

Post-Soviet practice of preserving ethnocultural identity of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia in Krasnoyarsk Region of the Russian Federation

Natalia P. Koptseva,¹ Vladimir I. Kirko²

¹ Department of Cultural Studies, Siberian Federal University, 79 Svobodny, Krasnoyarsk 660041, Russia

² Department of Management Organizations, Krasnoyarsk State Pedagogical University named after Victor Astafijev, 89 Ada Lebedeva St., Krasnoyarsk, 660049 Russia

decanka@mail.ru

Abstract: The article presents the results of many years' field research of small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia, resident in the territory of Krasnoyarsk Region (the Russian Federation). At the present time small-numbered indigenous peoples of Krasnoyarsk Region (the Evenks, Enets, Chulymy, Nganasans, Nenets, Selkups, Kets, Dolgans) are exposed to serious influence of modernization and global transformations. Ethnogeny and culture genesis processes are not the same for these ethnocultural groups. Some post-Soviet cultural practices support formation of a positive ethnocultural identity of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia. Museumization of the Nganasan culture (an indigenous Siberian people resident only in Krasnoyarsk region) confirms the conclusion that Taymyr Neo-Shamanism is significantly different from the Shamanism of archaic and traditional cultures. Museumization of the Nganasan cultural heritage points out that the culture experiences a strong impact of modern market mechanisms. True Shamanism is no longer typical of the ethnocultural identity of the Nganasans.

[Koptseva NP, Kirko VI. **Post-Soviet practice of preserving ethnocultural identity of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia in Krasnoyarsk Region of the Russian Federation.** *Life Sci J* 2014;11(7):180-185]. (ISSN:1097-8135). <http://www.lifesciencesite.com>. 22

Keywords: Indigenous peoples, North Asia, Siberia, Nganasans, ethnic identity and cultural identification

1. Introduction

There are two main opinions expressed in modern ethnical and cultural researches. The first of them is based on claiming self-sustainability, invariability (stability) of a certain culture. Supporters of this opinion suggest, that every culture is spread in a strictly outlined geographical area. From the point of view of these researchers, globalization does not influence the existence and development of local cultures. Soviet Age researchers of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia used to stick to this opinion. It was clearly manifested in their primordialism and articulated by the most authoritative Soviet ethnologist, Yuri Bromley (2009). This point of view of Soviet ethnographers and ethnologists was typical of their researches of indigenous cultures of the North and Siberia (Khomich, 2003; Volodin, 2003). If Soviet ethnologists found any dynamics of the cultures, they would arrive at the conclusion that all changes of the indigenous cultures is the result of communication between individuals within the framework of one given cultural group, not a result of intercultural communications and/or global influence (Northern Encyclopaedia, 2004).

The second point of view emerges from the fact that cultures of all modern societies are diverse. Practically, all modern societies are conglomerates, systems of multiple cultural groups with a stable social communication system and common social life.

Representatives of such researchers insist, that terms "small group", "ethnic minority", "national minorities" should be replaced with "ethnocultural group" (Berry et al. 2002). This opinion leads us to a very important conclusion. At the present moment it is wrong to see reasons of people's actions as influences of certain cultures. Behaviour of a people is not determined by a single cultural group. Ethnogeny and culture genesis are permanent processes. Processes of emergence of new ethnocultural groups, forming under constant cultural influence, is never ending in the world. For this reason the efforts of ethnocultural group researchers should be focused on the behaviour of people who belong to the ethnocultural groups. It is necessary to study, which cultural practices are used by people for preserving their ethnical and cultural identity (Branch, 2001; Greene et al., 2006; Kiang et al., 2010; Kiang et al., 2006; Phinney & Ong, 2007).

Researches of modern ethnocultural identity processes of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia during the post-Soviet period are impossible to be carried out without considering the global transformations making impact on the groups. Indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia are vulnerable to a series of economic, political, cultural influences. The major role in ethnogeny of small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia in post-Soviet time is played by the influence of industrial and urbanized Russian society (Kirko &

Zakharova, 2013; Kirko et al., 2010; Koptseva & Luzan, 2012; Amosov et al., 2012). At the present time, the Russian Federation is going through re-industrialization of Northern and Arctic territories. The activities of the largest economic players (such financial and industrial groups as “Rosneft”, “Gazprom” and others) in the areas of indigenous peoples’ compact residence make a huge impact on the ethnogeny and culture genesis of the peoples (Pal’chin, 2013; Semenova, 2010).

At the same time indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia, resident in the Northern and Arctic territories of the Russian Federation, are active participants of indigenous peoples’ associations. There are multiple social organizations of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia, which, with the help of modern information technologies, provide intensive interaction between various ethnocultural groups of indigenous peoples. Modern information technologies enhance the presence of Northern and Siberian indigenous peoples in the world; now their voice is heard as a voice of a large community. The political significance of the modern indigenous peoples, which is currently studied by multiple sociologists and humanitarian researchers, cannot be ignored (Feagin 1984; Francis, 1976; Gordon, 1976; Helm, 1965).

