernadskii and the biosphere**

Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadskii (1863–1943), one of the most distinguished Russian scientists of the twentieth century, had interests ranging from mineralogy to biochemistry and radiology. He was the founder of several new sciences such as geochemistry, biogeochemistry, radiogeology and hydrogeology. Vernadskii was the founder and the director of the Radium Institute (1922–39) and the Biogeochemical Laboratory (1929), which later became the Institute of Geochemistry and Analytical Chemistry, part of the Russian Academy of Science. Vernadskii also made important

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\(^{108}\) Russian adjectives *prirodnyi*, *estestvennyi*.

contributions to the history and philosophy of science. Of special interest to the theory of ethnogenesis is Vernadskii's teaching on the biosphere and the relation between humankind and nature.

Vernadskii viewed the biosphere as an integral part of the material structure of the earth and regarded man as inseparable from it. Humanity, according to Vernadskii, was not just irrevocably connected to the biosphere by its need for food and shelter, but was a constituent part of this natural phenomenon. Human evolution and history were, therefore, subject to the laws and evolutionary processes of the biosphere.

Vernadskii argued that the biosphere 'consists of living matter and inanimate matter, which over the whole of geological time are sharply separated from each other by their genesis and structure. There is, however, a perpetual connection between living and inanimate matter, which can be expressed as a constant biogenic flow of atoms from living into the inanimate matter of the biosphere and vice versa. This process is generated by living matter and manifests itself in the constant breathing, feeding, breeding etc. of its living organisms.'\(^1\)\(^1\)\(^0\) This diversity of its structure was the most fundamental factor differentiating the biosphere from other spheres of the planet such as the atmosphere and the lithosphere.

According to Vernadskii, there were two important and distinct processes in the biosphere. First, the growth in the power of living matter over the span of geological time, i.e. a gradual increase in its importance and influence on the inanimate part of the biosphere, and second, the evolution of species in geological time. 'Living matter is flexible, changing, adopting to changes in the environment, but, possibly, it also undergoes its own, independent process of evolution, manifested in changes within geological time, independent of environmental changes.'\(^1\)\(^1\)\(^1\)\(^1\) In particular, Vernadskii noted that over geological time, especially in the last two billion years, there had been a gradual growth of the central nervous system.\(^1\)\(^1\)\(^2\)

Living matter, i.e. the total sum of all living organisms in the biosphere, was both the creator and the carrier of the free energy which existed on a significant scale only in

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\(^{111}\) *Nauchnaia mysl'*, p. 19.

\(^{112}\) *Nauchnaia mysl'*, p. 239.
the biosphere. This free energy, namely the biogeochemical energy of living matter, encompassed the whole biosphere and determined its history. For example, it generated and affected the intensity of the migration of the chemical elements which created the biosphere and determined the biosphere's role as a factor of a geological significance.

Vernadskii described the biogeochemical energy in the following way. 'The biogeochemical energy of living matter is defined above all by the propagation of living organisms, by their unceasing urge, determined by the energy of the planet, to reach the minimum of free energy. This is determined by the fundamental laws of thermodynamics which ensure the existence and stability of the planet.'

Vernadskii emphasised that humankind was part of this phenomenon.

'By connecting the phenomena of life through the relation of their atoms, and bearing in mind that they occur in the biosphere, i.e. in an environment with a specific structure which changes only relatively in geological time, and recognizing that through their genetics living phenomena are intrinsically linked to the biosphere, it becomes manifest that biogeochemistry must be most closely associated not just with the sciences of life, but also of man, i.e. with the human sciences.'

According to Vernadskii, a new form of biogeochemical energy related to human activity had been rapidly growing in significance in the last ten thousand years. This new form of energy, while retaining the normal character of biogeochemical energy, generated new forms of the migration of chemical elements, and by its diversity and force greatly exceeded previous levels of biogeochemical energy. Vernadskii called this new form cultural biogeochemical energy.

Vernadskii claimed that cultural biogeochemical energy was an intrinsic characteristic of the human species, one that manifested itself in the daily activity of human beings, such as construction of housing, transportation, production and consumption of food, energy etc. According to him, cultural biogeochemical energy was linked with the mental activity of organisms, in particular with the development of the brain in the highest life forms and, ultimately, with the evolution of intelligence itself.

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113 *Nauchnaia mysl*, p.127.
114 *Nauchnaia mysl*, p.121.
The intellect was a complex social structure. Thus, differences in social environment could result in a higher level of intelligence which accounted, for example, for the differences between the power of the intellect of modern man and of his Palaeolithic predecessor, both of whom had an identical neural substratum but exercised a substantially different power over the environment. The intellect was able to manifest itself as a geological force only when homo sapiens included in their natural habitat the whole of the biosphere.

The conclusion of Vernadskii's argument was that the biosphere as a whole was entering a new geological era, when human activity would be the main geological factor in the biosphere. Since human power is based on the intellect, Vernadskii proposed calling this new stage of the planet's evolution the 'noosphere'. Vernadskii thought that 'the evolutionary process has created a new geological sphere - the scientific thought of social humanity. Under the influence of scientific thought and human labour the biosphere is changing into a new state - the noosphere.' He stressed, however, that 'the transformation of the biosphere by scientific thought through human labour is not a chance phenomenon, dependent on human will, but a natural process, the roots of which lie deep in evolution.'

The principle tenets of Vernadskii's thought postulated that man was an integral part of the natural phenomenon of the biosphere and was, therefore, subject to its laws. The common assumption of an opposition between man and nature was thus intrinsically wrong and illogical. The biosphere was undergoing a long-term process of evolutionary development. In the recent stages of this development, due to the evolution of the central nervous system, a new geological era had begun in which the human intellect became the principal factor.

115 From the Greek noos - intellect, mind
117 Nauchnaia mysl', p. 21.
1.2 The biosphere and ethnogenesis

Gumilev adopted Vernadskii’s ideas about the biosphere to the study of ethnic history. In particular, three concepts from Vernadskii’s theory played a central role in Gumilev’s thought. The first was Vernadskii’s contention about the logical inseparability of man and nature. The second concerned the importance of biochemical energy for the functioning of living organisms. The third was the special role of humans in the biosphere. Within this framework, Gumilev attempted to explain how ethnic collectives operated.\(^{118}\)

Gumilev thought that the key to understanding the special place of humans in the biosphere was their ability to adapt to various environments. He argued that ethnos, as a form of collective existence specific to humans, adapted to the environment, rather than political and social institutions. People adapted to a new environment by changing their behavioural stereotypes, instead of physical characteristics, as was the case with other mammals. This did not have an explanation in either social or biological terms. Therefore, a different kind of phenomenon was involved. This specific form of adaptive behaviour was ethnic transformation or ethnogenesis.

Gumilev suggested that ethnic division was the key human characteristic which allowed man to spread over the planet and become a factor of geological importance, a fact which Vernadskii emphasized. The ability to develop distinct behavioural stereotypes appropriate to different environments, a key feature of any process of ethnogenesis, meant that the biological evolution of human race had reached a new phase of development in which biological evolution was superseded by ethnic development.

Gumilev argued that humans changed the environment to meet their needs. He argued that radical transformation of the environment coincided with the emergence of a new ethnos with a new and original behavioural stereotype, after which a newly established way of life was maintained. Changes of environment by an ethnos were a result of a brief period in its history, at the time when it had an ability to make an extraordinary effort.

\(^{118}\) Whereas Vernadskii thought in terms of hundreds of thousands of years, i.e. in terms of geological framework, Gumilev’s area of enquiry was limited to historic times of last 5,000 years of human history.
Vernadskii talked about the development of the biosphere in geological time, i.e. millions of years, while Gumilev wrote about historical time, the last 5,000 years, and did not use the concept of the noosphere. According to A.N. Medved’, the author of an article on Gumilev’s reception of Vernadskii’s ideas, Vernadskii defined the noosphere as a new stage in the development of the biosphere when ‘humanity as a whole becomes a powerful geological force.’ Medved’ argues this is a point of disagreement between Gumilev and Vernadskii, since Gumilev did not see humanity as a single whole, but rather saw it as divided into ethnoses. Ethnoses were inherently different from each other, while the noosphere encompasses the whole of humanity. Gumilev used the term ‘ethnosphere’ instead of ‘noosphere’. For him human influence over the environment had a discontinuous character, through discrete processes of ethnogenesis. Gumilev essentially rejected the idea of a conscious, unified control over the environment of the noosphere. Although he accepted the idea of biosphere as his starting point, Gumilev proceeded in a different way, ending up in complete opposition to the idea of the noosphere. But despite their differences, Gumilev and Vernadskii’s conclusions were similar. They both argued that study of human history was impossible without a study of the laws of nature.

1.3 Static and dynamic ethnoses

Gumilev introduced a distinction between two different types of ethnoses. The first type lived in their native environment according to an established way of life suitable for that environment. This type of ethnos repeated in every new generation the previous life cycle with only insignificant changes. Such an ethnos was in a state of equilibrium with its environment, opposed innovations and did not expand outside its home region. Contemporary examples were the Albanians, the Basques, the Icelanders, and the Egyptian fellahin. All these ethnoses had in common the feature of effectively repeating the life cycles of previous generations by preserving their old traditions.

120 Etnogenez, pp. 116–18.
The second state of ethnos was the dynamic state. In this state there was a change of views and ways of life between generations. Such ethnoses were capable of adaptation to new environments through changes in behavioural stereotypes. Examples of such cases were the Russian colonization of Siberia, European expansionism, and the Ancient Greek colonization of the Mediterranean. Gumilev expressed this distinction in the following way:

‘Each ethnos has its own internal structure and its own unique stereotype of behaviour. Sometimes, the structure and the behavioural stereotype change between generations. This indicates that the ethnos is developing and that ethnogenesis has not died out. Sometimes, the structure of ethnos is stable because a new generation repeats the life cycle of the preceding generation. Such ethnoses are called ‘persistent’ [or static].’

Gumilev listed the differences between static and dynamic state of ethnos in the table below.122

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121 Etnogenet, p. 91.
122 Etnogenet, p. 124.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of ethnos</th>
<th>Static</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generational relations</td>
<td>New generations try to emulate behavioural stereotypes of previous generations.</td>
<td>New generation wants to be different from the previous one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to time</td>
<td>Cyclical conception of time.</td>
<td>Linear conception of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to nature</td>
<td>The economy is adapted to the environment.</td>
<td>The environment is adapted to the needs of the economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to neighbours</td>
<td>Defence of borders, hospitality.</td>
<td>Drive for territorial expansion, aggressive wars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to descendants</td>
<td>Tendency to limit increases in population.</td>
<td>Tendency towards unlimited reproduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to religion</td>
<td>Henotheism, barriers to alien penetration into one’s culture.</td>
<td>Proselytism and religious intolerance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to social institutes</td>
<td>Cult of elders</td>
<td>Institute of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to social life</td>
<td>Conservation of already existing social groups</td>
<td>Formation of new social groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude to alien cultures</td>
<td>Oblivious to foreign ideas and borrowings of technologies</td>
<td>Active adoption of foreign ideas; their use or rejection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-span</td>
<td>Life-span is unlimited; can be stopped only by external factors (e.g. natural disaster or foreign invasion).</td>
<td>Life-span of 1200–1500 years from the first impulse to disappearance or becoming a static ethnos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cause of existence</td>
<td>Completion of their ethnogenesis.</td>
<td>[Passionary mutations]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes to ethnoses in opposite condition</td>
<td>The dynamic state is considered as a waste of energy.</td>
<td>Static ethnoses are considered as savages, stagnant, inferior.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. The differences between the static and dynamic states of ethnos.
Thus, there are two states of ethnos. In the first, ethnos was adapted to a specific environment and limited to it in its development. The second type consisted of those ethnoses which were intensively increasing their numbers and spreading beyond the limits of their original environment. In the static state, all energy was absorbed by internal processes and its output was near zero; equilibrium was maintained. In the dynamic state there was activity in excess of what was necessary for the maintenance of equilibrium. Gumilev described this phenomenon in terms of a new ability of the ethnos to absorb more biochemical energy from the biosphere than was necessary for its mere survival and the issuing of this excessive energy beyond the ethnic system in the form of labour.\textsuperscript{123}

Gumilev stressed that there was no value difference between dynamic and static ethnoses. All presently ‘stagnated’ ethnoses at some point in their history had been through their dynamic phase, while those ethnoses which were currently developing would either disappear or become static in their turn.\textsuperscript{124}

As an example of dynamic ethnos, Gumilev cited the development of the Americans in the nineteenth century. Such key events in the history of the USA as the extermination of the indigenous Indian population, the slave trade, the annexation of Texas, and the over-running of California and Alaska by gold-diggers had an unorganized and spontaneous character in which central government only sanctioned a \textit{fait accompli}.

Other processes in history like the Arab diffusion into Eastern Africa, the arrival of the Dutch settlers at the Cape and later Orange County, the Russian settlement of Siberia and of the lands to the south of the Yellow river by the Chinese, all had a similar nature. So did the Greek colonization of the Mediterranean and the Viking raids in the early middle ages. Gumilev observed from these examples that there were frequently occurring phenomena of transition into a dynamic state, when aggressiveness and the

\textsuperscript{124} \textit{Etnogenez}, p. 125.
ability to adapt greatly increased, and which allowed an ethnos to adopt to new environments.\footnote{Gumilev, 'Etnogenez v aspekte geografii', Etnosfera, pp. 182–3.}

1.4 Passionarnost

Social, political, technological and geographical factors were sufficient to describe a static ethnos. But for a dynamic ethnos to exist a fourth parameter was necessary, which Gumilev called passionarnost' (from Latin passio).\footnote{Etnogenez, p. 297.} He defined it as 'the ability for single-minded super-efforts.' Gumilev distinguished three main types of people according to their level of passionarnost'.

Passionaries in the full sense of the word were those whose impulse towards an ideal was stronger than the instinct of self-preservation. They could have various degrees of physical ability or intellect, be morally bad or virtuous, with either creative or destructive tendencies. Indifference was the only characteristic which passionaries did not have.

Harmonious people were those whose impulse towards an abstract ideal was equal to their instinct of self-preservation. A harmonious personality was 'intellectually capable, hard-working and sociable, but not super-active.'\footnote{Etnogenez, p. 273.} They were incapable of formulating complex ideals or new forms of behaviour. All their efforts were directed towards fulfilment of needs such as self-preservation and upbringing of their children. A good illustration of what Gumilev meant by the harmonious type is W. Somerset Maugham’s character Henry Chester.

‘He had no interests except his business and his family. He liked his work; he made enough money to live in comfort, he put by a reasonable sum every year, he played golf on Saturday afternoon and on Sunday, he went up every August for a three weeks’ holiday to the same place on the east coast. His children would grow up and marry, then he would turn his business over to his son and retire with his wife to a little house in the country where he could potter about till death claimed him at a ripe old age. He asked nothing more from life than that, and it was life that thousands upon thousands of his fellow-men lived with satisfaction.’\footnote{W. Somerset Maugham, 'Sanatorium', Short Stories, London, 1998, p. 264}
Self-sacrificial or unusual behaviour typical of passionaries seemed unnatural to such people. Harmonious people always constituted the majority in an ethnos, irrespective of its phases or state. The predominance of this type resulted in a static ethnos.

Sub-passionaries were persons with a ‘negative’ passionarnost’. Such people were incapable of working consistently in order to sustain life and procreate. Their overriding impulse was to satisfy their desires without any regard to consequences. ‘They neither change the world like passionaries, nor preserve it like the harmonious people do, but live off the others.’ The distinct characteristic of sub-passionaries was the inability to control or to satisfy their sensual desires. Examples of sub-passionaries were vagabonds and beggars. Sub-passionaries often played important roles in ethnic history due to their mobility which allowed them to follow passionaries. But without the passionaries they were incapable of purposeful activity. The prevalence of this type led to the phase of disintegration.

Gumilev also distinguished six principal degrees of individual passionarnost’, according to their typical ideals or goals. For example, Alexander the Great had no rational reason to continue his conquests after the defeat of Darius. In fact, launching another far-away conquest in India was counter-productive in the sense that it prevented the Greeks enjoying the spoils of their victory. Gumilev argued that the motives for Alexander’s actions were to be found in his character, rather than in the objective needs of the Greek army or civilization. Alexander had two overriding qualities particularly remarked on by ancient authors: ambition and pride. His character was, in Gumilev’s view, a clear manifestation of passionarnost’ as a drive towards an ideal, which in his case was the ideal of victory.

The highest passionary ideal was the ideal of sacrifice. Jan Hus (1372–1415), who sacrificed himself for his principles, became a symbol of Czech ethnic self-assertion and by his death initiated the Hussite movement. Archpriest Avvakum (1620–82) preferred to sacrifice himself for his ideal – the Old Faith – rather than accept the changes in religious rituals initiated by Patriarch Nikon. Gumilev argued that this behaviour could not be

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129 Etnogenez, p. 276.
130 A more detailed account of the phases of ethnogenesis is given below, pp. 72–80.
131 Etnogenez, p. 328. See the table below for a list of passionary ideals.
understood in terms of human instincts, which would have directed them towards preservation of their lives. On the contrary, behaviour exhibited by people like Jan Hus or Avvakum was a manifestation of a special human quality — *passionarnost*[^132].

The table below summarises passionary ideals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioural ideal</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sacrifice</td>
<td>Avvakum, Filipp Kolychev, Semyon the Stylite, Jan Hus, Francis of Assisi.</td>
<td>Abstract ideal, e.g. saving one’s soul, is more important than life itself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory</td>
<td>Alexander the Great, Sulla, Suvorov, Peter the Great, Stalin, Churchill, Napoleon.</td>
<td>Seeks obedience and recognition of his authority over others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success</td>
<td>Abramovich</td>
<td>A person’s aim is to achieve social recognition. Material prosperity is not sufficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and creativity</td>
<td>Newton, Dostoevskii, Gauguin.</td>
<td>Pursues abstract goals instead of tangible, material objects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of prosperity with risk to life</td>
<td>Sir Francis Drake, the Conquistadors, modern day Russian businessmen.</td>
<td>Challenges the established norms with the objective of acquisition of material gains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursuit of prosperity without risk to life</td>
<td>Self-made entrepreneurs.</td>
<td>Willing to work harder to achieve material well-being, but does not challenge established norms of behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harmonious type</td>
<td>Average man – Maugham’s Henry Chester</td>
<td>Seeks satisfaction of vital needs according to established tradition. Not capable of formulating new ideals/goals but capable of sustaining an established way of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subpassionary</td>
<td>Drug-addicts, social outcasts, decadents, Chekhovian intelligentsia</td>
<td>Inability to satisfy one’s desires. Inability to control one’s desires. Cannot sustain the traditional way of life or pursue goals beyond the immediate satisfaction of desires.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Passionary ideals.
Gumilev arranged ideals in this order on the principle that people with a higher ideal had more influence on ethnogenesis. For example, he thought that successful people had more influence in an ethnos than those who were simply pursuing knowledge and therefore that the ideal of success required more passionarnost than the ideal of knowledge. Gumilev privately acknowledged that his classification of passionary ideals was provisional, but thought it sufficient to describe the phenomenon of passionarnost'.

Ermolaev put forward a different principle to determine the relative level of passionary ideals. He argued that the relative complexity of passionary ideals should be determined by the probability of their existence in the ethnic system. On this view, the more complex ideals were less frequent. This argument was based on the stochastic principle of the theory of dissipative structures, which stated that a more complex state of the system had lower probability. It followed that the least frequently encountered ideal required the greatest amount of passionarnost for its realization.\footnote{Ermolaev, 'Ob idealakh povedeniia' (see note 33 above), p. 23.}

People exhibiting sacrificial behaviour, like Francis of Assisi, Filipp Kolychev, Socrates, or Symeon the Stylite, were to be found in any superethnos. Persons pursuing the ideal of victory were more numerous, e.g. Alexander the Great, Suvorov, Richard the Lion Heart. Great scientists, writers, and artists were still more numerous, e.g. Newton, Descartes, Chekhov, Plato, St Augustine. Those who achieved success in their lifetime were more numerous still, from Bill Gates to Abramovich. Persons who pursued prosperity with a risk to their life were even more common, until one reached the 'thousands upon thousands' of harmonious people who live their life according to their society's traditional stereotypes.

Overall, Gumilev's classification of passionary ideals should be seen as a general guide to his concept of passionarnost rather than a definitive statement. It is, nevertheless, important as a tool for distinguishing in relative terms different types of behaviour in the theory of ethnogenesis.

Having given the description of passionarnost in terms of behavioural ideals, Gumilev explained its nature in biochemical terms. He defined it as 'an inborn ability of a body to absorb external energy and expend it in the form of labour.'\footnote{Etnogenez, p. 308.}
among humans, and at high levels it overrode the instinct of self-preservation. Passionarnost' was a form of biochemical energy, while psychology transformed energy impulses into human action. This led to a much more active functioning of the nervous system than was typical for normal members of the human species.

Gumilev hypothesised the relation of passionarnost' to the biosphere in the following way. The biosphere contained more energy than was required for sustaining energy equilibrium in the biosphere. This led to excesses of behaviour, which among human species take the form of passionary transformations. He further argued that the passionary impulse produced many instances of ethnogenesis, and the fact that passionary impulses were spread over large areas of the planet's surface in this indiscriminate fashion pointed to a cosmic origin of passionarnost', although he admitted that this was only a hypothesis.

Gumilev further claimed that passionarnost' was a kind of energy which directly affected human psychology and behaviour, overriding the self-preservation instinct. He hypothesised that these changes in behaviour were probably linked to some kind of micro-mutation which altered human hormones and/or the nervous system, thus leading to changes in behaviour, and ultimately resulting in the emergence of a new ethnos with a unique behavioural stereotype. Gumilev summarised his ideas about passionarnost' and its relation to ethnogenesis in the following way.

"The formation of a new ethnos is always linked with existence among some individuals of an uncontrollable internal drive towards a single-minded activity, always related to changes in either social or natural environment, while the attainment of their chosen goal, which is often illusory or fatal for the subject himself, is perceived by him as being more valuable than even the preservation of one's life. This is a rare case, a diversion from the norm and it has an opposite sign to the instinct of self-preservation...This phenomenon is at the basis of anti-egoistic ethics when the interests of the collective, even misconceived, prevail over personal interests including the care for one's life and that of one's offspring. People with this character in circumstances favourable to them act (and

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135 Etnogenez, pp. 207-14.  
136 Etnogenez, p. 312. Gumilev's stated belief that this source of this energy was located in outer space and his private conviction that this supported a belief in its divine origin have occasioned ridicule of his theory as a whole, but in fact it does not require them.
cannot help acting) in such a way, that the sum of their actions break the inertia of
the tradition and initiate new ethnoses.\textsuperscript{137}

*Passionarnost* was the necessary element of any process of ethnogenesis. In the
growth and early acme phases the prevalent behaviour in the system became more
complex, reaching its peak of complexity in the acme phase dominated by people with
the ideals of sacrifice and victory. After this phase, behaviour in the ethnic system
simplified, falling from the ideal of victory to the ideal of knowledge and creativity in the
early crisis phase, and leading to ideals of pursuit of prosperity in the inertia phase. The
behaviour in each phase of ethnogenesis was determined by the passionary ideal
prevalent among the majority of passionary people at that time. In relation to that ideal,
the simpler ideals were considered as primitive, while the more complex ones were
eccentric.\textsuperscript{138}

Gumilev emphasised that *passionarnost* had a noticeable impact in history only
when it was characteristic of the ethnos as a whole. For example, Alexander the Great
could not have done what he did without active support from his army – for
*passionarnost* to have an impact on history there had to be statistically significant
number of passionaries in the population. The famous names in history were famous only
because they served as a rallying point for other passionaries, whose overall level of
*passionarnost* made ‘great things’ in history possible.

It was relatively easy to distinguish deeds done through *passionarnost* and acts
performed from self-preservation. Actions caused by *passionarnost* were also
distinguishable from actions caused by external irritants like a foreign invasion. The latter
reactions were usually short-lived and did not produce a lasting effect. It was the essence
of passionaries, on the other hand, to devote themselves to a particular goal for
substantial periods of their lives.

To sum up, Gumilev described *passionarnost* in behavioural terms and tried to
explain it in terms of biochemistry and genetics. He could not give a proper scientific
account of the phenomenon he was describing, as no scientific studies were conducted to
support his views. His explanations of the nature of *passionarnost* in terms of natural

\textsuperscript{137} Etnogenez, p. 252.
\textsuperscript{138} Ermolaev, ‘Ob idealakh povedeniia’, p. 25.
science have, therefore, a hypothetical character. However, the concepts of the biosphere and biochemical energy are necessary conceptual tools for the theory of ethnogenesis. They provide a naturalistic framework for explaining the global and unplanned character of behavioural transformations which cause ethnogenesis and the changes to the environment which accompanied it. They support Gumilev’s contention that physical change could have only physical causes and, therefore, passionarnost’ has to have a basis in the biochemical energy of the biosphere. The concept of passionarnost’ as a behaviourist model is a new and interesting means of analysing of human behaviour. It should be seen as an important contribution to human understanding.

2. Ethnos and ethnic identity

In Gumilev’s view, through ethnos humans interacted with nature. To define its essence was a crucial part of his overall project. For a clearer understanding of Gumilev’s concept of ethnos, it is necessary to look at some alternative theories of ethnos prevalent in Soviet theoretical ethnography at the time when he formulated his theory. Against this background, three essential elements of the theory of ethnos are examined, namely, the concepts of a behavioural stereotype, of Komplimentarnost’, and the ethnic field.

2.1 Rival theories of ethnos

Traditionally, the main topics of Russian and later Soviet ethnography were the study of culture, particularly of material culture, ethnic anthropology, and the study of social organization in primeval and early clan societies. By the 1960s, ‘ethnos’ had been introduced as a specialized ethnographic term, and there was an increasing need to explore its theoretic foundations. A necessary antecedent condition of introducing the term ‘ethnos’ was the establishment of common characteristics which would make it

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139 Although the word ‘ethnography’ had been in use since the nineteenth century, the term ‘ethnos’ came into scientific use only in the mid-twentieth century.
possible to denote by this term 'all the communities that existed and continue to exist from the times of the early tribes to the nations of today.'

There were substantial differences among Soviet ethnographers about what constituted the main characteristic of ethnos. Amongst the principal factors being debated were language, culture, common territory, distinctness of psychological make-up, common origin and state affiliation. A debate among Soviet ethnographers in the scientific journal *Priroda* followed the publication of Gumilev’s article, which for the first time presented the main principles of the theory of ethnogenesis in a single work.

V.I. Kozlov, a long-time opponent of Gumilev’s theory, argued that ethnos was a social category because any biological relation in society would necessarily be a social one. Ethnic processes, on this view, were reducible to a variety of social processes, while ethnos itself was a type of social community. A common language and territory were necessary conditions for the emergence of a new ethnos. Kozlov criticised Gumilev by arguing that *passionarnost’* could not play any role in primordial society because it had rigid traditions which were impossible to challenge.

M.I. Artamonov also argued that ethnos was not a biological but a social category which had an amorphous nature. An ethnos was a group of people who had a stable common culture and could assume any social form, from a tribe to a state. Increased activity in an ethnos was not the ‘result of some unknown causes, but [caused by] an aggravation of external or internal conflicts in a particular society.’ The activity of passionaries, as described by Gumilev, would be successful only if they acted in accordance with the wishes of the majority.

Bromlei summed up the main differences between various concepts of ethnos. He argued Gumilev saw ethnos as a biological phenomenon. In contrast, Bromlei and his colleagues thought it was primarily a social phenomenon. They saw ethnos as a linguistic-cultural community of people. Artamonov thought this was sufficient to define

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143 A distinguished archaeologist who was Gumilev’s chief in the Khazar expeditions in Southern Russia.
ethnos, while Bromlei and Kozlov thought people in such a group also had to be aware or conscious of their unity, in particular of their common origin (either real or fictitious).

Bromlei also had a broader definition of ethnos which he called 'the ethnosocial organism.' As well as culture, it had territorial, socio-economic, and usually political unity, as was the case with a tribe or a nation. The existence of socio-economic components directly linked ethno-social organisms with socio-economic formations such as capitalist or socialist forms of society, giving it a meaning within the Marxist theory of history.

Ethnos in the narrow sense could exist in several social formations, e.g. feudal, capitalist or socialist, because culture, the objective basis of ethnos, had a relative independence from socio-economic formations. Some important components of culture such as art, philosophy and language reflected changes in the socio-economic field only indirectly. Bromlei argued, therefore, that the differences in social and ethnic evolution which were pointed out by Gumilev could be explained without ascribing to ethnos a biological character.

Bromlei admitted that there were some biological factors present in society and proposed dividing all social phenomena into socio-cultural and socio-biological ones. The former included technology, economy, law, morality etc., while the latter were largely limited to demographic factors. The fact that the individuals who comprised an ethnos had biological qualities did not mean that such qualities were characteristic of the ethnos as a whole. Of all biological groups, the most closely linked to ethnos was that of a population formed on the basis of endogamy. The formation and preservation of endogamy and other demographic factors were however determined by various socio-economic and political factors. Bromlei concluded that there was a more complex relation between ethnic and natural factors than Gumilev's view of ethnos as a biological phenomenon allowed for.

There was confusion on the part of Gumilev's opponents' between the biological and the 'natural' character of ethnos, later repeated by some Western scholars. Gumilev argued that ethnos was a 'natural' phenomenon in the sense that it was not deliberately created by humans and had laws of development independent of their rational actions. Ethnic identity was not genetically inherited because it was a matter of behavioural
stereotypes, which were acquired in a non-voluntary way in early life. Gumilev’s theory of ethnos and ethnic identity was a behaviourist theory, and not the biological one that has been commonly imputed to him.

When Gumilev’s concept of nature is taken into account, his position can be seen to have been closer to Bromlei’s than the latter appreciated. Gumilev did not disagree with Bromlei’s argument that behavioural stereotypes typical of a particular ethnos were acquired by members of that ethnos through the adoption of its culture in one’s life time and not inherited by biological means. He merely wanted to stress the non-voluntary nature of this process.

That is not to say that there were no differences at all between Gumilev’s and Bromlei’s theories. First, Bromlei did not distinguish between static and dynamic ethnoses, whereas for Gumilev this was a crucial distinction. Second, there was a difference in principle between them about the underlying causes of ethnic development. Whereas Bromlei argued that socio-economic factors were at the basis of ethnic changes, Gumilev located the source of such changes in passionarnost, a concept that has no parallel in Bromlei’s work. Finally, for Bromlei and other Soviet ethnographers, ethnogenesis was only the initial phase of the emergence of a new ethnos. Gumilev, on the other hand, understood by ethnogenesis the entire process of ethnic development from the initial phase of ethnos’ formation, to its final phase when ethnos became static.

### 2.2 Ethnos and ethnic identity

Gumilev rejected Soviet theories of ethnic identity which were based on a particular shared characteristic such as speaking the same language, being of the same race, occupying the same territory, or having common origins. Instead he proposed to consider ethnos as a unique system of relations between its members embodied in a unique behavioural stereotype.

Linguistic unity could not be the ultimate criterion of ethnic identity. There were cases of people with different languages belonging to the same ethnos (the French and the Bretons), while in other cases speaking the same language did not constitute the same
ethnos (the English and the Irish, the Spanish and the Hispanics). Moreover, an exact correlation of social and political institutions with ethnos was rare. For example, the nation-states of Western Europe of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (insofar as they really did unite ethnic and political boundaries) were exceptions in history. Ancient empires included many different ethnoses within the same political structure, while in the medieval times one ethnos was often divided between several feudal fiefdoms. Gumilev's aim was to show that ethnos was not defined by a similarity of its members such as language, race or common origin, but by a special kind of relation between the members of ethnos.

To explain this idea, Gumilev employed the General Systems Theory developed by the renowned biologist L. von Bertalanffy (1901–72). This theory was introduced by von Bertalanffy as 'a new paradigm which should control model construction in all sciences' with the aim of deducing universal principles. He argued that "system" is a model of general nature, that is, a conceptual analogue of certain rather universal traits of observed entities... The difference from conventional disciplines is not essential but rather in the degree of generality (or abstraction), "system" refers to very general characteristics shared by a large class of entities conventionally treated in different disciplines." Certain principles applied to systems in general, irrespective of their nature and of the entities concerned. This was why corresponding conceptions and laws appeared independently in different fields of science including psychology and sociology.

Gumilev applied the concept of system to ethnology. He argued that relations between individual members were a manifestation of the ethnic system, constituted by the special character of the relations between members of an ethnos rather than by their similarity. In this way, the behavioural stereotypes unique to an ethnic system became its definitive quality instead of shared characteristics such as origin or territory as maintained by the Soviet ethnographers.

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146 Etnogenez, p. 51.
148 General System Theory, p. 87.
Gumilev accordingly defined ethnos as 'a dynamic system which includes not only people, but also elements of the environment, cultural tradition and reciprocal relations with its neighbours. In such a system, the initial charge of energy is gradually expended, while the entropy steadily increases.'\textsuperscript{149} A system could either be in equilibrium like a static ethnos, or developing from an impulse, as with a dynamic ethnos. In the latter case, a system's relations changed over time as it had to remove the growing entropy and exchange it with the environment. The parameter responsible for these changes was passionarnost' which manifested itself in the phase of ethnogenesis.

The notion of a behavioural stereotype is fundamental to Gumilev's concept of ethnos — a person's behaviour in a particular circumstance was a manifestation of their ethnic identity.

'The phenomenon of ethnos is the behaviour of individuals who constitute that ethnos. In other words, it [the phenomenon of ethnos] is not in their bodies, but in their actions and relationships. Therefore, there is no human being outside an ethnos, except for a newly born baby. Every human being has to behave in a certain way, and it is the character of his behaviour which determines his ethnic identity. It follows, that birth of a new ethnos is a creation of a new behavioural stereotype, distinct from a previous one.'\textsuperscript{150}

This quotation is at the heart of Gumilev's thinking about ethnos and ethnic identity. He clearly stated that ethnic phenomenon was not in the body, i.e. it is not a biological attribute. On the contrary, the phenomenon of ethnos is in the behaviour — 'actions and relations'. That was why Gumilev said that a newly born baby had no ethnic identity — it was 'outside ethnos.' Newly-born babies did not have a settled pattern of behaviour — they were behavioural tabulae rasae. Babies acquired ethnic identity as they interacted with their parents and people around them and learned how to behave, i.e. began to acquired behavioural stereotype of their ethnos which was a set of traditions, customs and norms of behaviour specific to that ethnos. Gumilev stressed the non-voluntary nature of this process and distinguished it from 'social', i.e. deliberate and rational aspects, of human life. For Gumilev, there was a difference in principle between being 'English' — a phenomenon of ethnic behaviour — and being a Doctor of Philosophy,

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Etnogenез}, p. 101.
\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Etnogenез}, p. 142.
a result of conscious activity within an intentionally created social setting. That was why he called ethnos a ‘natural’ phenomenon, which in his understanding meant non-voluntary.

Ethnic identity did not depend on passionarnost'. Ethnic identity, like a behavioural stereotype, was an acquired characteristic. That was the reason newly born babies did not have an ethnic identity. Once acquired, however, an ethnic identity was impossible to change because it had a non-voluntary, non-rational nature.151

Passionarnost’, on the other hand, was an inheritable quality. As has been shown above, Gumilev described passionarnost’ in terms of behavioural ideals of various complexity, and explained it in terms of excesses of biochemical energy. He also hypothesised that passionary qualities were passed through genes. It follows that passionarnost' determined only the relative complexity of goals which an individual pursued in their life and not their ethnic affiliation, which had an acquired character.

Behavioural stereotypes were certain norms of behaviour which members of an ethnos acquired in their infancy. The structure of an ethnic behavioural stereotype was a rigorously defined norm of relationship between the collective and the individual; between individuals (within the collective); between sub-ethnic groups; between ethnos and its sub-ethnic groups. These norms had their logic of change in the phases of ethnogenesis. They were particularly important because they were perceived by an ethnos’s members as the only possible way of life, while different norms of behaviour were met with astonishment and disbelief.152

Gumilev gave numerous examples from history of clashes of behavioural stereotypes, from contacts between the Hellenes and the Scythians, to the Jews and the Romans and the Crusaders and the Arabs. Thus, the Crusaders were shocked by the Muslim tradition of polygamy, while the Arabs in their turn considered the uncovered faces of French ladies as shameful.

There was in fact no right or wrong way of thinking about such issues, as different norms of behaviour were at the very base of ethnic distinctions. Differences in behavioural stereotypes accounted for difficulties in inter-ethnic contacts. For example, in

151 Etnogenet., p. 145.
152 Etnogenet., p. 91.
the case of Western Europeans, ‘Africans, Indians, Mongols and even Russians were considered as barbarians or savages, while these people had a full right to say the same thing about the English.’ The Chinese were even more arrogant than Europeans, as they considered European envoys to China as primarily paying homage to the emperor.\footnote{Etnogenez, p. 224.}

In conclusion, Gumilev argued that the basis of ethnus was its unique behavioural stereotype. Ethnic identity had a non-voluntary, acquired nature. Through General System Theory Gumilev tried to define ethnus in terms of physical science and make his views consistent with the general laws of physics. At the same time, he ascribed the central role in the concept of ethnus to the notion of a behavioural stereotype. As was the case with \textit{passionarnost'}, there is a contrast between description of the ethnic phenomena in behavioural terms and a physicalist explanation of them. Soviet and Western scholars confused behaviourist arguments for ethnic identity with the concept of \textit{passionarnost'}, which in Gumilev’s view was an inheritable quality. Gumilev’s theory of ethnus would, therefore, be better described as a behaviourist theory of ethnic identity, rather than as biological.

\textbf{2.3 Komplimentarnost' and the ethnic field}

To explain the mechanism of interaction in ethnoses, Gumilev introduced the concepts of \textit{komplimentarnost'} and the ethnic field. He defined \textit{komplimentarnost'} as ‘a subconscious mutual sympathy between people.’ For example, marriages for love and were made and genuine friendships were formed on this principle, but it also had a wider significance. Gumilev argued that ‘in the formation of the initial community, that is the embryo of ethnus, the central role is played by an unconscious attraction between people of similar disposition.'\footnote{Etnogenez, p. 92.}

Gumilev wrote that the principle of \textit{komplimentarnost'} was initially devised while serving his first prison sentence in Norilsk. At the labour camp the necessary condition of survival was the ability to form informal links with other inmates, which formed small groups of two to four people who helped and supported each other. He argued that these
groups were formed on the basis of mutual sympathy, rather than rational calculation. Gumilev called this phenomenon of subconscious attraction *komplimentarnost'* and argued that it belonged to the emotional sphere.\(^{155}\)

Gumilev thought that the beginning of all ethnic processes was linked with emergence of small groups of people attracted to each other by positive *komplimentarnost*. An increase in *passionarnost* led to the emergence of people with different ideals to those of the majority. Those who held similar ideals were attracted to each other on the basis of *komplimentarnost*, creating the necessary conditions for the formation of an ethnic tradition, followed by the creation of social institutions.

Gumilev argued that a union of people attracted to each other always preceded the emergence of a new ethnic tradition. Such people formulated the common aims which bound them together and determined their historic destiny. Gumilev these called initial ethnic unions *konsortsi* and *konviki*. On the level of ethnic *komplimentarnost* was manifested in patriotism. On the superethnic level, *komplimentarnost* was intellectual and was usually manifested in arrogance towards other people’s way of life and ideals.

Gumilev introduced the concept of the ethnic field to explain ethnic unity and *komplimentarnost*. The principle of the field existed wherever there was a coordinated activity of many elements. The existence of an ethnic field was deduced on the basis of the observable unity of ethnic groups visible in the behavioural unity of its members. The ethnic field was the principle which regulated and coordinated the existence of an ethnos as an integral unit. ‘From the observed fact of the unity and integrity of ethnic groups, manifested in the uniformity of their structure and behaviour in the evolutionary process, it is possible to conclude that there are certain fields which regulate and coordinate this process.’\(^{156}\) Gumilev understood by the concept of the field a phenomenon displayed in ‘a coordination of multiple elements of the whole’ and in the preservation of ethnic unity.

Each ethnos had a unique frequency or rhythm. This rhythm was sometimes upset by passionary impulses, which restructured the existing ethnic system and gave it a new rhythm which led to formation of a new ethnos. Once it emerged, an ethnic field was perceived through its degree of closeness or alienation, i.e. through *komplimentarnost*.

\(^{155}\) L. Gumilev, ‘Zakony vremen’ (see note 35 above), p. 5.  
\(^{156}\) *Etnogen*, p. 291.
This explained the basic characteristic of ethnos expressed in the ‘us-them’ antithesis. On a behavioural level, ethnic rhythms were expressed in a behavioural stereotype.

The nature of the ethnic field explained why newly born babies did not have an ethnicity. 'The ethnic field as a phenomenon does not reside in the bodies of the mother and the child but manifests itself between them.'157 The newly born entered the mother’s ethnic field through close contact with the mother. Being in the mother’s ethnic field formed the ethnic field of the baby, later modified by contacts with the father, relatives, other children and the rest of one’s people. But one’s ethnic field was weak in the beginning and if the child was placed in a different ethnic environment, then their field would change accordingly. This would constitute a change in one’s ethnic identity which was relatively painless at an early age. In Gumilev’s view, ethnic fields, rather than genetically inherited qualities, were responsible for the strong nature of one’s ethnic identity.

The concept of the ethnic field helped to explain why ethnoses could live under the influence of other cultures while preserving their unique identity. At an encounter of two different rhythms there could be either a harmony which would lead to ethnic fusion, or disharmony which would lead to annihilation. The notions of ‘ours’ and ‘alien’ were, therefore, not abstract notions but a psychological representation of the real physical phenomena of ethnic fields and their rhythms. The degree of sympathy or antipathy between ethnoses depended on the similarity of their ethnic fields. Ethnoses in the same superethnos had harmonious ethnic frequencies, while an alien superethnos was most likely to have a dissonant ethnic rhythm. The level of natural sympathy or antipathy between ethnoses and between superethnoses could be discovered empirically, i.e. through history of ethnic contacts. As an example, Gumilev cited the history of relations between the nomad and Chinese superethnoses. The differences between them were so great that friendly contacts, even when political necessity required it, never lasted for long. Gumilev argued that such examples showed that at the basis of ethnic interaction there were non-rational processes which statistically determined the behaviour of ethnic masses.158

157 Etnogenez, p. 295.
158 Etnogenez, p. 296.
Ethnic fields could lose their old rhythms and generate a new, unique rhythm only at the time of a passionary impulse. In this case, ethnic rhythms were broken up by a higher than normal 'incandescence' in the form of passionary activity, when an ethnos lost its old ethnic field and acquired a new one with a unique rhythm. The historical process of such change in ethnic fields was observed in the emergence of groups of highly active people naturally attracted to each other because of their intuitive affinity to each other. If such groups of passionaries had sufficient passionary energy, they would attract other people into their groups, which would gradually lead to an emergence of a new ethnos. A passionary impulse was, therefore, the only case when a merger of two distinct ethnoses could result in a formation of a new, unique ethnos.

Gumilev introduced the concept of the ethnic field to provide an explanation for the behavioural phenomena of ethnic identity and komplimentarnost' in terms of physics. In the introduction to the section on the concept of the ethnic field, he stated that unlike the previous part of his treatise, this section had a hypothetical nature. Undoubtedly, this is true – the concept of an ethnic field has a speculative nature. Gumilev’s observations about the emotional aspects of ethnic identity and intra-ethnic relations have cogency without an additional physical explanation of these phenomena. The fact that Gumilev did not limit himself to generalisations reflected his personal desire for a positivistic account of ethnos. There is, therefore, a dualism in his views – on the one hand he put forward a behaviourist, non-voluntaristic theory of ethnos, on the other hand advanced a physicalist explanation not actually required by the former.

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159 Etnogenet, p. 289.
2.5 Ethnic groupings

Gumilev offered the following classification of different ethnic groups. The superethnos was the largest ethnic unit, which he defined as 'a group of ethnoses, which appears simultaneously in the same region, and which manifests itself in history as a mosaic-like integrity.' Superethnoses were observed directly and were defined exclusively by their degree of interethnic closeness. They were real units, not abstract conceptions of historians.

A superethnos was a system of a higher order than an ethnus. Development of a superethnos was determined by a combination of passionary impulses, geography and ethnic pre-history. As was remarked earlier, for Gumilev, the behavioural stereotype of an ethnus had a close relation with its environment. It was impossible to have the same behavioural stereotype in different geographical environments. This was one of the main reasons for the impossibility of a single culture for humankind. The other two factors which determined ethnic diversity were differences in passionarnost* and ethnic history.

Having received the same initial impulse, ethnoses in the same geographical region would develop in the same direction and have similar, but not identical, behavioural stereotypes. Examples of superethnoses included the Islamic, the Western European superethnos, the Ancient Greek, the Byzantine, the Chinese, and the superethnos of the Eurasian nomads.

Superethnoses never merged because every superethnos had its own unique ethnic dominant, i.e. 'a verbal expression of certain ideals which in every superethnos have a uniform meaning ... for all ethnoses in this superethnos' The ethnic dominant is 'a phenomenon or a complex of phenomena (religious, ideological, military, relating to lifestyle etc.) which determines the transformation of the initial ethno-cultural diversity... into a goal-directed uniformity.' This ideal was a life-asserting symbol which could not be replaced with the ideal of a different superethnos, because 'at the bottom of one's heart members of different superethnoses will keep that ideal, which is perceived by them as the only natural and proper one.'

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160 Etnogenez, p. 110.
161 Etnogenez, p. 142.
Ethnos was immediately below superethnos in the ethnic hierarchy. It was 'a system of individuals with various tastes and abilities, the products of their activity, traditions, their geographical environment, ethnic surroundings as well as certain tendencies which dominate this system's development.' Its essential characteristic was a unique behavioural stereotype which through Komplimentarnost among its members allowed them to differentiate themselves from all other similar groups through the 'us-them' antithesis. Examples of ethnoses include the English, the Ukrainians, and the Egyptians.

Ethnoses consisted of sub-ethnoses, groups which existed only as part of an ethnos. Sub-ethnoses were observed directly as their members differed in their manners, behaviour towards others, the way of expressing their feelings etc. The function of sub-ethnoses was 'to sustain ethnic integrity through a non-antagonistic internal competition.' Examples of sub-ethnos in the Russian ethnos were the estates, the Cossacks, the Pomors, the Siberians settlers from sixteenth century, the Old Believers in the seventeenth century, and the gentry in the nineteenth century. The greater the number of sub-ethnoses, the stronger the system as a whole would be. The number of sub-ethnoses depended on the level of passionarnost in an ethnos – the higher the level of passionarnost, the more ethnic units there were. Static ethnoses as rule had only one sub-ethnos.

The level down was that of the konviksia – groups of people with a similar way of life and intra-group family relations, for example, inhabitants of the same village or a large family. The lowest ethnic unit of all was that of the konsortsiia – groups of people united by a common historical destiny – in other words, associations of various kinds such as cartels, sects, gangs, companies. They usually dissolved within the lifetime of their members. The basis of group of any kind was a non-rational affinity between its members, namely Komplimentarnost.

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163 Etnogenet, p. 108.
164 From the Latin word consors – 'sharing destiny'.
3. Phases of ethnogenesis

Every ethnic group followed the same pattern of development which could be expressed in terms of the phases of ethnogenesis. An analysis of behavioural imperatives at a particular time allowed one to characterise an epoch in terms of its level passionarnost'. Phases of ethnogenesis provided data on which a curve of passionary tension for a particular ethnos could be drawn. Curves of different superethnos made it possible to deduce the general pattern of ethnogenesis by eliminating differences which were due to local or particular circumstances.

To determine the level of passionarnost', one had to study the process of ethnogenesis as whole rather than examining isolated episodes in the history of an ethnos. This could be done only by studying sufficiently large collectivities over long periods of time. Such data was available from history which had an absolute chronology of events (as opposed to relative time in biology or geology).

Gumilev claimed that his method analysed data from history with the methods of the natural sciences. Phases of ethnogenesis were categorised by three main factors: the behavioural imperative, the number of sub-systems in an ethnos or of ethnoses in a superethnos, and the frequency of events in ethnic history.165 The labour done by an ethnic collective was directly proportional to its level of passionary tension, defined as 'a quantity of passionary energy in an ethnic system divided by the number of people in that ethnos.' By calculating the number of events in history one could calculate the approximate energy expenditure and the level of passionarnost' in the ethnus at each phase.166

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166 Etnogenez, p. 265.
3.1 Behavioural imperatives

Gumilev argued that by looking at people's lives and attitudes at a particular time in the history of an ethnos, it was possible to determine which phase of ethnogenesis was at work. At the basis of classification by phases of ethnogenesis he put 'that moment without which no system can function, namely the collective's attitude towards the individual.' Every ethnic collective limited the freedom of its members, as it was necessary to take each other's interests and the interests of the ethnos as whole into consideration, but the way an ethnos influenced relations between its individual members changed over time and was linked with the phases of ethnogenesis.

The concept of a 'national character' similar in all periods of an ethnos' dynamic life was a myth. Gumilev gave an example of how attitudes had changed in the nineteenth century Russia. Oblomov and his servant Zakhar were sluggards, but their ancestors had conquered rich lands from the Tatars, and built a strong economy and beautiful houses. The ancestors of Ranevskaya in Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* had planted the orchard which she frittered away. Merchants from Ostrovskii's plays squandered capital accumulated by their grandfathers. What was more typical of the 'Russian psychological type' — the determined accumulation or the frivolous waste?

In Gumilev's view, everything depended on the phase of ethnogenesis. In the growth and the acme phases, the prevailing trend was towards behavioural diversity and expansion of territory, while in the inertial phase people tended to live off things accumulated by their ancestors. This was true of an ethnos as a whole, rather than of individual cases of accumulation or ruin which could happen in any phase of ethnogenesis.

As *passionarnost* could only be observed through its effects, there was a difficulty in determining its real levels in an ethnos because observable effects did not necessary correspond to the actual level of *passionarnost*. With a high level of *passionarnost*, forces in ethnos pulled in different directions, making its overall effect seem less. With a decrease in *passionarnost*, on the other hand, ethnos sometimes

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167 *Etnogenez*, p. 348.
168 From Goncharov's novel *Oblomov*.
169 *Etnogenez*, p. 346.
achieved more. For example, the Peloponnesian War had an influence limited to the ancient Greeks themselves. On the other hand, the spread of Hellenism over other non-Greek countries became possible when passionarnost fell to a sufficiently low level that one force, in this case the Macedonians, could coordinate and direct it in one direction.\textsuperscript{170} It was necessary to study the whole history of an ethnos to achieve an accurate view of its ethnogenesis.

It is important to note the difference between the behavioural stereotype and the behavioural imperative. There were a limited number of behavioural imperatives which correlated with the phases of ethnogenesis. Behavioural imperatives were, therefore, universal for all ethnoses. This made a comparative analysis of different ethnoses in terms of their phases of ethnogenesis possible. In contrast, behavioural stereotypes were unique to each ethnos and formed the basis of ethnic diversity.

For example, a compulsory Sunday service is no longer observed by most English people in the twentieth century, but that does not mean that there is no ethnic continuity with the seventeenth century zealous England of Cromwell. What determined an ethnos’ unity and continuity was the sense of belonging to the same ethnos, which was based on the entirety of an ethnos’ behavioural stereotypes and linked to its ethnic field. This manifested itself in the intuitive awareness of one’s difference from other ethnoses expressed in the ‘us and them.’ Behavioural imperatives, being uniform across all ethnoses depending on their phase of ethnogenesis, allowed one to have a comparative analysis of different ethnoses from different times and places.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{170} Etnogenez, p. 266.
\textsuperscript{171} V.Iu. Ermolaev to A. Titov.
3.2 Phases of ethnogenesis

Gumilev distinguished the following phases of ethnogenesis. At the start of ethnogenesis there was a sudden emergence of a small number of passionaries and sub-passionaries. In the growth phase (faza pod""ema) there was a rapid growth of the number of passionaries either through reproduction or incorporation. The acme phase (akmaticheskaia faza) had the maximum of passionaries in ethnic system. The crisis phase (faza nadloma) saw a sharp decline in the numbers of passionaries and their replacement by sub-passionaries. In the inertial phase (inertsionnaia faza) there was gradual decrease of passionaries in the system. By the disintegration phase (faza obskuratsii) there was almost complete substitution of passionaries by sub-passionaries, who would destroy their ethnos from within due to their inability to sustain a behavioural stereotypes characteristic. In the static phase harmonious persons remained who maintained the old ways of life without change.

Gumilev defined a behavioural imperative for each phase of ethnogenesis. It depended on the level of passionarnost’ in an ethnos, represented by the prevalent ideal of behaviour, which Gumilev called the ‘is to ought’ relation. This relation changed in different epochs and these changes were reflected in historical documents and literature, the study of which helped to classify an epoch according to phases of ethnogenesis. The dominant ideal was an indicator of the collective’s dispositions or frame of mind.

In the growth phase a new behavioural imperative emerged – ‘The world must be changed because it is bad’ (Nado izmenit’ mir, ibo on plokh). Every individual must perform their role within the ethnos properly. The determining factor in this phase was one’s duty towards the collective, in contrast with the emphasis on birthright in a static ethnus. In the growth phase, ‘there were no rights, but responsibilities’ for performance for which one was rewarded. One’s progress in society was determined by one’s abilities rather than inheritance.

The acme phase was the period when a superethnos manifested the highest level of passionarnost’ and lasted approximately 300 years. The passionarnost’ of the acme

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172 Etnogenez, p. 280.
173 Etnogenez, p. 129.
174 Etnogenez, p. 350.
phase was not evenly distributed, but exhibited peaks followed by depressions. There were usually three peaks of *passionarnost*’ in the acme phase, each subsequent peak lower than the preceding. Between the three peaks of *passionarnost*’ were periods of depression, in which the *passionarnost*’ of the ethnic system fell to critically low levels. The depressions showed a tendency toward the conditions of the crisis phase, but in the acme phase there was enough *passionarnost*’ to temporarily reverse the trend.

The higher levels of *passionarnost*’ manifested themselves in the dominance of the behavioural ideals specific to the acme phase. According to Gumilev’s theory, the two highest ideals were the ideal of victory and sacrifice. The increased *passionarnost*’ gave rise to a new behavioural imperative – ‘Be yourself’ (*Bud’ samim saboi!*). ‘The power of duty is replaced by the right of power, which is limited only by the awareness that one’s neighbour is equally strong and aggressive.’ Self-assertiveness of the ethnos as whole was supplanted by individual self-assertiveness within ethnors which was expressed in the ‘be yourself’ imperative.

Instead of collaborators, individuals in the acme phase became competitors which led to conflicts inside an ethnic system. Thus, the surplus of wealth and the consequences of victories achieved at the time of unity in the growth phase create conditions for an increase of individualism within an ethnors which led to internal conflicts. For example, in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, the Western European superethnos entered its acme phase. The wars against the Hungarians, the Vikings, and the Spanish *reconquista* necessary for preservation of the superethnos were superseded by the wars of Guelphs and Ghibellines and the Crusades, which did not serve any immediate good. The increased *passionarnost*’ was spent on internal conflicts as well as on expansion into foreign lands.

The next, crisis, phase was characterised by a sharp fall of *passionarnost*’ and a consequent crisis of political and social institutions. The reason was that social and political institutions created in the acme phase could only be sustained by the levels of *passionarnost*’ characteristic of the acme phase. With a continuous sharp fall of *passionarnost*’, old forms of ethnic organization were no longer adequate and had to be reformed. Whereas in the acme phase there was an excess of passionaries and not enough

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175 See Chapter 3 for a more detailed account of passionarnost and behavioural ideals.
positions in society to satisfy their ambitions, in the crisis phase there was a reverse
situation, i.e. there were not enough passionary people to fill all the positions in ethno-
social system necessary to sustain its proper functioning.

The above problem was further aggravated because *passionarnost'* in the
superethnos fell faster than social and political institutions could be reformed. This
resulted in a continuous crisis and repeated attempts at solving it, all ending in failure.
Finally, when *passionarnost'* fell to such levels that the old behavioural stereotypes could
no longer be sustained, the superethnos went into an open crisis phase. This was
characterised by civil wars, social conflict and, most importantly, a radical split in the
behavioural stereotypes of a previously united superethnos (the Reformation).
Throughout the crisis phase there was a tendency towards simplification of behavioural
ideals and ethnic hierarchy.

The passive majority, which by this time suffered enough from the vainglorious
exploits of passionaries, refused to support its ambitious compatriots and formulated a
new imperative ‘We are sick and tired of great men’ (*My u*stäli ot *v*elikih!). The fall in
*passionarnost'* gathered speed while the social transformation inevitably fell behind the
needs dictated by the new imperative. The severity of the situation combined with a still
substantial, albeit somewhat reduced, *passionarnost'* of the system, compelled people to
look for radical solutions. Everyone understood that life had to change, but each insisted
on his own solution and rejected compromise. Passionaries joined one of the conflicting
sides and civil wars broke out. This was a necessary attribute of the crisis phase.

For example, the iconoclastic crisis in Byzantium was a typical case of the schism
of a previously unified mentality. We have already remarked that Europe underwent its
crisis phase in the fifteenth and sixteenth century in the form of the religious wars of the
Reformation and Counter-Reformation; Russia's crisis phase began in the nineteenth
century with the symptomatic splits in the common mentality, exemplified by the
revolutionaries, which led to the bloody internal conflicts in the twentieth century.

A new imperative, ‘Let us be, you bastards!’ (*Daite zhe zhit', gady!*), marked the
transition to the inertial phase. The victorious side in the civil wars, which ended when
there were no more passionaries left to fight, formulated another new imperative, ‘Be as I
am’ (*Bud' takim kak Ia*). As the previous epoch (the crisis phase) had compromised
violence as a way of solving problems, the majority preferred any order which would protect them from the tyranny of the strong.

The Western European superethnos overcame its crisis phase in the seventeenth century. Thus, the principle of *cuius regio, euis religio* was established when the Catholics and the Protestants ceased their intense confrontation, religious skepticism increasingly prevailed, and Europe regained some sense of unity in the Enlightenment. A new form of common identity was established called the ‘civilized world’, which, in Gumilev’s view, included the countries of old Christendom, no longer united on a religious basis but still with sense of a common identity. Byzantium reached the same phase under the Macedonian dynasty in the ninth century, while in Rome this phase began under Emperor Augustus (63 BC – AD 14).

Gumilev pointed to marked changes in behavioural imperatives throughout the history of Europe as an illustration of his theory. He contrasted the conquistadors of the sixteenth century and the bankers in the nineteenth century as representatives of the ideals of their respective epochs. The conquistadors tried to achieve success with a risk to their lives, while the ideal of the civilized nineteenth century was success without such risk. The wars of the Huguenots with the League were replaced by parliamentary voting. This was possible only with a general decline in *passionarnost*. The Western superethnos entered its ‘civilization’ phase (inertia). This was the time conducive for accumulation of material culture, ordering of life, and the disappearance of ethnic distinctions within the superethnos. Lower *passionarnost* made possible the organisation of the harmonious types and sub-passionaries. In Europe law and order prevailed and was sustained by custom rather than force. Similar processes occurred in Byzantium under the Macedonian dynasty, in the Islamic superethnos under the Safavids (1500–1722) in Iran and the early Great Moguls (1525–1857) in India, and in the Chinese medieval superethnos under the Yuan (1279–1398) and the Ming (1398–1620) dynasties.

At the end of the inertia phase, the ethnic system underwent a period of destruction, when its unity disappeared and behavioural stereotypes became less numerous and more simple. The transition to the disintegration phase was manifested in the ‘We’ve had enough!’ (*S nas – khvatit!*) imperative. This phase was dominated by sup-

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passionaries, i.e. people whose motives were directed at the immediate satisfaction of sensual desires. The dominant imperative in the disintegration phase was ‘Be as we are!’ (Bud’ takim kak my!), i.e. ‘do not pursue anything which cannot be eaten or drunk.’ In the disintegration phase, ‘any growth becomes odious, diligence is ridiculed, intellectual pleasures provoke hostility. In art there is a lowering of style, in science original works are replaced by compilations, in social life corruption becomes the norm, and in the army the soldiers control the officers and generals by threats of riots. Everything is for sale, no one can be trusted...’ These were the times of the late imperial Rome in the third and fourth centuries, and of the late Byzantine empire in the twelfth century.

Since subpassionaries were incapable of maintaining a workable economy and society, they disappeared once material resources were exhausted. If an ethnos survived the disintegration phase, its ethnic fragments continued to exist in a static form. First, in the memorial phase, which imperative was ‘Remember how wonderful it was!’ (Pomni, kak bylo prekrasno!), and later in the homeostasis characterised by ‘Be happy with yourself, troll!’ (Bud’ sam soboi dovolen, troll!) On the ruins of the disintegration phase they taught their children ‘to live quietly, avoid conflicts with their neighbours and between themselves. Anatomically and physiologically they are fully accomplished individuals adapted to the environment, but have so little passionarnost’ that there is no ethnic development. Even if a passionary person is born among them by chance, he tries to realize himself among the neighbours rather than at home; for example, the Albanians made their careers either in Venice or Constantinople.

After the transition to homeostasis, the ethnos continued simplification until it lost all imperatives and the awareness of the past, while surviving relations and attitudes were maintained without any significant change. The individual was shown his role and was required to be satisfied with it. ‘Satisfaction is the main psychological condition for the conservation of relations.’ An ethnos in this condition was in equilibrium with nature.

Gumilev summarized his theory in the table below.

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177 Etnogenez, p. 419.
178 Etnogenez, p. 419.
179 Etnogenez, p. 420.
180 Etnogenez, p. 475.
### Phases of Ethnogenesis

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<tr>
<td>Crisis phase</td>
<td>'We know that everything will be different!'</td>
<td>Transition to the inertial phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Let us be, you bastards!'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inertial phase</td>
<td>'Be like I am!'</td>
<td>Transition to the disintegration phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'We've had enough!'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disintegration phase</td>
<td>'Be as we are!'</td>
<td>Transition to the memorial phase: possible regeneration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Be it a day, but mine!'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memorial phase</td>
<td>'Remember how wonderful it was!'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Be happy with yourself, troll!'</td>
<td></td>
<td>Transition to homeostasis: relict [static ethnos]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeostasis</td>
<td>Oblivion, loss of imperatives</td>
<td>Possible return to another combination of ethnoses and the environment, primary for new ethnogenesis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Phases of ethnogenesis.
In conclusion, Gumilev formulated a general model of historic development which allowed him to look for certain patterns in history. In particular, through analysis of dominant behavioural imperatives and the relative intensity of events, it was possible to determine the phase of ethnogenesis currently taking place. The similarity of phases of every ethnogenesis allowed a comparative analysis of otherwise different superethnoses.

There are a number of problems with this theory. Gumilev did not define the term 'event' which is important for his analysis. Furthermore, behavioural imperatives are subjective criteria, which is open to difference in interpretation. Determining phases by number of ethnic groups is too general to be of concrete use on its own. Generally, there is a lack of rigorous criteria in the theory, and an excess of general, subjective parameters.

An important question is whether the theory of ethnogenesis can in principle be seen as a scientific theory. Karl Popper introduced the concept of falsifiability as the criterion of demarcation between science and non-science. On this view, a theory is testable, and therefore scientific, only if some imaginable observation would refute it. The theory of ethnogenesis can pass this test. For example, it would be refuted if the phases of ethnogenesis did not follow in the order set by the theory. For example, if the Russians in the twenty-first century pursued the ideals of victory and sacrifice and society's dominant imperative was 'Be yourself' instead of 'Be like I am', that is, if the characteristics of the acme rather than the inertial phases were most prominent, then the theory of ethnogenesis would be refuted. Likewise, if there were a noticeably large number of people capable of changing their ethnic identity through deliberate actions, than Gumilev's arguments about non-voluntary character of ethnic identity would also be refuted.

Gumilev outlined general principles for the analysis of ethnic history. Some of the shortcomings of his theory can be solved by further research. For example, V. Ermolaev proposed to measure passionarnost' by comparing frequency of homologous events throughout the history of an ethnos. For example, the passionarnost' of the Communist

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subethnos could be measured by the rate of change of the Party’s membership. The importance of the theory of ethnogenesis is in the emphasis on behavioural changes in history and their relation to ethnic development formulated by Gumilev is a fundamentally new approach to history.

4. Relations between ethnic and social, cultural, and biological factors

Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis has many implications for understanding history, human behaviour and interethnic relations. In this section the relation of the theory of ethnogenesis to social, cultural and biological aspects of history is examined. Finally, the relation between free will and passionarnost’ is analysed.

4.1 Social development and ethnogenesis

The starting point of thinking about the relations between the social and ethnic aspects of life was the contention that every human being lived in a collective that, depending on the point of view, could be defined as social or as ethnic. In other words, human beings lived both in society, for example, a political state, and were members of their ethnos. But, Gumilev argued, these notions were incommensurable.

Gumilev understood by ‘social’ those aspects of life which were deliberately or consciously created. For example, insofar as the political state is defined by constitutions and laws, it is the product of intentional, rational acts. They have meaning only within the context of human rationality. Ethnos, in contrast, was a spontaneously evolved collective with an original behavioural stereotype (the multitude of behavioural stereotypes characteristic of ethnos). On this view, driving on the left side of the road was a social element of behaviour because it was regulated by intentionally formulated and enforced rules. Having turkey on Christmas day was an ethnic behavioural stereotype because it was an unintentionally evolved convention. The difference between the social and the ethnic was the difference between an artefact and an undesigned convention.

The same ethnos could live in different political states, as was the case, for example, with the Armenians before World War I, and one state could be composed of different ethnoses, as was the case with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Gumilev argued that correlation of ethnos with social and biological categories was like that of length, weight and temperature, i.e. they were parallel parameters irreducible to any single parameter.¹⁸³

Someone wishing to apply Gumilev’s views, then, might argue that the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union (i.e. socio-political structures) were created and sustained by the passionary potential of the Russian superethnos. But they also included in its political and social domains parts of different superethnoses such as the Muslims, the Jews, and the Western Europeans. The inclusion and governance of these representatives of other superethnoses was possible thanks to the expenditure of excessive passionarnost’ by the Russians in the acme and early crisis phases. The fall of the Soviet Union (i.e. the fall of the socio-economic structure of Russian superethnos) did not mean the collapse of Russian superethnos, even though some members of the superethnos were no longer part of its political structure. For example, the Russians in the Baltic States were absorbed into the socio-political structures of a different superethnos by becoming citizens of the European Union, but kept their superethnic identity. The Russian superethnos was not, therefore, identical with its political institutions such the Russian Federation or Soviet Union, so that it was possible to write a political history of the Russian state without ethnic study.

Whether or not Gumilev himself would have endorsed this interpretation, he definitely regarded the distinction between social and ethnic aspects of human nature as important. In Soviet science, in particular, social aspects were considered dominant. Historical materialism was a social theory of history in that it gave priority to economic factors, which in their turn determined social and political developments. Not being able to challenge these views directly, Gumilev separated his field of enquiry from Marxist dogma. As a result there is an obvious lack of conceptual links between social and ethnic aspects of history in Gumilev’s thought. He essentially limited his argument by stating

¹⁸³ Etnogenez, p. 216.
the existence of the distinction between the two aspects of human life, without exploring the nature of their relation.\textsuperscript{184}

Gumilev stressed the non-rational, emotional element of human behaviour. Behavioural stereotypes were deeply entrenched phenomena which could not be changed intentionally. The time-scale necessary for noticeable changes in ethnogenesis was measured in centuries, so that natural, spontaneous factors were prevalent. In the modern world, increasingly dominated by ethnic and religious conflicts, the theory of ethnogenesis with its emphasis on non-voluntary, non-rational factors in ethnic development acquires new importance as an alternative to rationalist models of society.

4.2 Relations between ethnogenesis and culture

There was a distinction between culture and ethnos. Culture was seen by Gumilev as a social factor, i.e. as a human artefact. Accordingly, culture could spread beyond the superethnos of its origin. For example, the ancient Greek superethnos (which only comprised the Hellenes) and Hellenism were two distinct phenomena. Through Hellenism, Greek culture spread outside the ancient Greek superethnos to the Middle East and Egypt and had a revival of its influence in the Renaissance.\textsuperscript{185} Similarly Buddhism spread beyond its origins in India to the Far East.

Ethnogenesis was, however, a necessary condition for the creation or revival of culture. 'Cultures are creations of human hands and there is no human being outside an ethnos. The creation of ethnos and its development, that is ethnogenesis, is like running an electric current through a stopped engine, after which it starts working again.'\textsuperscript{186} In other words, ethnogenesis provided the passionary energy for creation and development of culture.

'Passionarnost' plays its role in the development of culture, but its role is of an engine, rather than a steering wheel...Given certain abilities, one can be taught the skills of a painter or a poet, but a skill will always remain a skill - without a creative impulse it is impossible to transcend imitation...Nevertheless, a creative

\textsuperscript{184} Etnogenez, pp. 50–51.
\textsuperscript{185} Etnogenez, p. 162–63.
\textsuperscript{186} Etnogenez, p. 163.
emotional drive in itself is insufficient, because it is impossible to complete one’s work without a determinate effort towards one’s purpose. The art demands sacrifice from its creators; the ability to make sacrifices for one’s ideal is a sign of *passionarnost*. Hence, every human product is a combination of three elements – skills, *passionarnost* and cultural tradition, and is, therefore, to a certain degree, a crystallized *passionarnost* of its creator.\(^{187}\)

Ethnogenesis, as a natural process, could begin at any moment in time, irrespective of cultural or technological level of development. Whether a new ethnos created new or developed an existing culture depended on historic circumstances. For example, Gumilev argued that the emergence of the Great Russian ethnos in the fourteenth century was the beginning of a new ethnogenesis, distinct from that of Kievan Rus. The new Russian ethnos inherited certain cultural elements, for example, the Orthodox religion.

There were two stages in ethnogenesis which were conducive to cultural flourishing. The first one was in the growth phase before the ‘overheating’ of ethnic system in the acme phase. The second one was in the crisis phase, i.e. right after the overheating of the acme phase. The passionary tension at that time was just right for passionaries to try to influence the world by gentler means, i.e. through arts, literature and science rather than by war and conquest, than in the acme phase. In the Western European superethnos, for example, the cultural flourishing during the Renaissance marked the beginning of the crisis phase,\(^{188}\) while the same period in Russian ethnogenesis occurred in the nineteenth century.

The above phenomenon is related to the type of people who engage in arts and sciences. For Gumilev, the artist or scientist was a passionary whose *passionarnost* was insufficient for immediate self-sacrifice, but high enough to be devoted to a particular goal. Such people gave a specific character to their ethnos, which either made it stand out from all other ethnoses or facilitated interethnic relations thus forming superethnoses. For example, people like Gogol, Newton or Dostoevskii needed a substantial degree of *passionarnost* to be creative personalities. Overall, Gumilev had a considerably more

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\(^{188}\) *Etnogenez*, p. 283.
subtle approach to problems of interaction between culture and ethnogenesis than was allowed by his opponents.

4.3 Ethnic and biological factors

Ethnic and biological factors were parallel but irreducible parameters. There were differences in principle between ethnos and organism as ontological types. An ethnos could divide into colonies (for example, English overseas settlers) or disperse and still continue to exist (for example, the Jews), while parts of the organism could not exist on their own. Each ethnos was unique and its tradition was limited by its superethnos, while organisms produced offspring. An ethnos could exist indefinitely in the static state, while an organism inevitably died.

There was also a difference between population and ethnos. Population (which was an analogue of ethnos among animals) was the total of the same species living in the same territory for some generations, interbreeding only with members of the same group and separate from other groups. An ethnos was a system of various people and the products of their activity, a phenomenon characteristic only for humans.\(^{189}\)

Gumilev's overall contention was that ethnos was a form of existence within human species. A relatively small mutation was sufficient for its creation, so that ethnoses could emerge more often than species but existed for shorter period of time. As was shown above,\(^{190}\) Gumilev thought that ethnic divisions, rather than social, cultural or technical developments, gave humans their key distinctive characteristic of a substantially higher degree of adaptability compared with other animals. Ethnos was an elementary notion, irreducible to either social, or biological, or geographical phenomena.\(^{191}\)

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\(^{189}\) Etnogenez, p. 217–18.
\(^{190}\) See section 2.3.
\(^{191}\) Etnogenez, p. 56, 57, 59.
4.4 Free will and *passionarnost’*

The relation between free will and *passionarnost’* had the following nature in the theory of ethnogenesis. Energy was required to implement decisions made out of free will. This had to be a special type of energy refracted in the human psyche — *passionarnost’*. But a capacity for action did not determine action itself, which was a matter of decision. There was a difference between falling in love (an involuntary act) and hooliganism (a voluntary act). Free will was a determining factor only in the latter case. *Passionarnost’* determined the complexity of the behavioural alternatives available to the person, while leaving choices to the individual.

Ethnic processes were different from individual responsibility. In the former case statistical rules for large numbers were applicable, while in individual cases moral and legal rules applied. Gumilev put forward the following theory to explain the distinction between voluntary and involuntary actions.

There were two main spheres in the psyche which determined one’s behaviour. The first one was the emotional sphere. *Passionarnost’*, subconscious motives and human instincts belong to this area. The conscious sphere was the second area of the mind. There was a distinction between different impulses in the conscious sphere just as there was a distinction between *passionarnost’* (formulation and long-term pursuit of an abstract goal) and basic instincts in the emotional sphere.

In the conscious sphere, the life-preservation impulses were called ‘commonsense egoism’ and sacrificial ‘attractiveness’ (*attractivnost’, from Latin *attratio*). Unlimited egoism required for its realization a reason and a will. Reason was defined as an ability to choose from available options, while the will was the ability to act according to one’s deliberate choice. Thus, any action performed through instincts or reflexes, or under external compulsion, was not done freely. There was ‘a small, but strictly defined area where the individual carries moral and legal responsibility for one’s actions.’

For example, there was a difference between manslaughter in self-defence and a murder in order to rob or revenge somebody. Similarly, seduction was differentiated from rape.

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192 *Etnogenet*, p. 319.
Gumilev argued that one had to rely on a common experience of humanity to distinguish a compelled action from a free one.

Opposed to commonsense egoism was an impulse which Gumilev called ‘attractiveness’. This quality attracted one to truth-seeking, to beauty, or to justice. Attractiveness was the analogue of passionarnost’ in the conscious sphere. A combination of these four factors, i.e. passionarnost’ versus the strength of instincts, and egoistic tendencies versus attraction to ideals, determined the limiting possibilities for individual personalities and the range of their actions, while still leaving some room for free will.

Attractiveness determined the field, for example, whether a person was drawn to poetry, astrophysics, or medieval history. Passionarnost’ determined the complexity of one’s ideal and the degree of effort one could expend in pursuit of the chosen goal. Talent was a separate factor in one’s work, independent from either passionarnost’ or attractiveness. The theory of ethnogenesis does not deal with particular choices, but with the general character of behaviour.

For example, high passionarnost’ combined with high egoism would result in types of man with great ambition like Alexander the Great or Napoleon. High passionarnost’ combined with strong attraction to truth would create people like Avvakum or St Paul the Apostle. Moderate egoism combined with passionarnost’ equal to basic instincts would produce a bourgeois type. Scholars and scientists are people with higher than average attraction to truth-seeking combined with moderate passionarnost’ sufficient for a sustained effort in a chosen field. People with high attractiveness in general were, in Gumilev’s view, ‘the Quixotic types’. He accordingly distinguished between deeds and phenomena (deianiia and iavlentia), the former being subject to choice and responsibility.

In conclusion, Gumilev made more subtle distinctions concerning human behavioural than his opponents acknowledged. Passionarnost’ was not a deterministic concept as they supposed. On the contrary, the higher the level of passionarnost’ the more diverse human behaviour became, as people formulated and pursued increasingly

193 Etnogenez, p. 320.
194 Etnogenez, p. 446.
varied goals and behaved in more and more idiosyncratic ways, while at low levels of *passionarnost*’, for example in a static ethnos, human behaviour was uniform.

**Conclusion**

Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis is a wide-ranging and original one. It deals with many important issues, from human relations to the natural world, to the nature of interethnic contacts and problems of free will and determinism. The central concept of Gumilev’s theory is the concept of *passionarnost*’, the key to understanding processes of ethnic change.

Gumilev’s overall approach was based on a naturalistic understanding of ethnic history. It is, however, a behaviouristic rather than biological theory. On this basis he built his theory of ethnos, ethnic identity and *passionarnost*’. One of his positive contributions is the theory of ethnic identity, which has a wider significance as a behaviourist, non-voluntaristic alternative to the dominant rationalist paradigm. Gumilev’s thinking about ethnos has at its core a challenging idea of ethnic diversity as a mechanism of adaptation to different environments. In this respect, the general spirit of Vernadskii’s thought, based on understanding human evolution as an integral part of the evolution of the biosphere, has a direct parallel in Gumilev’s treatment of ethnogenesis as a natural process. Gumilev’s attempts at providing an explanation of the phenomena he was describing in physical terms at best have a hypothetical character, which does not detract from the significance of his non-voluntaristic approach to ethnic history.

Gumilev has avoided certain conceptual problems traditionally associated with a naturalistic understanding of history by insisting on a distinction between ethnic history, which is in the domain of natural science, and political, social, cultural and economic aspects of history, which are the subject matter of social and humanitarian sciences. The theory of ethnogenesis cannot be accorded the status of a proven scientific theory. There are few rigorous criteria and a lack of conceptual linkages between ethnic and socio-cultural aspects of history. Gumilev’s theory should be seen as a foundation for a novel approach to understanding ethnic history, rather than a complete scientific theory.
Chapter 4
The Theory of Ethnogenesis and the Philosophy of History

Introduction

The theory of ethnogenesis is the first attempt in the history of Russian historical thought to develop a general historical model without a specific focus on Russia. This Chapter develops the examination of the theory of ethnogenesis by comparing it with two other theories of history. This also helps to place Gumilev’s theory within a wider context of the development of historical thought. In particular, I compare it with Danilevskii’s theory of cultural-historical types and Toynbee’s theory of challenge and response. Its comparison with Danilevskii’s theory helps to put the theory of ethnogenesis within the context of Russian historical thought, while Toynbee is particularly useful because his theory was one of the few contemporary works with which Gumilev engaged.196

1. Culture-historical types and ethnogenesis

A comparison with Danilevskii’s theory is particularly useful for two reasons. First, he is generally credited as the founder of the modern tradition of local civilizations. I will argue that the theory of ethnogenesis continues this tradition. Second, he is an important figure in Russian historical thought. I will present and compare the inspiration behind the theories, their theoretical and methodological premises, their content, and conclude by summarising them.

196 Etnogenez, p. 147.
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196 Etnogenez, p. 147.
1.1 Inspiration

Danilevskii presented the theory of cultural-historical types in *Russia and Europe*. This book dealt with a wide range of issues including Russian history and politics, international relations, the Eastern question, the nature of religion, of the state, of anthropology, of ethnography and of science in general. Traditionally, two main areas have been distinguished in Danilevskii’s thought. First, he is credited as the founding father of the theory of local civilizations; second, Danilevskii is seen as a theorist of a particular ideological project. In this work, I will concentrate on Danilevskii’s theory of cultural historical types and try to establish its main points of similarity and divergence with the theory of ethnogenesis.

The inspiration for the development of the theory of cultural-historical types is to be found in the larger context of Danilevskii’s project of providing a rational basis for the distinction between Western Europe and the Slavic world. As the title of Danilevskii’s book suggests, the nature of the relation between Europe and Russia is at the centre of his work. Only three of the seventeen chapters of *Russia and Europe* are devoted to the theory of cultural-historical types proper.

In contrast to Danilevskii, Gumilev’s motivation in his main theoretical work was ‘to understand the world history as coming into being of one of the earth’s spheres – the ethnosphere’. There was no preference shown for any single historical period or country. For example, references to Russian history are much fewer than those to Byzantine or Ancient Chinese history. Gumilev was trying to develop a new general theory of ethnogenesis, i.e. an explanation of the reasons for the emergence, existence and disintegration of ethnoses. Thus, although in his later works Gumilev presented his

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199 The full title is *Russia and Europe: Views on Cultural and Political Relations between the Slavic and Germanic-Roman Worlds*.
200 Etnogenez, p. 146.
201 *Ot Rusi do Rossii; Drevniaia Rus’*. 
own views on Russian history from the point of view of the theory of ethnogenesis, this was not the purpose, either implicit or explicit, of his theoretical work.202

Although Danilevskii's principal aim was to provide rational, scientific grounds for the differences between the Russian-Slavic world and Western Europe, the theory of cultural-historical types is also commonly credited with being the precursor of the theory of local civilizations. The most well-known representatives of this school are O. Spengler and A. Toynbee.203 The theory of cultural-historical types played the role of a theoretical basis for the other propositions in Danilevskii's thought.

1.2 Theoretical premises

Danilevskii put forward a general theory as a basis for his theory of history. He distinguished three main substances in nature, namely matter, motion and spirit. These three substances permeated all levels of reality. Accordingly, there were three principal levels of organization in the world — the non-organic, the organic and the social levels. There were three sciences which could deduce basic theoretical principles of nature — chemistry for matter, physics for motion, and psychology for spirit. All other sciences, including history and sociology, studied particular variations of these three basic substances.204

These variations of the basic substances unfolded in accordance with a morphological principle of a non-evolutionary development of species. According to this principle, all species were autonomous and developed according to individual innate principles of growth. This view was contrasted with the idea of a general law of development applicable to all species. For example, Danilevskii rejected Darwin's theory of evolution because it laid down one principle of development, i.e. the survival of the fittest, for all species. In contrast to Darwin, he thought that each species develops in accordance with its unique innate ideal principle which had a divine origin.205 Danilevskii thought that the scientific proof of the innate ideal principle could be found in the

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202 I deal with the relation of the theory of ethnogenesis to Gumilev's views on Russian history and Eurasianism in Chapters 5 and 6.
204 Rossiia i Evropa, pp. 157–59.
205 Filosofija istorii Danilevskogo, p. 78.
orderliness of the natural world which was best explained by the existence of a higher intelligence. In this way, Danilevskii was able to reconcile his scientific methodology to the Orthodox faith.  

Danilevskii introduced the concept of an artificial classification in history, which he based on the distinction between artificial and natural systems of scientific classification. He argued that there was a uniform process of development for scientific knowledge. The level of development in any science depended on the type of classification it employed.

The first stage was the collection of facts and materials. At the next stage, a systemization was attempted. It was, however, unlikely that this would be done in accordance with the real nature of the subject-matter. For example, in astronomy the first theories which systemized the known facts were geocentric theories.

The next stage was the introduction of a natural principle of classification. In astronomy this happened with the Copernican system. The final phase of scientific development was the introduction of a general rational law for that science, which in the case of astronomy was the discovery of the law of gravity by Newton.

Danilevskii drew on examples from the histories of other sciences – from chemistry and physics to botany and zoology – to conclude that the turning point in the development of any science was the change from the artificial to the natural system of classification, which in most cases meant an adoption of non-evolutionary models. He proposed three principles to which a fully-developed science must conform – the principle of division, the principle of similarity, and the principle of homogeneity.

In contrast to Danilevskii, who based his thought on non-evolutionary principles, the starting point of Gumilev's theory was to place man in the natural world of the biosphere. He wanted to understand human history as a part of evolutionary processes and used Vernadskii's ideas about the biosphere as a cornerstone for the theory of ethnogenesis.

As was argued in the previous Chapter, there is an important distinction between the ethnic phenomena described by Gumilev in behaviourist, non-voluntaristic terms, and

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206 Filosofia istorii Danilevskogo, p. 81.
207 Russiia and Europe, pp. 76–8.
208 Russiia and Europe, pp. 78–9.
his explanation of those phenomena in terms of physical science. The insistence on providing a physicalist explanation for his theory reflected Gumilev’s personal desire to present his views as a positivist theory, a point he shared with Danilevskii.

There are, however, some important differences. In contrast to Danilevskii, who subscribed to a complete identification of social factors with biological ones, Gumilev distinguished various aspects of history. He designated political, legal, cultural and technological aspects of history by the term ‘social’. This term included those aspects of history which were products of deliberate acts of the human mind and distinguished them from ethnic history, which had a non-voluntaristic, unconscious character directed by biospheric processes. In this way, Gumilev avoided a reduction of political and social phenomena to physical reality.

Gumilev thought that the ‘relation between social, political and ethnic collectives can be likened to the relation between the measures of length, weight and temperature. In other words, these phenomena are parallel but incommensurable.’ 209 It followed that in order to have a complete description of a human collectivity, all of the above aspects had to be included into the final analysis. The principal innovation introduced by Gumilev was the idea that ethnus was a natural phenomenon of the biosphere. Therefore, ethnus and ethnic history must be studied with the methodology of the natural sciences. 210

Unlike Gumilev, Danilevskii argued for an identification of social phenomena with organic matter. In other words, he espoused the naturalistic method of reducing social and historical characteristics to biological qualities. Bazhov argues that Danilevskii should be seen as a ‘naturalistic idealist’, where by ‘naturalistic’ is understood an application of the notions and methods of natural sciences to the study of human society, while the ‘idealist’ dimension is based on Danilevskii’s ideas about the divine origin of innate principles of development in species. 211 The identification of social with biological phenomena allowed Danilevskii to apply the principle of the autonomous development of species in organic nature to history. On this basis he introduced the concept of the cultural-historical type as the main agent in history.

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209 *Etnogenet*, p. 175.
210 *Etnogenet*, p. 181.
211 *Etnogenet*, p. 83.
A few preliminary conclusions can be made on the basis of the above comparison. First, both Danilevskii and Gumilev tried to find a foundation for their respective theories of history in natural science. The difference between them is that Danilevskii sought to base his theory on a non-evolutionary paradigm, whereas Gumilev drew on Vernadskii’s ideas about the biosphere. Second, Danilevskii had a religious aspect to his theory, whereas Gumilev emphasized naturalistic monism. Significantly, Gumilev did not advocate a reduction of social factors to natural ones. Instead, he introduced an important distinction between social and ethnic aspects of history. Finally, Gumilev had a behaviourist element to his theory of ethnic identity and ethnic changes. This aspect of his theory has no equivalent in Danilevskii’s thought.

1.3 Nature of history

The prevalent view of history in the second half of the nineteenth century was based on the idea of a linear progress. The concept of linear progress divided history into successive phases of development, representing a progress from the lower to higher forms of development. There were thought to be three main phases in history – the ancient, the medieval and the modern. Bazhov argues that the linear view of history has some parallels with the evolutionary view of nature, in that both had at their core the idea of a progression from lower to higher forms of organization on the basis of a universal principle of development. Just as Danilevskii rejected Darwin’s theory of evolution by proposing the morphological principle as the key to the development of species, he also rejected the idea of linear progress in history.

Danilevskii gave two main reasons for the rejection of the linear idea of history. First was the morphological principle of development of species. By identifying historical types with biological species, he denied that history could have a unified principle of development. Second was the idea of an artificial classification in history, based on the distinction between artificial and natural systems of science.

Danilevskii argued that history was an artificial level of classification. For example, the fall of the Western Roman Empire was traditionally seen as the dividing line between ancient and medieval history. He argued, however, that this event did not
have any significant effect, for example, on history of China or India and other non-European countries. It followed that the fall of Roman Empire did not encompass the whole of humanity and could not be used as a universal principle of division in history between the ancient and medieval periods. He argued that there had not been and was unlikely to be in the future a single event which would encompass the whole of humanity and supply the basis for a division of world history into periods.

Danilevskii argued that a theory which held that history of Ancient Greece and Rome had more in common with the histories of Ancient Egypt or China than with the history of modern Europe was implausible. It was absurd to think that Egypt, India, China, Babylon and Assyria, Iran, Greece, and Rome, all of them having their own distinct phases of development, should be put into one group, while the two phases in the development of the ‘Germano-Roman’ race were classified as two different periods of history, namely the medieval and the modern. Danilevskii concluded that the linear concept which divided history into three phases was an artificial method of scientific classification because it contradicted the principles of the natural classification.

The most important reason for the rejection of the linear concept of history was the failure of traditional historiography to distinguish between stages of development and types of development. For example, different architectural styles, such as Classical, Byzantine and Gothic, did not represent stages in the gradual process of the development from lower to higher styles of architecture but were independent types of architecture in their own right. Similarly, various ‘forms of historical life of mankind ... do not only change and improve with age, but also vary according to cultural-historical types.’

Stages of development could only be distinguished within a particular cultural-historical type. Danilevskii drew a parallel with architecture where it was possible to distinguish between early and late gothic style as two stages of the same development, but in which it was meaningless to classify gothic style as itself a further stage in the development of architecture as a whole. It followed that the division into stages of development should be subordinate to the distinction between cultural-historical types.

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212 Rossiia i Evropa, p. 80.
213 Rossiia i Evropa, p. 81.
214 Rossiia i Evropa, p. 85.
Among the examples of these were the Egyptian, the ancient Semitic, the Indian, the Iranian, the Jewish, the Greek, the Roman, the Arabian and the Germano-Roman cultural-historical types. Danilevskii maintained that all people in history had their own ancient, middle and modern history 'like everything organic had their own phases of development'.\textsuperscript{215} The number of stages was not fixed and depended partly on the view of the historian, partly on the character of each cultural-historical type. He concluded that the traditional division of history failed to appreciate its richness.

Danilevskii is regarded as the founder of the tradition of 'local civilizations' which emphasised the importance of local cultures and opposed the idea of a uniform development of humankind. It was this aspect of his theory which Gumilev acknowledged he was developing in the theory of ethnogenesis.\textsuperscript{216}

Their respective list of cultural-historical types and superethnoses are similar to an extent. For example, Gumilev also argued that the Romans and the Western Europeans belong to two different superethnoses. There is, however, an important difference between their respective classifications. Danilevskii's cultural-historical types were limited to groups which developed a distinct culture and socio-political institutions. Gumilev's superethnos was based on a behavioural unity of human groups. Gumilev's ethnic behaviour was more diverse than Danilevskii's formalised cultural achievements and he saw many more superethnoses than Danilevskii had identified cultural-historical types. Gumilev distinguished several dozens of superethnoses in the last 3,000 years, while Danilevskii counted around ten cultural-historical types in the whole of history.

Danilevskii identified the principle he called 'the mistake of perspective' as one of the reasons for the errors in historical classification. According to this principle, Western historians considered events in medieval and modern history as most important because they were nearer to them chronologically and were part of the history of their own cultural-historical type. The history of other times and peoples was seen as a background to the history of the West. In this way the erroneous identification of European history with the history of the whole world became a prevalent assumption in historical thinking. Bazhov notes that Danilevskii was one of the first thinkers to describe

\textsuperscript{215} Rossiia i Evropa, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{216} Etnogenez, p. 146–47.
the phenomenon of ‘Eurocentrism’. This is considered as one of his most important contributions to historical thought.217

Gumilev continued the tradition of the rejection of Eurocentrism began by Danilevskii. For example, he maintained that the rejection of Eurocentrism was particularly desirable because it allowed an understanding of the history of mankind ‘not as a single whole with a unique centre in Europe, but as a mosaic-like whole, a species, divided by different environments.’218 This view of world history followed from the theory of ethnogenesis.

According to Gumilev, each ethnogenesis was a separate and distinct process. Ethnogenesis was a natural phenomenon of the biosphere, while ethnic identity was based on behavioural stereotypes.219 Fluctuations of passionarnost' caused global behavioural changes which were manifested as discrete processes of ethnogenesis. An initial passionary impulse caused a surge in activity which led to emergence of an original behavioural stereotype. Henceforth, the process of ethnogenesis consisted in the expenditure of the initial passionary impulse, manifested in the phases of ethnogenesis. These phases were analysed in terms of dominant imperatives peculiar to each phase.

Two principal similarities can be distinguished between the two theories. First, both Gumilev and Danilevskii shared a polycentric view of the world, expressed in the rejection of Eurocentrism. Danilevskii was the first to reject the idea of the unity of humanity and replace it with the idea of cultural-historical types. Gumilev also dismissed the idea of the unity of mankind and saw ethnic history as a succession of discrete processes of ethnogenesis. Second, Danilevskii introduced the idea of various cultural-historical types at different stages of development which is similar to Gumilev’s idea of superethnoses undergoing the same phases of ethnogenesis. Overall, Gumilev and Danilevskii had in common a vision of history based on the rejection of unified linear development and a desire to explain historical phenomena in positivist terms.

217 Filosofia istorii Danilevskogo, p. 99.
Three main differences in their views on history should, however, also be emphasized. First, one of the two main premises in Danilevskii’s thought was the reduction of social phenomena to organic ones. In contrast to Danilevskii, Gumilev sought to distinguish various aspects of human history. Thus, only ethnic history was subject to a study by the methods of natural sciences. Gumilev introduced a behaviourist theory of ethnic identity, while the dynamic qualities of ethnic history were analysed through the concept of *passionarnost*. The physicalist explanation of the phenomena he was describing is concerned is secondary to the behaviourist account in his theory, even though, in contrast to Danilevskii, he employed physical rather than biological models. Most importantly, *passionarnost*, the key concept for understanding historical changes, had no parallel in Danilevskii’s thought.

**1.4 Nature of development in history**

Danilevskii distinguished three main categories of people in history: those who had a positive influence on history, those who had a negative or destructive effect, and the ‘ethnographical material’. In the first category were cultural-historical types proper, among which Danilevskii listed the Egyptian, the ancient Semitic, the Indian, the Iranian, the Jewish, the Greek, the Roman, the Arabian and the Germano-Roman cultural-historical types and two American civilizations destroyed by the Spanish. In the negative group were the Huns, the Mongols and the Turks whose role was to destroy weaker civilizations. The third category consisted of people who have no influence on history, for example the Finno-Ugric people.

In contrast to Danilevskii, Gumilev thought that value judgments were inapplicable to ethnos. He advanced a universal theory of ethnos and did not make a distinction between ethnoses in terms of their relative value, only in terms of phases of ethnogenesis. Ethnos, in Gumilev’s theory, was a natural phenomenon, akin to any other physical phenomenon. Just as it would be nonsensical to categorize molecules as ‘bad’ or ‘good’, any ethnos was to be seen in the same light.

Danilevskii formulated five laws of historical development of cultural-historical types. First, a cultural-historical type must have close linguistic ties. Second, people
comprising a cultural-historical type must have political independence from other cultural-historical types. The third stated the impossibility of continuity between cultural-historical types. The fourth declared that a cultural-historical type achieved full development when it formed a federal system of states. The fifth asserted that the period of flourishing for any cultural-historical type was relatively short and in the end exhausted the living energy of that cultural-historical type.

The first, second, and fifth laws of historical development were formulated to provide a basis for the creation of a Slav federation with Constantinople as its capital. Danilevskii’s aim was to give a theoretical justification for a Pan-Slavonic solution to the Eastern Question which was at the centre of Russian foreign policy in the 1870s and 1880s.

Only the third and the fifth principles have parallels with the theory of ethnogenesis. In Gumilev’s view, there were four principal scenarios for superethnic contact – co-existence, assimilation, mixing, and fusion. The *passionarnost* of each ethnos was crucial in determining the type of contact. In the case of contact between an ethnos with a high level of *passionarnost* and a static ethnos, the result was either the assimilation or the displacement of the weaker ethnos. Two equally static ethnoses, on the other hand, would usually find a *modus vivendi*.

If ethnoses from different superethnoses have equal *passionarnost*, intermixing and destruction of the behavioural stereotype in both ethnoses would result. But if fusion occurred at the time of a passionary impulse, then a new ethnos and a new behavioural stereotype would emerge.220

The difference between conflicts between superethnoses and conflicts within a superethnos was crucial. In conflicts on a superethnic level,

'The opponent is seen as something alien, interfering, and subject to elimination. Personal emotions such as anger, hatred, envy etc. do not become the motives for a display of cruelty. The further the systems are away from each other, the more cold-blooded becomes mutual extermination, turning into a kind of dangerous hunt. And one cannot get angry with a tiger or a crocodile. Conflicts inside the

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220 *Etnogenes*, p. 305.
Gumilev accordingly likened contact between two superethnoses to friction between two solid bodies. The inevitable result was 'ethnic ruins'. Different types of ethnic relations were, however, possible. A symbiosis occurred if different ethnoses divided functions between themselves. For example, in Eurasia each ethnos occupied its own environmental and economic niche. This led to mutually profitable existence for all concerned. Kseniia appeared when ethnoses from different superethnoses lived in the same region, but did not divide functions among themselves and adhered to endogamy. Examples included interethnic cohabitation in Belgium and Canada, as well the Baltic Germans in the Russian Empire.

A special case of superethnic contact was the appearance of chimeras. These arose when an already formed ethnic system came into a close contact with an alien ethnos. If the latter was not able to find its own environmental niche, it had to live off the native ethnos. This led to emergence of a chimera — 'a combination of two incompatible systems in the same wholeness.' Examples of this kind included the Teutonic occupation of the Baltic states in the thirteenth century, the medieval Bulgarian kingdom (the nomads living off the native Slav population) and the Khazar khanate. Gumilev thought that there were natural, objective, limits to relations between different superethnoses. The best policy was to live in peace, but separately.

The subject of superethnic contacts is the most controversial area in the theory of ethnogenesis, particularly the notion of a chimera and the related concept of anti-system. The importance of these notions for the theory of ethnogenesis, however, can be overstated. Gumilev devoted only four out of 476 pages to the concept of the chimera, although he concluded by stating that his next book (which was never written) would deal with the subject of chimeras and anti-systems in greater detail.

221 Etnogenez, p. 103.
222 Etnogenez, p. 297.
223 From the Greek word for 'guest'.
224 Etnogenez, p. 134.
225 Etnogenez, p. 302.
226 Etnogenez, p. 302-05.
Iu.M. Borodai published an article in 1981 in praise of Gumilev’s book. In this article, he stresses the importance of the concept of the chimera as the most important innovation in the theory of ethnogenesis. An article rebuking Borodai, and by extension Gumilev’s theory, appeared the next year. The debate – ostensibly on the theory of ethnogenesis – centred on the notion of the chimera, a peripheral concept for the theory of ethnogenesis. This mistake was later repeated by some Western scholars. For example, Loren R. Graham places the concept of the chimera at the centre of the whole theory of ethnogenesis, and accordingly calls it a racist theory.

The concepts of the chimera and of the anti-system do not fit easily in the theory of ethnogenesis, which has a strong positivist emphasis. Instead, those concepts reflect Gumilev’s religious convictions. In the last chapter of *Ethnogenesis*, Gumilev stated his philosophical and religious views. These were based on the idea of an eternal struggle between Good and Evil, on the one hand represented by life-asserting forces in nature such as the biosphere, and on the other hand by the vacuum, i.e. an absence of life and matter.

This kind of speculative religious philosophy does not co-exist well with the rest of the theory of ethnogenesis; the reader is struck by the incongruity between the greater part of the book and the last chapter. Nevertheless, this aspect of Gumilev’s thought has attracted people with strong nationalist sentiments who, like Borodai, saw the concept of the chimera as the core of the theory of ethnogenesis.

To return to the comparison with Danilevskii, Gumilev also argued that the dynamic state could not last indefinitely; an ethnos would either disintegrate or enter a static condition, depending on historical circumstances. Some phases of ethnogenesis were similar to some of Danilevskii’s laws of historical development. For example, in the inertial phase there was a flourishing of civilization which could not last indefinitely.

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229 Loren R. Graham, *Science, Philosophy and Human Behaviour in the Soviet Union*, New York, 1987, p. 257. Admittedly, Graham acknowledged that his views are based on reading Borodai’s article and his interviews with Kedrov, Borodai’s opponent. He also mentioned that he had not read the *Ethnogenesis and the Earth’s Biosphere*, since it had not been published at the time.
230 *Ethnogenez*, pp. 442–44.
231 A more detailed discussion of Gumilev’s reception in post-Soviet Russia is given in Chapter 6.
This aspect of the theory of ethnogenesis was similar to Danilevskii’s fifth law of historical development, which stated that the period of flourishing was limited.

There is, however, an important difference between Danilevskii and Gumilev with regards to their respective views on the temporality of periods of flourishing in history. Danilevskii did not define what he meant by the 'living energy'. In contrast, Gumilev made the concept which defined the dynamic qualities of ethnos, i.e. *passionarnost'*, the central point of his theory.

Danilevskii argued that different cultural-historical types developed certain distinct aspects of cultural and social life. For example, the Greeks developed the idea of beauty, the Germano-Roman peoples explored the analytical study of nature and created natural sciences, while the Semitic peoples developed higher religious ideas. Real progress in history was to 'walk in different directions the whole field which comprises various aspects of human historical activity'\(^\text{232}\) rather than to go continuously in the same direction, as the traditional European idea of linear progress maintained.

Another aspect of Gumilev’s thought similar to Danilevskii’s was the idea of the impossibility of a fusion between different superethnoses. Every superethnos was defined by a unique behavioural stereotype, determined by the differences in the environment and initial conditions at the beginning of ethnogenesis. These factors, together with *Komplimentarnost'*, a degree of natural affinity between groups of people, limited the possibility of interaction between superethnoses. This was similar to Danilevskii’s third law of historical development which stated the impossibility of continuity between cultural-historical types.

To sum up, in contrast to Danilevskii, Gumilev distinguished between different aspects of history. Political, cultural, social, and economic aspects of history were outside ethnic history. Linguistic ties, political independence and other aspects which Danilevskii listed as factors regulating the development of cultural-historical types did not directly affect ethnic history as understood by Gumilev, but rather served as a background to ethnogenesis. The principal factor in ethnogenesis was *passionarnost'* which influenced human behaviour over long periods of time. Gumilev advanced a behaviourist, non-voluntaristic theory of history which had no parallels in Danilevskii’s thought.

\(^{232}\) Rossiia i Evropa, p. 87.
1.5 Preliminary conclusion

Let us recapitulate the principle themes of two theories. Danilevskii’s theory has three main points. First, the cultural-historical type was seen as the basic structure of history and identified with known civilizations. On the ontological level, it was identified with organic forms of matter. Second, Danilevskii introduced five laws of historical development of cultural-historical types. Third, Danilevskii was preoccupied with the analysis of the peculiarities of the Slavic and Germano-roman types. This was the main area of his interests in Russia and Europe.

Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis can be presented in the following way. First, there was a distinction between the ethnic and other aspects of history. Ethnic phenomena were analysed in behaviourist terms and interpreted as a natural phenomenon of the biosphere. Second, ethnogenesis was a temporary and discrete process characterised by specific phases. Third, the mechanism responsible for behavioural changes in history was *passionarnost*, an inborn ability to formulate and pursue complex ideals. Fourth, the similarity of phases of ethnogenesis allowed a comparative study of different ethnoses.

It should be noted that only the first two aspects of Danilevskii’s theory have parallels in Gumilev’s thought and even then they are not identical to it. The central notion of Danilevskii’s theory was the concept of the cultural-historical type, defined as a development type and an organic formation, while for Gumilev the basic idea consists in the notion of ethnos as a natural phenomenon in the biosphere, sustained by *passionarnost* and having a non-voluntarist, emotional basis.

The two thinkers had a common desire to approach history anew from the viewpoint of the natural sciences. The premises they based their theories on, however, were different, i.e. non-evolutionary theories of the world for Danilevskii and the concept of the biosphere for Gumilev. They, nevertheless, shared a polycentric view of history and saw autonomous groups as the main actors in history. It can be concluded that Gumilev, by introducing original concepts such as *passionarnost*, the behaviourist nature of ethnic identity, and the stress on the independent nature of each process of ethnogenesis, went much further than Danilevskii in creating an original theory of historical development.
2. Toynbee and Gumilev

This section compares Toynbee’s and Gumilev’s analyses of history. This illuminates some important aspects of the theory of ethnogenesis. I outline Toynbee’s theory of history as presented in the two-volume abridgement of *A Study of History*.\(^{233}\)

2.1 Inspiration and premises

The starting point for Toynbee was the history of classical antiquity – a well-known field of study for Western historians, in contrast to Gumilev’s studies of the nomads, peoples with whom Western scholars are far less familiar. The history of the ancient Greece and Rome, their growth and fall, was taken by Toynbee as a model for the growth and decline of other civilizations. Toynbee described his inspiration in the following way:

‘The writer, born into the age of the Late Victorian optimism, and encountering the First World War in early manhood, was struck by the parallels between the experience of his own society in his own lifetime and those of the Hellenic society, a study of which had provided the staple of his education. This raised in his mind the questions: Why do civilizations die? Is the Hellenic civilization’s fate in store for the Modern West? Subsequently his inquiries were extended to include the breakdowns and disintegrations of the other known civilizations, as further evidence for throwing light on his questions. Finally, he proceeded to investigate the geneses and growth of civilizations, and so this *Study of History* came to be written.’\(^{234}\)

As argued above,\(^{235}\) Gumilev’s inspiration for developing the theory of ethnogenesis came from the conviction that traditional methods of historical inquiry were inadequate for explaining ethnic history. In particular, traditional concepts of history were too Eurocentric to be a universal model of history. The difference in Toynbee’s and Gumilev’s professional interests was reflected in the respective focus of their studies on


\(^{234}\) *A Study of History*, vol. 2, p. 393.

\(^{235}\) See pp. 36–39 above.
‘classical’ civilization and nomadism. Despite this difference, Gumilev wanted to answer a similar question, i.e. why do ethnos emerge and disappear.

Toynbee began his study by searching for a unit of historical study that was relatively self-contained and was therefore more intelligible in isolation from the rest of history. The nation states of Western Europe could be not such units, as the principal chapters in their history could not be studied in isolation from the history of Europe as a whole. For example, the major chapters of English history such as the conversion to Western Christianity, the establishment of the feudal system, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the expansion overseas, the establishment of responsible parliamentary government, and the Industrial Revolution, could be understood only in their European context. Western Europe as a whole, however, did constitute an intelligible unit of historical study because its history was intelligible in its own terms. Toynbee argued that the intelligible units of historical study were civilizations, which constituted a distinct class of the genus ‘societies’.236

According to Toynbee, there were twenty-six civilizations. The six which emerged from primitive life were the Egyptian, the Shumeric, the Minoan, the Sinic, the Mayan and the Andean. The rest were affiliated in various degrees to their predecessors. For example, Western Christendom was affiliated to Hellenic society. Toynbee argued that as members of the same class, civilizations could be subjected to a comparative study just like primitive societies were studied comparatively by anthropology.

There were a number of differences between civilizations and primitive societies. Only civilizations were undergoing a process of growth. The number of civilizations was small, whereas the number of primitive societies was very large. Civilizations comprised very large numbers of individuals, whereas primitive societies were much smaller and had shorter periods of existence. The essential difference between the primitive and the higher societies was, however, the difference in the direction of their mimesis.

Toynbee argued that mimesis or imitation was a generic feature of social life and its operation could be observed in every social activity, ‘from imitation of the style of film-stars by their humbler sisters upwards.’237 In primitive society mimesis was directed

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towards the older generation, i.e. towards the past, so that custom ruled and society remained static. In societies undergoing the process of civilization, mimesis was directed towards creative personalities. In such societies, ‘the cake of custom’ is broken and society was in dynamic motion along a course of change and growth. This difference was, however, only valid for the last few thousand years. Primitive societies went through a dynamic stage to rise from the pre-human level, after which they were replaced by civilizations. Civilizations were, therefore, the next stage in the development of humanity; they assumed the dynamic role abandoned by the primitive societies.

Several points of similarity and difference can already be noticed. Toynbee considered civilizations to be a distinct class of human societies, recent in origin and representing a next step in the evolution of human society; the principal difference from primitive societies was in the direction of mimesis. Gumilev also distinguished between static and dynamic ethnoses, where the character of relations between generations was one of the distinctions between the two states of an ethnos. In a static ethnos each new generation reproduced the behavioural stereotypes of the previous generation, while in a dynamic ethnos new generations behaved differently.

The difference between static and dynamic ethnoses, however, was not that they belonged to different classes, as in Toynbee’s theory. The only difference between two kinds of ethnos was in their phase of ethnogenesis: a dynamic ethnos would inevitably become static, and conversely every static ethnos at some point in its history went through a dynamic phase. In contrast to Toynbee, Gumilev wanted find a definition for an historical unit which would be applicable to any environment inhabited by people, any historical epoch, and any level of cultural, political, or technological development. Accordingly, no distinction was made between primitive societies and civilizations.

Gumilev went to great pains to emphasise that a distinction between ‘primitive’ and ‘civilized’ societies was meaningless for his theory. The only difference between ethnoses, irrespective of their level of technological or cultural development, was in their level of passionarnost. In a dynamic ethnos, passionarnost varied in phases of ethnogenesis. The uniqueness of an ethnos was determined by its phases and original

\[238\] See pp. 48–52 above for more details.
behavioural stereotype. A static ethnos was distinguished exclusively by its original
behavioural stereotype.

Gumilev argued that the commonplace view of static ethnoses as primitive, and of
civilizations (particularly Western civilization) as dynamic, was a historical coincidence.
Western Europeans were in the dynamic phase of their ethnogenesis at the time of their
encounter with other peoples who were in a static state, and this coincidence led them to
believe that this was a permanent state of affairs.

Ethnos was ‘a large, self-contained system with a dynamic stereotype of
behaviour and an original internal structure, which changes according to phases of
ethnogenesis.’ Groups of ethnoses which were close in behavioural stereotypes
(themselves determined by geography and ethnic pre-history) and levels of
passionarnost’ formed superethnoses. Ethnic history was best understood within the
larger context of the history of the superethnos, for reasons similar to Toynbee’s
acceptance of civilizations as units of historical study.

Nevertheless, Gumilev’s superethnos is not the equivalent of Toynbee’s
civilization. As a superethnos was defined by its behavioural unity, there were many
more superethnoses than civilizations. The concept of superethnos included many
groupings which Toynbee considered as primitive societies. For example, there was a
Nomad superethnos which included the nomadic people of the Eurasian steppes, the
Polynesian peoples, the Australian aborigines, and many others.

An occasional correspondence between superethnoses and civilizations, for
example in the case of Western Europe, Russia or Rome, was due to the fact that the
superethnos was at the basis of socio-cultural institutions. Socio-political and cultural
units like the Roman Empire, the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphate, the Mongol Ulus, the
Byzantine Empire, and the Russian Empire, can be clearly identified because of the well-
defined character of their institutions. For example, the Roman Empire as a political
entity can be studied through its laws, imperial decrees and other surviving documents.
Gumilev argued that ‘in the broad sense the notion of “social category” can be applied to
stable institutions, for example the state, church organization, polis (in Ancient Greece)

or a feud.\textsuperscript{240} But these extremely rarely coincide with ethnoses, so it followed that there were no direct relation.

Superethnoses did not have explicitly articulated definitions. They were constituted by the overall set of behavioural stereotypes which had a non-voluntary, emotive character, so that people were not always explicitly conscious of possessing the stereotypes intrinsic to their superethnos. For example, it is an accepted behavioural norm in Russia to shake hands every time two males who know each other meet. They may become aware of the relative idiosyncrasy of this custom only when they encounter an ethnic milieu where this is not practiced in the same way. The total of behavioural stereotypes, which in English are best understood through such terms as shared practices, constitute an ethnos, while ethnoses with close behavioural stereotypes make up a superethnos.

Behavioural stereotypes by their very nature did not have an exact representation in formal customs or social and political institutions and did not leave behind tangible, material evidence as was the case with socio-political institutions and cultural artefacts. An ethnos could outlive its political institutions, as was the case with the Russians after the disintegration of the Russian Empire. Conversely, legal concepts could survive the ethnos which created them, as was the case with Roman law which continued to be used in Europe long after the behavioural stereotypes characteristic of the Romans were no longer practiced. An ethnos existed as long as the behavioural continuity expressed in its original stereotype was sustained.

The interaction between ethnic and social factors, in the special sense employed by Gumilev, i.e. intentionally created institutions, is one of the most difficult and important problems arising from the theory of ethnogenesis. As has been noted earlier, Gumilev did not explore this problem sufficiently. Instead, he concentrated on developing a new paradigm for the study of ethnic history. In this project, the first step was to distinguish ethnic history from other aspects of human life and define the nature of ethnos.

\textit{Passionarnost}', which was the driving factor of ethnic history, was an attribute of ethnos only. Social and political units could only 'use' the \textit{passionarnost}' which was

\textsuperscript{240} \textit{Etnogenet}, pp. 50-51.
available among ethnoses in that system. In this way, socio-political units were based on a superethnic foundation, but rarely directly corresponded with it. Accordingly, there were two aspects to human life. 'From the first perspective one sees social organizations – tribal alliances, states, theocracies, political parties, schools of philosophy etc.; from the second – ethnoses, i.e. human collectives, which emerge and disintegrate in a relatively short time, but [which] in each case have an original structure, a unique behavioural stereotype and a distinct rhythm, which in its limit [leads to] the homeostasis.'

Gumilev accepted that there was a 'band of freedom' where human beings had the right and capacity for choice. But 'for the actions themselves, which in the physical sense is labour, there has to be energy, refracted in person's psychophysiology. If we compare social and biological aspects to sides of a coin – heads and tails – then this energy and its manifestations will be the metal itself, on which both figures are stamped.' Social and biological factors were immediately observable, while factors underlying ethnic history had to be inferred from those observations. A synthesis of all major components in human understanding was necessary for a comprehensive grasp of human nature. The human body was a laboratory where social and natural forms interwound. In this way, Gumilev did not deny the existence of the phenomena of civilizations as described by Toynbee. Instead, he argued that there was another aspect to history which required a different approach.

The distinction between social and ethnic aspects can be illustrated by an example from Karl Popper. He made distinction between an objective world of material things (World 1), a subjective world of minds (World 2), and a manmade yet autonomous third world (World 3).

'World 3 ... is the world of ideas, art, science, language, ethics, institutions – the whole cultural heritage, in short – in so far as this encoded and preserved in such World 1 objects as brains, books, machines, films computers, pictures, and records of every kind. Although all World 3 entities are products of human minds, they may exist independently of any knowing subject – the Linear B scripts of the Minoan Civilization have only recently been deciphered – provided they are encoded and preserved in some potentially accessible World 1 form.'

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241 Etnogenez, p. 50.
242 Etnogenez, p. 222.
243 Popper, p. 61.
In Popper’s terms, the theory of ethnogenesis can be said to deal with World 2 – the subjective world of minds – with the important caveat that it emphasized the unconscious, emotional nature of ethnic phenomena. The theory of ethnogenesis did not attempt to explain everything in history. For example, it could not explain or predict the future of technological development or the evolution of political and cultural institutions, but only focused on ethnic development.

The theory of ethnogenesis studied changes of *passionarnost* in superethnoses, e.g. how passionary ideals expressed in dominant imperatives changed over time, rather than the political or military power of a state. Changes in passionary potential underlined large socio-political trends, but were never identical with them. *Passionarnost* was not perceived directly, but through political, social or military events. In other words, the underlying ethnic processes could be seen only through the prism of socio-political history. It was reflected in the dynamic of events in political, social and cultural spheres of life. That was why changes in frequency or density of events were one of the three criteria Gumilev proposed for determining phases of ethnogenesis. As he did not give a satisfactory definition of ‘event’, this criterion remains at best an intuitive guide to passionary changes.

As has been remarked earlier, the lack of any clearly defined conception of the relation between socio-political and ethnic processes is a considerable deficiency in Gumilev’s theory. V. Ermolaev introduces the concept of the ‘ethno-social system’ to fill this lacuna in the theory of ethnogenesis. On this view, human behaviour is determined by three principal factors – biological, ethnic, and social. The biological determines bodily functions, ethnic is responsible for the non-voluntary, subconscious, behaviour unique to an ethnos, while the social determines technological progress which includes cultural and political institutions.

It is emphasised that none of these factors can be observed in isolation from the rest. For example, President Putin is both Russian and President of the Russian Federation, i.e. he is at the same time a representative of a certain behavioural stereotype.

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244 I am indebted to V. Ermolaev for explaining the difference between socio-political units and ethnoses. He first introduced the concept of an ethno-social system in his post-graduate work ‘Etnogenez i sotsial’naia geografii gorodov Rossii’ (see note 29 above) and further developed it in *Passionarnost’ i povedenie* (see note 33 above).
and performs a social role in the political system. It follows that the concepts of 'ethnic' and 'social' are only abstract models needed for an adequate description of historical process.

The interrelation of these factors constitutes 'ethno-social' systems, for example, the Roman Empire, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and so on. For example, the United Kingdom in its ethnic aspect consists of the English, the Scottish, the Welsh, and the Irish, as well as various ethnic minorities distinguishable by original behavioural stereotypes, all of whom interact with each other in the system represented by its social and political institutions. Accordingly, there is a distinction between belonging to the English ethnos and having British citizenship. A decision by the Home Office is sufficient to acquire a citizenship, while it may take several generations to become to become a member of the English ethnos.

The interaction between the social and ethnic aspects of history is one of the most important problems arising from the theory of ethnogenesis. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to provide a sufficiently comprehensive account of this issue. We can, however, note the lack of conceptual links within the theory of ethnogenesis as presented by Gumilev, and point to possible ways of resolving this issue, as, for example, has been attempted by V. Ermolaev.

So far as Gumilev and Toynbee are concerned, the principal difference between their theories is the nature of the subject-matter of their studies. In terms of the above distinction between the social and natural aspects of history, Toynbee was concerned with the social aspect of history since the process of civilization was a spiritual growth, determined by human will and rational choices. In contrast, ethnogenesis was a natural process determined by factors outside the rational sphere.

This difference was reflected in their respective thinking about the progress of history. Toynbee held the view that history was ultimately a teleological process. The progression from primitive societies to civilizations was an example of the progress which could also be discerned amongst civilizations. For example, Toynbee argued that Western civilization was the only civilization still in the process of growth, while other existing civilizations, that is, the Russian Orthodox, the Eastern Orthodox, the Islamic and the three Far Eastern civilizations, had already broken down. 'The fundamental
similarity in the purposes of all civilization is not to be forgotten. Each seed has its own destiny, but the seeds are all of the one kind, sown by the same Sower, in the hope of the same harvest.  

For Toynbee, history had a teleological nature, in that the progress of history was to achieve some transcendental goal. Gumilev, on the other hand, held the view that ethnic history had a discrete nature. In other words, the ethnic histories of different superethnoses were independent of each other and there was no progress in ethnic history beyond individual cases of superethnoses, a view he shared with Danilevskii.

For Toynbee, the comparative study of civilizations lay outside the scope of natural science and its methods. The reason for this was his belief that in the genesis of civilizations there was always an 'unknown quality present, namely the reaction of the actors to the ordeal when it actually comes.' Toynbee argued that the scientific postulate of the Uniformity of Nature did not apply to the geneses of civilizations. Accordingly, it was impossible to find the causes affecting the development of civilizations which in identical situations would produce the same effects.

Toynbee studied civilization, a manifestation of the spiritual progress of humankind. In contrast, Gumilev studied ethnos, a natural, material, in the broad sense of the work, phenomenon. He held the view that humanity was an integral part of the natural world, particularly of the biosphere. Ethnic processes had to be studied by the means and methods of the natural sciences, while history was a source of empirical data. As has been argued, Gumilev did not formulate sufficiently rigorous criteria for his method to offer the kind of precision which is a necessary attribute of natural science.

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2.2 The cause of growth

I now turn to the causes of the genesis of civilization and of ethnogenesis respectively. Toynbee stated the fundamental question of his study: ‘What is the positive factor which sets human life in motion again by its impetus?’ Gumilev also began his inquiries by asking why ethnoses emerged and disappeared.\footnote{Etnogenèz, p. 15.}

Toynbee rejected explanations for the origin of civilizations based on a racial distinction or an environmental factor. He maintained that neither race nor environment on their own could offer a satisfactory explanation about the positive factors which caused the growth of civilizations.

As we have seen earlier, Gumilev also rejected the idea that the environment was the only cause of ethnogenesis. The geographical environment was a permanent factor, while the emergence of new ethnoses was a relatively rare occurrence. Racial and other factors relating to the inherent biological qualities of particular nations were likewise rejected by Gumilev on the grounds that such an explanation of ethnogenesis contradicted empirical evidence.\footnote{Etnogenèz, p. 58–9.} For example, some ethnoses were composed of different races, as was the case with the Brazilians who counted European, African and indigenous American elements amongst them.

Toynbee argued that six primal civilizations emerged because of challenges from the environment. The Egyptian, the Sumeric, the Shang, the Mayan, the Minoan, and the Andean civilizations were at first faced with harsh conditions which served as a stimulus for the appearance of creative minorities among primitive tribemen.

Creative minorities broke ‘the cake of custom’ and thereby started the process of civilization. In the case of affiliated civilizations, the loss by the creative minority of their creative capacity led to a dynamic reaction in the form of the secession of the internal proletariat which initiated the growth of a new civilization. A prime example of the emergence of an affiliated civilization was the rise of the Christian Church in the late Roman Empire. The Church gave rise to the Byzantine and Western civilizations, which through it were affiliated with the Hellenic civilization.
Toynbee argued that a difficult environment was a positive influence on the genesis of civilizations. From the examples of the inhospitable conditions at the sites of former civilizations, such as the Mayan civilization in Yucatan, the Indic civilization in Ceylon, the ruins of Petra and Palmyra, and Easter Island, he inferred that when civilizations first emerged in those regions the conditions must have been difficult. Civilizations grew, therefore, as a response to challenges from the environment.

In contrast, facile conditions were inimical to civilization. In his view, 'the difficulty and stimulus of an environment are apt to increase pari passu.' A civilization usually originated in the harder of two areas. For example, the Chinese civilization first emerged in the Yellow River Valley, a harsher environment than the Yangtse Valley; Attica, which gave rise to Athens, was a less hospitable place than Boetia; the town of Byzantium had a less advantageous position than Chalcedon; Brandenburg was in a more remote and less developed area than the Rhineland countries, despite which Prussia led the unification of Germany. It followed that inhospitable regions produced successful societies.

Another factor which could have a positive effect on the genesis of a civilization was the stimulus of blows. A crushing defeat was apt to stimulate the defeated party to sort its problems and make a victorious response. For example, Athens suffered under the military might of the Persian Empire in 480–79 BC when the city was occupied and Athenian temples were destroyed. But this blow gave rise to 'this indomitable spirit in the Athenian people' that led to the achievements of the Periclean age.249

The stimulus of pressures was another challenge which led to a successful response. Thus, frontier peoples often achieved a more brilliant development than their neighbours in more protected positions. For example, the Osmanlis created the Ottoman Empire while the Qaramanlis passed into obscurity; the Austrians responded successfully to the Ottoman challenge and emerged as a leading European empire, while the Bavarians, who were in a secure military environment, failed to remain significant players in European affairs.

In the case of Russia, Toynbee argued that the Russian response to the challenge from the nomads stimulated the Cossack agricultural settlement of the steppe and use of

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river navigation. Peter the Great’s response to the pressure from the West was to found St Petersburg and reform the army and the state apparatus.

Toynbee argued that some challenges could be too severe, ‘i.e. the maximum challenge will not always produce the optimum response.’ Among examples of excessive challenges he mentioned, the challenge of Greenland was contrasted with that of Iceland, only the latter being adequate for a successful settlement. Similarly, English settlers in Massachusetts were successful in adapting to their new territory, while in Labrador conditions were too harsh for them to succeed.

A special case of an excessive challenge was the arrested civilization. Such a civilization encountered a challenge on the border-line between the degree of severity which evoked a successive response and that which entailed defeat. The tour de force required of such civilizations was too great to leave spare energy for further development. Examples included the Eskimos, the Eurasian Nomads, the Polynesians, and the Spartans. All had two features in common, namely specialization and caste, and were consequently lacking the flexibility and inventiveness essential for successful growth. In brief, Toynbee argued that external challenges of various kinds provoked a spiritual response which led to emergence of new civilizations.

Gumilev argued that a general characteristic of the beginning of the dynamic state was the ability of new population to achieve a tour de force, manifested either in migration, or in increased intellectual, military or economic activities. Formation of a new ethnos always had the same nature, namely an uncontrollable internal drive among a small group of people towards intense single-minded activity, expressed in formation of complex ideals. Passionaries were always the minority and in this respect similar to creative minorities. These people broke up old traditions and created a new ethnos based on an original behavioural stereotype.

The ability for a tour de force, however, was not a spiritual response to an external challenge. ‘Every ethnic process begins in a particular geographic environment, with the presence of certain traditions in initial forms and in a unique, historically determined combination of forces around the epicentre of the new process of ethnogenesis. But for a new ethnos to emerge, a new generation with a greater number of
passionaries must appear. The difference in principle between the two theories was that for Gumilev the ability to achieve a tour de force came from the biosphere, rather than from the internal spiritual powers of society, as it did for Toynbee.

For example, Gumilev disagreed with Toynbee’s analysis of the reasons for the rise of Austria. He pointed out that the Serbs and the Greeks had encountered the same challenge from the Ottomans but failed where the Austrians succeeded. He argued the difference in their respective responses lay in the different level of passionarnost available in each ethnos. The Balkan Slavs were in the disintegration phase at the time of the Ottoman advance and did not have passionary resources to resist. The Austrians, on the other hand, were in the early inertia phase with enough passionarnost to organise resistance to the Ottoman Empire’s advance. The difference in passionary potential, rather than the nature of the challenge, determined the outcome of their respective encounter with the Ottomans.

It follows that the crucial difference between the two theories was that for Toynbee an external challenge invoked an internal response in society, whereas in Gumilev’s view an external challenge in itself was insufficient for a new ethnos to appear. A new ethnos emerged when a passionary impulse caused changes in behaviour of a sufficiently large group of people which resulted in their creative reorganization. This hailed the dynamic stage in an ethnos’ history.

Gumilev’s description of the role of passionaries in ethnogenesis was, however, similar to Toynbee’s description of creative minorities and their role in the process of civilization. The quote below summarises Toynbee’s argument:

‘The creative personality is impelled to transfigure his fellow men into fellow creators by re-creating them in his own image. The creative mutation which has taken place in the microcosm of the mystic requires an adaptative modification in macrocosm before it can become either complete or secure; but ex hypothesi the macrocosm of the transfigured personality is also the macrocosm of his untransformed fellow men, and his effort to transform the macrocosm in consonance with the change in himself will be resisted by their inertia, which will

251 Etnogenez, p. 148.
tend to keep the macrocosm in harmony with their unaltered selves by keeping it just as it is.\textsuperscript{252}

If one substituted ‘behavioural stereotype’ for ‘macrocosm’, ‘passionary’ for ‘creative personality’, and ‘passionary mutation’ for ‘creative mutation’, this would be an almost exact summary of Gumilev’s account of the initial stages of emergence of a new ethnos.

But, of course, these notions are not exact equivalents, and the choice of words represents the fundamental difference in the basic assumptions about the nature of historical process. For Gumilev, ethnogenesis was a natural process caused by the external factors in the biosphere, independent from conscious decisions. For Toynbee, the genesis of civilizations was a spiritual response to a challenge presented by human or physical environment. It follows that while their descriptions of the genesis of civilization and of a superethnos were similar, their understandings of the underlying causes of these processes were different in principle. Toynbee continued the tradition of historical analysis in which the main factors affecting history had a spiritual, voluntaristic nature. In contrast, Gumilev proposed a behaviourist concept of history in which ethnic processes were analysed in terms of long-term behavioural changes caused by fluctuations in \textit{passionarnost}'.

\textbf{2.3 The nature of growth}

Creative minorities played the central role in Toynbee’s account of the growth of civilizations, as did passionaries in the theory of ethnogenesis. Toynbee argued that ‘Growth occurs when the response to a particular challenge is not only successful in itself but provokes a further challenge which again meets a successful response.’ Such growth could not be measured either by an increasing control over the human environment, for example, in the form of conquering other people, or improvements in available techniques which led to an increased control over the physical environment. The real growth was a process which Toynbee called ‘etherialization’ – ‘an overcoming of

\textsuperscript{252} A Study of History, vol. 1, p. 213.
material obstacles which releases the energies of the society to make responses which henceforth are internal rather than external, spiritual rather than material.¹²⁵³

According to Toynbee, ‘Civilizations ... grow through an élan which carries them from challenge through response to further challenge, and this growth has both outward and inward aspects. In the Macrocosm growth reveals itself as a progressive mastery over the external environment; in the Microcosm as a progressive self-determination or self-articulation.’²⁵⁴ Successful responses to successive challenges manifested growth if the action of challenge and response moved away from the external environment towards an inner arena of civilization. ‘Growth means that the growing personality or civilization tends to become its own environment and its own challenger and its own field of action.’²⁵⁵ Toynbee called this process ‘progress towards self-determination.’ Self-determination of civilization was, therefore, the fundamental characteristic of its growth. The moving force of self-determination and of the growth of civilization was creative personalities or creative minorities.

‘All acts of social creation are the work of individual creators or, at most, of creative minorities.... Growing civilizations differ from static primitive societies in virtue of the dynamic movement, in their bodies social, of creative individual personalities; and we should add that these creative personalities, at their greatest numerical strength, never amount to more than a small minority.’²⁵⁶

The above analysis is similar to the process of ethnogenesis described by Gumilev. The process of ethnogenesis began when a certain number of passionaries who could not content themselves with the static life of the traditional society challenged tradition and through their actions created a new ethnos. Passionaries were always a minority in any phase of ethnogenesis, but they imposed their behavioural imperatives on the harmonious majority. Gumilev thought that this was a universal mechanism of ethnogenesis present in any type of society, either ‘primitive’ or ‘civilized’.

Notwithstanding the similarity of their analysis of the genesis and growth of society, the fundamental difference between the two thinkers is clear. For Gumilev

ethnogenesis was a biospheric process reflected in the ethnic sphere as a formation of behavioural stereotypes and imperatives. Changes in behaviour were objectified in changes in social norms, such as laws and formal customs. Only the latter were recorded in historical documents (themselves social products, i.e. intentionally created by the authors) which meant that the theory of ethnogenesis had to study social factors to get to the underlying phenomena of ethnic behaviour, its real subject-matter.

For Toynbee, on the other hand, the process of civilization was spiritual, internal to human nature and opposed to the physical world process. He saw the physical world as an outside irritant for the awakening of the spiritual forces latent in human soul. For Gumilev, human behaviour was part of the natural environment, and especially of biospheric processes, which left only ‘a narrow band of freedom’ for conscious acts. The contrast between Gumilev and Toynbee is a contrast between a naturalistic, non-voluntaristic and a spiritual view of history.

2.4 Breakdown and disintegration

In Toynbee’s view, a breakdown of civilization was not inevitable. It was neither caused by external factors such as a foreign invasion, nor was it always present in the internal structure of society. A breakdown occurred when a civilization could no longer adequately respond to a challenge. This failure to respond successfully to a challenge lay in the internal spiritual nature of society and was not an objective historic necessity. In contrast to Danilevskii and Gumilev, Toynbee argued that civilizations did not have a finite period of growth.

The key to understanding the cause of the breakdown of civilizations lay in the nature of mimesis. According to Toynbee, mimesis was a social mechanism through which the creative minority re-moulded the passive majority in its own image. But this was a dangerous path to follow since ‘this mimesis is a kind of social drill; and the dull ears that are deaf to the unearthly music of Orpheus’ lyre are well attuned to the drill sergeant’s word of command.’257 There was a constant danger in growing society, ‘since the condition which is required for the maintenance of growth is a perpetual flexibility

257 A Study of History, vol. 1, p. 276
and spontaneity, whereas the condition required for effective mimesis, which is itself a prerequisite of growth, is a considerable degree of machine-like automatism.\textsuperscript{258}

As mimesis by its very nature was an uncreative response to outside pressure, there was always a danger of the creative leadership infecting itself with the lack of initiative which they induced in their followers. In this case, the creative minority became a dominant minority, which relied on brute force rather than its creative impulse.

Two principal consequences arose from the creative minority's failure to lead by example. The first factor was the emergence of an internal proletariat within the society itself, i.e. a group of people ostensibly from the same civilization but who no longer shared its values. In Toynbee's view, 'This secession of the led from the leaders may be regarded as a loss of harmony between the parts which make up the whole ensemble of the society. In any whole consisting of parts a loss of harmony between the parts is paid for by the whole in a corresponding loss of self-determination. This loss of self-determination is the ultimate criterion of breakdown.'\textsuperscript{259} An example of the internal proletariat was the rise of Christian communities in the late Roman Empire.

The second factor was the rise of the external proletariat, i.e. neighbouring people who had been 'charmed' by civilization while it was in its growth phase, but who were repelled by it after the creative minority became a dominant minority. An example of an external proletariat was the northern barbarians who eventually destroyed the Western Roman Empire.

The ultimate criterion of disintegration was the schism of the factions within society. The dominant minority through its work would eventually achieve a universal state. This in itself was 'one of the most conspicuous marks of disintegration', when a disintegrating civilization purchased a temporary reprieve by submitting to forcible political unification in a universal state. The internal proletariat founded a universal church, while the external proletariat formed barbarian war-bands. All three phenomena unfolded in the first to the fourth centuries AD. This was the disintegration of the Roman civilization.

\textsuperscript{258} A Study of History, vol. 1, p. 278.
\textsuperscript{259} A Study of History, vol. 1, p. 279.
Gumilev argued that ethnogenesis was a recurring phenomenon which had a logic of development every superethnos followed. This was expressed as phases of ethnogenesis: the growth, the acme, the crisis, the inertial, and the disintegration phases, sometimes followed by a static existence which he called homeostasis. All ethnoses underwent these phases, except in those cases when ethnogenesis was terminated by an external force, such as a foreign invasion; as, for example, was the case with the indigenous American civilizations.

The phase of ethnogenesis similar to Toynbee’s disintegration was the crisis phase (faza nadloma). In this phase, there was a sharp fall in passionarnost’ and a simplification of the ethnic system. It began with unsuccessful attempts at a reform of social institutions, followed by civil wars and behavioural splits in the superethnos. In contrast to Toynbee, the crisis phase was inevitable. As the imperative ‘We are sick and tired of great people’ became dominant, social institutions which were designed to accommodate high levels of passionarnost’ could no longer be sustained.

This led to an open crisis of the whole system, similar to Toynbee’s idea of creative minorities becoming infected with mimesis. Toynbee argued that ‘the ultimate criterion and the fundamental cause of the breakdown which precede disintegration is an outbreak of internal discord through which societies forfeit their faculty of self-determination.’ Gumilev, however, emphasised the behavioural split, internal conflicts and a simplification of behavioural imperatives, from the ideal of victory in the acme phase, to the pursuit of prosperity without risk in the inertia phase, as the main characteristics of the crisis phase. Different groups in a superethnos sought to impose their own solution to the crisis, which manifested itself in the imperative ‘We know, we know everything will be different!’

Historical examples of the crisis phase were the times of Marius, Sulla and the civil wars in Rome in the second and first centuries BC, the iconoclasm crisis in Byzantium in the eighth and ninth centuries, the Reformation in Europe, and the Russian Civil War. These were periods of acute internal discord, what Toynbee called ‘the

\[260 A Study of History, vol. 1, p. 365.\]
division and discord within the bosom of a society characteristic of the disintegration phase.

The inertial phase was similar to Toynbee's establishment of a universal state. It saw the establishment of a behavioural unity based on a simplified behavioural ideal – the rejection of individuality by following a role model like Augustus in imperial Rome, or the ideal of the gentleman in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe, expressed in the imperative 'Be like I am!' There was an active accumulation of material and cultural artefacts, a steady decline in artistic quality, a reduction in the numbers of active individuals, and the prevalence of a hardworking but passive population.

But this was the 'Indian summer' of civilization, which was similar to Toynbee's analysis of the universal state. In his view, the ultimate reason for the appearance and sustainability of a 'universal state' was a prevalent desire for political unity following the 'time of trouble.' Both Toynbee and Gumilev argued that although this period in the life of civilization was represented by a flourishing of arts and sciences and an increased control over the external environment, this was a temporary reprieve before the final disintegration.

### 2.5 Emergence of Christianity

The difference between Gumilev's and Toynbee's analyses of the emergence of early Christianity is the best example of the differences between their respective theories. As remarked earlier, Toynbee used the history of the late Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity as the model for all other civilizations. Gumilev used this historical period as one of his main examples in *Ethnogenesis and Earth's Biosphere*, because it was well studied and offered abundant material for an interpretation from the point of view of the theory of ethnogenesis.

According to V. Ermolaev, one of Gumilev's main Western sources for this period was J.C. Robertson, *History of the Christian Church from the Apostolic Age to the*
Reformation,\textsuperscript{264} which had been translated into Russian.\textsuperscript{265} Robertson's detailed narrative account, which stuck strictly to the factual record, was used by Gumilev as a source for illustrations of his theory. We shall see as we proceed how numerous passages in Robertson were co-opted by Gumilev as examples of a larger process of ethnogenesis at work in the history of the early Christians.

According to Gumilev's interpretation, the Romans first emerged in the eighth century, Romulus symbolizing the start of Roman ethnogenesis. The growth phase of the Roman ethnos lasted until the expulsion of the Sabines, while the establishment of the Roman hegemony over Italy and the Punic Wars marked its acme phase. The reforms of Marius marked the beginning of the crisis phase, while the Civil Wars which followed signified the open crisis phase of the Roman ethnos. The victory of Octavian over Antony and Cleopatra and his assumption of the title of Augustus marked the start of the inertial phase.

Against this background, Gumilev interpreted the history of the early Christians. Gumilev understood by Byzantium 'the phenomenon which emerged as a result of the passionary impulse of first and second centuries in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, formalised itself as the Church with all its deviations and currents, [and] acquired a stereotype of interaction with the secular power. This entity stretched much wider than the border of the Eastern Empire and survived it for many centuries.'\textsuperscript{266}

The first Christian converts pursued the imperative of the early growth phase 'The world must be changed because it is bad' and differentiated themselves by their behaviour both from the Jews, among whom they first appeared, and from the Gentiles. Christianity was attracting such number of people not content to live the traditional life that by the reign of Trajan (98–117), it had emerged as a distinct ethnos. In the theory of ethnogenesis, Christianity began as a subethnos within the Jewish ethnos, before it emerged as a distinct ethnos.\textsuperscript{267}

The Roman behavioural imperative of the inertial 'Be like I am', the principle of conformity to established norms and practices, was incompatible with Christian

\textsuperscript{264} J.C. Robertson, \textit{History of the Christian Church from the Apostolic Age to the Reformation A.D. 64-1517}, 8 vols, London, 1874 (hereafter, \textit{History of the Christian Church}).

\textsuperscript{265} J. Robertson, \textit{Istoriia khristianskoi tserkvi}, 2 vols, St Petersburg, 1896.

\textsuperscript{266} \textit{Etnogenez}, p. 360.

\textsuperscript{267} \textit{Etnogenez}, p. 361.
imperatives. A passage from Robertson illustrates the contrast Gumilev remarked upon.

‘All that the magistrate had to care for was a conformity to the established rites – a conformity which was considered to be a duty towards the state, but was not supposed to imply any inward conviction. The refusal of compliance by the Christians, therefore, was an unintelligible scruple, which statesmen could only regard, with Pliny, as a criminal obstinacy.’ 268 The Christians differentiated themselves behaviourally from the rest of the population, while their commitment to their ideals, which was a manifestation of their passionarnost’, was in stark contrast to the prevailing attitudes in the empire.

Despite prosecutions from the Roman state and population, the rapid growth of Christianity was such that by the third century Christians had grown from a tenth to a fifth of the total population of the Empire, while in the Eastern provinces they were the majority. 269

The Milan edict issued by Constantine in 313 gave the Christians the benefit of toleration, rather than ascendancy over other religions. But in Gumilev’s view, Christianity was replacing the old system of behaviour. In AD 312 an edict was issued for the general observance of Sunday. In AD 314 Constantine omitted the secular games, and refused to take part in the rites of Jupiter Capitolinus, to the great indignation of the Romans. By two laws of 319, Constantine forbade private sacrifices and divinations. 270

‘Commissioners were sent throughout the empire, with instructions to visit the temples and to inquire into the worship which was performed in them; and these commissioners, although unarmed, and unprotected by any military guard, were allowed to do their work without hindrance – circumstance which shows how little hold the heathen religion retained on the general mind. In the consequence of their visitations, many statues were stripped of their precious ornaments, destroyed, or carried away, and many impostures of the priests were exposed.’ 271

This was in contrast to the Christians who sacrificed themselves rather then denounce their religion. For example, under the last prosecutions in the reign of Diocletian (284–305), the Christians were ordered to give up their scriptures but many

268 History of the Christian Church, vol. 1, p. 35.
269 History of the Christian Church, vol. 1, p. 221.
chose to die or suffer for their religion than to obey the order. This was the difference in passionarnost’ between the old Roman superethnos and the new Christian one.

When Julian the Apostate (361–63), tried to re-establish heathen religion his attempts failed not so much due to the resistance of the Christians, as to the feebleness of conviction on the part of the heathen population.

‘The utter decay of the old religion in the Syrian capital may in some measure be estimated from a story which is told by the emperor himself — that when, after having restored the temple of Daphne, near the city, he repaired to it on the day of a great local festival, he found, instead of the splendid ceremonial and the crowd of worshippers which he had expected, that only a single old priest was in attendance, with no better sacrifice than a goose, which the poor man had been obliged to provide at his own cost.’

The final blow to the Roman behavioural stereotype came in 382, when Gratian ordered the Altar of Victory to be removed from the Roman Senate. An excellent example of the difference between the old, dying behavioural system and the triumphant new one was the polemic between St Ambrose of Milan and Senator Symmachus. Robertson remarked how in reading their rival pleadings ‘we cannot but be struck by the remarkable contrast in tone between the apologetic diffidence of Symmachus and the triumphant assurance of Ambrose... The cause of paganism is rested, not on the truth of doctrine, but on an appeal to historic and patriotic associations.’

Gumilev contrasted the behaviour of the Roman senator with his ancestors, the proud conquerors of Hannibal and creators of the mightiest empire the world had ever known. This contrast displayed the several phases of the Roman ethnogenesis, from the heroic times of the growth and acme phases, through the crisis phase embodied the bloody conflicts in the Civil Wars, the prosperity of the inertial phase in the early empire, to the decadence and final oblivion suffered by the later empire in the disintegration phase in the fourth and fifth centuries.

In Gumilev’s view, the remains of the Roman ethnos were maintained by social institutions and state traditions, rather than the Romans’ belief in their ideals. As soon

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273 History of the Christian Church, vol. 1, p. 400.
274 Etnogenez, p. 363.
as this artificial support was removed, the Roman behavioural system disintegrated. Gumilev’s view of this process drew on Robertson. ‘The old system was evidently doomed. Its remaining strength was not in belief but in habit. The withdrawal of public funds told on it to a degree which would have been impossible if there had been any principle of life in it. The priests, when attacked, succumbed in a manner which indicated an utter want of faith and zeal.’ In stark contrast to the Roman behavioural stereotypes, which had a faint shadow of life in them based on long habit, the new behavioural system centred on Christian beliefs was gathering strength and imposing its behavioural ideals on the population of the eastern part of the Empire.

In the fourth century the Byzantine superethnos entered the acme phase. As passionarnost of the Byzantine superethnos was growing, fine points of Christian dogma acquired a significance which was possible only at the highest levels of passionarnost, when abstract ideals dominate behaviour in the superethnos. Robertson remarked how in the fourth century ‘the highest questions of Christian doctrine became subjects of common talk, and excited the ignorant zeal of multitudes very imperfectly influenced by Christian principles.’

The theological controversy of the fourth century centred on the definition of Christ’s nature. The Orthodox, Nicene view supported the idea of homoousion (of the same essence or substance with God), some factions favoured homoiousion (of the like essence), while the Arians rejected Christ’s human soul and argued that he had an imperfect divine nature. The disagreement over one letter caused such upheaval that several decades of disputations, mutual recriminations and even riots were needed before this particular issue was settled at the second general council in Constantinople (381).

Gumilev argued that these and similar differences which for three hundred years – the duration of the acme phase – dominated the history of the Church were determined by high passionarnost of the superethnos, when abstract ideals were deemed more important than material prosperity or political stability. It is important to note

275 History of the Christian Church, vol. 1, p. 403.
276 Etnogenez, p. 364.
277 History of the Christian Church, vol. 1, p. 305.
278 Etnogenez, p. 369.
passionarnost' did not determine the form or the subject of the disputes, but their character.

The acme phase dominated by people pursuing the ideal of self-sacrifice led to the spread of behavioural stereotypes which could accommodate them. Gumilev argued that this was the reason for growth in monastic movements from the fourth century onwards. Robertson described this phenomenon in the following terms. "As the profession of Christianity was no longer a mark of separation from the mass of men, some further distinction appeared necessary for those who aspired to a higher life. Hence many persons...sought to attain a more elevated spirituality by withdrawing from mankind and devoting themselves to austerity of life and to endeavours after undisturbed communion with heaven." As Gumilev read Robertson, this was a description of people in pursuit of the ideal of self-sacrifice.

Symeon the Stylite (388–460) was the first 'pillar-saint', spending 37 years on a pillar about a yard in diameter near Antioch. "His neck was loaded with an iron chain. In praying, he bent his body so that his forehead almost touched his feet; a spectator once counted twelve hundred and forty four repetitions of this movement, and then lost his reckoning. The stylite took only one scanty meal a-week, and fasted throughout the season of Lent." This is an example of the pursuit of the ideal of self-sacrifice – the most abstract ideal – which one encountered in the acme phase.

By no means was everyone pursuing the ideal of sacrifice in the acme phase. The dominant imperative ‘Be yourself” meant people asserted their individuality in different ways. Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria (385–412), was described as ‘able, bold, crafty, unscrupulous, corrupt, rapacious, and domineering.” He was the principal opponent of Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople (397–404), and stopped at nothing to maintain his authority as the leading ecclesiastical figure. Theophilus was pursuing the ideal of victory. Behaviour in the acme phase was very diverse with people giving various manifestations to the pursuit of their ideals.

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279 Etnogenez, p. 367.
Toynbee had a remarkably similar view of the early Christians as a ‘tiny band of martyrs...spiritually potent out of all proportion to its numerical strength. Thanks to the prowess of these heroes who at the critical moment stepped forward from the Christian ranks to bear their witness at the cost of life itself, the Church emerged victorious.’ Their sacrifice was more than sheer disinterested courage. ‘Men and women enthusiastically sought martyrdom as a sacrament, a “second baptism”, a means to forgiveness of sins and a secure passage to Heaven.’ But in contrast to Gumilev, he analyzed this phenomenon in spiritual rather than behavioural terms.

In 529, Justinian ordered the closure of the philosophical schools of Athens, after which philosophers emigrated to Persia and philosophical heathenism was extinguished in the empire. The same year, all pagans and heretics were excluded by an imperial decree from civil or military office. They were allowed three months to choose between conformity and deprivation of all civil privileges. This was the end of the Greco-Roman superethnos, already in its memorial phase.

The Roman behavioural stereotypes died out or were replaced by a new behavioural system centred on Christian belief. Gumilev argued that this was an example of an interaction between an old and a new superethnos, the Romans and the Byzantines respectively. The theory of ethnogenesis offers a new interpretation of history, which instead of socio-political factors or spiritual and cultural ones, as in Toynbee’s case, studies long-term behavioural changes in through the concept of *passionarnost*. This approach can give new insights into history.

For example, A.H.M. Jones argued that the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the survival of the Eastern one was due to the difference in the vulnerability of their respective borders. In the West the borders along which the barbarians were attacking were stretched and, therefore, required considerably bigger military and economic resources than was the case in the East, where the border in Thrace was relatively easy to protect. This does not, however, explain how the disintegration of Roman traditions and emergence of Christianity happened. In contrast, these were the central elements in Gumilev’s interpretation of this period.

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Furthermore, in the following centuries Byzantium was arguably under more pressure than Rome in the fifth century. It lost the African provinces to the Arabs, who continued to mount pressure by besieging Constantinople itself, while in the north the Slavs overrun the Byzantine heartland including the Peloponneso, so that, for example, an overland communication between Constantinople and Thessalonica, the second city of the empire, was impossible for most of the eighth century. Nevertheless, the Byzantines withstood these pressures until 1204, that is, until they went into disintegration phase similar to that of Rome in the fifth century.

The Byzantine expansion took a spiritual and intellectual form, rather than military (unlike the Romans, the Western Europeans, the Arabs and the Russians in the similar phase of their respective ethnogeneses). Nevertheless, the passionary mechanism of this expansion was similar to all other cases; the ideals of victory and self-sacrifice were the dominant ideals in the acme phase.

Toynbee thought that the early Christians represented the internal proletariat which was brought into existence by the spiritual failure of the Hellenic civilizations. In contrast, Gumilev argued that Christianity was a consequence of a new passionary impulse. He argued that a radical difference between the behaviour of the early Christians and the rest of the empire was a case of a formulation of a new behaviour stereotype. He argued that if there had been no passionary impulse which brought to life the Christians and set in motion the great barbarian migration, Rome would have disintegrated by itself until a few remains were left in the form of static ethnoses with a distant memory of their glorious past. In contrast to Toynbee, Gumilev did not see the epoch of late antiquity and rise of Christianity as a necessary model for development of all ethnoses.

2.4 Summary

There was difference in principle between Toynbee's and Gumilev's views on the nature of the historical units they were studying. Superethnos was understood by Gumilev as a natural phenomenon constituted by shared behavioural stereotypes, acquired in a non-voluntary manner in early childhood, while the dynamism of superethnos was due to *passionarnost*. Civilization for Toynbee was a spiritual progress from external to internal challenges. Significantly, both Toynbee and Gumilev saw history as consisting of cases of growth and decline independent of each other, but Toynbee in addition saw a teleological dimension to history which is absent in the theory of ethnogenesis.

Their descriptions of the process of change in history are remarkably similar, with an important caveat regarding their respective emphases on behaviourist as opposed to spiritual transformations. For example, there are striking similarities between the role of Toynbee's creative minorities and Gumilev's passionaries in the genesis and growth of civilizations and superethnoses respectively.

The most important difference was in the explanation which they gave for the phenomena they described. Gumilev explained the behavioural changes which underlay ethnic development through causation by the external factors in the biosphere, while Toynbee saw the growth of civilization as a spiritual response to external challenge.
Conclusion

The theory of ethnogenesis is an original paradigm for the study of ethnic history, which emphasises the non-voluntary, behaviourist nature of ethnic development and interaction. It is a concept of history that is anti-humanistic and anti-Enlightenment in its spirit. Gumilev’s significant contribution was the creation of a conceptual framework which moved away from the traditional historical study of political, social and cultural events towards a study of ethnic history interpreted as naturalistic phenomenon of human behaviour. This is the main difference of the theory of ethnogenesis from Danilevskii’s and Toynbee’s theories of history.

Toynbee followed the humanitarian tradition, which ascribed to humans a complete freedom of action. History consisted of free and conscious decisions of people and was opposed to the material world governed by laws of nature. In contrast, Gumilev saw human behaviour in its ethnic aspect as a part of the biosphere. Ethnogenesis was a natural, spontaneous and long-term process independent of conscious acts. Nevertheless, the theory of ethnogenesis, as presented by Gumilev, is too general to become a natural science. The emphasis on the natural, material nature of ethnogenesis makes Gumilev’s theory closer to the theory of culture-historical types developed by Danilevskii.

The conceptual frameworks which the two Russians used for their theories were, however, different. Gumilev used the concepts of the biosphere and passionarnost’, and emphasised the behavioural nature of ethnos. In contrast, Danilevskii used socio-cultural factors to distinguish between cultural-political types and employed anti-evolutionary concepts as a theoretical basis for his view of history.

There is, however, an important aspect of Gumilev’s thought which has not been dealt with so far. This is Gumilev’s views on Russian historical identity and its relation with Europe and Asia. The last two Chapters examine Gumilev’s views on Russian history and his links with Eurasianism.
Chapter 5

Russian History and the Theory of Ethnogenesis

Introduction

This Chapter gives an account of Gumilev’s views on Russian history and has two principal goals. First, it provides an illustration of the theory of ethnogenesis as applied to a specific historical example. Second, it presents Gumilev’s particular interpretation of Russian history. It therefore connects the theory of ethnogenesis and the particular version of Russian historical identity examined in the next Chapter on Gumilev’s relation with the Eurasians.

Gumilev did not give a consistent and comprehensive account of the whole of Russian history. His last major monograph, *Ancient Rus and the Great Steppe,*288 covered the period from the ninth to fifteenth centuries. *Ancient Rus* studied a wide range of issues in Eastern European history with special attention to the relationship between Russians and nomads. His only other book on Russian history, *From Rus to Russia,*289 was conceived as a popularised version of this work. It extended his account as far as the eighteenth century but did not really cover any century after the fifteenth in any great detail. Gumilev also wrote on various aspects of Russian history in a number of articles and in his correspondence with P.N. Savitski.290

There are four central themes in Gumilev’s thought on Russian history. First, he argued that there was a distinction in principle between Kievan Rus and Muscovite Russia. Second, he emphasised the positive effects of the Mongol influence on Russia. Third, Gumilev stressed the emergence of a distinct behavioural stereotype as the key to understanding Russian history. Finally, he interpreted Russian history in terms of the phases of ethnogenesis. In this Chapter, the principal themes of Gumilev’s interpretation of Russian history are examined in chronological order.

288 *Drevniaia Rus’* (see note 23 above).
289 *Ot Russ do Rossi* (see note 187 above).
290 In addition, I use material on post-fifteenth century history kindly provided to me by V. Ermolaev. See pp. 16–17 above for an explanation of Ermolaev’s relation to Gumilev.
1. The decline of Kievan Rus

One of the distinct novelties in Gumilev's approach to Russian history was the crucial distinction between Kievan or Ancient Rus and Muscovite Russia. This distinction was important for Gumilev's interpretation of the whole of Russian history since it allowed a special interpretation of such key events in medieval Russian history as the decline of Kiev, the Mongol invasion, the rise of Moscow and the Lithuanian and Polish influence on Western Russia.

According to Gumilev, in the thirteenth century Kievan Rus had reached the final phase of its ethnogenesis, the disintegration phase. In Gumilev's theory, the dynamic phase of ethnos lasted on average 1,200 years. It followed that the beginning of Slav ethnogenesis should have taken place somewhere around the first century AD. Gumilev used works by A.A. Shakhmtov291 and A.E. Presniakov292 as well as by contemporary archaeologists to support this contention. He hypothesized that same process was at work in the beginnings of Slav ethnogenesis as had produced the appearance of the Goths and the early Christians. Gumilev maintained that in the history of the eastern Slavs 'there is a combination of two independent processes: the natural phenomenon of ethnogenesis which began in the first century AD, and the social one, that is the creation of a state, which was interrupted thrice by the Goths, the Avars and the Normans respectively and which was finally achieved only in the eleventh century under Iaroslav Mudryi.'293

The emergence of Kievan Rus was not, in Gumilev's view, the beginning of the ethnic history of the eastern Slavs, but rather the final phase of the overall Slav ethnogenesis. This occurred when 'Slavdom ceased to exist as a single whole, while still preserving a mutual comprehensibility of the [Slavic] languages or linguistic closeness as a reminiscence of the former unity.'294 The creation of the Russian state in the eleventh century did not happen either 'in the growth phase of passionarnost', nor in the phase of overheating or even the crisis [phase], but in the inertial phase, which is characterised by an intense flourishing of literature and arts, which obscured from later historians the

291 A.A. Shakhmatov, Drevneishie sud'by russkogo plemen, Petrograd, 1919
292 A.E. Presniakov, Lektsii po russkoi istorii, Moscow, 1938.
293 Drevniaia Rus', p. 34.
294 Drevniaia Rus', p. 31.
[earlier] epochs of heroic deeds, disasters overcome and victories unrecorded.' Due to
the lack of records, it was difficult to provide concrete historical evidence for this view.
Gumilev based it on a general assessment of the history of Eastern Europe in the first
millennium AD, which in his view was dominated by a series of ethnic processes caused
by a passionarny impulse of the first century AD. It follows that as far as Slav
ethnogenesis was concerned, his argument had a speculative nature.

One reason for the characterisation of Kievan Rus as in the phase of obscurity was
the prevailing behavioural attitudes. In Gumilev’s theory, each phase of ethnogenesis had
a characteristic behavioural imperative expressed in an ideal principle governing the
ethnos’ attitude to the individual. In the case of Kievan Rus, the fall in passionarnost
resulted in a diminishing unity and the increased pursuit of short-term interests over long­
term goals.

‘The sense of unity was quickly disappearing, as principalities were breaking up,
turning from udels into votochinas. The princes were turning from sovereigns into
large landowners. The importance of the capital, first Kiev, later Vladimir, was
steadily decreasing. The capital was changing hands between competing princes
who were settling their differences through force rather than law. The ability to
resist foreign invasion was weakening, consumed by an unrestrained egoism,
typical for sub-passionaries.’

This was characteristic of the late phase of obscurity in which the simplification
of the ethnic system showed characteristic signs of decay such as ‘egoism,
ungratefulness, greed, wilfulness and political myopia’ which, in Gumilev’s view,
were the prevailing attitudes in late Kievan Rus. This phase of the Slav ethnogenesis was
similar to the late Roman Empire. The fate awaiting Kievan Rus, like that of the Romans,
was either degeneration and disintegration or subjugation to a foreign domination.
However, neither of these two scenarios occurred. ‘On the contrary, a new Russia
achieved more glory than Ancient Rus.’ On Gumilev’s view, the subsequent history of

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295 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 34.
296 See pp. 123–31 for more details on Gumilev’s arguments for passionary impulse occurring at that time.
297 See pp. 72–81, for more details on behavioral imperatives and their relation to phases of ethnogenesis.
298 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 551.
299 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 522.
300 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 520.
Russia was the result of a passionarny impulse in the thirteenth century, which set in train a new ethnogenesis. Gumilev admitted that the history of the Slavs was a peripheral theme for his work. Nevertheless, his view of this period must be regarded as highly speculative.

2. Mongolian influence and the beginning of the Great Russian ethnos

An important aspect of Gumilev's analysis of thirteenth century Kievan Rus was the assertion that Rus was incapable of protecting itself from foreign aggression because of its low passionarnost', a natural outcome of its ethnic history. At the same time, a new process of ethnogenesis began, which would eventually lead to the formation of the Muscovite superethnos. At this crucial point, the history of Rus was further complicated by a close contact with two 'young' superethnoses – the Mongols and the Western Europeans.

According to Gumilev, the Mongolian process of ethnogenesis began in the early eleventh century AD. At this time, there appeared a new generation with an uncharacteristic behaviour, the so-called 'people of the long will'. By the late twelfth century, the level of passionarnost' among the Mongols had reached its height with the emergence of the Mongol Empire under Genghis Khan. Riding high on the wave of their passionarnost', the Mongols swept into Rus in the first half of the thirteenth century.

The Western European ethnogenesis, on the other hand, began, in Gumilev's view, in the eighth century. In the thirteenth century, the Western European superethnos, consisting of the nations of Christendom, was in the acme phase. One of the characteristics of this phase was expansion outside a superethnos' original borders. The acme phase of expansion of Western European superethnos took the form of the Crusades. The founding of the Livonian order in 1237, with the purpose of spreading the Catholic faith in the Baltic provinces and North Rus, presented a direct threat.

As Rus was in then in the phase of obscurity, it was incapable of sustaining its independence by its own force. The question of a choice between the West and the Mongols was, therefore, crucial for the future of Russia. Gumilev acknowledged that there was a strong pro-Western party in Rus. For example, Prince Andrei (brother of
Alexander Nevskii) and Daniil Galitskii had a strong anti-Mongol, pro-Western sentiment. In Novgorod and Pskov there were also pro-Western factions linked to the West by commercial and cultural links. The Western factions wanted to unite the Russian princes and expel the Mongols with support from the West.

Gumilev argued that this course of action was impossible at that time for a number of reasons. Firstly, the Western Europeans would not fight to unite a foreign country and an alien faith. Indeed, one of Gumilev's main arguments against the historical possibility of a rapprochement with Western Europe was the strong antipathy between Catholics and Orthodox believers.

'Our ancestors did not so much understand as feel the enormous abyss between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. They knew that a Catholic could not be a Russian but why this was so they did not know, and even for us this is difficult to determine. These vague sentiments were confirmed in 1204–5 [the sacking of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade] when the Europeans showed what they were capable of.'

Gumilev argued that the Crusaders would have taken over a weakened Russia after its fight with the Mongols ended and turned it into another colony, like those in the Baltic provinces or the Latin Empire created in Greece after the sacking of Constantinople in 1204.

Gumilev also believed that by the thirteenth century the unification of Russia was an unrealistic goal. Kievan Rus was irrevocably split into South-Western, North-Eastern and Novgorod lands which were in constant conflict with each other. The tendency towards independence among Russian principalities had become the dominant trend and the disintegration of the country was unavoidable. This was the inevitable result of the falling level of *passionarnost* in Rus at the time. In practical terms, there was not a sufficiently strong native force which could unite the Russian principalities and subject them to a single authority. That was why, argued Gumilev, the pro-Westerners' efforts were doomed to fail, as proved by the experiences of Daniil Galitskii, defeated by the Mongols in 1254, and Andrei, the brother of Alexander, who fled to Sweden in 1252 after the defeat by the Mongol general Nevriui.

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301 Gumilev to Savitskii, 8 June 1960, Savitskii archive.
2.1 Alexander Nevskii

The native Russian forces at Nevskii’s disposal were limited. Nevskii needed Mongol military support to battle against Western expansion and against the opposition at home. Alexander Nevskii’s famous victory over the Teutonic knights on Lake Peipus in April 1242 forestalled but did not completely remove the danger of a German offensive. The German knights had bases in the Baltic provinces and could draw on the resources of Western Europe. Alexander Nevskii clearly understood the danger from the West and the need for a strong ally to counterbalance that threat.

Nevskii went on to crush a major rebellion in Novgorod in 1257–58 with Mongolian assistance. After the death of Batyi in 1256, he made a pact with his successor Berke, as a result of which he received military aid in exchange for a tribute to the Golden Horde. Gumilev observed that ‘if one cannot protect oneself, one has to pay for protection against one’s enemies.’

For Gumilev, an important question was whether Alexander Nevskii was the last prince of Ancient Rus or the first prince of the future Great Russia, which for Gumilev was mutually exclusive. Gumilev argued that Alexander Nevskii and his supporters’ selfless behaviour was in contrast to the prevalent behaviour of Rus in the twelfth and thirteenth century which he called ‘a narrow-minded egoism’.

‘The very existence of the controversy shows that in parallel with the disintegrative processes there emerged a new generation [which was] heroic, sacrificial and patriotic. In other words, a people emerged who considered an ideal (or a distant prognosis) to be higher than their personal interests or accidental wishes. Although in the thirteenth century there very few of them, in the fourteenth century their children and grandchildren constituted a considerable part of society and were the embryo of a new ethnos, later called the Great Russians.’

The emergence in the thirteenth century of this new generation marked the beginning of the hidden growth phase of the Great Russian ethnogenesis.

302 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 132.
In Gumilev’s view, Alexander Nevskii was responsible for three principal achievements. First, he formulated a new behavioural model – altruistic patriotism – which for several centuries was the basis of Russia’s development. Second, he started the tradition of union with the Asiatic peoples, founded on ethnic and religious tolerance. This allowed the creation of the multiethnic Russian state. Finally, Alexander’s direct descendants built a new Russia from their base in Moscow. Gumilev argued that ‘Nevskii’s significance lies in the fact that through his far-sighted policy he preserved nascent Russia in the incubation phase of its ethnogenesis, figuratively speaking, from conception to birth.’

The basis of Alexander Nevskii’s policies, which in Gumilev’s view saved the Russian ethnos at a crucial period of its history, was opposition to the West and alliance with the Mongols.

In his analysis of Nevskii’s legacy, Gumilev made several important points. Nevskii stood out from other Russian princes of the time by his military and political talents. This naturally attracted committed and principled followers, whom Gumilev called passionarii. Also, Alexander’s authority had a substantial influence on subsequent Russian generations. Gumilev contradicted himself, however, by arguing that Alexander Nevskii’s policy of alliance with the Mongols was a new policy for Russia. He had noted elsewhere that Russian princes of the Kievan period had a long tradition of political contacts with nomads.

The importance of Gumilev’s argument becomes more evident if Nevskii’s role is analyzed retrospectively. His most interesting observation was the behavioural divergence between Kievan Rus, where princes from the same dynasty ruled according to the lestvicehestvo system of inheritance over a federation of principalities with a clear tendency towards disintegration, and a new Russia formed around Moscow, a highly centralized state with a single autocrat at its head. This was a qualitative change which in his view amounted to a new process of ethnogenesis. Nevskii’s behaviour and policies were the first clear symbol of this new trend. The weak point of Gumilev’s argument is the lack of precise criteria for a distinction between the two processes of ethnogenesis. His arguments left plenty of room for possible disagreement.

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304 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 544.
305 Drevniaia Rus’, pp. 468–70, 484–86.
2.2 The Mongol influence

One of the distinctive aspects of Gumilev’s view of Russian history was his insistence on the positive role of the Mongols. Gumilev gave three main reasons for this view. First, the Mongols supported the Orthodox Church through their policies of religious tolerance. Second, they provided military assistance against Western aggression. Finally, there was an intensive ethnic intermixing with the Turkic people in the early history of Muscovite Russia, which had a significant influence on the formation of the Russian ethnic character.

In this respect, it is important to note the importance of the Orthodox Church. In Gumilev’s view, ‘the only thread which linked all Russian people in the thirteenth century was the Orthodox faith. Anyone who professed Orthodoxy and acknowledged the spiritual authority of the Russian metropolitan was one of our own, a Russian.’\(^306\) In a country divided between various independent principalities and spheres of foreign influence, the Church sustained ethnic unity.

For Gumilev, the Church had three main roles in history: its religious role proper, and a social and emotional role. In its religious role, the Church was a keeper of dogmas, theology and tradition. Its social role consisted of the daily conduct of affairs, including relations with the secular authorities. Finally, ‘in the emotional aspect each religion is a form of a particular world view or mentality (mirooshchushchenie).’ This feeling, which was not strictly rational, determined the natural affinities governing the quality of the ethnic contacts between different ethnoses.

Gumilev emphasised that most believers were ignorant of the intricate details of theological dogmas, but that this did not stop them from having firmly held beliefs. ‘They simply feel the phenomenon of a world view (mirooshchushchenie) of one or the other religions and choose that version [of a religious creed] which best suits their psychological disposition.’\(^307\) In Gumilev’s theory, a person’s ethnic identity was formed in the early stages of their life through behavioural mimicry of their family and friends. This identity had a non-voluntary nature and, once formed, it was impossible to change.

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\(^{306}\) Ot Rus do Rossii, p. 139.

\(^{307}\) Drevniaia Rus’, p. 552.
The choice of Orthodoxy in the ninth century was not, therefore, an accidental decision by Prince Vladimir; it was based on a deep psychological pre-disposition of Russians towards this religion. On this view, the preservation of Orthodoxy was the most important factor for Russian identity in the Middle Ages.

The alliance with the Mongols allowed Russia to preserve this most precious institution of the Orthodox Church, the safe-keeper of the unique Russian identity. In contrast to the Western Europeans, who were engaged at that time in religious crusades, the Mongols professed religious tolerance as a state policy. The Iasa of Genghis (Law Code) offered protection to any religion on condition of submission to the political authority of the Great Khan.

A residence of an Orthodox bishop was opened in Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde in 1260. According to Gumilev, the bishop of Sarai was seen as the representative of the whole of Russia. The Church estates were exempt from Mongol taxes while the Orthodox bishop, backed by the Mongol military force, often performed the role of mediator and arbiter between various warring factions in Russia. Gumilev contrasted the conditions of the Russian Church under Mongol rule with the experience of the Orthodox lands captured by the Catholic powers in Constantinople and the Orthodox provinces under Polish-Lithuanian rule. He pointed out that Orthodox institutions were not in a privileged position under Catholic rule.

Russia also received military aid against the West’s aggression. Gumilev maintained that as soon as the Tatar forces became involved, the Crusaders were effectively stopped. In return for the tax which Alexander Nevskii pledged to pay Sarai, Rus received protection from a strong and reliable army. For example, in 1268 at the battle of Rakovor, Novgorod’s army defeated the allied forces of the Germans and the Danes. When reinforcements arrived from Europe with the aim of attacking Novgorod, the people of Novgorod called on their Mongol ally, and a cavalry force of five hundred Tatars arrived. The Germans did not dare to attack Novgorod while there was a Mongol force and had to abandon their aggressive plans against the Russian republic.

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In the same way as Novgorod was saved from the Germans, Smolensk preserved its independence from the Lithuanians by voluntarily accepting Mongol suzerainty (1274) in exchange for military protection. Gumilev argued that the alliance with the Horde gave North-East Russia a long desired peace and stability, while still preserving its ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{309}

'Russian principalities which accepted a union with the Horde completely preserved their ideological independence and political self-government. For example, after the victory of the Muslim faction in the Horde under khan Berke there were no demands for a Russian conversion into Islam. This alone shows that Rus was not a province of the Mongol Ulus but a country allied with the Great Khan, which paid him certain tax for the maintenance of the army which it needed.'\textsuperscript{310}

The submission to the Khans was just a formality, based on the diplomatic etiquette of the time.\textsuperscript{311} Gumilev argued that the benefits of Mongol protection became apparent by the middle of the fourteenth century. In this he seems to be supported by subsequent scholarship. For example, Ostrowski argued that following the apparent economic stagnation of the second half of the thirteenth century, Northern Rus in general, and North Eastern Rus in particular, displayed signs of recovery in the early fourteenth century, followed by a flourishing of the economy from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards.\textsuperscript{312}

Finally, Gumilev argued that the Tatars formed an important ethnic component in the emerging Great Russian superethnos.

'The population of Rus after 1241 was approximately 3.5 to 4 million people. The number of Tatars in the Horde was five times the number of its troops, i.e. around 1 million people. There are 170 million Russians at present to only 5 million Tatars. It is reasonable to assume that their growth coefficient was similar and, therefore, there should have been 40 million Tatars. Where are the [missing] 35

\textsuperscript{309} Ot Rusi do Rossi, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{310} Ot Rusi do Rossi, p. 134.
\textsuperscript{311} L. Gumilev, 'Menia nazyvaiut evraziitsem' (see note 25 above), p.135.
million, which were not exterminated by anyone? It is obvious that they are among 170 million of the Russians.\textsuperscript{313}

The rest of the Tatars did not merge with Russians because of Islam. This, in Gumilev’s view, pointed to the fact that the Kazan Tatars were the descendants of the Muslim Bolgars (\textit{musul’manskie bulgary}), rather than of the original Mongolian invaders.

The three factors of the preservation of Orthodoxy, protection from the West and ethnic intermixing created a system of co-operation which protected the nascent Russian ethnus in its early period, when it was at its weakest. Gumilev concluded that ‘The abortion by Alexander Nevskii of an attempted shift to the hostile West led to that system of ethnic contact which one should call symbiosis. The phase lasted until 1312 when Khan Uzbek adopted Islam as the state religion.’\textsuperscript{314} By that time, the growing \textit{passionarnost} of Russia allowed it to play an increasingly independent role in regional politics.

The importance of Gumilev’s analysis for understanding Russian history lies in his view of the Russian lands as part of the socio-political system of the Mongol empire. The formation of a Russian ethnus under these circumstances had important consequences for later Russian history. Although Gumilev’s arguments are often extreme and uncompromisingly anti-Western as well as favourable to the Mongols, his work on this subject had an important influence on the debate about Russian identity. Modern Russian historians of Russia’s relations with the Tataro-Mongols have to take Gumilev’s views into account. Krivosheev argues, for example, that Gumilev’s ideas on Russia’s relations with the Mongols can no longer be simply dismissed as ‘not serious’ or ‘unscholarly’.\textsuperscript{315} In this way, Gumilev helped to undermine the traditionally anti-Mongolian focus of Russian historiography.

\textsuperscript{313} Letter to P.N. Savitskii, end of January 1958, Savitskii archive.

\textsuperscript{314} \textit{Drevniaia Rus’}, p. 536.

3. The growth phase

Gumilev considered 1312, the year Khan Uzbek succeeded to the Horde’s throne and established Islam as the state religion, a turning point in Russia’s relation with the Horde. He also argued that at this time new social and ethnic forms began to take shape in North-East Russia, which eventually led to the emergence of the Great Russian ethnos. Gumilev emphasized three principal aspects of this process. First, he pointed to the increasing role of the Orthodox Church in this period, in particular, the role of such leaders as Sergei of Radonezh and the metropolitan Alexei. Second, Gumilev stressed the importance of a new system of \textit{kormlenie} which increased the military potential of Moscow. Third, he argued that from the reign of Ivan Kalita onwards, a new policy of ethnic tolerance emerged. These three factors were responsible for the rise of Moscow, which from this time becomes the centre of the new Great Russian ethnos.

3.1 The role of the Church

The Church played the most prominent role in the creation of the new Great Russian ethnus. When in the beginning of the fourteenth century Kievan Rus finally sank into oblivion, there was neither political nor ethnic unity in Russia, as the old system of power relations between various social and ethnic groups had finally collapsed. The former centres of power along the Dnepr basin were replaced by new centres such as Tver, Smolensk, Riazan, Nizhnii Novgorod, and Moscow in the North East. There was, however, no unity among these new centres. In these circumstances, the Church was the only surviving social institution of Ancient Rus which still provided opportunities to \textit{passionarii} for self-realization. This was why ‘neither Moscow, nor Tver, nor Novgorod, but the Russian Orthodox Church as a social institution became the bearer of the hopes and aspirations of all Russian people irrespective of their sympathies to particular princes.’\textsuperscript{316}

In this context, Gumilev analyzed the growth of Orthodoxy in Russia in the fourteenth century. He argued that in the Kievan period there was a strong pagan element

\textsuperscript{316} \textit{Drevniaia Rus’}, p. 551.
in society, while Christianity was spread primarily in the cities and among the social elite. He argued that the ratio of Christians to pagans was steadily increasing in favour of Orthodoxy. This was due to the fact that, on the one hand, pagan *passionarii* who could not make a career in Rus had an option of serving the Mongols, and on the other hand, to the fact that ‘the Orthodox *passionarii* stayed at home protecting the “Holy Rus”. Over a hundred years, this process bore results. The Russian lands became Christian with elements of a dual faith, in which [non-Christian elements] did not have a socio-political importance.317

In this new spiritual climate, the old Byzantine ascetic tradition of hesychasm, which had originated on Mount Athos in Greece, began to spread in Russia. It held that a person was capable of entering into a direct, personal contact with energies emanating from God. Religion should, therefore, be based on the experience of communication with God, rather than on logical premises as was the case with theology and philosophy. Hesychast monks were distinguished by their constant concentration and meditation: the name ‘hesychasm’ comes from the Greek word for ‘being silent’ or ‘being at rest’.318

In the fourteenth century, when Byzantium was under the threat of Ottoman invasion, attempts were made at a rapprochement with the Roman Church. The ideological leaders of this policy were Byzantine theologians with a humanistic bent, who were opposed by the hesychasts within the Orthodox Church. In the theological disputes of the mid-fourteenth century, the hesychast movement was the upholder of the Orthodox traditions. Its adherents advocated a policy of religious and political independence from the Latin West.319

Gumilev argued that Athos was the centre of an ideological alternative to Constantinople’s policies of rapprochement with the Latin Church, and because Athos opposed union with the West, hesychasm became popular amongst Russians. The growth of hesychast monastic centres in the fourteenth century, the most famous of which was the Monastery of the Holy Trinity founded by Sergii of Radonezh in 1337, had far-reaching consequences. Gumilev argued that with the spread of the Orthodox *skits* and

317 *Drevniaia Rus’,* p. 559.
319 *Povest’ o Mitiae*, pp. 8–13.
the growth of their authority, 'people began to believe that Orthodox Russia could sustain itself without having to rely on the Tatars or the Lithuanians.' In this way, 'the growing passionarnost' of Russians was directed by the Orthodox religion towards the goal of building Holy Russia.\(^\text{320}\)

Under these circumstances, Moscow was able to assume the initiative in foreign and internal politics. This was in dramatic contrast to the Byzantines, who had to rely on the Turks or the Italians to maintain their independence. Gumilev treated this as an example of the difference between different stages of ethnogenesis, specifically, the phase of obscurity then being experienced by the Byzantines and the growth phase the Russians were undergoing.

According to the theory of ethnogenesis, a new process of ethnogenesis always manifested itself in a breaking-up of old social structures and behavioural stereotypes. This process of the destruction of the old and the emergence of new social institutions and behavioural stereotypes was relatively smooth in fourteenth century Russia. This was in part due to the old right of departure according to which people of all social ranks could change their lord by moving to a different province. In these circumstances, 'the rise of passionarnost' made subordination a voluntary matter, while the notion of high treason became absurd, since people considered themselves free and rulers did not have power to restrain the freedom-loving Russians.\(^\text{321}\)

The only force which kept together the new emerging ethnic system was the Orthodox Church, for 'religious apostasy was considered as an exit from the system, as treason.'\(^\text{322}\) In these circumstances, an alliance of the metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus with Moscow was the key to Moscow’s fourteenth-century rise. 'The unity which was so much needed by the growing ethnos was achieved by means of a universal veneration of the Church or, as one would say in the twentieth century, through the unity of ideology.'\(^\text{323}\) Gumilev argued that the political system which emerged in fourteenth century Russia was a theocracy.

\(^{\text{320}}\) Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 150.
\(^{\text{321}}\) Drevniaia Rus', p. 563.
\(^{\text{322}}\) Drevniaia Rus', p. 564.
\(^{\text{323}}\) Drevniaia Rus', p. 564.
3.2 The ascent of Moscow

A decisive event for the Church’s relations with Moscow was the acquittal of the metropolitan Petr, falsely accused of simony by the supporters of Grand Prince Mikhail of Tver. After his acquittal at the council in Pereslavl-Zalesskii in 1311, the relationship of the metropolitan of Kiev with Prince Mikhail of Tver became more strained and Petr increasingly favoured Moscow over other Russian principalities. Under Mikhail’s successors Tver sought an alliance with the pagan Lithuania. This strengthened Church support of Moscow, which maintained a traditional alliance with the Horde. The new metropolitan, Feognost, officially moved his residence to Moscow in 1326, which greatly increased Moscow’s status.

As Moscow was increasingly identified with the metropolitan, Gumilev argued that the solution to the idea of Russian unification became self-evident. ‘All lands populated by the Orthodox [people] should be under the great prince of Vladimir’s rule, while local autonomies were to be preserved and the relations between principalities were to be fixed by treaties. This situation was typical of an emerging superethnos.’ In this context, the main reason for the emergence of Moscow as the centre of the new Russian ethnus was Moscow’s ability to attract a new generation of energetic and principled passionarii from other Russian territories and unite them with the Orthodox faith.

The main achievement of Ivan Kalita, which in Gumilev’s view had not been sufficiently appreciated by traditional historiography, was the final realization of a new principle of the organization of the state, namely ethnic tolerance. Gumilev argued that in Moscow, selection for state service was on merits rather than ethnicity. The Tatars who fled from the increasingly stringent Muslim order in the Horde, Orthodox Lithuanians fleeing from Catholic oppression, and landless Russians nobles who wished to serve in Moscow, were all accepted into Moscow’s service.

In this system, the people who arrived in the service of the princes of Moscow ‘sought to take on state duties, for carrying out which they received pay, rather than protection of rights which they did not have,’ as they were landless people from outside Moscow’s realm. In this way they could realize their ideal of protecting Orthodoxy, and

324 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 565.
had a sufficient livelihood guaranteed by the right of departure. As it was in the state's interests to keep them satisfied, the state kept its promises. As a result, there was an abundance of passionarii at its service. This system, foreign to the West, was so attractive that Tatars who did not wish to convert to Islam, Lithuanians who did not sympathise with Catholicism, and many other Orthodox people of Eastern Europe came to serve Moscow. 325

Gumilev argued that 'already under Ivan Kalita the newly formed ethnus, the Muscovites, began to differentiate themselves from the populations of other cities and principalities, and started to aspire to the role of arbitrator in all-Russian disputes.' 326 An example of this tendency was a deliberate subversion of Tver's reputation by accusing it of pro-Lithuanian sympathies. This policy, which was representative of Moscow's aspiration to the leadership and consolidation of Russia, continued after the death of Ivan Kalita in 1340. Gumilev argued that the fact the descendants of Kalita, Semen I and Ivan Krasnyi were not naturally bright rulers was a blessing in disguise as the initiative was taken by passionarii boyars and above all clerics, the dominant force in Moscow politics in the mid-fourteenth century.

The Church reached the height of its power in the fourteenth century under the Metropolitan Aleksei, 'who was for Russia what Abbot Sugerius was for France, Gregory VII for the Roman Church, Solon for Athens, Zarathustra for Iran.' 327 Gumilev argued that the Metropolitan Aleksei became the de facto head of the Moscow state after the death of Ivan Kalita, while continuing to wield considerable authority over all Russian Orthodox princes because of his metropolitan status. Under Aleksei's leadership, Moscow became 'a unifying theocratic monarchy.'

This view is disputed by Skrynnikov, who convincingly argued that Aleksei's influence was tempered by the boyars, who held considerable powers in Moscow. 328 Skrynnikov agreed, however, that Aleksei placed the Church's policy under the influence of Moscow's princes more openly and consistently than was the case under his

325 Gumilev, 'Epokha Kulikovskoi bitvy', p. 17.
326 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 152.
327 Drevniaia Rus', p. 569.
predecessors. Gumilev argued that 'the union between the metropolitan and the Moscow state which was ruled by the 'old boyars' – relatives of Aleksei – was equally necessary for both of them.' Although Gumilev overstated the role of the metropolitan Aleksei, his arguments were valuable in their emphasis on the importance of the role of Church in the early history of Russia.

The rise of Moscow was inadvertently boosted by a natural disaster which struck western Eurasia in the middle of the fourteenth century. The plague epidemic of the 1350s had a considerable impact on the development of the Russian ethnos. In Gumilev's view, the real hindrance to the new generation of passionaries were the upholders of the traditions of local independence inherited from Ancient Rus. They were preventing the triumph of the new behavioural stereotype championed by the active part of the population. As a result of the plague epidemic in 1353, passionaries had an advantage because they were better capable of overcoming the despair inflicted by the plague. 'They restored life, spread their genes in the population and in 25 years a new rise occurred.'

It is useful to note how Gumilev characterized the difference in attitudes between new Russia and old Rus. As an example, he contrasted Moscow's policies with those of Suzdal's. Suzdal in the fourteenth century stood for the traditions of Ancient Rus. Like Moscow, Suzdal also had a tradition of close co-operation with the Mongols and supported the policies of Alexander Nevskii. In contrast to Moscow, however, Suzdal was against any changes in the political structure of the Russian states. Gumilev argued that Suzdal's princes, relying on the protection of the Mongols against external enemies, concentrated their efforts on the development of trade, while the Muscovites became the driving force behind the unification of Russia. The differences in their respective priorities reflected the difference in their passionarnost'. While Moscow was striving for an ideal of unification and for the protection of Orthodoxy, Suzdal was content with a narrow, short-term policy of commercial prosperity.

The difference in attitudes was also characteristic of their respective treatment of the Tatars. In Moscow, the Tatars were encouraged to take on the Orthodox religion and in the next generation were integrated into the Russian ethnos, while in Suzdal they kept

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329 Sviatiteli i vlasti, p.28.
330 Drevniaia Rus', pp. 568–69.
331 Drevniaia Rus', p. 568.
their old religion and remained a separate ethnos. In Gumilev’s view, Moscow was an example of a dynamic ethnos which was rapidly expanding and incorporating other peoples, while Suzdal was an example of a static ethnos which refused to adopt any behavioural or social innovations.

The role of the Church in this period was that of an intermediary between the Vladimir lands and the Horde at a time when the Lithuanians were pursuing an active policy of expansion into Russian lands. In these circumstances, the Tatars were the only adequate adversary who had a genuine interest in stopping Lithuanian aggression against Russia. Furthermore, under the leadership of the metropolitan, the Church actively pursued a policy of Muscovite aggrandisement. The metropolitan Aleksei annexed to Moscow Rostov, Galich, Solamsk and even Vladimir...Even without Tatar support, the metropolitan managed to turn Moscow into the capital of a regenerated state, which from now should be called Russia (Rossiia).[^332]

One of the key moments in this process was the initiative of the metropolitan to procure a confirmation from the Horde of the hereditary right of Moscow princes to the title of ‘Great Prince’. Gumilev argued that ‘in this way, the political tradition of Kievan Rus was finally abolished. It was replaced by an absolutely new hereditary principle of a dynastic monarchy.’[^333] After the plague epidemic of 1353, Moscow became the focus of the Church’s efforts, which directed the organised passionarii elite of Great Russia towards the goal of unification. The theocracy ‘made Moscow the capital of Russia in twenty years without spilling a single drop of blood.’[^334] This period was Gumilev’s ideal model for Russian history.

[^332]: Drevniaia Rus', p. 571.
[^333]: Ot Rusi do Rossi, p. 157.
[^334]: Drevniaia Rus', p. 574.
3.3 The battle of Kulikovo: the beginning of the open growth phase

By the middle of the fourteenth century, the Horde was ridden by rivalries and rebellions. A particularly long period of instability lasted from 1357 to 1380. One of the factions was led by Mamai who, because he was not a descendant of Genghis Khan, could not formally assume the throne. In Gumilev’s view, Mamai was a rebel. Furthermore, Mamai was supported by the Genoese, who pursued an aggressive trading and ideological policy in Russia from their Crimean base at the city of Kafa. Mamai was also allied with Moscow’s main rival in the West, Lithuania, which in the second half of the fourteenth century was integrating into Catholic Europe.

When Tokhtamysh asserted a legitimate claim to the Horde’s throne in 1376, the rivalry between him and Mamai was brought into the open. In this situation Moscow chose the side of the lawful khan. Gumilev argued the conflict was not between Russia and the Golden Horde, as was traditionally thought, but between an international coalition of Catholic powers and the disparate nomad tribes under Mamai on one side, and Russian forces around Moscow and the Tatars under the leadership of Tokhtamysh on the other. In this way, the Battle of Kulikovo could be understood as a Russian fight against Western influence.

The importance which Moscow assumed in these circumstances was the consequence of Russia’s growing passionarnost’. By the end of the 1370s, a new generation of passionarii born in the aftermath of the 1353 plague epidemic came to the fore. Gumilev argued that the new generation led by prince Dmitrii wanted to reassert their leading position in Moscow. Opposed to Dmitrii’s policy of self-affirmation against Mamai were some representatives of the old generation who preferred to live peacefully under Mamai and Catholic influence. This was a ‘fathers and sons’ dispute, a generational conflict typical of a dynamic ethnos when a younger generation pursues more complex behavioural ideals than those of their ancestors.

335 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 571.
337 Drevniaia Rus’, p. 623.
The Church actively supported Dmitrii in his plans against Mamai. In fact, the Suzdal’s bishop Dionisii, a follower of Sergii of Radonezh, sparked the conflict with Mamai by refusing to receive his emissaries. Gumilev interpreted this conflict as having awoken national sentiment on an unprecedented scale because people understood that they were fighting to protect their identity as a new and distinct ethnos, or as he put it, ‘a principle on which one had to build daily life and ethics, a world view and aesthetics, in one word, all that which is today called an original cultural type.’ A symbolic sign of the importance of the battle against Mamai was the blessing given by Sergii of Radonezh to Prince Dmitrii, who opposed any increase of ‘Latin’ influence in Russia.

Gumilev believed that ‘in order for people to realise themselves as a unity, there had to be ‘a common historical fate which expressed itself in a common deed, an undertaking which required an extraordinary effort.’ The Battle of Kulikovo was such an event for the Russians: it marked the emergence of Muscovite Russia as ethnos. The ‘arrays of the people of Suzdal, Vladimir, Rostov, Pskov took the field of Kulikovo as representatives of their principalities but returned as the Russians.’ After the battle of Kulikovo, the new nation, Muscovite Rus, became a reality, ‘a fact of world historical importance.’

Gumilev’s interpretation of the Battle of Kulikovo was an important statement of the anti-Western standpoint in Russian historiography of the second half of the twentieth century. His views on this subject became influential in the 1980s and 1990s. Vadim Kozhinov, for example, developed Gumilev’s ideas on the Battle of Kulikovo in a number of articles, the most important of which was ‘“The Mongol epoch” in Russian history and the true meaning and significance of the Battle of Kulikovo’. At the end of the fourteenth century, Russian passionarnost’ was not sufficient to sever all political dependence on the Golden Horde. The sacking of Moscow by Tokhtamysh in 1382, a consequence of the intrigues of Suzdal princes resentful of Moscow’s successes, undermined relations between Moscow and the Horde. The

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340 Ot Rus do Rossii, p. 164.
sympathy for the Horde was gone for good, even though the Moscow authorities did not pursue the war with Tokhtamysh. Thus, by the end of the fourteenth century, 'the authority of the khan was still seen as something inevitable, but was already perceived as a liability which all Russians would happily get rid of, particularly as by the end of the fourteenth century the union with the Horde ceased to have its former benefits for Moscow.'\textsuperscript{342} Similarly, in ecclesiastical matters the Russian Church in the fourteenth century still relied on the guidance from the patriarch of Constantinople. The growing passionarnost' of the Russians, however, set the trend in their history towards becoming fully independent from all external influence.

On the western frontier, the Polish-Lithuanian victory at the Battle of Tannenberg (1410) laid to rest the power of the Teutonic Knights, while the Agreement of Horodlo (1413) united the Polish and Lithuanian nobilities and increased Catholic influence in Lithuania, thus exacerbating tensions with the Orthodox population still under Lithuanian rule. In the 1440s the Grand Duke of Lithuania also became King of Poland and Lithuania finally became a fully fledged Catholic state. Gumilev argued that the Lithuanian failure to become the champion of the Orthodox faith ultimately determined the contest with Vilnius over the succession of Kievan Rus in favour of Moscow.

By the middle of the fifteenth century, Moscow had established itself as the leader of the Orthodox world. The Russian Metropolitan Isidor supported the decisions of the Council of Florence (1438–39) which established a union between the Orthodox Church and Rome. On his return to Moscow, Isidor was removed from his post and imprisoned for treason against Orthodoxy. A new metropolitan was elected by a council of Russian bishops. This was an unprecedented event in Russian history, as all previous metropolitans had been appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople.

Gumilev argued, therefore, that at this time 'the very pattern of politico-ecclesiastical views of the Russians changed. While before it had been considered the norm to accept Greek authority in matters of faith, now they [the Russians] thought it possible to claim independence for their Church. In its ethnic aspect, this meant that the passionarnost' of Russia had considerably surpassed the level of an ethnos.'\textsuperscript{343}

\textsuperscript{342} \textit{Ot Rusi do Rossii}, p. 167.
\textsuperscript{343} \textit{Ot Rusi do Rossii}, p. 183.
Moscow's diminishing reliance on Greek guidance in spiritual matters, as demonstrated by the election of Iona, reflected the rising passionarnost' of Muscovy. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453, Moscow became the only independent Orthodox realm in the world. This fact had a profound impact on the Russian national consciousness. The only hindrance to becoming a superethnos was Moscow's status as a vassal of the Golden Horde.

Under Vasilii I (1389–1425), there was an economic upturn, demographic growth and a flourishing of the arts accompanied by successes in foreign policy, for example against Khan Edygei and Prince Vitovt of Lithuania. Gumilev's theory interpreted these developments as evidence of the growth phase. Vasilii I was the first prince to succeed to the Moscow throne under the rule of primogeniture, exemplifying the way in which the new stereotype was replacing the old lestvichestvo system of inheritance prevalent in Kievan Rus.

It was, however, in the reign of Vasilii II (1425–62) that the old traditions of the Kievan Rus were finally defeated. It is in this context that Gumilev saw the feudal war of Vasilii Temnyi with Iurii Dmitrievich (the brother of Vasilii I, who should have succeeded to the throne under the Kievan system of inheritance) and his sons, Vasilii and Dmitrii Shemiaka. Gumilev argued that 'Shemiaka lost because the people and the army preferred the new order, i.e. the new behavioural stereotype, to the old, traditional one.'

The system introduced under Ivan Kalita, and based on state service to the Grand Prince, became the dominant force in the Russian state. This process became evident in the spread of the pomest'e system, which by the early sixteenth century was widespread in the Muscovite state. No single event marked the end of the old system. Kobrin, for example, argues that the process of substituting pomest'e, a system of landholding conditional on the holder's service to the Grand Prince, for votchina (appanages), the traditional unalienable right of nobility to their land, was a long and gradual one.

Although the practical importance of the appanages was negligible by the mid-sixteenth century, they were formally abolished only in 1598 with the expiration of the

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344 *Drevniaia Rus*', p. 678.
345 V.V. Kobrin, 'Stanovlenie pomestnoi sistemy', *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 105, 1980, p. 164.
Riurik dynasty. Gumilev was, however, right in pointing to the general trend which resulted in the system of absolutist government characteristic of Muscovite Russia and in contrasting it with the decentralized political system characteristic of Kievan Rus. He cited it as one of the multitude of behavioural stereotypes which distinguished Russia from Kievan Rus.

Vasilii II actively used Tatar forces, some of whom permanently settled in Moscow’s dominions. An example of this policy was the establishment of the Kasimov principality, which maintained its distinct ethnic character for a long time, including the retention of Islam. The general rule was, however, for the Tatars to integrate into Russian society by converting to the Orthodox faith and marrying Russians.

In the theory of ethnogenesis, the incorporation and assimilation of other peoples was characteristic of a growing ethnos. Gumilev argued that the Great Russians emerged as a combination of the Slavs, the Finno-Ugric tribes and the Tatars in the period from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, which was its growth phase. The special stress on the Tatar element, characteristic of Gumilev’s work on this issue, undoubtedly reflected his personal commitments.

### 3.4 The end of the growth phase

The final period of the growth phase of the Great Russian ethnogenesis coincided with the reign of Ivan III (1462–1505). The two principal events in this period were the annexation of the Novgorod Republic to Moscow and the collapse of the last remains of the Golden Horde. In Gumilev’s view, these events were a natural development of the processes underway in Russia from the thirteenth century.

In 1471, a powerful coalition of Lithuania, Novgorod, and the remains of the Horde was formed against Moscow. Ivan III counterbalanced the threat to Moscow by making an alliance with the Crimean Khan Mengli-Girei in 1473. Gumilev argued that the Muscovites saw Novgorod’s alliance with Lithuania as a betrayal of the Orthodox religion and the all-Russian cause. The expedition against Novgorod in 1473 was likened

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347 Gumilev, ‘Menia nazyvaiut evraziitsem’, p. 139.
by the Muscovites to Dmitrii Donskoi’s struggle against Mamai. Gumilev took it as
evidence that the new Muscovite ethnus had ceased to see the Novgorod people as
fellow-countrymen.

Although Novgorod was forced to renounce its alliance with Lithuania, the
presence of the strong anti-Muscovite coalition meant that Moscow’s hold over
Novgorod was not secure. That is why the goal of Ivan III’s policy was the complete
abolition of Novgorod’s independence and the overthrow of the Golden Horde. In 1478
Novgorod was finally annexed to Moscow. Many noble families were resettled to
Moscow and the vechevoi bell, the ancient symbol of Novgorod’s freedom and the
Kievan political system, was taken to Moscow.

‘Novgorod is a brilliant example of a death of an ethnic system, when the actual
people who constitute that ethnus did not die themselves. The individual people
became members of the new ethnus, while a certain original system of behaviour,
which previously kept these people together, disappeared. With the collapse of
Novgorod’s independence the behavioural stereotypes typical of vechevaia Rus
were also destroyed.’ 348

In this way, the new behavioural stereotype based around the centralised government
under the autocracy of the Grand Prince of Moscow triumphed over the old Kievan
system of independent principalities.

From the point of view of the theory of ethnogenesis, the collapse of Tatar rule
after the Battle of Ugra (1480) marked the beginning of Russia’s existence as a
superethnos. Gumilev argued that Ugra did not represent the ‘overthrow of the Tatar
yoke’ as traditional historiography maintained but a re-arrangement of political-military
alliances in the Steppe. From the times of Vasilii II, parts of the Horde were being
included in the Muscovite realm, while tributes to Sarai had ceased to be paid long before
that. This battle marked the end of Russia’s role as a formally subordinate member of the
Horde and its emergence as the fully independent successor to the Mongol empire.

In 1502, the Golden Horde finally collapsed. After the death of the Kazimir in
1492, an internal crisis ensued in Lithuania, and Moscow took advantage by annexing the
Seversk lands in the upper regions of Oka. With the annexation of Pskov, Chernigov and

348 Ot Russi do Rossii, p. 192.
Riazan in the early sixteenth century, Russia became a unified country. The Tatar kingdoms in the south and the east were too weak to challenge the increasingly strong Moscow state, while Poland-Lithuania was weakened by its wars with the Ottoman Empire, and the rest of Europe was undergoing the crisis phase of its ethnogenesis represented by the Reformation.

By the early sixteenth century, the Grand Prince of Moscow was ready to assume the title of the Grand Prince of All Russia, as all the lands of Kievan Rus with the exception of the lands occupied by Poland were under Moscow's sovereignty. The reign of Ivan III marked the end of the growth phase of Russian ethnogenesis and the beginning of its acme phase. Gumilev stressed that the rise of Moscow was the result of a new passionary impulse which created a new ethnos of Great Russians (velikorossy), who possessed an original behavioural stereotype distinct from that of Kievan Rus.

4. The acme phase

As Russia advanced into the acme phase, the behavioural ideals of the Russians changed. The unification and protection of the country which had established and affirmed Russia as a distinct superethnos was already achieved, but the numbers in Russia of passionarii motivated by the ideal of victory and who sought to establish and affirm their distinctness were still increasing. As a result of this growth of passionarnost' in the acme phase, in addition to the characteristic external expansion, there was an increased number of internal conflicts.

In the theory of ethnogenesis, each phase has unique behavioural imperatives. These are expressed in the way an individual sees himself vis-à-vis society or, in other words, each phase of ethnogenesis has a dominant ideal of behaviour which passionaries follow. For example, in the growth phase the ideal was a person who carried out his duty, which in Russia's case was the protection of Orthodoxy and bringing the lands of old Rus under the authority of Moscow. The behavioural imperative of the growth phase was 'be

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349 The exact dates for the acme phase come from conversations with V.Ermolaev, St Petersburg, Summer, 2004. These dates were generally accepted by Gumilev and his circle as the correct ones for the Russian acme phase.
whom you must be’, i.e. a diligent performance of one’s duty for which a person did not expect any extra reward was the required behavioural norm.

The higher level of passionarnost’ in the acme phase, however, meant that people had higher ambitions. One was no longer content to carry out one’s duty but also wanted recognition, an attitude characteristic of the ideal of victory. In terms of behavioural imperatives it was formulated as ‘be yourself’, i.e. recognition of individuality was a necessary component. Gumilev argued that people in sixteenth century Russia, unlike their ancestors in the growth phase, wanted to stand out from the crowd. ‘It was no longer enough to be a prince in the service of the state, but one also had to be Prince Shuiskii, not just a tsar’s okol’nichii but Godunov, instead of being a Cossack one had to be Ermak Timofeevich.’

This psychological shift to increased individualism was one of the main characteristics of the new phase of ethnogenesis. As Gumilev put it, ‘the role model was not a person who performed his duty, but a person who triumphed over his rivals and circumstances.’

4.1 The first peak of the acme phase

In practical terms, the rising passionarnost’ of the Russian superethnos was visible in the increase in the numbers of those who were not content to live the life of their ancestors but wanted to achieve glory and power, for which the principal means was state service. That was why, argued Gumilev, the most active part of the population went to Moscow. The government’s policy of relocating potential troublemakers among the nobility also led to the increase in the passionarnost’ of the capital.

Other passionarii migrated to the frontiers of the realm. As the frontiers were very turbulent, there were many chances to expend their excessive energies in achieving glory and wealth. In many ways, this process was advantageous to the state, since the protection of its borders was one of the main concerns of Russia until the eighteenth century, when it finally reached its naturally defensible frontiers. The presence of

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350 *Ot Rusi do Rossii*, p. 197. Prince Shuiskii was the leading member of the Boyar Duma in the sixteenth century and was crowned Tsar in the Time of Troubles (1606–10). Boris Godunov was Tsar of Russia (1598–1604) after death of the last member of the Riurik dynasty. Ermak (c.1540–85) was a Cossack leader who pioneered the Russian conquest of Siberia.

351 *Ot Rusi do Rossii*, p. 197.
numerous passionarii at the borders led to the emergence of numerous sub-ethnoses, some of whom eventually became a separate ethnos known to history as the Cossacks. This was an example of ethnic diversification, regarded by Gumilev one of the main characteristics of the acme phase.

Another direction of passionary activity in the sixteenth century was ecclesiastical. Passionarnost' expressed itself in the capacity to form and sustain ideals or goals of various degrees of complexity. The highest passionary ideal of sacrifice led to theoretical disputes within the Church between the ‘nonpossessors’ and ‘possessors’ (nestiazhateli and iosifliane). Their disputes were not just over the issue of monastic landowning, but related to fundamental questions of the religious life and church-state relations. The nonpossessors advocated the old hesychast ideals of asceticism and contemplation, and argued that the Church did not need to be wealthy or have any special association with an earthly ruler. The possessors, on the other hand, advocated a closer alliance with the state through which it could guide people to the ways of righteousness and stamp out any heresy.352

The possessors, whose attitudes better fitted into the acme phase, triumphed over their opponents. They formed an alliance with the Russian state in return for the preservation of monastic holdings. They further advanced the idea of ‘Moscow the Third Rome’, which maintained that Russia had a special destiny as the only independent Orthodox power. After the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans, Russia was the inheritor of both the Roman Empire and true Christianity. Hosking argues that although this doctrine did not have clear expression in secular policy, ‘it had considerable popular appeal and inculcated among ordinary Orthodox believers the conviction that their country had a special and exclusive mission to fulfil in the world.’353

The contrast between Moscow, the small city-state under the political and military control of the Golden Horde and the ecclesiastical guardianship of Constantinople in the fourteenth century, and ‘Moscow the Third Rome’ with pretensions to a unique role in the world in the sixteenth century, was stark. Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis, in applying the concept of passionarnost’ to Russian history, tried to explain this change.

353 Russia and the Russians, p. 107.
While many of his arguments can be questioned, its strength lies in pointing to the long-term magnitude of the historical change involved.

*Passionarnost'* grew in the Russian superethnos throughout the first half of the sixteenth century. Its highest point was marked by the Church council of 1551, known as Stoglavyi sobor, which reflected the dominant desire of the Russian people of the time for personal salvation. Stoglavyi sobor formulated the highest passionary ideal of self-sacrifice. The council’s aim was ‘directed at the strengthening of the moral authority of the Church over society. ‘354 Stoglavyi sobor took place in an atmosphere of religious elevation and, as Gumilev’s contemporary Vernadskii pointed out, exerted an immense authority on Russians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

In foreign policy the first *passionarii* peak of the acme phase resulted in the annexation of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556). Gumilev considered the conquest of Kazan as the only truly bloody episode in the Russian advance to the east.355 In 1558 Moscow started the Livonian War, the first attempt by the Russians not just to defend themselves against the West, but to annex and settle a Western territory. This was an important step in Russian history, indicating Russian *passionarnost*’ was at a high level.

In 1566, Zemskii sobor was called to discuss Polish-Lithuanian peace proposals. Zemskii sobor consisted of the members of the Boyar Duma, the clergy, representatives of the gentry, government officials and rich merchants. It rejected Polish-Lithuanian peace proposals over Livonia and assured the government that the country was prepared to make new sacrifices for a final annexation of Livonia.356 These aggressive and ambitious attitudes of the leading classes of society represented the high *passionarnost*’ of the time.

At this time Russian advance into Siberia began. Typically for the acme phase, the settlement of Siberia was carried out on the private initiative of the Cossacks and the Russians, rather than being centrally organized by the state. People like the Stroganov brothers and Ermak, who were at the forefront of the Russian advance into Siberia, were the passionary forces of the Russian superethnos. Siberia offered ample opportunity to expend their *passionarnost*’ in the pursuit of wealth and freedom.

354 Sviatiteli i vlasti, p. 176.
355 Ot Russi do Rossii, p. 207.
In Gumilev’s view, the main reason for the successful settlement of Siberia was the ability of the Russians to establish good relations with the indigenous population. ‘Anybody who has the most basic knowledge of Russian history will see that the joining of Siberia would have been impossible without voluntary consent and mutual trust. To doubt this fact is to undermine the ethnic axis of Russian statehood.’ He argued that the local people were able to live their lives as they had done before the arrival of the Russians, who did not want to convert the locals to Christianity or to change their way of life.

Gumilev claimed that the indigenous population of Siberia had a right to hold any posts in the Russian state. This attitude was the extension of the principle of ethnic tolerance of the fourteenth century. He argued that ‘the Russians saw in the [indigenous] Siberians a people equal to themselves and if they [the Siberians] accepted Russian authority, they automatically became equal members of society, i.e. of the state.’

Siberian tribes had to pay a tribute to the Russians, particularly in fur, a highly valuable commodity at the time, a light burden compared with contemporary Anglo-Saxon treatment of the Indians in America. He argued that Russians were naturally more inclined to respect other people’s right to their own way of life, inherent in the unique Russian behavioural stereotype. This made the conquest of Siberia an easy and peaceful process.

Gumilev’s view of Russian advancement in Siberia was very idealistic. Forsyth argues that in fact there were significant tensions and even open conflicts between the Cossacks and the indigenous population of Siberia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For example, the Samoyed wars of 1662–63 showed that ‘the annexation of the northern part of Western Siberia was by no means a peaceful or voluntary matter, but a campaign as violent and ruthless on the part of the conquerors as those carried out in any other colonial empire.’

Ermak, one of the most famous Russian pioneers of Siberia, was killed in a battle with the Siberian Tatars. Of course, the Samoyed Wars were not completely representative of the Russian colonization of Siberia and the Russians were...

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358 Gumilev, ‘Menia nazyvat evrazitsem’, p. 140.
able to establish good relations with at least some of the peoples they encountered. Nevertheless, Gumilev’s view of Russian advancement to Siberia as trouble-free is very simplified and idealistic.

Gumilev had a special view of oprichnina as an ‘anti-system’. Anti-systems in Gumilev’s philosophy consisted of those groups of people who adhered to ‘a negative world view’, i.e. they perceived the material world as evil. Anti-systems emerged as a result of close contacts between two superethnoses, one of which was in the acme phase. In Russia’s case, this was due to contact with the Western superethnos. Among the examples of ‘anti-systems’ Gumilev provided were the Cathars in France, the Bogumils in Byzantium, the Manichaeans, and the Gnostics. In Russia, the anti-system phenomenon was represented by the strigol’niki, the judaizers and, most importantly, by the oprichnina.

Gumilev argued that the essence of the oprichnina was a series of unprecedented and meaningless murders for the sake of murder. Furthermore, despite the apparent monstrosity of their policies, the oprichniki were convinced of their own righteousness. This, in Gumilev’s view, is a characteristic sign of an anti-system in which ‘the evil’ typically replaces ‘the good’ in people’s core beliefs.360

The ideas about oprichnina as an ‘anti-system’ reflected Gumilev’s religious beliefs; they do not fit well with the theory of ethnogenesis, which has a strong positivist bias.361 From the point of view of ethnogenesis, the division of Russia into zemshchina and oprichina could also be interpreted as a tendency of falling passionarnost’, rather than an ‘anti-system’. This tendency became later evident in the passionarii depression of the Times of Trouble.

In contrast to Gumilev, Skrynnikov argued that the early oprichnina measures (1564–66) had a distinct anti-boyar bent. The exile of the Suzdal aristocracy to Kazan had a devastating impact from which they never fully recovered.362 The confiscations of votchins were unlawful from the point of view of the traditions of the old Rus. Ivan the Terrible was then attempting to establish his absolute authority, which in itself was a distinct feature of the new Russian superethnos.

360 Ot Rusi do Rossii, pp. 212–15.
361 See p. 102 for the more detailed discussion of the concept of anti-system.
362 Ivan Groznyi, p. 114.
4.2 The first passionary depression of the acme phase

With the death of Ivan the Terrible (1584) the first peak of the acme phase came to an end. Although the overall levels of *passionarnost* were very high, it began to fall in the second half of his reign. This had a profound effect on the future development of Russia.

An ostensible reason for False Dmitrii’s wide support was the unpopularity of Godunov’s rule. There was, however, a specific ethnic aspect to the Troubles. Gumilev argued that the most pronounced support for the anti-Muscovite movement came from Seversk region, the Don Cossacks and the Riazan nobility. The Cossacks and the Seversk people, as distinct ethnoes in the Russian superethnos, were opposed to the Great Russians. The Riazan nobility was the elite of the frontier troops and represented a southern Russian subethnos. The central regions were passive throughout the Time of Troubles because their passionary energy was exhausted in the oprichnina massacres, the wars in Livonia and in the east. The border territories were, on the other hand, largely spared in the oprichnina and the great efforts of the Livonian War. They had, therefore, more *passionarnost* than the centre.

The Bolotnikov uprising, which in the Soviet historiography was considered to be one of the great peasant insurrections in the class struggle of Russian history, was in Gumilev’s view the struggle of the three Russian subethnoses (the Seversk people, the Don Cossacks, and the Riazan nobility respectively) against the Great Russians. The Time of Trouble was, therefore, a struggle for the supremacy between northern and southern ethnoes of the Russian superethnos. The disintegration of the previously strong and aggressive Russian state and the ensuing chaos of the Time of Troubles was a result of a passionary depression, i.e. a sharp fall of passionary people, which followed the passionary ‘overheating’ in the middle of the sixteenth century.

The events of the Times of Trouble were further complicated by the intervention of the foreign powers, i.e. of Poland and in a later stage Sweden. The failure of the Poles to impose on the Russians a Polish tsar was the consequences of the differences between the European and Russian superethnoes, rather than of religious or political matters. For

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363 *Ot Rusi do Rossii*, p. 220.
example, the Poles accepted Sigizmund Vasa as their king without any difficulty, in spite of the fact that he was formerly a king of Sweden, which was Poland’s political rival. His son Vladislav, on the other hand, could not stay on the Russian throne despite support from the top boyars. The idea of a tsar from a different superethnos was too abhorrent to the Russian mind.

By the end of the Time of Troubles passionarnost’ was only left in the north-east of Russia. That was why the national revival came from Nizhnii Novgorod, where the army was formed under the leadership of Minin and Prince Pozharskii with a goal of liberating Moscow from the Polish occupation. Gumilev pointed out that the main moving force of ethnogenesis was not the leaders with big names, like Minin and Pozharskii, but the simple folk who by their ‘personal example and enthusiasm, rather than through orders, induced more inert people to perform the necessary action. But a coordinated, purposeful action was possible only when Russian passionarnost’ changed its trend towards growth and people could be sufficiently organized. The change of the trend in passionarnost’ produced that general attitude among the victors which made possible the election of a neutral tsar Mikhail Romanov in 1613. In the Time of Trouble Russia expended excessive energy in this internal conflict and freed from the negative effects of the oprichnina.

The relative tranquillity of the first Romanov’s reign was a consequence of the great expenditure of passionary energy in the previous century. In Gumilev’s theory, the period from the death of Ivan III in 1505 to the election of Mikhail Romanov in 1613 was the first period in the acme phase of Russian ethnogenesis. In the first half of this period passionarnost’ was increasing, by the middle of the sixteenth century it reached its climax which also coincided with the reign of Ivan the Terrible. After that passionarnost’ began to decline and reached its lowest point during the Time of Troubles. By levels of passionarnost’ Gumilev understood the number of passionary people in the ethnos, i.e. people with complex ideals such as the ideal of victory and sacrifice, which was characteristic of the acme phase.

364 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 231.
365 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 235.
The Time of Troubles was not, therefore, 'an accident, and all that spilt blood, all those fires which burnt our lands, were the consequences of passionary depression after overheating in the middle of the sixteenth century.' In the first quarter of the seventeenth century Russian passionarnost' began to grow again and the superethnos regained the pre-Troubles levels of passionarnost'.

4.3 The second peak of passionarnost' and the unification with Ukraine

The election of Filaret Romanov as patriarch in 1619 marked the end of the passionary depression. The measures taken for the strengthening of the state and society in the reign of Mikhail Romanov and the patriarchate of Filaret (d. 1634) were indicative of the rising passionarnost' of Russian superethnos. The capture of the Ottoman fortress of Azov by the Cossacks in 1637 was characteristic of this trend. This event was typical of the acme phase, when advances were made through spontaneous actions of irregular forces rather than planned by the government.

The reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich (1645–72) coincided with the second peak of passionarnost' in the Russian ethnogenesis. A new law code was accepted by the zemskii sobor in 1649 which replaced the Sudebnik of 1550. The Russian expansion into Siberia continued in the seventeenth century. In 1648 the first Russian settlement on the Pacific was founded. By the middle of the seventeenth century there again was an illusion that the country was stabilized. 'It seemed that Russia again became “the Holy Rus”, the last stronghold of the ecumenical Orthodoxy.'

An example of high passionarnost' at that time was the visit to Moscow by the patriarch of Antioch, Makarii, which took place in the mid-1650s. His son described the patriarch's visit and mentioned their astonishment at the requirements of the Russian Church service compared with the rites of the Eastern Church. He and his father were 'dying from exhaustion', while the Muscovites were carrying on with the service. The Muscovites 'surpassed [by their piety] holy men in the desert.' Complex requirements

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366 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 235.
368 Russkaia kul'tura, pp. 108–09.
for personal and social behaviour and a high regard for abstract ideals are characteristic of passionarnost'.

Characteristic of the high passionarnost' of the Russians at this time was Kapiton's movement, which flourished in the forests around Kostroma and Viaz'ma from 1630s to 1660s. Kapiton, the leader of the movement, was an extremely ascetic person. He used to wear heavy stone plates all the time and slept by hanging from the ceiling from a rope around his waist. Kapiton and his followers kept a constant strict fast, while in later stages of the movement he preached a voluntary starvation as the only way to save one's soul. Panchenko argues that this should not be seen as an isolated case. This movement attracted many followers from all classes of society. Thus, well before the collective self-immolations of the Old Believers, there were many heresies similar to Kapiton's. Such movements represented the highest passionary ideal of self-sacrifice, when an abstract ideal became more important than a person's own life.

In foreign policy, the central question for the Russians in the middle of the seventeenth century was the unification with the Ukraine. Gumilev put forward the following view of Ukrainian ethnic history. The Ukrainian ethnus was a fusion between the remains of the Kievan Slavs and the Christianized descendants of the Cumans. Passionaries from other regions who did not like the harsh burden of Moscow's order or their lack of rights under Polish rule had fled to the southern frontiers where they married local Orthodox women of the Cuman descent and in a few hundred years emerged as the Ukrainian ethnus. The Ukrainians, like the Russians, had certain amount of nomad blood in them.

The Ukrainian position under Polish rule was made difficult by their religious differences. Gumilev argued that the Poles were less tolerant towards their Orthodox subjects than towards other Christian confessions, for example the Protestants. The Orthodox Russian gentry was not allowed to serve on the same conditions as its Catholic counterparts, while the Orthodox merchants were being ousted from their trade by the Jews, who also served as tax-collectors for the Polish landlords.

369 Russkaia kul'tura, p. 23–24.
After the Union of Brest (1596), which created the Uniate Church in Poland-Lithuania, Catholic pressure on the Orthodox population intensified as a part of the Polish Counter-Reformation movement. The Polish Orthodox subjects, by and large loyal to the Polish crown, were presented with 'an immoral alternative' of either converting to Greek-rite Catholicism or suffering persecution. Gumilev argued that theological differences as such were irrelevant, as the majority of the population was illiterate. The real difference between the Poles and the Ukrainians was in their respective core beliefs and values (miroshchushchenie), which at that time was symbolised by their faith. Furthermore, the rental system in Poland was much harder for the peasants than serfdom in Muscovy, and was further exacerbated by the facts that the tax-collectors were Jews, and that the Russian peasants lacked an ally in the Orthodox nobility as it was also politically underprivileged. This situation led to a series of revolts from the end of the sixteenth century, beginning with Nalivaiko in 1594 and culminating in Khmelnitskii’s rebellion of 1647.

The main demands of the Ukrainian Cossacks were an increase in the numbers of registered Cossacks under the Polish crown, equality of rights with the Polish nobility, freedom for the Orthodox faith and the expulsion of the Jews. The increasing bitterness of their conflict with the Poles made it necessary for the Ukrainian Cossacks to seek Russian help. This led to the Pereiaslav union (1654), after which a long period of wars between Russia and Poland ensued. These consumed Russian passionarnost'. The Treaty of Andrusovo (1667) ended this conflict and confirmed Russian possession of the left bank of Ukraine.

Gumilev argued that the final episode in Russo-Ukrainian unification was the battle of Poltava in 1709, which ended a long period of attempts by the Ukrainian hetmans to steer Ukraine away from Russia. In his view, the main reason for the final triumph of the unification policy was the sense of belonging to the same superethnos, which manifested itself in the mutual support of Russians and Ukrainians for each other. Thus, it was despite, rather than because of, the current political situation, that the two nations joined together.

Nachertanie, p. 187.
Gumilev argued the union with Russia, based on common beliefs and sympathies, was advantageous for the Ukrainians. First, all the initial demands of the Cossacks were met; they all were registered for state service and there was no more persecution of their religious beliefs. Second, there was never any discrimination against Ukrainians in Russia. This continued under the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union when many Ukrainians held leading positions in the Russian state, from Rumiantsev and Bezborodko in the eighteenth century, to Khrushchev and Brezhnev in the twentieth century. The Ukrainians also prospered from the expansion of the Russian state towards the Black Sea, acquiring new lands for settlement.

Gumilev's views on Russia's relations with the Ukrainians are biased and idealistic. Although correct in respect of the good mutual understanding between the two ethnoses in so far as the Left Bank Ukrainians were concerned, Gumilev did not consider Russia's relation with the West Ukrainians, particularly those of the Uniate persuasion. For example, Hrushevskii argued that the Russians had a separate history beginning with the colonization of Suzdal-Vladimir lands in the twelfth century. In contrast, the Ukrainians continued the traditions of Kievan Rus. Gumilev's approach has a bias towards the Russian point of view in the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations, although it does have the novelty of basing the analysis on the concepts of Komplimentarnost' and superethnic identity.

The unification with Ukraine forced the issue of the Church reform on Russia. Gumilev argued that in the seventeenth century there were three main routes which the Russian Church could have followed. First was the old 'Holy' Rus option with its relative unity of beliefs and traditions. This was essentially what Avvakum and his followers advocated. Such an option was, however, already a lost ideal in the seventeenth century and would have led to the isolation of Russia, according to Gumilev. The second was the creation of a theocratic universal Orthodox empire, the option espoused by Nikon. Finally, Russia could attempt to become a secular European power, with the

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inevitable subjugation of the Church to the state, the option eventually taken by Peter the Great.\textsuperscript{374}

Unification with the Ukraine made the choice more urgent since differences in religious rituals were undermining the newly acquired unity of the two nations. Gumilev thought that the split was ‘essentially a conflict between the Great Russian (Muscovite) and the Ukrainian Orthodox traditions.’ The Ukrainians won in this conflict and changed Russian Orthodox rituals. Thus, ‘the names of Epifanii Slavinetskii, Simeon Polotskii, Feofan Prokopovich became an integral part of Russian cultural history.’\textsuperscript{375} This was a view similar to that advocated by G. Vernadskii.\textsuperscript{376}

The irony of this view of Church reform lies in the fact that by moving closer to Ukrainian practices, the Russians also moved closer to Latin culture. For example, the opening of the ‘Slav-Greek-Latin’ Academy in Moscow (1685) marked a growth of Catholic influence in Russia as it proved almost impossible to teach modern subjects in any other language but Latin, while the Academy’s syllabus was strongly marked by Jesuit influence.\textsuperscript{377}

Gumilev considered the triumph of Nikon’s reforms as the triumph of an ideology which could serve as ‘the foundation for the Russian superethnos as a group of close but distinct ethnoses.’\textsuperscript{378} The Old Believers, on the other hand, defended a local version of the Orthodoxy which had appeared in North-Eastern Rus in the fourteenth century. The Old Believers had the ideology of a ‘narrow nationalism’ of Muscovy, close in its spirit to the concepts of the ‘Third Rome’ and ‘Holy Rus’. The establishment of a universal character for the Russian Church was, in Gumilev’s opinion, Nikon’s greatest achievement. Gumilev claimed that after the execution of Avvakum, the Old Believers completely split from the established Church and became a distinct sub-ethnos.
4.4 The Second Passionary Depression and Peter the Great's Reforms

The death of Aleksei Mikhailovich in 1672 marked the beginning of the second passionary depression of the acme phase. The ensuing rivalry between the boyar clans of Miloslavskiis and Naryshkins and the instability of the political system, shaken by the streltskii revolts (1682, 1689 and 1698), were indicators of falling passionarnost'. The lowest point of the depression was symbolized by the Russian defeat at Narva (1700). The reforms launched by Peter the Great after that event marked the end of the decline of passionarnost', represented by the battle of Poltava (1709). The Treaty of Nystadt (1721) marked the beginning of a new peak of passionary activity.

Within this context, Gumilev presented a specific view of Peter's reign. The Miloslavskiis, as a family with Polish roots, tended to favour a pro-Catholic foreign policy. Under Sofia's regency, Russian foreign policy was re-orientated towards an alliance with the Catholic powers in the Holy League against the Ottoman Empire. This was a radical change from the foreign policy of the previous reigns, which pursued the struggle with Poland and the liberation of the Orthodox people. In this context, Gumilev pointed out that the Orthodox subjects were treated much better under the Ottomans, with a large degree of autonomy under the millet system as compared with Catholic rule in Poland.

After two unsuccessful campaigns against the Crimean Tatars under prince Golitsyn's leadership, Sofia's position was undermined and Peter became the sole ruler of Russia. Gumilev argued that to a considerable degree this was due to the unpopularity of pro-Western influences under Sofia's government. A policy of national revival was pursued in the first decade of Peter's reign from 1689–1701. Peter finished the war with the Ottomans by seizing Azov from them in 1696. The futility of the alliance with the Catholic powers of the Holy League was then apparent. Instead, Peter allied Russia with the Protestant powers.

Gumilev argued that the Russians had a positive Komplimentarnost with the Protestants.379 In Gumilev's view, the Reformation, which marked the end of the crisis phase of the Western superethnos, resulted in a behavioural split which produced two

379 Chob svecha ne pogosla, p. 10.
distinct behavioural stereotypes, the Protestant and the Catholic. Orthodox Russians had a closer affinity with the Protestant behavioural stereotype. Moscow supported the Protestant Union of Sweden and Germany against the Catholic League in the Thirty Years War, allowed the establishment of a German colony in Moscow, and actively traded with England and Holland from the times of Ivan the Terrible. With the Catholics, on the other hand, the Orthodox believers had a history of negative contacts, for example, the tensions in Ukraine in the sixteenth and seventeenth century.

Gumilev argued that when ‘from the sixteenth century the Catholic West thrust itself onto us while the East was already organically fused with Rus ... [it acted] as a counterbalance to the ‘European encroachment’ ... until Peter I found a compromise solution by allowing into our culture not the Catholic, but the Protestant West, [which was] considerably less potent.’ Gumilev explained Peter’s fascination with Europe by contrasting Russia’s acme phase with Western Europe’s inertial phase. ‘For somebody who as a child saw the bloody streletskii revolts, witnessed violent religious debates, had to constantly fight for his own life in palace intrigues, the quiet, peaceful life of Holland in the inertial phase did indeed seem like a dream.’ Europe in the inertial phase was more appealing to Peter than Russia which was still going through its bloody and turbulent acme phase. Bizarrely, Gumilev considered Peter a non-passionary, something manifestly at odds with his own theory of ethnogenesis. His characterization of Peter really reflects his own extreme dislike of the pro-Western direction of the Peter’s reforms.

Gumilev argued that Peter’s yearning for Russia to be like Holland at the beginning of the eighteenth century was similar to an adolescent girl’s desire to become a grown-up by putting on make-up and wearing her mother’s clothes. Just as wearing adult clothes does not turn a child into an adult, the borrowing of European customs could not change Russia’s phase of ethnogenesis. The objective reality of Russian life forced itself

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380 Gumilev to Savitskii, 11 May 1958, Savitskii archive.
381 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 285.
382 Etnogenez, p. 278.
onto the young Tsar when he had to foreshorten his visit to Europe to put down another strelets'kiy revolt in Moscow.

Gumilev argued that the habit of breaking old traditions was common in Moscow at least since Ivan III, as was the tradition of employing foreign experts in state service. In Gumilev's view, Peter's employment of German and Dutch military expertise was not much different from the policies of the Grand Princes of Moscow who relied on the Tatar cavalry in the fifteenth century. In Gumilev's view, twenty-five to thirty years of contact with Europe would have been sufficient to achieve all the necessary aims of military modernization.

Peter's reforms were a continuation of those begun under his father's reign. The process of secularization was well under way in the reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich, while the adoption of Western clothes, the reading of Western books and a general fascination with a Baroque, semi-Polish culture was widespread in the upper echelons of Russian society in the mid-seventeenth century. For example, the first Russian court poet, Semen Polotskii, through his influence on the tsar was advancing a new Baroque culture at the highest layer of society which was triumphing over the apologetics of Old Rus, like the archpriest Avvakum.

There was nothing inexplicable, therefore, in Russia's move towards Europe. Panchenko argued that the sixteenth century was 'the period of Russia's loneliness', an exception rather than the rule in its history. Before then Russia had been part of the Byzantine cultural sphere with its rich culture and traditions. In the seventeenth century Russia began to move towards Europe. Peter's reforms were the clearest manifestation of this trend. The association with these superethnic worlds did not necessarily undermine Russia's identity as a superethnos. Gumilev's uncompromising rejection of any Western influence was determined by his strong anti-European sentiment which affected his judgment of various aspects of Russian history, particularly Peter the Great and his reforms.

Peter's reforms had a much more profound effect on Russian national behaviour than any previous reforms. Gumilev argued that this was due to a lower level of

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383 Russia and the Russians, pp.169-70.
384 Russkaia kul'tura, pp. 51-55, 188.
385 Chob svecha ne pogasla, p. 81.
passionarnost' in the beginning of the eighteenth century compared in the previous two hundred years. Gumilev considered Peter’s reforms in a negative way, seeing them as a sign of passionary depression. This does not, however, follow from the theory of ethnogenesis.

Ermolaev argued that Peter’s reforms could be seen as an attempt at finding new forms of behaviour that led Russia out of the passionary depression of the end of the seventeenth century. The Church split and the political unrest represented by the streltsky rebellions were expressions of falling passionarnost’ and a crisis of Russian seventeenth century society. Peter’s reforms, on the other hand, paved the way for Russia’s recovery in the eighteenth century. Peter changed Russian behaviour in a way that made it possible to reach the last peak of the Russian acme phase under Elizabeth I.386

Gumilev agreed that despite the outward appearances to the contrary, Peter the Great in many ways actually strengthened some of the old Muscovite traditions. For example, he argued that Peter increased the dependence of the nobility on the state by introducing the table of ranks, which essentially continued and deepened the tradition of central authority relying on the army and the bureaucracy as its power base. Under Peter the Great, more than in any other reign, Russia became essentially an ‘ensemble of estates one way or the other linked with the state service.’ The serfdom laws were tightened to an unprecedented degree and new taxes, including the poll tax were introduced. Thus, Gumilev argued that ‘the window to the West’ had two sides to it’, i.e. the ‘progressive’ side introducing Western practices into Russia and the ‘autocratic’ side which reinforced serfdom and state authority.387

Gumilev’s analysis of Peter’s reign and policies undoubtedly reflected his personal views, which had a very strong anti-Western bias. These views are not compatible with the theory of ethnogenesis and in many instances contradict it. For example, Gumilev could not satisfactorily explain the reasons for the success of Westernizing policies launched under Peter the Great and the fact that contact with Western Europe had a profound effect on Russia’s history, culture and self-awareness. A straightforward rejection of European influence as strictly negative does not explain the

386 Ermolaev, ‘Ob idealakh povedenija’ (see note 33 above), p. 11.
387 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 288–89.
complexity of this important factor in the modern history of Russia. A more detailed analysis of Gumilev’s views on this subject will be presented in the next Chapter in the context of his relation to Eurasianism.

4.5 The Last Peak of Passiornost’ and the End of the Acme Phase

The period after the Treaty of Nystadt was an optimal time from the passionary point of view. In the eighteenth century, Russian passionost’ was sufficiently low to avoid the intense internal conflicts and rebellions which had rocked Russia in the previous two centuries, while at the same time it was high enough to continue the outward expansion. The growing passionost’ reached its peak in the reign of Elizabeth I (1741–61).

The new peak of passionost’ manifested itself in the Seven Years War (1756–63), when the Russian army achieved unrivalled successes in the campaign against Prussia, culminating in the symbolic capture of Berlin in 1762. The Russian passionost’ of that time was dominated by the ideal of victory. This passionary ideal was behind the Russian commanders’ readiness to achieve victory at the cost of huge casualties which so horrified the Europeans, who had at that time a much lower passionost’. The high Russian passionost’ manifested in their ability to sacrifice themselves for the ideal of victory, led to the famous remark by Fredrick the Great that ‘it is easier to kill these Russians than to defeat them.’

The falling level of passionost’ in the second half of the eighteenth century was still high enough to defeat the Ottoman Empire in the First Turkish War (1768–74) and the Second Turkish War (1787–91). The result of these wars was the annexation of the territories on the Black Sea coast, including the territory of Russia’s old enemy the Crimean Tatars (1783). Nevertheless, falling passionost’ manifested itself in Pugachev’s rebellion (1773–75), which was an indicator of the future crisis phase.

At the end of the eighteenth century, Russia included in its empire four different superethnoses. The Western European superethnos was represented by the Baltic Germans and the Poles. The Islamic superethnos was represented by the Muslims of

388 Russia and the Russians, p. 190.
Crimea and the Caucasus and, later in the nineteenth century, Central Asia. The remains of
the Byzantine super-ethnic entity were accounted for by the Georgians and the
Armenians. The Jews, in Gumilev's view were a distinct superethnos, included in
Russia's domain after the partitions of Poland (1772, 1793 and 1795).

The Russians had a positive affinity or komplimentarnost' with the Protestant
Germans and the Christians of the Transcaucasus as well as with the nomads of the Great
Steppe. On the other hand, the Russians had difficult relations with the Poles, the Jews,
and the Muslims due to a negative komplimentarnost'. Gumilev argued that it was due to
traditional policies of ethnic tolerance that the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century
was a stable state. From the point of view of the theory of ethnogenesis, however, the
stability of the Russian state was better explained by the high levels of passionarnost'
than by ethnic tolerance. Gumilev's personal views and the conclusions which seem to
follow from the theory of ethnogenesis did not always correspond to one another.

5. The crisis phase

Gumilev did not write about the crisis phase of Russian ethnogenesis in detail. He
did, however, express his views on this topic in several interviews. There is also an
article co-written with V.Iu. Ermolaev which deals with this period of Russian history
in more detail. In addition, there are helpful published and unpublished works by
Ermolaev on this topic. Ermolaev's views provide the best and fullest available account
of the last two hundred years of Russian history from the point of view Gumilev's
ethnogenesis theory.

5.1 The initial period of the crisis phase

When talking about the crisis phase, it is important to keep in mind that Gumilev meant the trend of passionarnost' was falling, not that there was a sudden absolute fall of passionarnost' in the superethnos. For Russia, the first sign of this phase were the attempts at the reforms associated with Speranskii. These reforms were significant as a sign of the new trend in Russian history towards a 'liberal' reform of the state and society. The absolute level of passionarnost' was, nevertheless, still high. That is why the war of 1812 was won by the Russians.

The falling passionarnost' meant, however, that internal dissent was growing. Gumilev argued that in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, there appeared symptoms of crisis. 'On the one hand there was a growing sectarianism among the [lower classes] of people, on the other hand a growing pro-Western feeling among the upper classes.'³⁹¹ The Decembrists revolt (1825) marked the lowest point of this trend. The Decembrist movement was important because it was the beginning of the revolutionary movement in Russia. As such, it was the first indication of a behavioural split characteristic of the crisis phase.

Long-term passionary trends had local rises and falls, which was particularly characteristic of the acme phase. In the crisis phase, after the low point of the Decembrist revolt, a local passionary rise followed under Nicholas I. The suppression of the Polish revolt in 1831–32 and the 1848 intervention in Hungary were, from the point of view of ethnogenesis theory, signs of increased passionarnost'. 1849 was the apogee of Nicholas' reaction and marked a change in the passionary trend from growth to a century-long fall.

An explosion of creative activity was characteristic of the early crisis phase. The reason for this phenomenon was that at a lower level of passionarnost' in the early crisis phase, the ideal of creativity and knowledge became the dominant ideal in the superethnos, replacing the ideal of victory characteristic of the late acme phase. In Gumilev's view, in the nineteenth century ‘the system was moving towards simplification, discharging from itself “free atoms” i.e. passionaries, which found their

niche in the intellectual life – arts and sciences. This led to a flourishing of arts and literature unprecedented in Russian history. Throughout the whole nineteenth century poets, writers, painters, and scientists were revered in Russia. This was not a uniquely Russian phenomenon. In the European superethnos, the early crisis phase was marked by the early Renaissance movement as well as the beginning of the attempts to reform the Church and the feudal system.

The trend of falling passionarnost' meant that a reform of social and political institutions which were created in the acme phase was unavoidable. The emancipation of the serfs (1861) and other 'great' reforms of Alexander II's reign, considered from ethnogenesis point of view, were attempts at reforming the social and political system to suit the lower passionarnost' of the superethnos. The failure of these attempts was shown by the fact that the end of Alexander's reforms (1874) saw the beginning of the revolutionary terrorist movement, most conspicuously represented by the formation of Narodnaia Volia (1879). This marked an increasing divergence and antagonism in the superethnos.

Alexander III's reign proved the inadequacy of authoritarian methods for preserving the unity of the superethnos. Such methods of control as censorship, the use of a secret police (Okhrana), and attempts at forced Russification, failed at their aim of rooting out dissent in society. Lower levels of passionarnost' meant that the methods successfully used by Nicholas I proved inefficient in the reign of his grandson. The reign of Nicholas II was the beginning of the open phase crisis phase of Russian ethnogenesis. It saw increased civil unrest, culminating in the 1905 Revolution and the forced compromise of the October Manifesto, which established the Duma (Russian parliament) and relaxed censorship rules. On the other hand, there were continued attempts at reforms as represented by Stolypin's agrarian reform.

The trend of falling passionarnost' reached its climax in 1917. The old social and ethnic system, formed in the acme phase and unsuccessfully reformed in the early crisis phase, collapsed. The behavioural stereotypes of tsarist Russia disappeared. The gentry, who were the leading subethnos in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were eliminated in this cataclysm.

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392 L.N. Gumilev, 'Istoria nauka estestvennaia', Sel'skaia molodezh', 2, 1988, p. 49.
In the Civil War, the Russian passionary (ethnic) field split into two opposing sides – the Reds and the Whites. The Bolsheviks had by this time emerged as a subethnos, whose behavioural ideal was the achievement of social equality. Their opponents in the Civil War, the Whites, failed to formulate an ideal which would unite them into a single subethnos as was the case with the Reds. Their disunity, caused by lack of passionarnost', ensured their defeat.

5.2 The Communist Subethnos

It is possible to examine the history of the Communist Party from the point of view of the ethnogenesis theory which treats the Russian Communists as a subethnos. A subethnos went through the same phases of ethnogenesis as a superethnos, but its period of existence was around 100 years, instead of 1200 years as for a superethnos.

The communist subethnos was formed on the basis of the revolutionary socialist organizations which at the turn of the twentieth century attracted the most passionary persons in the Russian Empire. The core of its early members came from the border areas of the Russian superethnos. For examples, 40% of the leading Communists came from the western areas such as the Baltic states, Ukraine, Belorussia; 25% from the southern areas of contact with the Muslim superethnos, e.g. the Volga region, the Caucasus, Georgia, Azerbaijan; and 15% from polyethnic capitals of the empire.

The original Communists were therefore not part of the Russian ethnos, but a diverse group united by a common ideal of social revolution who adhered to a particular behavioural stereotype. A Communist in the first half of the twentieth century was distinguished by certain behaviours and high motivations which made the Communists as a group into a subethnos.

At the Third Congress of RSDRP Lenin championed the creation of the ‘party of a new type’ – a committed, well-organized and centrally managed party of ‘professional revolutionaries’. This group formed the nucleus of the subethnos. After the seizure of power in October 1917, the Bolsheviks attracted members of other social parties and

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many unaffiliated passionary individuals. This provided them with sufficient passionary resource to win the Civil War. 1921 was the end of the rising phase of Communist subethnos.

In 1924, ‘Lenin’s enrolment’ campaign was launched aiming at mass recruitment to the party. As a result of this campaign, a new type of people became the majority of the party members. Unlike the committed opponents of tsarist power, new members were attracted to the party because it was the ruling elite. Their ideals were the increase of personal power, i.e. the ideal of victory characteristic of the acme phase.

Stalin was the leader of these new party members. Unlike the old intellectual elite of the Bolsheviks, these new members were capable of managing the party and the country in a practical way. Trotsky represented the ‘old guard’, whose ideals were orientated towards ‘permanent revolution’. The party struggles of the 1920s were, from the point of view of ethnogenesis, between representatives of the acme phase and those of the growth phase, in which the acme phase behaviour triumphed.

This triumph of the acme phase happened in 1929, the year of Great Turn. In the history of the communists, this year was the final triumph of the new party members over the ‘old guard’. Intellectuals and theoreticians gave way to practical power-hungry members of the nomenklatura. The latter presided over a rigid system of behaviour and over the radical reforms imposed on the party and the country as a whole in the 1930s and 1940s.

The death of Stalin in 1953 marked the end of the acme phase for the Communists. The most committed supporters and opponents of Stalin’s policies, i.e. those with the highest level of passionarnost’, were dead. Khrushchev’s attempts at a reform of Stalin’s party system at the twentieth Party Congress marked the beginning of the crisis phase of the Communists. A new type of members with less rigid norms of behaviour, ‘the children of twentieth Congress’, joined the party from among the intelligentsia.

Khrushchev’s failed attempts at reforms in the party and the country led to economic and political crisis. The removal of Khrushchev from power in ‘the Small October Revolution’ of 1964 signalled the end of the crisis phase for the Communists. A behavioural homogeneity of party members was imposed under the slogan of ‘political
stability'. In this way, 'the cynicism of inertia replaced the enthusiasm of the rise phase, the rigid leadership of the acme phase, and the neurotic voluntarism of the crisis phase.' 395

A compromise solution was reached expressed in the attitude 'if you want to live, pay your party contribution'. 396 This was neither a return to Lenin's days, nor a continuation of Stalin's policies, but a new *modus vivendi* in the Party. For the Soviet Union as whole, the maxim 'we pretend to work, and you pretend to pay us' expressed the end of active attempts to change society, characteristic of the acme phase, and a shift to sustaining the status quo, characteristic of the inertial phase.

By the 1970s, the ideal of prosperity became the prevalent mode of behaviour, while the Communist party, from being a radical revolutionary force, became a medium for career-making and acquisition of material gains. By the 1980s, the Communist subethnos entered its obscurity phase, when such qualities of its members as the fanatical commitment to Communist ideals were a distant memory.

The need for reform was obvious, but as the events of 1991 showed, the Communist leaders, who still had at their disposal the army and the secret services, were no longer supported by the *passionarnost* of their subethnos and, therefore could no longer maintain the Soviet behavioural system. As soon as the membership of the party no longer provided material and social benefits, the majority of its members left the party. This was the end of a once powerful party which had triumphed against all the odds in the Civil War and attempted a gigantic transformation of Russian society in the 1930s.

Gumilev argued that 'we [the Russians] have lived through a crisis phase which lasted for 150 years, from the Decembrist to Stalin inclusive. All this time the *passionarnost* of our system has been falling due to dissipation, i.e. a dispersion of energy. Having lost a lot of men in 1812–14, we had already considerably lowered out *passionarnost* then...[The number of passionaries] was gradually decreasing till very recently.' 397

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395 Ermolaev, 'Odnorodnye sobytiia v etnogeneze' (see note 182 above), p. 80.
396 Ermolaev, 'O kommunizme v Rossii' (see note 33 above), p. 7.
5.3 The final period of the crisis phase

The general character of the crisis phase was a sharp fall of passionarnost', which in practical terms meant that a new generation had a less complex behavioural ideal than the previous generation. In the acme phase the change from the ideal of sacrifice, represented by the metropolitan Filipp Kolychev, to the ideal of victory, represented by Suvorov, took 300 years. In the crisis phase, the fall of passionarnost' was much faster. For example, the change from the ideal of knowledge and creativity, represented by great Russian writers of the nineteenth century, to pursuit of prosperity with risk in the modern day Russia, took less than 200 years. Below is a summary of the changing behavioural ideals in the Russian process of ethnogenesis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Behavioural ideals</th>
<th>Time of behavioural ideal’s dominance, by centuries</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>In the rise phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pursuit of prosperity without risk.</td>
<td>12th century.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pursuit of prosperity with risk.</td>
<td>13th century.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Success</td>
<td>14th century.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>15th century.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Victory</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Self-sacrifice</td>
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Table 4. Changes of passionary ideals in Russian history.

After the collapse of the Communist system, the crisis phase in Russia was nearing its end. Modern Russian business practice, where a contract killing is not an unusual method of settling business disputes, is characteristic of a transition to the inertial phase. The passionarnost' of Russian superethnos has fallen to such levels that the

398 Ermolaev, 'O stereitipakh povedeniia' (see note 33 above), p. 10.
399 Ermolaev, 'Ob idealakh povedeniia' (see note 33 above), p. 19.
leading ideal in society is 'the pursuit of prosperity with risk to life.' Whereas at the end of the acme phase the prevalent ideal was 'the ideal of victory', typified by such individuals as Suvorov, and in the early crisis phase it was 'the ideal of knowledge and creativity' represented by Pushkin or Dostoevskii, the dominant behaviour of Yeltsin's years was acquisition of wealth by any means available, typified by the oligarchs.

In future Russia should enter its 'golden autumn' of the inertial phase, when there will be a very slow and steady fall of passionarnost' accompanied by establishment of law and order. This was what Gumilev predicted for twenty-first century Russia, which he called the 'golden autumn' of the ethnos, when a unique culture would flourish and peace and order triumphed. 'As to the future – I am an optimist. Today, we are coming out from the crisis phase.'

Conclusion

In conclusion, the theory of ethnogenesis applied to Russian history produces new and interesting results for the study of Russian identity. Gumilev's emphasis on ethnic as opposed to cultural continuity allowed him to argue that Muscovite Russia was a distinct entity from Kievan Rus. Using the conceptual framework of the ethnogenesis theory allowed him to be the first Russian historian to put forward a consistent argument for this view. This in turn led him to re-assess the Mongols as having a positive influence in Russian history. Finally, his views of the Westernizing policies started by Peter the Great offered a controversial but distinctive view on this important period in Russian history.

Gumilev's view of history should be seen as a new way of interpreting the well known events in history. It is not without its limitations, particularly with regards to exact qualifications of historical events and epochs. For example, there are no definite and rigorous criteria to differentiate between the ethnogeneses of Kievan Rus and of Muscovite Russia. The theory of ethnogenesis, nevertheless, provides a new dimension to the study of a complex phenomenon of history.

A distinction should be made between an ethnological view of Russian history and Gumilev's personal views and preferences. The former includes the distinction between Kievan and Muscovite Russia, the analysis of historical entities in terms of their difference in behavioural stereotypes and level of passionarnost¹, the phases of ethnogenesis and their characterization through behavioural ideals and imperatives. The latter includes Gumilev's belief in the exclusively positive role of the Mongols and nomads, and his distinct anti-Western bias.

Taken as a whole, Gumilev's original interpretation of the main historical events of Russian history has important consequences for the debate on Russian identity. It rejected a European orientation and championed the view of Russia as a Eurasian superethnos. In this way, Gumilev's thought should be considered in the wider context of its relation with the Eurasian tradition, which is the subject of the next Chapter.
Chapter 6
Gumilev and the Eurasians

Introduction

Gumilev’s relationship with Eurasianism was somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, he was both chronologically and physically detached from the Eurasian movement. Eurasianism first appeared in 1921 and had effectively ceased to exist by the middle of 1930s; most Eurasian literature was unavailable in the Soviet Union until decades later. Gumilev’s intellectual formation occurred independently of the mainstream of Eurasian thought, and he developed an original theory of history unprecedented in the Eurasian thinking. Nevertheless, Gumilev referred to himself as ‘the last Eurasian’ and claimed a strong affinity with their ideas.\footnote{L.N. Gumilev, ‘Skazhu vam po sekretu, chto esli Rossiia budet spasena, to tol’ko kak evraziiskaia derzhava’ (hereafter, ‘Skazhu Vam po sekretu’), \textit{Ritmy Evrazii}, p. 23.}

I begin with an outline of the main tenets of Eurasianism. I then look at the areas of common interest between the original Eurasians and Gumilev, particularly their views on the geopolitical, cultural and ethnic aspects of the concept of Eurasia. After this, I discuss Eurasian views on the history of Russia, concentrating on the European and the Mongolian influences respectively. Finally, I look at the reception of Eurasian ideas in post-Soviet Russia and assess their impact on Gumilev’s intellectual legacy.
1. The Concept of Eurasia

Eurasianism emerged in 1921 when four exiled Russian intellectuals published a collection of essays entitled *Exodus to the East*. These Eurasians renounced Russia's orientation to the West, which had led to the disastrous world war, revolution and civil war. In their view, Russia belonged neither to Western Europe, nor to Eastern or Southern Asia, but to Eurasia, 'the region between East and West which geographically, ethnically, linguistically, and historically constitutes a separate entity.'

During the 1920s, Eurasianism developed into a diverse ideological and political movement. In this Chapter, I will concentrate on those representatives of the Eurasian movement who had close links with Gumilev either personally or in terms of shared scholarly interests. In particular, I will concentrate on the works of Trubetskoi, G. Vernadskii, and Savitskii, who represented the 'scientific' core of the Eurasian movement.

A radical revisionist approach to Russia's historical identity was characteristic of the Eurasians. For example, Savitskii stressed the influences on Russia of various cultures: Byzantium to the South in the tenth to thirteenth centuries, the Eastern nomads from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, and European culture from the eighteenth century onwards. He argued that Russian culture belonged neither to the East nor the West. It had generated a unique culture of its own from a combination of elements. For the Eurasians, Russia's uniqueness lay in a union of both European and Asian elements.

'In the cultural area there are two factors central to the Eurasian concept. First is the emphasis on the multinational, rather than national nature of the Russian state from the fifteenth century onwards...Second, there is the assertion that the relation with Asia is as important in Russian history as the relationship with Europe. This thesis assumes a revision of Russian international relations with a greater emphasis than before on the role of the East.'

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402 N. S. Trubetskoi, P. N. Savitskii, G. V. Vernadskii and G.V. Florovskii.
403 Naarden, 'I am a genius' (see note 1 above), p. 69.
405 P.N. Savitskii, 'Na mezhdunarodnom s'ezde istorikov v Varshave. 1933 (iz reziume doklada)', *Evrasia*, p. 40.
In addition to their belief in the cultural and historical uniqueness of Russia, the Eurasians also argued that Russia was geopolitically unique. According to G. Vernadskii and P. Savitskii, Eurasia was not naturally divided into European and Asian parts as was traditionally thought. The division was horizontal, into the tundra, the forest, and the steppe. For example, the climatic conditions in European Russia were similar to those of Siberia. On the other hand, Russia was separated from Western Europe by its continental climate, with its sharp seasonal temperature oscillations compared to the milder European climate.

'Eurasia geographically can be defined as a system of great plains, i.e. Belomoro-Kavkazskaia [Eastern European], Western Siberian and Turkestanskaia respectively. In the botanical sense it can be divided into long strips along the latitude. The main zones are the forestless tundra along the Arctic Ocean, the forest zone, the steppe zone, and the deserts. The geographic basis of the Russian history lies in the interaction between the forest and the steppe zones.'

The basic factor in Russia’s geographical situation was the combination of forest and steppe, hence the interaction between the sedentary and nomadic cultures which eventually merged into a single Russian culture. Vernadskii argued that although the Russian people were predominantly the carriers of agricultural tradition, they also traditionally performed the role of intermediaries between the forest and the steppe economies. Russia-Eurasia occupied the heart of the continental Old World. Around Eurasia were the ‘purlieus’, parts of the Old World, like China, India or Europe, which extend to the sea. Accordingly, the ‘purlieus’ were predisposed to engagement in an oceanic economy. The economy of Russia-Eurasia, on the other hand, had a special inner-continental character.

A special place in Eurasian geopolitical thought was occupied by the notion of mestorazvitie. This notion was developed by Savitskii and G. Vernadskii. Vernadskii defined mestorazvitie as ‘a certain geographic environment, which imprints the mark of

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407 Nachertanie russkoi istorii, pp. 23–25.
its uniqueness on human communities which develop in that environment.\textsuperscript{408} Eurasia was a distinct, self-contained \textit{mestorazvitie}, with a unique geographical, ethnic, economic and historic tradition. Russia-Eurasia as a large \textit{mestorazvitie} was not limited to the steppe, but combined the steppe with the zones of forest, desert and tundra. The territory which the Eurasians identified as the Eurasian \textit{mestorazvitie} was essentially the territory of the late Russian Empire and Soviet Union. Vernadskii claimed, therefore, that the history of expansion of the Russian state was a history of adaptation of the Russians to their \textit{mestorazvitie} and adaptation of the total area of Eurasia to their economic-historical needs.\textsuperscript{409}

Only within the geographical framework of a distinct \textit{mestorazvitie} could large social and political units be created, such as the Scythian empire, the Huns, the Mongolian empire, and later the Russian Empire.\textsuperscript{410} The concept of Eurasia as a distinct \textit{mestorazvitie} was a radical break with the traditional view of Russia as partly in Europe and partly in Asia. Tatishchev, one of the leading ideologists of Peter's reforms, represented Russia's Asiatic and European sections as entirely separate and contrasting entities, united politically but with no physical or cultural-geographical affinity between them. On this view, which by the late eighteenth century became a truism, the natural border that separated European Russia from Asia was the Urals.\textsuperscript{411}

Eurasian insistence on Russia's geographical integrity was a reaction to the Tatishchevian view. The Eurasian project entailed, on the one hand, the elimination of geographical distinctness between European and Asian parts of Russia, and, on the other hand, creation of a geographical border between Russia and Western Europe. They divided Eurasia horizontally into tundra, forest and steppe, which they claimed had a geographical and political continuity. This separation from Western Europe came in the form of climatic border expressed in the January isotherm – in Russia it was negative, while in Western Europe it was positive. As Mark Bassin argues, in this way the Eurasians undermined the traditional imperial concept of Russia as a European power

\textsuperscript{408} \textit{Nachertanie russkoi istorii}, p.102
\textsuperscript{409} \textit{Nachertanie russkoi istorii}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{410} \textit{Nachertanie russkoi istorii}, p. 103.
\textsuperscript{411} Mark Bassin, 'Russia between Europe and Asia: The Ideological Construction of Geographical Space' (hereafter, 'Russia between Europe and Asia'), \textit{Slavic Review}, 50 (1), 1991, pp. 1-17, at p. 6.
with Asian colonies. Instead, they offered the vision of Russia as a Eurasian power in its natural geographical and cultural borders.\footnote{412 Bassin, 'Russia between Europe and Asia', p. 16.}

Savitskii argued that the idea of the geographic distinctness of Eurasia had parallels in Russian historico-philosophical thought. Russian philosophy of history, even before the emergence of the idea of the geographical distinctness of Eurasia, maintained that Russia had particular features which made it a ‘special historical world’. Savitskii referred to A. Herzen and K. Leont’ev in support of his argument. He argued that it was not accidental that the theories of the geographical and of the historic uniqueness of Russia, although independently formulated, pointed in the same direction. This coincidence supported the notion of mestorazvitie as a synthesis of geography and history into a new science called geosofia.\footnote{413 P.N. Savitskii, Rossiia osobyi geograficheskii mir, Prague, 1927 (hereafter, Rossiia osobyi geograficheskii mir), pp. 58–59.}

The proposed synthesis of geography and history meant for Savitskii a reformulation of the connection between the geographic and historical features which defined Russia-Eurasia. Savitskii thought that certain aspects of the Russian spiritual and psychological character, the distinctness of the state system, aspects of economic life and so on, had certain parallels with the geographical features of Russia-Eurasia. For Savitskii, the identification and analysis of such parallels between social history and geography was the principal subject matter of geosofia.\footnote{414 Rossiia osobyi geograficheskii mir, p. 63.}

Savitskii thought that the methods of geosofia could also be applied to world history in general. The notion of mestorazvitie could help to explain the phenomenon of cultural continuity in some parts of the world. For example, China’s cultural and historical continuity and its ability to assimilate newcomers could be partly explained by certain geographic conditions. Similar cases could be made for India, Iran, Europe and so on. Significantly, Savitskii argued that mestorazvitie should be related to N.Ia. Danilevskii’s cultural-historical types. In this view, every cultural-historical type correlated to a particular mestorazvitie.\footnote{415 Rossiia osobyi geograficheskii mir, pp. 63–67.} This line of argument is very similar to Gumilev’s ideas about the importance of environment for ethnogenesis.
The role of the state was also seen by the Eurasians as positive and necessary for the foundation and development of culture. Eurasian unity depended on a single central authority based on geographical and economic factors. In the words of Savitskii, 'the nature of Eurasia calls for a much greater degree of political, cultural and economic union than is the case in other parts of Europe and Asia.'

In Trubetskoi's view, there was a need to find a new ideological basis for a unified state in Eurasia. The class base of the Soviet Union was unreliable because it left room for national antagonism which could lead to separatism. The real basis of the state should be a combination of nations united through a broader, Pan-Eurasian nationalism. This would recognize that the Eurasian peoples had an unconscious affinity with each other and shared a common historical fate.

These ideas were a response to the anti-colonial movements for national self-determination which were gaining momentum after the end of World War One. If there were only one organic Eurasia, than the issue of separatism lost its meaning. In Riasanovsky's view, 'Eurasianism can be considered as a determined defense of Russia, one and indivisible, in an age when empires crumbled.'

In political terms, a Eurasian state would be governed by an 'ideocracy', which would coordinate all aspects of state's life. Eurasia was particularly suited to such governance, as it was a 'special world' in geographic, cultural and historic terms. Eurasia was also ideally suited to economic and political autarky. The closest state to ideocracy was the USSR, but its Communist ideology was based on erroneous, class-focused principles. The Eurasian aim was to replace Communist ideology with a true Eurasian ideocracy.

So far as the question of Eurasian continuity with Russian intellectual tradition is concerned, Riasanovsky, one of the first scholars to publish on Eurasianism, argued that 'while the Russian intellectual tradition provided no foundation for Eurasia, two recent

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developments in Russian culture contributed to the emergence of that concept. These were the
growth of scholarship in relevant fields and a new trend in Russian literature.' Among those developments, Riasanovsky lists the
developments at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries in Turkic and Finno-Ugric studies. For example, 'Klyuchevsky, like the Eurasians later, spoke in terms of a real synthesis between the Russians and the Finnic peoples, going far beyond assertions of limited contact or circumscribed influence.' Fascination with Asia and identification with Asiatic peoples were features of the literary Symbolist movement, for example in the works of Alexander Blok and Andrei Belyi.

'Perhaps even more immediately relevant for Eurasianism,' continues Riasanovsky, 'were studies detailing the rich cultural background of ancient Russia and linking elements of Russian and non-Russian cultures...It is important to realize that in the field after field and topic after topic Russian scholars were discovering a new and largely "non-Western" richness in the Russian and "pre-Russian" past, and its connections with other civilizations.' In this area, the Eurasians innovated by defining Eurasia geographically and putting more emphasis on non-European influences in Russian culture.

The most important factor for understanding Eurasianism was, however, what Riasanovsky called 'the immediate historical context', namely, the fact 'that the Eurasians were young Russian intellectuals in alienation from their society and in exile in the West.' Eurasianism would have never existed in its historical form if it were not for events such as the Russian revolution, the Civil War and the White emigration. No previous scholarly and cultural developments in pre-Revolutionary Russia had lead to such a radical break with the Russian cultural tradition as would Eurasianism.

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421 Riasanovsky, 'The Emergence of Eurasianism', p. 67.
422 See for example A. Belyi's Peterburg (1905) and A. Blok's Skify (1918).
423 Riasanovsky, 'The Emergence of Eurasianism', p. 66.
424 Riasanovsky, 'The Emergence of Eurasianism', p. 66.
2. Gumilev's views on Eurasia

At this point it is useful to compare the Eurasians' views with those of Gumilev. As we mentioned in Chapter 2, Gumilev was in correspondence with Savitskii for more than 12 years until the latter's death in 1968. After Savitskii’s death, Gumilev continued to correspond with G. Vernadskii. Gumilev’s acquaintance with Eurasian works began in his student years when he read E. Khara-Davan’s *Chingiz Khan as military leader and his legacy: a cultural-historical outline of the Mongolian Empire in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries*, N.P. Toll’s *The Scythians and the Huns* and Savitskii’s *On the aims of nomad studies*. In his first letter to Savitskii, Gumilev wrote that he had first read Saviskii’s *On the aims of nomad studies* twenty years before. As their relationship developed, Savitskii sent to Gumilev other Eurasian works, and received in return Gumilev’s works. By the 1970s, Gumilev had an extensive library of Eurasian works.

Gumilev described his relation to Eurasianism in the following way.

‘I am often called a Eurasian and I am not denying it for several reasons. First, this was a powerful historical school and I am honoured if I am ranked among its members. Second, I carefully studied works of these people. Third, I agree with the main historio-methodological conclusions of the Eurasians. But there are also substantial differences – the concept of *passionarnost*’ was absent in their theory of ethnogenesis. Generally, they very much lacked natural sciences. Nevertheless, the Eurasian doctrine was conceived as a synthesis of humanitarian and a natural science, i.e. as a synthesis of history and geography.’

Gumilev stressed the scientific and historic importance of Eurasianism; for him it was foremost ‘a powerful historical school’.

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428 Gumilev to Savitskii, 18 November 1956, Savitskii archive.
429 V.Iu. Ermolaev recalled in conversation that he first read a Eurasian book in 1980. ‘This was the first edition of G.Vernadskii’s *Nachertanie russkoi istorii*, which of course belonged to Gumilev. L.N. kindly allowed me to make chronological references from *Nachertanie*, needed for my university work on Russian ethnogenesis which I then began to write under his supervision… I understood very well that Gumilev’s taking a Eurasian brochure from the back row of his bookshelf to give to me to read was a sign of the highest degree of trust.’ An autograph list of all the Eurasian works shows that Gumilev had a complete collection of all the main Eurasian authors, particularly Trubetskoi, Savitskii, and G. Vernadskii.
Gumilev agreed with the basic Eurasian analysis of the geographical nature of Russia. He claimed that 'the basic principle discovered by P.N. Savitskii is correct – the borders of Russia/Eurasia which separate this inland continent from the Western Europe correspond to the January isotherm. To the east it is negative, while to the west it is positive.'\textsuperscript{431} He accepted, in other words, the Eurasian argument for the geographical separation of Eurasia and Western Europe.

Gumilev claimed to have come to an independent acceptance of the Eurasians’ central principle of polycentrism while reflecting on the questions which also interested the Eurasian theoreticians. According to him, Eurasian polycentrism maintained that there were many ‘centres’ in the world, which could be identified by the similarity of the environment. Europe was such a centre, but so were Palestine, Iberia, and China.\textsuperscript{432}

There is, however, an important difference between the Eurasians and Gumilev. While the Eurasians stressed the intrinsic value of each culture and hence held a polycentric view of the world and history, Gumilev based his arguments in favour of polycentrism on the theory of ethnogenesis which was grounded in natural sciences.

Gumilev highly valued the Eurasians discoveries in geography and tried to further develop their ideas about the role of environment in ethnic history. In a letter dated 1 January 1957 Savitskii wrote:

'I feel and see that you have enough thoughts and observations about the “geographical factor” for there to be a special book about it...You are right: “a combination of raznoodarenie (or as you say “of two and more landschafts”) greatly stimulates and accelerates development [of ethnos]. In this thought of yours there is no contradiction to my ideas. I think that there is no contradiction with the thought of G.V. Vernadskii either...You have with great precision followed the importance of a “combination of raznoodarenie” for ethnogenesis. The priority in this great historio-geographic discovery undoubtedly belongs to you.'\textsuperscript{433}

Gumilev argued that because of the new approach first championed by the Eurasians, the role of geography assumed a fresh importance. ‘Thanks to Eurasianism

\textsuperscript{432} Gumilev, ‘Skazhu vam po sekretu’, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{433} Savitskii to Gumilev, 8 December 1956, Gumilev’s private archive, L.N. Gumilev Memorial Museum, St. Petersburg (hereafter, Gumilev’s private archive).
and the solid historical grounding of the Eurasian theoreticians, it is possible now to unite such sciences as history, geography, and natural history.' Gumilev saw this as the main scientific achievement and the main perspective of Eurasianism. It is important to note that Gumilev emphasized the scientific achievements of the Eurasians, rather than their ideology.

In the historical analysis of Eurasia, Gumilev added a new factor which was absent from the thought of the original Eurasians. According to Gumilev, passionary impulses together with geographic factors had determined the development of Eurasia. The key to the understanding of the emergence of the Greater Russian superethnos within this context was, according to Gumilev, the 'positive komplimentarnost', or natural affinity of the two main superethnoses of our country – Russian and the Steppe peoples. This served as a foundation of the Muscovite state, followed by the territorial expansion of the Russian Empire as well as the invincibility of the USSR in World War II.

The ethnoses of Eurasia, in Gumilev’s view, were related to each other by certain aspects of common spirituality (vnutrennee dukhovnoe rodstvo), psychological compatibility, and mutual sympathy or affinity, which Gumilev called komplimentarnost’. Examples of this superethnic unity were the relations between the Russians and the Buriats in Western Siberia, and contacts between the Russians and the Tatars on the South-Eastern borders of the Muscovite Tsardom. These claims about the natural affinities between the Russians and the indigenous peoples of Eurasia echoed Savitskii’s assertions about the multinational character of Russian state. Gumilev accordingly maintained that ‘In the...ethnic history of Russia, it is imperative to take into account the ethnogenesis of all people of our country. Every one of those ethnoses, having its own ethnic age and its level of passionarnost’, had a powerful influence on the development of ethnogenesis of the whole superethnos.

Of particular interest for the question of the relation of Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis to Eurasianism are Savitskii’s theories of the cyclical structure of Russian

434 Gumilev, ‘Menia nazyvaiut evraziitsem’, p. 28.
436 Gumilev ‘Istoriko-Filosofskie sochinenii kniazia N.S. Trubetskogo (zametki poslednego evraziitsa)’, Istorii, Kul’tura, Iazyk, pp. 31–54 (hereafter, ‘Zametki poslednego evraziitsa’), p. 34.
437 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 293.
Savitskii wrote to Gumilev, ‘I know that you do not directly deal with Russian history. But as a “nomadologist” you should keep it in your sight. Also, my observations might, perhaps, be of some methodological interest to you.’

Savitskii analysed Russian history from 1538 to 1632 in terms of peaks and depressions. He argued that there were three peaks each lasting for 17 years (1547–64, 1581–98, 1615–32), three depressions for about 10 years each (1538–47, 1571–81, 1605–15), and two transitional periods lasting 7 years each (1564–71 and 1598–1605). Each period was characterised by a certain ‘rhythmic repetition of events.’ Savitskii further developed his ‘rhythmic theory’ in Ritmy mongolskogo veka and Pod’em i depressii v dreveneurusskoj istorii as well as in numerous drafts dealing with Russian history up to the twentieth century.

For Savitskii, the peaks were typified by military victories such as the capture of Kazan (1552), building projects such as the construction of Vasilii Blazhennyi, and religious councils such as Stoglavy sobor (1551). Depressions, on the other hand, were military defeats such as the defeat in the Livonian War, declines in economic activity at the times of poor harvests in the early seventeenth century, or a lack of construction projects, political decentralisation and so forth. In Savitskii view, these peaks and falls represented changes in the military, political, or economic strength of the state.

An important issue is how far Savitskii’s thoughts on this topic were similar to Gumilev’s own. According to Gumilev, the period from the death of Ivan III in 1505 to the election of Mikhail Romanov in 1613 was the first period of the acme phase of Russian ethnogenesis. In the first half of this period Russian passionarnost’ was increasing, reaching its climax at the time of the council of Stoglavyi sobor. Thereafter Russia’s passionarnost’ began to decrease, reaching its lowest point during the Time of Troubles.

After the Time of Troubles, Russian passionarnost’ began again to increase and reached its highest point in 1654 with the unification with the Ukraine. Thereafter passionarnost’ fell again, reaching its lowest point at the Russian defeat in the battle of Narva (1700). After the battle of Narva, passionarnost’ began to rise and reached its

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440 Gumilev, Ot Rusi do Rossii, p.235.
highest point in the Seven Years War (1756–63). In the second half of the eighteenth century passionarnost' was falling and by the early nineteenth century had reached a critical point. At that point the superethnos entered the crisis phase, which had continued to the present day.441

There is, therefore, an apparent similarity in Savitskii’s and Gumilev’s emphases on peaks and falls as characteristic of historical process. It is, however, evident that Savitskii and Gumilev meant different things when they talked about what was rising and falling. For Savitskii and other Eurasians, peaks and falls had a strictly socio-economic or cultural significance and took the form of increases in military power, political influence or economic growth rates. Gumilev, on the other hand, talked about rises and falls of passionarnost', manifested in dynamic changes in behavioural imperatives within a particular superethnos. Military victories or defeats were, for Gumilev, only indicators of passionary trends. For the Eurasians, these factors were all there was to history.

Their respective understandings of the underlying causes of ethnic history were, therefore, entirely different. Whereas the Eurasians stood on the traditional understanding of history as a development of socio-economic and cultural factors, Gumilev created a new paradigm for understanding ethnic history as a natural process in the biosphere, expressed in dynamic changes of human behaviour based on the relative complexity of their behavioural ideals and dominant imperatives.

Though he differed with them over history, Gumilev’s perception of the geopolitical nature of Eurasia was similar to that of the Eurasians. According to him, ‘a united Eurasia led by Russia has been traditionally opposed in the West by Catholic Europe, in the Far East by China, and by the Muslim world in the South.’ There is, however, a contradiction in Gumilev’s views on this subject. On the one hand, he argued that the Tatars and other nomads like the Bashkirs, the Kazakhs and the Kyrgyzes were Eurasian peoples and as such had a natural affinity with the Russians. On the other hand, all of these people were Muslims, which put them into a different superethnos. Despite Gumilev’s argument that there was a strong Nestorian element among the Mongols, by the eighteenth century the overwhelming majority of the nomads had converted to Islam, with the exception of the Kalmyks who were Buddhist.

441 See pp. 175–82 above.
Gumilev argued that 'the landscapes of Eurasia are very diverse. For every people a relation to its landscape is very important because it determines its economy. An ethnos is adapted to its environment and is comfortable there.' Gumilev, like the Eurasians before him, saw Eurasia as a collection of smaller environments united into a bigger geographical region, where each people occupied its special place while at the same time belonging to the larger Eurasian superethnos. In his view, 'the diversity of landscapes of Eurasia is conducive to the ethnogenesis of its people. Every ethnos found its natural place: Russians settled on the river banks, Ugro-Finns and Ukrainians settled on the river divides, Turkic people and the Mongols in the steppe, the Paleoasians in the tundra.' Effectively, Gumilev was applying Eurasian ideas about the importance of mestorazvitie to his analysis of Eurasian ethnogenesis.

Gumilev also argued in a Eurasian manner about the desirability of political union for the Eurasian peoples.

'A great diversity of geographical conditions meant that a union for the people of Eurasia was always preferable to disunity. Disintegration led to weakness; disunity in the Eurasian condition meant a dependence on one's neighbours, who are far from always disinterested and merciful. That is why in Eurasia political culture developed its own, original vision of the ways and aims of development.'

According to Gumilev, 'the Eurasian people built a common statehood by putting at the core of their union the principle of the inviolability of the rights of all people to a certain way of life. In Rus' this principle was embodied in the concept of sobornost' and was strictly observed. In this way the rights of the individual were also preserved.' Gumilev maintained that the experience showed that while every people's right to remain themselves was preserved, a united Eurasia had successfully contained the onslaught of Western Europe, China, and the Muslims. This view of Russia's relationship to its neighbours is similar to the Eurasian analysis of Eurasia's relation to the other large mestorazvitie which bordered it to the West, South and South-East.

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442 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 298.
443 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 298.
444 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 298.
There was continuity between Gumilev and the Eurasians in the areas dealing with geography and history. In particular, they shared the concept of *mestorazvitie* and a belief in the importance of the political unity of Eurasia. Their respective understandings of the fundamentals of the historical process were, however, radically divergent.

### 3. Eurasian Attitudes to Europe

A central role in Eurasian thought was played by their negative view of Western influence on Russia. Riasanovsky argued that 'it was the iconoclastic Eurasian identification of Russians and Russian culture with Eurasia, a concept which included non-Russian, often Asiatic, nationalities of the Russian State, which accounted for much of the notoriety of the movement and the tremendous polemics which it aroused.' To understand Eurasian views of the role of Western influence on Russian history, it is important to look at the Eurasian concept of world history.

V.M. Khachaturian argues that the Eurasians generally adhered to a particular concept of world history. This concept, which determined the Eurasian approach to the role of individual national cultures in history, was based on a multilinear view of the historical process, developed in Western historiography by Vico and Herder, and in Russia by Danilevskii and Leont'ev. 'The idea of the multilinear nature of the world historical process is often present in the works of the Eurasians and accepted by them almost as an axiom.' The only work which gave a theoretical justification of that concept was Trubetskoï's *Europe and Mankind*.

In this book, Trubetskoï denied the idea of a linear development of history. Instead, he put forward a concept of progress based on the idea of world cultural development as a realization of the potential diversities inherent in various cultures. In this way, the idea of culture common to all mankind was opposed by the idea of a national culture. By stressing the uniqueness of each culture, the Eurasians denied European culture the central role in world history.

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446 V. M. Khachaturian, 'Istoriosofiya Evraziistva' (hereafter, 'Istoriosofiya Evraziistva'), *Evraziia*, p. 44.  
447 Khachaturian, 'Istoriosofiya Evraziistva', p. 45.  
The central arguments of Europe and Mankind can be presented in the following way. European chauvinism and cosmopolitanism were two sides of the same coin; both were based on the essentially egocentric psychology of Europeans. The difference between a chauvinist and a cosmopolitan was a matter of degree not principle. ‘Civilisation’ and ‘world culture’ were synonymous for the Romano-Germans with European culture. This belief in the superiority of one’s own kind was the same in chauvinism and cosmopolitanism alike, and based on an ego-centric psychology. The difference between them was that whereas a chauvinist thought that his national culture was the supreme cultural achievements, a cosmopolitan thought the same of European culture as a whole.

Trubetskoj argued that if the idea of the linear development of culture was accepted, those cultures that were most similar to the European culture were considered more developed, while dissimilar ones were seen as backward and barbarian. Trubetskoj wanted to show that there was no objective reason for this view. He argued that all cultures had the same intrinsic worth, however similar or dissimilar they were to the European model. This line of thought continued the Russian intellectual tradition of ‘local civilizations’ founded by Danilevskii, who also based his arguments against Eurocentrism on the uniqueness of cultural-historical types.449 In turn, this intellectual tradition was continued by Gumilev, who argued that history was a series of processes of ethnogenesis independent of each other.

Unlike Danilevskii’s cultural-historical types and Gumilev’s superethnoses which used scientific models to define their respective concepts, Trubetskoj’s anti-European polycentrism was based on a strictly cultural analysis. Specifically, Trubetskoj argued that attempts at integration into European culture would always have a negative result. The development of people trying to integrate themselves into European culture would be slowed as, on the one hand, they would lose or suppress their intrinsic cultural uniqueness and their distinct psychological type, while on the other hand they would never be

449 There was in Danilevskii’s theory an Augustinian notion of religious and cultural continuity in history, which in his view expressed itself in the antagonism between the ‘city of God’ and the ‘city of this world’, i.e. the fight between the Slavic and the Roman-German historical types. Bazhov argued that this notion was not logically linked with the fundamentals of the theory of cultural-historical types. Danilevskii’s notion of providential continuity should be, therefore, seen as an autonomous component of Danilevskii’s overall thought, Filosofiia istorii Danilevskogo, p. 121.
capable of cultural development to the same degree as the native Europeans. Furthermore, uneven distribution of Europeanized elements within a recipient culture led to antagonism in society. In this situation, different classes in society had different cultural traditions, and were unable to understand each other in the same way as they did when they adhered to the same cultural tradition.

The solution to the problems caused by the spread of Europeanization lay with the intelligentsia of the non-European people. It was their responsibility to recognise the entirely relative value of European culture; that this culture was valuable only for people who created it; that European culture was no better or worse than any other culture; and that adaptation of European culture by people who did not originally create it was harmful; that full adaptation to European culture was only possible through assimilation to the Romano-German peoples; and that through this assimilation a recipient culture became 'static' and unable to independently develop further. It followed that the recipient culture would always remain in a material and spiritual dependence on the original European culture.\textsuperscript{450}

The Eurasians saw Russia and the West as having inherently different national and spiritual cultures. Adopting alien ideas could have a negative impact on the development of the recipient culture, especially if that culture was at a different stage of development. Trubetskoï's theory provided a tailor-made theoretical justification for a rejection of the Westernizing reforms of Peter the Great and his successors. A detailed critique of the Westernizing policies of Russian state was given in Trubetskoï's \textit{Chingiz Khan's legacy. A view of Russian history not from the West, but from the East.}\textsuperscript{451}

In Trubetskoï's view, a specific historical example of the adverse consequences of Europeanization could be seen in Russia after Peter the Great's reforms. Trubetskoï argued that there was a real need for Russia to defend itself from the technically advanced West. But although technical and military expertise had to be borrowed from the West, the Russian reformers who undertook this task lost sight of the ultimate aim of modernization, which was the preservation of cultural and spiritual uniqueness of Russia.

\textsuperscript{450} N.S. Trubetskoï, 'Evropa i Chelovechestvo', \textit{Istoriia, Kultura, Iazyk}, pp. 55–113.
\textsuperscript{451} N.S. Trubetskoï, \textit{Nasledie Chingiskhana. Vzgliad na russkuiu istoriiu ne s Zapada, a s Vostoka}, Berlin, 1925.
Instead, Russian military strength was bought at the price of cultural and spiritual imprisonment.

The abolition of the institution of the Patriarchate and its replacement by the Synod destroyed the foundation on which the spiritual purity of the nation was based. The close connection between religion and everyday life was replaced by alien secular ideas borrowed from Europe. Trubetskoi maintained that Peter the Great had a perverted sense of patriotism. He did not love 'real, historical Russia,' but wanted to create from Russian material a great European power which was just like any other European state, only with a bigger territory, army, and fleet.

As the old ideological foundations of Russian statehood had been destroyed by Peter the Great, its new foundations had to be based on force. This was the reason, in Trubetskoi's view, why serfdom had been reinforced and Russia had militarized to a previously unknown degree. Furthermore, foreigners had assumed a leading role in the Russian state. They did not have any 'organic connection' with Russia, saw everything 'truly Russian as barbaric and the Russians as semi-savage fools.' This had led to an increased selfishness in society and, foremost, in court circles. As a consequence there was a growth in favouritism, palace coups, a bigger burden on the landed gentry in the service of the state, and increased exploitation of the peasantry.

The results of Europeanization in the social sphere were equally disastrous. As the process permeated from the top to the lower classes, it generated an unprecedented cultural, spiritual and social gap in society as different classes were exposed to the 'benefits' of European culture. The upper layers of nobility were outwardly Europeanized under Peter the Great, while the spiritual basis of European culture was acquired by them only at the end of the eighteenth century, when the lower classes were just beginning formal Europeanization.

The result was that, on the one hand, each class had a 'cultureless' period when they had already abandoned their native culture but had not yet acquired the alien European culture, while, on the other hand, social differences were deepening because of the differences in spiritual and cultural attitudes. Furthermore, because of its artificial nature, the process of Europeanization made it almost impossible for different generations, even from the same class, to understand each other, so that the problem of
fathers and sons was created by Europeanization. ‘In a word, the process of
Europeanization destroyed all national unity, inflicted deep wounds on the national body
and sowed dissension and hostility among the Russian people.’

In foreign policy, Europeanization led to the abandonment of traditional policy
and its replacement with harmful and useless meddling in European affairs. In domestic
policy, Trubetskoi argued that adoption of alien principles had led to policies of
Russification alien to the spirit of pre-Petrine Russia. The influence and prestige of the
Orthodox Church was undermined by its subjugation to the state, which had become an
anti-national regime.

The Russian Revolution did not change the fundamental problem inherited from
Peter the Great. European ideals were not rejected outright. Instead of one alien ideology
a different, equally alien Communist ideology was adopted. A complete rejection of
European civilization was needed to return Russia to its natural historical path, which for
Trubetskoi and other Eurasians meant, above all, developing a Russian national culture
based on a specific Russian or Eurasian psychological character and mentality. The
historical ideal of this culture was in pre-Petrine Russia.

Khachaturian correctly pointed out that the Eurasian analysis of Russia’s relations
with Europe was one-sided. ‘Seeing the European influence as a negative factor, which in
many ways determined the destiny of Russia...the Eurasians did not attempt to analyse
the reasons why European ideas so substantially entered the spiritual life of Russia and
formed within it such a powerful tradition, which successfully challenged Russia’s own,
national culture.’ Eurasian writings on Europe betrayed a powerful psychological
reaction to the conditions they found themselves in the early 1920s, i.e. a forced exile into
an alien cultural milieu by dramatic events at home which destroyed their old way of life.

Riasanovsky pointed to ‘the fact of a striking disjointedness, in a lack of
fundamental connection between Eurasianism and preceding Russian views of the world.
While particular ties between Eurasian ideas and earlier doctrines can be readily
established, the total Eurasian outlook, including the very concept of Eurasia, strikes a

452 N.S. Trubetskoi, ‘Nasledie Chingiskhana. Vzgliad na russkuiu istoriu ne s Zapada, a s Vostoka’
reader conversant with Russian intellectual history as something radically new. This disjointedness is best understood within the context of the manifest failure of the old system of belief which the Russian intelligentsia and nobility faced in the wake of the collapse of the Russian empire. Although Gumilev was not in exile, through his background, his personal ideals, and his scholarly interests he naturally felt attached to the Eurasians and perceived himself as one of their own kind.

The work in which Gumilev gave a detailed summary of his views on Eurasianism was his introduction to Trubetskoi’s collected works on Eurasian topics. Gumilev gave an overview of the latter’s thought and interpreted Trubetskoi’s theories in terms of the theory of ethnogenesis. Gumilev stated that ‘Trubetskoi worked on that level of European science which is now undoubtedly out of date. We will make some amendments and test Prince N.S. Trubetskoi’s concept for validity, using material unknown to the author. If the concept is generally correct, then our conclusions will be similar.’ In his view, even if he and Trubetskoi sometimes argued from different premises, the conclusions they reached were similar. Their views converged on the desirability of cultural and ethnic diversity, the negative impact of Eurocentrism, the role of the Mongols in Russian history and the positive qualities of nomads in general, and the negative consequences of Peter the Great’s reforms, as well as on the future of Russia as a Eurasian civilization.

Gumilev applied his theory of ethnogenesis to support Eurasian arguments about the impossibility of a common world culture and the rejection of European influences on Russia. Gumilev, echoing Trubetskoi and Savitskii, claimed that a common world culture was impossible because ethnoses lived in different geographical environments and had different pasts. These generated present cultures and were sustained by a level of

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455 Gumilev was closer in his personal behaviour and ideals to the social norms of a Russian nobleman rather than a Soviet professor. It was, therefore, no accident that on a personal level, Gumilev felt himself closer to the Eurasians than to his Soviet contemporaries. See V.Iu. Ermolaev, ‘“Chernaia legenda”: imia idei i simvol sud’by’ in L.N. Gumilev, Chernaia legenda: druz’ia i nedrudi Velikoi Stepi, Moscow, 1994 (hereafter, Chernaia legenda), pp. 7–26 (p. 21).
passionarnost’ particular to that ethnos. The culture of every ethnos was unique and it was this very diversity of mankind which gave it its flexibility and success as species.

In Gumilev’s view, ethnic history had a discreet nature. It followed that what intrinsically differentiated one ethnos from another was their level of passionarnost’ and behavioural stereotypes. This was different from the original Eurasians, who considered the uniqueness of different cultures the basis for their polycentric view of history. Unlike the Eurasians, Gumilev thought that the underlying factor in history was passionarnost’, rather than culture. Nevertheless, his conclusions about geopolitical and historical nature of Eurasia were similar to Eurasian conclusions.

4. Mongolian Influence and Russian Historical Identity

The place of the Mongols in Russian history played a central role in the thought of both the Eurasians and Gumilev. Naarden pointed out that

“The Mongol period... is not only interesting as an illustration of the technical problems to be surmounted in medieval studies. Gumilev has shown that the paramount interest of the epoch derives from the fact that a position once taken is bound to include an appraisal of the character of the entire subsequent historical development. He demonstrated that the predominant trend in both pre- and post-revolutionary Russian history writing had always been oriented to the West and Europe-centred in character. This has become manifest through Gumilev’s treatment of the Mongol period, and subsequently of the whole of Russia’s history, from a Eurasian perspective.”

Traditionally, Mongol dominance has been one of the most cited reasons for the relative backwardness of Russia compared with the West. On this view, Kievan Rus was an integral part of European civilization until the Mongolian invasion in the thirteenth century. As a consequence of the Mongolian yoke, Rus was diverted from its historical path and acquired negative characteristics such as despotism, disregard for the

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458 Gumilev, ‘Zametki poslednego evraziitsa’, p. 36.
459 Naarden, ‘I am a genius’, p. 68.
460 See for example V.K. Kantor ‘Zapadnichestvo kak problema “russkogo puti”’, Voprosy filosofii, 4, 1993, pp. 24–34.
rule of law, and a subservient mentality amongst its subjects, factors which still stand in the path of Russia becoming a ‘normal’ European nation.

Contrary to this view of the Mongol yoke as a disastrous period in the history of Russia, the Eurasians claimed that ‘without tatarschina⁴⁶¹ there would not have been Russia.'⁴⁶² Savitskii, for example, argued that the achievements of Kievan Rus’ which were supposedly destroyed by the Mongol invasion were exaggerated. He argued that in Kievan Rus’ before the Tatar invasion, a process of ‘political and cultural deterioration’ had been underway. A relative political unity of the first half of the eleventh century had given way to ‘the chaos of independent principalities’ in the following years. Increasing pettiness became a characteristic feature in the cultural domain. The architecture of later Kievan Rus was dwarfed by its earlier achievements. Savitskii, therefore, argued that Kievan Rus’ was in relative decline even before the Mongol invasion.

Savitskii drew parallels between Russia and other Slav nations in the period from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries in that they experienced an initial period of flourishing followed, instead of consolidation, by disintegration, decay and foreign domination. This was the history of the Bulgars, the Serbs, the Poles, as well as of Kievan Rus’. Savitskii claimed it was ‘a great luck for Rus’, when, doomed to collapse due to internal disintegration, it was taken over by the Tatars and no one else.

The Tatars, in Savitskii’s view, were ‘a “neutral” cultural milieu for Russians, tolerant of “various gods and cultures”…They descended on Rus as a God’s punishment, but did not trouble the purity of national art.’⁴⁶³ In Savitskii’s opinion, had Rus been taken over by the Turks or the West, the burden of foreign domination would have been much heavier, and the consequences for cultural and spiritual integrity much worse than under the Tatars.

As well as being the best alternative for Rus, the Tatars contributed certain new qualities to the Russian state and people, which made it possible for Russia to develop into a strong continental empire. Due to the Tatar influence, Russia was organised militarily, a state centre was created, and Russia achieved stability. The most important influence was Chingiz Khan’s idea of a great single state. Because of the religious and

⁴⁶¹ Things pertaining to the Tatars and their way of life.
⁴⁶³ Savitskii, ‘Step’ i oselost”’. p. 525.
cultural differences, the Russians could not adopt that idea in its pure Mongolian form. Under its influence they, however, attempted to create their own version of it, drawing the formal inspiration from the rich imperial tradition of Byzantium.

Trubetskoi, however, noted that although Russia had close cultural links with Byzantium for many centuries, it was only under the Mongolian rule that they became interested in grand state theories and created an empire of their own. He argued that although due to cultural and historical factors, the ideological foundation of the Russian state had to be based on the Orthodox religion, the prime inspiration for the creation of a great continental empire came from the Mongols. For Trubetskoi, the Mongols and the Russians were carrying out a historical mission by uniting the core of the Eurasian continent which geographically, economically and anthropologically, constituted a single whole.464

Russian cultural and spiritual originality was forged under the Tatar yoke. The core of Russian originality, according to G. Vernadskii and Savitskii, was Russian piety or godliness (russkoe blagochestie). Savitskii said that ‘in the pre-Tatar Rus there were some aspects, hints [of this special Russian piety]; in the “Tatar” Rus there was the completeness of mystical penetration and understanding, and its best creation, Russian religious painting...In this striking contradiction, the Tatars in their role as a God’s punishment purified and sanctified Rus, and by their example fostered in Russia the idea of its power and greatness.’465 This apparent contradiction demonstrated the dual nature of Russia. On the one hand, Russia was the successor of the Great Khans, a unifier of Asia; on the other hand, Russia was a carrier of a spiritual tradition represented by the Byzantine cultural heritage. Russia thus combined the elements of the historic traditions of both the sedentary and nomadic people.

Gumilev was deeply interested in the nomad world and particularly in its influence on Russian history, something he shared with other Eurasians. The sheer amount of material published by Gumilev on the subject speaks for itself. One of his interviews began with the statement: ‘I, a Russian, have been defending Tatars from

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slander all my life' followed by an impassioned defence of the Tatar role in Russian history. In fact, Gumilev's re-interpretation of the role of the Mongols in Russian history was in many aspects much more radical than that of other Eurasians. Both the Eurasians and Gumilev had a genuine interest in the nomad world and tried to employ this interest in order to challenge prevalent views about Russian medieval history.

In his correspondence with Savitskii, there was a high degree of emotional solidarity regarding this aspect of Russian history. Savitskii wrote to Gumilev: 'I myself and some of my scientific friends spent a considerable part of our lives on defending the thesis that "the Mongols brought to Rus more good than harm"...I wish you success in your fight for your scientific conclusions from the bottom of my heart. Based on everything I know, I am sure that they are true.' This quote from Savitskii confirms to the continuity of Eurasian and Gumilev's views on this subject.

Gumilev not only endorsed the Eurasian analysis of the Mongol role in Russian history, but put forward a much more radical reinterpretation of this aspect of Russian history, strengthening his arguments with a historical analysis based on his theory of ethnogenesis. According to him, it was wrong to look at Russian history as a continuous development from Kievan Rus' to Muscovite Russia. In Gumilev's view,

'It is necessary to distinguish the history of the ancient Kievan Rus' (from the ninth to thirteenth centuries, including Novgorod until its fall in the fifteenth century) and the history of Muscovite Rus' (from the thirteenth century to the present). The key period for understanding [Russian] history is the thirteenth to fifteenth century, when Russia emerged as a result of interposition of two different processes of ethnogenesis. The final phase of the ethnogenesis of Kievan Rus' correlated with the incubation period of the future Russia. This gave such a tragic complexion to the times of Aleksandr Nevskii, Dmitrii Donskoi and Vasilii Temnyi.'

Gumilev maintained that the Mongols protected the nascent Russian ethnos from the Western military and religious aggression at a crucial time. Within this context, the

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466 L.N. Gumilev, 'Ia, russkii chelovek, vsiu zhizn' zashchishchau tatar or klevety', Chernaia legenda, pp. 247–323.
467 Savitskii to Gumilev, 29 November 1965, Gumilev's private archive.
468 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 292.
role of Alexander Nevskii was iconic for both Gumilev and the Eurasians. Gumilev reiterated his conviction that the Mongols and the Russians had a common enemy in the West. The Orthodox Russians were among the intended victims of the Crusaders, but Nevskii stopped the Crusaders’ advance with the Mongols’ help. He argued that Nevskii’s pact with Khans Batu and Berke was a military-political alliance, while the tribute the Russians had to pay to the Golden Horde was a contribution to a common treasury for the maintenance of the army.

This was a traditional Eurasian view. In Vemadskii’s opinion, Alexander Nevskii sacrificed political freedom to save religious freedom. ‘Two [great] deeds of Alexander Nevskii – his fight with the West and his humility to the East – had the single purpose of saving Orthodoxy as the source of moral and political force of Russian people.’ This thesis runs through Gumilev’s own work on Russian history.

Unlike the Eurasians, who did not have a clear distinction between Kievan and Muscovite Russia, Gumilev claimed that the difference between Ancient Kievan Rus’ and Muscovite Rus’ was clear if one compared their behavioural stereotypes. He argued that ‘Moscow did not continue Kievan traditions as was the case in Novgorod. On the contrary, Moscow was destroying the traditions of vechevaia vol’nost’ and the princes’ internecine wars. It replaced them with different behavioural stereotypes, to a large extent borrowed from the Mongols, such as a system of strict discipline, ethnic toleration and deep religiosity.’ Gumilev’s analysis was more systematic and radical than was the case with the Eurasians. In more than one way, Gumilev was further developing and systemising the ideas which the Eurasians formulated in the 1920s.

Gumilev agreed, for example, that it was very easy to perceive Russian history as a continuous process from the ninth to the twentieth century. This was particularly true if one looked at its cultural history, as the Muscovite cultural tradition, based on Orthodoxy, came from Kievan Rus. If, however, one considered the ethnic tradition, that is, a

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470 Ot Russi do Rossii, p. 134–35.
472 For example in Drevniaia Rus’, p. 541; Ot Russi do Rossii, pp. 123–36.
473 Ot Russi do Rossii, pp. 293–96.
behavioural unity of people sustained by *passionarnost*’, then one would see two different processes.⁴⁷⁴

‘The cultural tradition, i.e. the sum of knowledge and its conceptions, is lodged in what has been created by man and passed in time from one ethnos to another. Because the cultural tradition, based on Orthodoxy, was borrowed by Moscow from Ancient Rus’ and underwent only formal changes, for people in the eighteenth and twentieth centuries the historic continuity was fully sustained. The heritage of the Kievan Rus’ and the achievements of the Muscovite Rus’ were merged together, which gave them a reason to think of a continuous development of Russian history from the ninth to the twentieth century.’⁴⁷⁵

Gumilev agreed that if one had in mind culture – everything that has been created by people – it was possible up to a point to accept continuity in Russian history. But so far as ethnogenesis was concerned, that thesis was completely inapplicable. ‘Unlike cultural tradition, ethnic tradition is not a continuity of dead forms created by men, but a behavioural unity of living individuals sustained by their *passionarnost*’.⁴⁷⁶

Trubetskoi saw Russia as a province of the Mongol Empire and as benefiting from the association. Gumilev, however, had a more uncompromising view of Russia’s relation with the Mongol state. He argued that a political and military alliance was a more accurate description of the relationship between Rus’ and the Golden Horde. He pointed out that Aleksandr Nevskii acknowledged the suzerainty of the Khan of the Golden Horde in 1258, the same year that the Pope declared a crusade against the Schismatics (Orthodox Christians) and the Tatars.

For Gumilev, the connection between these two events was reason to see the relationship between Rus’ and the Golden Horde as a military-political alliance. Gumilev likened Russia’s relation with the Mongol state at that time with the union of Russia and Ukraine in 1652.⁴⁷⁷ He also pointed at the historical experience of those Russian territories which fell into the Western sphere of influence, like Galicia and Belarus. These

⁴⁷⁴ *Ot Rusi do Rossii*, p. 296.
⁴⁷⁵ *Ot Rusi do Rossii*, p. 296.
⁴⁷⁶ *Ot Rusi do Rossii*, p. 296.
territories were subjected to religious oppression and economic exploitation by Poland-Lithuania.\textsuperscript{478}

Naarden correctly summarised Gumilev’s view as follows: ‘The alliance with Mongols offered the Russians security and order while it left their autonomy almost intact. The Orthodox Church was free to undertake missions in the Mongol territory, and exempt from tributary obligations in Russia itself. Under the Mongol suzerainty the rise of Moscow took place and its political, religious, and ethnic unity was restored through cooperation between the Church and the State.’\textsuperscript{479} Gumilev did not, however, stress that the emerging Great-Russian ethnos also included the Finns and the Orthodox Lithuanians. For example, Gumilev noted that many Russian nobles had Tatar ancestors,\textsuperscript{480} but he did not also emphasise that there were many Russian aristocratic dynasties of Lithuanian origin such as the Golitsyn, Kurakin, Mstislavskii or Trubetskoi families. Gumilev’s personal affection for the Steppe people, and his professional interests as a nomadist, as well as a dislike of European influence, undoubtedly influenced his views on this subject.

Gumilev endorsed the Eurasian interpretation of the growth of the Russian state as a natural inheritance by Moscow of the Mongolian political leadership of Eurasia. On this view, in the course of the fourteenth century the Golden Horde started to decline and became Islamic, and political and military cooperation with the Russians came under pressure and changed character. The ethnic symbiosis, however, was reinforced as large numbers of Mongols went over to the service of Moscow. In the end it had been a natural development for the tsars of Moscow to assume the role of the Khan after the collapse of the Golden Horde.\textsuperscript{481}

Gumilev argued that the myth of the evil nature of the Mongols originated in Western Europe in the thirteenth century and was later transplanted into Russian thought with the spread of Western European philosophical and historical ideas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{482} In contrast to Gumilev, Ostrowski argues that anti-Tatar sentiments are clearly detectable from the middle of the fifteenth century. ‘The Church-

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\textsuperscript{478} Gumilev, ‘Zametki poslednego evraziitsa’, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{479} Naarden, ‘I am a genius’, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{480} Gumilev, ‘Zametki poslednego evraziitsa’, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{481} Gumilev, ‘Zametki poslednego evraziitsa’, p. 42.
\textsuperscript{482} Gumilev, ‘Zametki poslednego evraziitsa’, pp. 36–39.
\end{flushright}
concocted virtual past of Rus’ princes trying to free the Rus’ land from the Tatars is a post-1448 invention. In the chronicles, such a view appears only in interpolative passages of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{483}

Ostrowski’s argument fits very well with the view of Russian history in terms of the theory of ethnogenesis. As the Russians rejected reliance on Constantinople in spiritual matters, they also began to assert more openly their political independence from the Horde.\textsuperscript{484} But it is characteristic of Gumilev to ascribe to Western influence all negative features of Russian history, including the negative perception of the Mongols.

As a consequence of Western influence, Russia abandoned its tradition of religious and ethnic tolerance inherited from the Mongols. Gumilev accordingly saw the nineteenth century policy of Russification and the Soviet twentieth century attempts at levelling national diversity in the USSR as inherently alien to the Russian tradition represented by the inclusive policies of the pre-Petrine Muscovite state.

Gumilev once again echoed the Eurasian idea of the negative nature of European influence on Russia. ‘Unfortunately, in the twentieth century we abandoned this sensible and traditional policy and adopted European principles – tried to make everyone look alike. But who wants to be like someone else? The mechanical transfer of Western traditions of behaviour into the Russian environment produced little good, which is not surprising.’ He argued that ‘the so-called ‘civilized’ countries belong to a different superethnos, namely the Western world, which used to be called Christendom. It emerged in the ninth century and after thousand years of development came to a natural finale of its ethnic history.’\textsuperscript{485}

It followed that any Russian attempt to remodel itself in Western Europe’s own image was likely to produce negative effects and ultimately doomed to failure. According to Gumilev’s theory ‘the Russian superethnos appeared 500 years later than the Western one. As we are 500 years younger, however hard we try to emulate the European experience, we will not be able to reach the levels of well-being and the mores characteristic of Europe. Our age, our level of passionarnost’ presupposes completely different behavioural imperatives.’ Gumilev added that ‘this does not mean that one

\textsuperscript{483} Muscovy and the Mongols (see note 312 above), p. 160.
\textsuperscript{484} See pp. 151–54.
\textsuperscript{485} Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 299.
should not study other peoples' experience, but one should always remember that it is other peoples' experience. All the achievements of the West are the result of a long and difficult historical process. In this way, Gumilev was echoing Eurasian arguments about natural limits to the Europeanization of Russia.

An important question is how far the view of the positive role of the Mongols was dependent on the Eurasian framework. Gumilev thought that the two concepts were indistinguishable. For example, he even criticized Trubetskoi for not being a consistent Eurasian when he talked about negative aspects of the Mongol influence. On the whole, the Eurasians had a favourable view of Eastern influence in general and the Mongolian one in particular. Even among the Eurasians, Gumilev stood out as an unquestionable supporter of the Mongols.

In conclusion, Gumilev's relationship to the Eurasians was paradoxical. Although he developed his ideas largely in intellectual isolation, his views on central aspects of Russian history had a striking similarity to the original Eurasian ideas. This was particularly so with respect to the historico-geographical concept of Eurasia and the polycentric view of world history. With regard to the role of the Mongols in Russian history, Gumilev was more radical and thorough in his re-interpretation of their role than other Eurasians. As Naarden argued, Gumilev 'saw it as his mission in life to forge the tentative beginning and ideas [of the original Eurasians] into one comprehensive perception of history.' Gumilev's work on this area surpassed the Eurasian works of the 1920s and 1930s in its breadth and details.

The most important difference between Gumilev and other Eurasians was in Gumilev's theory of ethnogenesis. There was no comparable theory in Eurasian thought to match the theory of ethnogenesis in scale. Apart from a few scattered remarks on this subject, for example, in Savitskii's Rossiia osobyi geograficheskii mir or Vernadskii's Nachertanie Russkoi istorii, the only work devoted to theoretical issues of world history is Trubetskoi's Europe and Mankind (1920). This book was more of a pamphlet than a

486 Ot Rusi do Rossii, p. 299.
487 Gumilev, 'Zametki poslednego evrazitsa', pp. 41-42.
488 Naarden, 'I am a genius', p. 68.
489 See for example Gumilev's Drevniaia Rus' on the relation between the nomads and Russia from the ninth to fifteenth centuries, plus Gumilev's earlier works on the history of Eurasian nomads (see p. 16 above) and various articles on this subject.
full-scale monograph (consisting of only 120 pages), and was focused on arguing against the prevalent Eurocentric views of history. It is incomparable in its breadth and scale to Gumilev’s main theoretical work *Ethnogenesis and Earth’s Biosphere*. Nevertheless, the conclusions for Russian history that Gumilev drew from his theory of ethnogenesis were to support the Eurasian ideals.

5. The post-Soviet Reception of Gumilev’s Ideas

An important question that arises from the above discussion is how far Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis is compatible with Eurasianism. This is a particularly important question because in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eurasian ideas acquired a wide currency in the political discourse of the countries of the former Soviet Union. As a result, Gumilev’s theory of ethnogenesis is seen by many as a theoretical basis for neo-Eurasianism.

As some scholars have pointed out, Eurasianism was a reactive cultural movement. For example, Mark Bassin argues that underlying all its complexities, Eurasianism was a reaction to the territorial and political fragmentation of the traditional Russian state following the October Revolution and the Civil War. In this way it should be seen as an attempt to replace the old imperial ideology with a new one. If there had been no revolution, civil war or emigration, then Eurasianism would not have existed in the form it did. Eurasianism emerged because Russian intellectuals with an anti-Western orientation had a specific reason to respond to events of the day in an extremely sharp and polemical way.

The core of the Eurasian outlook consisted, on the one hand, in the rejection of Soviet power for religious and ideological reasons, while on the other hand it also

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490 This section has been greatly enriched through discussions with Viacheslav Ermolaev in summer 2004. I also use unpublished work by Ermolaev in which he presents his ideas about the relation between the theory of ethnogenesis and the neo-Eurasian ideas and tries to analyse the phenomenon of Eurasianism from the point of view of the theory of ethnogenesis.

491 See for example *Osnovy geopolitiki* (see note 16 above), pp. 152–55, and *Russkaia Etnopolitologiia* (see note 18 above), pp. 245–58.

rejected the whole imperial period of Russian history from Peter the Great onwards. The Eurasian geopolitical and cultural ideal was associated with Muscovite Rus of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, when Russia was part of the Mongol state. In this respect, Gumilev was undoubtedly a real Eurasian, both in his ideological and personal sympathies.

Ermolaev argues that it was characteristic for Russia at times of passionary declines to turn its priorities towards the East, while at times of passionary peaks its policy re-orientated itself towards the West. For example, the Livonian War and the establishing of trade links with England, the Unification with the Ukraine, and the Russian success in the Seven Years War were periods of passionary increases in the Russian superethnos.493 In contrast, in the nineteenth century Russian 'passionarnost' was falling and the focus of Russian foreign policy shifted to the Eastern Question, the annexation of Central Asia, and finally to the Far East, ending in disastrous military defeat by Japan. Eurasianism was a product of passionary depression (1894–1920) which marked the beginning of the open crisis phase. This is why 'Eurasianism, by its place in the behavioural system of Russian superethnos, unquestionably represents the tendency of falling passionarnost', not only chronologically, but also with respect to its content.494

Russian communism had many similarities with Eurasianism. Communist slogans of 'the fight with imperialism', 'support for Asian national liberation movements' represented the same Eurasian sentiment of enmity towards the 'civilised world'. 'Communist dreams in Russia about India and Afghanistan rebelling against the "British colonisers" were compatible with Eurasian calls for the fight against the intellectual and political hegemony of the "Romano-Germans".'495 This indicates a certain similarity between their respective perceptions of the world, a point taken up by the neo-Eurasians in the 2000s.496

493 See the Chapter 5 for details.
494 Ermolaev, 'O Evraziitve v Rossii' (see note 33 above), p. 5.
495 See, for example, the discussion of Trubestkoi's Europe and Mankind above.
496 It is interesting to note how in the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union a number of publications appeared which tried to reconcile Communist doctrines with Eurasianism. For example, in a recent book by E.S. Trotskii, Russkaia Etnopolitologiia (see note 18 above), there is a section entitled 'Eurasianism and Leninism' in which it is argued that the two ideologies were very close to each other, going as far as to say that the Soviet Union was 'a Eurasian unity of nations.' Gumilev's role is seen as a link between the original and the neo-Eurasians.
At the basis of this closeness was an intuitively negative perception of the West, combined with the historical circumstances of the emergence of Eurasianism and Communism. Their closeness was determined by the fact that both the Eurasians and the Communists wanted to impose their stereotypes on Russia as a whole. A similar point is made by Bassin, who argues that the Soviet regime was also 'grappling with essentially the same dilemma, namely how to preserve the political-territorial cohesion of the old empire while rejecting the basis on which it had been held together.' Eurasianism can only be understood in the same historical context of the disintegration of the old social and political system, which necessitated a radical revision of Russian history and its relations with the West.

There were, of course, some differences between the Eurasians and the Communists. First is the difference in their respective influence on Russian history. Whereas the Eurasians were a small group of emigrants, the Communists emerged by the 1920s as the leading subethnos in the Soviet system. Second is the difference in their ideals. Whereas the Eurasian religious-political models went back to the Orthodox monarchy of the pre-Petrine times, the Communists aimed at building an ideal state of the future. But from the point of view of the theory of ethnogenesis 'classical Eurasianism and Russian Communism are in the same homologous set because of the direction of their behaviour, which represented the behavioural ideal of their epoch'. That is, they both represented the crisis phase in Russian ethnogenesis.

During Soviet times Gumilev was the only scholar who continued to work within the Eurasian intellectual framework and as a result was sharply criticized for his views by mainstream historians. When after the collapse of the Soviet system Eurasian works became available to the public, Gumilev was in a unique situation as the only person who openly talked about Eurasianism before official restrictions were removed. Eurasianism became firmly associated with Gumilev and the whole of his thought. As has been argued in this Chapter, this is a correct assumption with respect to his views of Russian history.

497 Bassin, 'Eurasianism and Geopolitics in Post-Soviet Russia', p. 38.
500 See pp. 38–39 for more details.
and its relation with the West and the nomads, but not in so far as the theory of ethnogenesis is concerned.

The analogy between the original Eurasians and the Communists also helps to explain the popularity of neo-Eurasianism in post-Soviet Russia. After the collapse of the Soviet system, a considerable number of people remained sympathetic to Soviet ideals and behavioural norms. At the same time, it was clear these ideals must be reformed to adapt to the new post-Soviet environment. The reason for the phenomenal popularity of Eurasianism in the post-Soviet countries was because Eurasianism was capable of replacing Communism by providing similar solutions in a different ideological form.

To some extent this view is echoed by Mark Bassin who argues that those who were hostile to the process of political fragmentation of the Soviet space perceived a need 'for some sort of radical ideological alternative which could replace the now thoroughly discredited Soviet federalism as a rationale for preserving the political cohesion and integrity of the former state territory.'\(^{501}\) In the theory of ethnogenesis the emphasis is, however, on the psychological compatibility of Communism and Eurasianism.

I use two examples given by Ermolaev to illustrate the nature of the transition from Communism to Eurasianism. In the 1990s, a publicist S. Kara-Murza introduced a concept of 'Soviet civilization', which argued that the Soviet Union was a special civilization which espoused collectivist values, distinct from and opposed to individualist values of the West.\(^{502}\) There was an evident sympathy in Kara-Murza's books for Soviet norms of life and behaviour. But in the early 1990s this very same person was at the centre of an informal group which had a strong affinity with Eurasian doctrine. Ermolaev observes that 'in personal behaviour, love for 'Soviet civilization' does not contradict adherence to Eurasianism.'\(^{503}\)

Another example of the ideological transition was Sergei Lavrov. He was a highly distinguished Soviet academic and official at Leningrad University, where he was Gumilev's chief. Lavrov was also the secretary of the Leningrad University Party committee, a post which made him almost equal to the head of the university. In addition, he was also a doctor of geography, professor and the vice-president of the All-Union

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\(^{501}\) Bassin, 'Eurasianism and Geopolitics in Post-Soviet Russia', p. 40.

\(^{502}\) S.G. Kara-Murza, *Sovetskaia tsivilizatsiia*, Moscow, 2001

\(^{503}\) Ermolaev, 'O Evraziistve v Rossii', p. 6.
Geographic Society of USSR Academy of Science. His speciality was West Germany, where he frequently travelled for research. Such an opportunity to regularly visit a Western country was in a rare privilege in the Soviet times. At the pinnacle of his career he was elected as People’s Deputy to the Supreme Soviet.

Ermolaev remembers how the collapse of the Soviet system became a personal tragedy for Lavrov. He was convinced that the existence of Russia outside the Soviet framework would lead to a national catastrophe. Despite being an experienced apparatchik and in an excellent position to continue his career in new Russia he, unlike many former Party members, did not conform to the new democratic ideals. Instead, to the surprise of many people who knew him, Lavrov joined the newly created Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which offered no prospect of a political career in Yeltsin’s Russia. In his way, he remained loyal to his communist ideals even at the expense of personal and political hardship, a sign of passionarnost’. Lavrov understood, nevertheless, that the communist doctrine had to be adapted to new circumstances and that some of its basic principles had to be reformed or abandoned.

'This committed Communist and a consistent supporter of the USSR, by the mid-1990s surprisingly quickly turned to Eurasianism. He devoted the rest of his life to successfully proving to his comrades in the Communist Party the importance of Eurasianism, the fatal mistake of its underestimation, and its compatibility with the Soviet doctrine. Thus, a transition from Eurasianism to Soviet behavioural ideals, as well as the opposite transition, did not require any significant reform of personal behaviour. In post-Soviet Russia these two forms of behaviour came to be quite compatible both ethologically and psychologically.'

In this context, it would be interesting to know how Gumilev reacted to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Ermolaev recalls how, in August 1991, he learned about the August putsch and its failure. A couple of days after that he went to see Gumilev at his dacha. He was convinced that Gumilev, as a victim of the Soviet system, would welcome the collapse of the USSR. Ermolaev was amazed to see a sad Gumilev watching the declarations of independence by Soviet republics. Ermolaev recalled the following conversation:

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"Lev Nikolaevich, I congratulate you - Sofia Vlas'evna is dead!" Gumilev was silent. "Lev Nikolaevich, something's happened? Why are you so gloomy?"

...Gumilev suddenly replied to me in a dry tone: "Yes, it seems that you are right - Sofia Vlas'evna is indeed dead. Only there is no reason to be happy - the country is falling apart before our very eyes." "Lev Nikolaevich, but you used to say yourself - that it's the [crisis] phase, it can't be helped." But my attempt at a joke was categorically cut off: "How can you joke about this - it is our country - our forbears fought for it, many generations of people fought so that Kazakhstan would be ours, that Fergana would be ours, that we would live with the Kazakhs and the Uzbeks in the same country. And now? What will happen to the country?" 5

For Ermolaev, this was the first and only episode in their relationship when he completely misjudged Gumilev's reactions and motivations. In the case of Lavrov, whose ideology was shattered and who had personally a great deal to lose from the collapse of the Soviet Union, such a reaction was perfectly understandable. Gumilev, on the other hand, suffered all his life from the Soviet regime for his views. He had good reason to welcome the changes because with the collapse of the old system all ideological restrictions on his theories disappeared.

Ermolaev tried to interpret Gumilev's reaction within the context of the ethnogenesis theory. Gumilev's theory of history is based on the premise that the object of study was the actual behaviour of people, represented by the processes of adaptation in the environment based on available passionarnost, while socio-cultural indicators played a secondary role.

Ermolaev proposed the following principle to analyse Gumilev and Lavrov's reactions to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Behaviour always manifests itself as reaction to an external event, in this case, the collapse of the Soviet Union. It follows that a behavioural unity can be observed only on the basis of the similarity of behavioural reactions to a historical event. The larger the scale of a historical event, the clearer the behavioural reaction to it and the more distinct the unity of behaviour becomes.

Lavrov, a high-ranking communist with many privileges, and Gumilev, a Eurasian repressed by the Soviet authorities, were equally fond of the Soviet Union. They both reacted in a similar way to its disintegration, and both saw it as a personal tragedy.

5 A codeword for the Soviet Power.
"This means that while remaining ideologically different doctrines, Russian Eurasianism and Russian Communism were similar and compatible in their actual behaviour, in their reactions to large events."\textsuperscript{507} The behavioural closeness of the Eurasians and Communists was a result of the closeness in their perception of historical time. The Soviet Union, a political manifestation of the crisis phase, was cherished by people whose behaviour was also the product of this phase. Their ideological differences had a secondary importance, as Lavrov and Gumilev's reaction to the collapse of the Soviet Union showed.

The similarity of behavioural ideals led to the endorsement by the Eurasians of various Soviet policies such as the economic development of Russia-Eurasia during the industrialization and their recognition of the political talents of the Bolsheviks. As has been noted earlier, there was a clear similarity in their views on the modern political organisation of the state.\textsuperscript{508} To borrow Trubetskoi's terminology, Soviet Communism was ideocracy, only Marxist rather than Eurasian.

"The key difference between the Eurasians and the Communists in their actual political behaviour was which ideology should serve the state 'ideocratic' machine. Trubetskoi directly talked about the aim of Eurasianism as replacing the Communist, European 'idea-ruler' with the Eurasian 'idea-ruler'. Should anyone then be surprised that even such committed communists as Lavrov easily adopted Eurasian colours or that some Eurasians had links with the NKVD?"\textsuperscript{509}

Eurasianism was a temporary phenomenon which reflected the depression of 1894–1920. This also explains why Eurasianism became popular in a similar depression of 1982–2004. It follows that as the country comes out of depression, the popularity of Eurasianism should also recede.

We have seen that Gumilev was related to Eurasianism in several ways. First, Gumilev shared their scholarly interest in nomadic studies. Second, Gumilev had a strong personal fondness for Eurasian nomads, their way of life and their history. Third, Gumilev belonged to that part of the Russian nobility which traditionally had a negative view of the Western influence on Russia. Fourth, Gumilev had personal contacts with

\textsuperscript{507} Ermolaev, 'O Evraziistve v Rossii', p. 8.
\textsuperscript{508} See p. 189 above.
\textsuperscript{509} Ermolaev, 'O Evraziistve v Rossii', p. 15.
such important Eurasian figures as Savitskii and Vernadskii, which led him to feel personal solidarity with the original Eurasians.

The above factors combined to provide the basis for Gumilev's self-identification as the last Eurasian. As has been argued in this Chapter, Gumilev's Eurasianism manifested itself in the way he valued and employed the scholarly and scientific achievements of the Eurasians, primarily in geography and history. Furthermore, he thought that he was continuing the Eurasian tradition with his work. On a personal level, he was proud to belong to the Eurasian school of thought. Finally, Gumilev believed that Eurasianism had a big future in Russia.

Gumilev's conviction that Eurasianism was a viable basis for the Russian state was based on the argument that the Russian superethnos emerged in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries in the territories under the Mongolian rule. He believed this historical experience could bring prosperity and stability to modern day Russia. That was why he said in one of his last interviews 'I believe that if Russia is to be saved, this will be done only through Eurasianism', i.e. only a union with the Eurasian people would make Russia a strong and stable state.

The fact that Russia first emerged within the framework of the Mongolian ethnosocial system does not mean that in the twenty-first century Russia can have the same relation with the Steppe people and derive from it the same benefits as it did six centuries ago. In the theory of ethnogenesis, ethnos had a dynamic dimension, determined by passionarnost, whose changes were manifested in the phases of ethnogenesis. In Gumilev's own view, the Steppe people and the Russians emerged from different passionary impulses, of the tenth and thirteenth centuries respectively.

If one accepted Gumilev's argument, in the twenty-first century these two superethnoses would be at different phase of their ethnogenesis – the end of the crisis phase for Russia and the disintegration phase for the nomads. It follows, that in the twenty-first century there is simply no noticeable force in the Eurasian steppes for Russia to ally itself with and which could serve as a counter-balance to Western influence. In contrast, in the fifteenth to twentieth centuries Russia had close contacts with Europe

which had a profound impact on its history and behaviour. For these reasons, Eurasianism should be seen as a utopian ideology.

If one did accept Gumilev’s argument, then a historical parallel for the contemporary period of Russian history would be the experience of Byzantium in the early ninth century. On Gumilev’s theory, Christianity first emerged as a *konsortsia* of apostles around Christ, later growing into a subethnos within the Jewish ethnos, which in its turn was part of the Roman ethno-social system. The behavioural divergence of the Christians and the Jews was openly established after Bar-Kokaba rebellion in 132, after which the Christians became a distinct ethnos. After the Edict of Milan (313) and the Nicean council (325), Christianity became the dominant behavioural system for the Eastern Roman Empire, the Christians became a superethnos.

The crisis phase of the Byzantine superethnos was in the eighth and ninth centuries, represented by the iconoclast controversy, while the early inertia phase came under the Macedonian dynasty. If the historical parallels are extended to contemporary Russia, than the Eurasian ‘calls to use the constructive experience of the Russian symbiosis with the Mongolian Ulus in the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries would be analogous to a slogan in the ninth century Byzantium for the Christians to return not only to the “symbiosis” with the Roman Empire of the early prosecution, but also to combine the worship of Christ with attendance at Solomon’s temple.’ From the point of view of the theory of ethnogenesis, Eurasianism is as absurd for modern Russia as the above hypothetical programme would have been absurd for Byzantium in the ninth century. Gumilev’s conviction that Eurasianism was the only solution for Russia is odds with the essence of the theory of ethnogenesis.

This does mean that the whole of Eurasian thought or of Gumilev’s work on Russian and nomad history is fruitless. The Eurasians made important scholarly discoveries and their historical re-interpretation of Russia’s relation with the Steppe had many positive aspects. But the scholarly achievements of Eurasianism do not make it a sound political ideology, while Gumilev’s Eurasian views are not identical with the theory of ethnogenesis.

511 See pp. 123–30 above for more details.
In fact, the neo-Eurasians who use Gumilev’s name to gain themselves notice are least of all attracted to the theory of ethnogenesis. For example, Lavrov published a biography of Gumilev, the first such work to come out.\textsuperscript{513} There is a special chapter on the history of Eurasianism, which is not strictly necessary to the book. In contrast, the theory of ethnogenesis only receives 25 pages, just over half the size of the Eurasian chapter. Lavrov admits in the opening sentence to the chapter on ethnogenesis that this chapter was the most difficult one to write because ‘to make it convincing there must be a conviction in the theory of ethnogenesis. And there is not.’\textsuperscript{514} There is no doubt that the reason why Lavrov, terminally ill at the time of completion of the biography, continued his work, was because he valued Gumilev’s credentials as a Eurasian. The theory of ethnogenesis had no significance for Lavrov.

Gumilev’s personal association with Eurasianism led to its identification with the theory of ethnogenesis. In this relation, the theory of ethnogenesis has the status of a theoretical appendix to a political ideology, which is wrong in principle. For this reason, it is not the deterministic nature of the theory of ethnogenesis which attracts right-wing nationalists to Gumilev, as H. Kochanek thinks,\textsuperscript{515} but his Eurasian views. Gumilev devoted his life to developing a new approach to history and in the end fell victim to his political illusions. But as has been argued in this Chapter, Gumilev in the theory of ethnogenesis implicitly refuted his own Eurasian illusions.

\textsuperscript{513} Sergei Lavrov, \textit{Lev Gumilev. Sud’ba i idei}, Moscow, 2000 (hereafter, \textit{Lev Gumilev}).
\textsuperscript{514} \textit{Lev Gumilev}, p. 320.
\textsuperscript{515} See p. 11 above for more details.
Conclusion

Gumilev accepted many important Eurasian ideas, especially those dealing with the geographical nature of Eurasia and its history. He continued to develop these ideas in a more thorough and comprehensive way by bringing into focus Russia’s relations with Eurasian nomads. He also tried to support his Eurasian views by applying the theory of ethnogenesis to Russian history. The theory of ethnogenesis is, however, an independent intellectual paradigm that is entirely distinct from Eurasianism.

Gumilev shared with the Eurasians their perception of key aspects of Russian history such as the European influence and the relations with the Mongols. However, he put forward a more radical interpretation of these aspects of Russian history, in particular regarding Russian relations with the Mongolian state. The radicalism of Gumilev’s and of Eurasian views on Russian history was a reaction to the events of Russian history which they witnessed. Nevertheless, their work in this area was an important contribution to the debate on Russian historical identity.

The collapse of the Soviet Union saw the resurrection of interest in Eurasianism in Russia. Gumilev was in a unique position as the only self-acknowledged Eurasian scholar. His professed identification with Eurasianism led to the identification of neo-Eurasianism and the theory of ethnogenesis. Instead of being seen as an independent intellectual paradigm, his theory of history was used as a 'scientific' justification for neo-Eurasianism ideology. This is an unfounded and unfortunate association. In creating the theory of ethnogenesis, Gumilev rose above the Eurasian intellectual and ideological framework. On these grounds, he should be considered an independent thinker rather than 'the last Eurasian'.
Chapter 7
Conclusion

The first two Chapters gave an overview of Gumilev’s life and works that there is no need to revisit in detail here. Gumilev’s starting point, his studies of Eurasian nomads, involved a detailed investigation of a little-known historical period and geographical region. It gave Gumilev scholarly experience, established him as a historian and provided him with rich historical material on which he later based the theory of ethnogenesis. They also reinforced the non-European focus of his world view. This aspect of Gumilev’s work is, however, a specialized area and lies outside the focus of the thesis. This conclusion sums up the central ideas of the remaining Chapters and suggests a general assessment of the two main areas of Gumilev’s thought we have discussed, namely, the theory of ethnogenesis and his views on Russian history and identity.

Gumilev’s background is important to understanding his unconventional views and ideas. He came from the cultural and intellectual elite of pre-revolutionary Russia. On the one hand, this led to his rejection of Soviet ideology and values. On the other hand, he upheld ideals of Orthodoxy and Russian patriotism, which eventually led him, somewhat paradoxically, to oppose the dismantling of the USSR. His personal preferences motivated him to study the history of Eurasian nomads, while his enquiring mind compelled him to look for a new explanation of historical phenomena. The combination of the above factors resulted in a new theory of history and a distinct view of Russian identity.
1. The Theory of Ethnogenesis

The theory of ethnogenesis was Gumilev’s most important intellectual achievement. It presented an original view of ethnic transformation as a non-voluntary natural process. *Passionarnost* was the key concept for understanding the process of ethnogenesis, defined it as the ability to formulate abstract ideals of various complexities and persist in their attainment for the greater period of one’s life. *Passionarnost* was described as a behaviourist phenomenon but explained in physicalist terms. This dichotomy between behaviourist definitions and physicalist explanations runs through the whole of the theory of ethnogenesis. The behaviourist aspect is the most valuable and promising part of the theory of ethnogenesis.

The global nature of ethnic transformations led Gumilev to argue that these processes were part of the biosphere. V.I. Vernadskii’s concept of the biosphere was an important influence on the theory of ethnogenesis, providing the conceptual basis on which Gumilev developed his own theory. Ethnos, in Gumilev’s view, was a process, rather than a state. This distinction was expressed in the differentiation between static and dynamic ethnoses, while ethnogenesis was seen as the main mechanism in human adaptability to diverse environments. Vernadskii’s thought based on understanding human evolution as a part of the general evolution of the biosphere was paralleled in Gumilev’s view of ethnogenesis as a natural, spontaneous phenomenon.

Gumilev introduced a new concept of ethnic identity, which stressed the non-rational, emotion-based nature of ethnic identification. An ethnos was bound together by its ethnic field, expressed in *komplimentarnost* and a unique behavioural stereotype. Economic, social, and political factors were replaced by a behaviouristic analysis of non-voluntary, emotional motivations and identity. Gumilev pointed to the limitations of the voluntaristic approach to history which focused on the analysis of history in terms of rational choices. Gumilev introduced several concepts which have an independent value irrespective of whether the theory of ethnogenesis is accepted as a whole. In particular, the non-voluntary nature of ethnic identity and analysis of long-term behavioural changes in terms of *passionarnost* offer interesting insights into human nature.
A weakness of the theory of ethnogenesis is its lack of rigorous criteria. Gumilev used descriptive methods which by their nature had a substantial degree of subjective interpretation. His method is useful in a retrospective historical analysis of large global changes in history, but it lacks a definitive quality. Another problem was his desire to provide an exhaustive explanation of ethnic phenomena in terms of physics and biology. Gumilev, as a historian and geographer, was not qualified for this task. For example, his explanation of the origins of passionarnost' as caused by cosmic factors could not be verified with any degree of certainty and has ridiculed in the eyes of many the theory as a whole.\textsuperscript{516} This obscured the real significance of the theory of ethnogenesis as a behaviourist conception of history.

Likewise, the explanation of passionarnost' as a micro-mutation of the central nervous system spread through genes could not be anything but pure speculation. For such explanation of passionarnost' to become a scientific hypothesis, there had to be specialist studies in such fields as genetics and biochemistry. Gumilev was not in a position to carry out such studies and should have limited himself to developing the behaviourist aspects of his theory.

The weak areas do not, however, undermine the theory as a whole. Some of its weak points, such as the lack of rigorous criteria, can be remedied by further development. For example, Gumilev's follower Ermolaev introduced a new definition of 'event' in ethnogenesis which avoided the conceptual problems faced by Gumilev on this issue.\textsuperscript{517} There is no reason to assume \textit{a priori} that other difficult areas of Gumilev's theory could not be modified or developed in a similar manner.

The theory of ethnogenesis as presented by Gumilev should be seen as a foundational work which provided an outline of a new model of ethnic history. Some of its parts must be re-examined, some rejected, others further developed. Gumilev's achievement was the establishment of a new framework for the analysis of history. His version of the theory is not the final word, but has significance as the discovery of a new historical paradigm.

\textsuperscript{516} Ermolaev argued that Gumilev's insistence on the cosmic origin of passionarity was based on his religious beliefs.
\textsuperscript{517} See pp. 81–82 above.
2. The theory of ethnogenesis in a historical perspective

The idea of ethnic history as a natural process of adaptation in the biosphere led Gumilev to view ethnic history as discrete processes of ethnogenesis. This was supported by the central concepts of his theory, such as the non-rational basis of ethnic identity and the importance of geographical factors for ethnogenesis. These views ensured a non-linear model of history. The theory of ethnogenesis continued, therefore, a historio-philosophical tradition of 'local civilizations'.

The theory of ethnogenesis had two main similarities with Danilevskii’s theory of cultural-historical types. First, both Gumilev and Danilevskii attempted to interpret history in a naturalistic way. Second, they both saw history as a non-linear process which consists in an autonomous development of discrete historical units.

There were, however, important differences between the two theories. In contrast to Danilevskii, Gumilev made an important conceptual distinction between ethnic and other forms of history. Furthermore, while Danilevskii relied on non-evolutionary, anti-Darwinist theories, Gumilev employed twentieth century conceptual models for the analysis of ethnic processes, focusing on the behavioural and emotional aspects of ethnic processes. Gumilev moved closer than his predecessors to a concept of history derived from the natural sciences rather than the social sciences and humanities by stressing the behaviourist nature of ethnic development.

A comparison of the theory of ethnogenesis with A. Toynbee’s theory of history showed certain similarities. Their respective descriptions of the process of the formation and development of historical units had similarities such as the role in history of 'creative minorities' and passionaries, and their respective characterization of the main stages of historical development. The main difference, however, was in their fundamental postulate about the nature of history. Whereas for Toynbee history was a spiritual growth, for Gumilev it was a natural, behaviourist process of adaptation in the environment.

An illustration of their differences was their respective analyses of the fall of the Roman Empire and the emergence of Christianity. Toynbee saw this as a breakdown of classical civilization. Gumilev, on the other hand, argued that it represented the end of the Greco-Roman superethnos, manifested in the disintegration of the Roman Empire, while
the rise of Christianity was a new process of ethnogenesis which later led to the formation of the Byzantine Empire. Gumilev analyzed this period of history in positivist terms, while Toynbee analyzed it in spiritual terms.

Unlike Danilevskii and other Russian philosophers of history, Gumilev did not focus exclusively on Russia, but tried to create a genuinely general concept of history. In this way Gumilev was closer to such Western philosophers as Marx, Hegel, and Toynbee. Instead of Marx’s historical materialism, Hegel’s world spirit, and Toynbee’s spiritual growth, Gumilev saw history as global fluctuations of passionarnost’ that were part of the biospheric processes. He provided a non-Marxist alternative to understanding history in twentieth century Russia and prepared the intellectual ground for shifting the focus of historical analysis from economic and class factors to ethnic factors.

3. Russian history

The theory of ethnogenesis applied to Russian history produced new and interesting results. Gumilev stressed a unique behavioural stereotype as the key to understanding Russian national identity, while the emphasis on ethnic as opposed to cultural continuity allowed him to argue that Muscovite Russia was a distinct historical process from Kievan Rus.

An important distinction should be made between an ethnological view of Russian history and Gumilev’s personal views. The former include the distinction between Kievan and Muscovite Russia, the analysis of historical entities in terms of the difference in behavioural stereotypes, passionarnost’ and phases of ethnogenesis. The latter stressed, on the one hand, the unambiguously positive view of the Mongols and other nomads, and, on the other hand, a distinct and uncompromising anti-Western sentiment.

The main themes of Gumilev’s whole work met in his views on the role of the nomads. His view of the Mongol period of Russian history was based on a rejection of the traditional view of the Mongols as the destroyers of the prosperous Kievan civilization which had been one of the main arguments for Russia’s difference with the West. Gumilev insisted on the positive role of the Mongols, first as guardians of the
nascent Russian ethnos from the Western expansion in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, and second as providing a significant element in Russia’s ethnic composition.

Gumilev’s approach to Russian history has its limitations. For example, there were no exact criteria to differentiate between Kievan Rus and Muscovite Russia. Instead, he used descriptive methods which by their nature had a substantial degree of subjective interpretation. In contrast, D. Likhachev argued that the differences were the result of a historical evolution, rather than a beginning of a new tradition. This dispute is difficult to settle conclusively due to lack of exact and objective criteria in the theory of ethnogenesis, which is an intellectual framework for understanding global changes in history, rather than as a precise method of historical analysis.

Taken as a whole, Gumilev’s interpretation of Russian history has important consequences for the debate on Russian historical identity. In particular, it leads to a shift away from a European orientation and towards a unique identification of Russia as a Eurasian superethnos. Gumilev’s argument that the Great Russian ethnus originated in the thirteenth century and that it was at a different phase of ethnogenesis compared with the Western superethnos reinforced Russian non-occidental identity. The insistence on the limits to Russia’s integration with the West has relevance for contemporary arguments about the future Russian development as witnessed in the debates about suitability of Western models of democracy for modern Russia.

Gumilev’s ideas began to become influential in the 1980s via such writers as Dmitrii Balashov and Vadim Kozhinov. In addition, Gumilev’s views on the relation between the Russians and the nomads made him popular in non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union. For example, a new university in the capital of Kazakhstan was named after Gumilev. It is important to remember when studying Gumilev’s ideas on Russian history that his personal views, the product of his background and life experience, led him to interpret central events in the history of his country in the way he did.

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520 See note 341 above.
4. Eurasianism

Gumilev's kept alive the intellectual and historical tradition begun by the Eurasians in spite of the criticism he received from the Soviet authorities. His work in this area was considerably more thorough and systematic than anything attempted by the Eurasians themselves, while his conclusions were more radical than those of his Eurasian predecessors. The continuity between Gumilev and the Eurasians lay in their intellectual and historiographic closeness, rather than in the ideological aspects of their thought.

Gumilev's relation to Eurasianism had several aspects. First, he accepted many important Eurasian ideas, especially those dealing with the geographical nature of Eurasia and its history, and continued to develop these ideas in a more thorough and comprehensive way. For example, he brought into focus Russia's relations with the Eurasian nomads in much greater detail than the Eurasians themselves. He also tried to support his Eurasian views by applying the theory of ethnogenesis to Russian history, although with little success. Despite Gumilev's efforts to prove the contrary, the theory of ethnogenesis remained an independent intellectual paradigm, distinct from Eurasianism.

Second, Gumilev shared with the Eurasians the perception of such key aspects of Russian history as the European influence and relations with the Mongols. The radicalism of Eurasian views on Russian history was a reaction to the events of Russian history which they lived through. Nevertheless, their work in this area was an important contribution to the debate on Russian historical identity because they put forward a new and unusual formula of Russian identity.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a renewed interest in Eurasianism. Gumilev was at that time in a unique position as the only self-acknowledged Eurasian scholar. His self-professed Eurasianism led to the complete identification of neo-Eurasianism and the theory of ethnogenesis. As a result, this theory, instead of being seen as an independent intellectual paradigm, came to be used as a 'scientific' justification for neo-Eurasian ideology. This is an unfounded association. In creating the theory of ethnogenesis, Gumilev rose above the Eurasian intellectual and ideological framework. He should be, therefore, considered an independent thinker rather than 'the last Eurasian'.
Overall, Gumilev’s views on Russian history can be categorized as a continuation of the conservative tradition of nineteenth century Russian historical thought. The rejection of Westernization and the emphasis on a polycentric view of world history points to a close affinity between Gumilev and such nineteenth century thinkers as Danilevskii and Leont’ev. This affinity was further strengthened through their shared naturalistic approach to history and their espousal of the principle of local civilization as the main unit of historical process.

The affinity with the Eurasians was based on a rejection of Western reforms and an emphasis on non-occidental influences on Russia, a development of the traditional sentiment of Russian conservative nationalist thought. In the case of Gumilev and the Eurasians, the alternative to the West was the nomadic influence. Thus, there is a certain continuity that stretches from Danilevskii’s attempt to develop a scientific basis for Slavophil ideology, runs through Leont’ev’s rejection of Slavic identity as essential for Russia’s distinct identity and the Eurasians’ emphasis on the positive influence of the Mongols in Russian history, before culminating in Gumilev’s radical vision of Muscovite Russia emerging from an ethnic symbiosis with the Golden Horde. Gumilev’s thought can, therefore, be seen as the latest phase in the development of this intellectual tradition.
Final Thoughts

There are two distinct areas of Gumilev's thought in contradiction with each other: the theory of ethnogenesis and Eurasianism. His most important intellectual contribution is the theory of ethnogenesis. In Eurasianism, Gumilev developed and elaborated in much greater detail views of his predecessors, but this work did not have the same level of significance and originality as the theory of ethnogenesis. He could not completely resolve the dichotomy between them, while after his death the theory of ethnogenesis acquired a subordinate role to Eurasianism. This is an unjustified position. Gumilev should be remembered as a creator of an original school of thought, rather than the last and brightest thinker of a defunct historico-ideological movement.

Gumilev's life was a combination of personal hardships, academic dedication and great intellectual ambition. His background, ideals and intellectual calibre, combined with his personal experiences, resulted in a unique philosophy which is impressive in its scope and originality. He rejected both Soviet and Western theories of history and attempted to create new historical paradigm. Each of the three principal areas of his intellectual activity, namely the nomad studies, Eurasianism and the theory of ethnogenesis, are sufficient to make him an outstanding thinker. Taken as a whole, Gumilev's thought is an intellectual phenomenon.

Although many aspects of his thought are controversial, it should not be overlooked that Gumilev, with all his faults, was not afraid to address the grand questions of history. As has been noted, 'the highway of science is strewn with corpses of deceased theories which just decay or are preserved as mummies in the museum of the history of science.' Credit should be given to those who are not afraid to tackle the grand questions of nature and history, even if their answers are not always completely satisfactory; otherwise 'the museum of the history of science' would be a wearisome place. Gumilev – the explorer of new worlds and forgotten epochs, the creator of a new philosophy, Russian thinker and patriot – was an original mind who made the study of history and human nature a more fascinating enterprise.

521 General System Theory (see note 147 above), p. 119.
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