However, post-Soviet researchers of the Northern and Siberian indigenous peoples turn to obsolete methodology and old-fashioned ethnological conceptions, while it is required to study the ethnocultural groups not as a static phenomenon, but in the dynamics of ethnogeny and culture genesis.

2. Material and Methods

The main method of study is field research under the guidance of Professor Natalia Koptseva, carried out in the years 2010-2013 by scientists, post-graduates and students of Siberian Federal University majoring in culture studies. The field research was carried out in three areas of Krasnoyarsk Region that bear the “North territory” status: Evenkiysky District, Taymyrsky Dolgano-Nenetsky District, Turukhansky District (Amosov et al. 2012). The methods used during the field research are: focus groups, expert interview, insider’s view, visual anthropology (Reznikova, 2013). Statistical methods were also applied.

Result validation was provided by including representatives of indigenous peoples into the process of research. Organization of research, selection of settlements for field works and experts for interviews was done by Ekaterina Sin’kevich, an ethnical Evenk. The field research was participated by representatives of indigenous peoples engaged in the local authorities of Evenkia, Taymyr, Turukhansky District.

According to the Census of 2010, in Krasnoyarsk Region of the Russian Federation there are representatives of over thirty ethnocultural groups of Northern and Siberian indigenous peoples. In Shushenskoe, Novoselovskoe, Uzhurskoe and some other settlements, there live the Khakass. The Khakass, who come from the Republic of Khakassia (borders with the South of Krasnoyarsk Region), are usually students or labour migrants in Krasnoyarsk city, towns of Minusinsk, Achinsk, Kansk. But the number of Khakass population in Krasnoyarsk Region is continuously decreasing. In 1989 there were 6466 people, in 2002, there were 4489 people, and in 2010, there were only 4102 people (0.15% of the whole population of Krasnoyarsk Region). Their number decreased by 387 people, which can be connected to the processes of ethnical and cultural self-identification. It is clear that the indigenous peoples resident in industrial and urban areas tend to identify themselves as “Russians”, while people resident in their “mother land” still claim that they belong to indigenous groups.

In Table 1 “Population number of the indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia based on All-Union Census of the years 1959, 1979, All-Russian Census of the years 2002, 2010” you can observe that the ethnocultural self-identification processes are different for the indigenous peoples. Despite a certain stabilization of the process of ethnical identity, the share of Krasnoyarsk Region population identifying themselves as indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia is constantly decreasing. Though, at first sight, the decrease seems insignificant.

Table 1. Population number of the indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia based on the All-Union Census of the years 1959, 1979, All-Russian Census of the years 2002, 2010 [27]

	1959 people	1979 people	2002	2010
Total	2204051	2700167	2966042	2828187
Dolgans		4630	5805	5810
Evenks	4476	4128	4632	4372
Khakass	3304	5273	4489	4102
Nenets	1925	2497	3188	3633
Tuvans	947	1141	1492	2939
Yakuts	4343	1315	1368	1468
Buryats		898	1051	1051
Ket	984	984	1189	1029
Nogais		35	380	950
Nganasan	694	787	811	807
Selkup	350	363	412	281
Enets			213	221
Shors		300	201	161
Chulyms			159	147

The number of Selkups considerably decreased: in the year 2002, 412 people identified themselves as such, while in the year 2010 there were only 281. The number of people calling themselves Shors also decreased: in 2002 there were 201 person, and in 2010 there were only 161. The same is true for the Kets: in 2002, they were 1189 people, and in 2010 they were 1029. The number of people claiming themselves Chulym decreased by 12 people. The number of citizens who identify their ethnicity as the Evenks or Enets. The number of people who claim themselves Nenets is growing (3188 people in 2002, 3633 people in 2010).

In our opinion, the so-called “stabilization” of ethnical and cultural self-identification processes can be observed in the statistical data provided by All-Russia Census of 2010, which reflects two different processes. The first one is connected to re-industrialization, urbanization, i.e. modernization of the Northern and Arctic territories. As soon as indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia get in the zone where modernization processes are in action, their ethnical self-identification begins to transform. The indigenous population of the North and Siberia, influenced by the modernization processes, tends to identify themselves as “Russians”. However, there are some special post-Soviet practices, which, being taken up by the indigenous peoples, provide their self-identification with their initial ethnonym.

The mentioned post-Soviet practices are based on specific legal relations established in a series of statutes and regulations acting in the modern Russian Federation.

3. Results

The Russian Federation possesses a sufficient amount of statutes and regulations offering legal systems for forming positive cultural identity of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia. First of all, the right of these peoples for their original culture is established by the Constitution of the Russian Federation, which also states that this right is protected on both federal and regional levels. There is a Federal Law No. 184-FZ dated October 6, 1999, “On General Principles of Organization of Legislative (Representative) and Executive Bodies of State Authorities of Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation”, which claims that regions may independently pass laws and other regulations for supporting traditional lifestyle of small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. It also remarks that presence or absence of such regional regulations does not influence the federal subsidies provided to the representatives of such ethnical and cultural groups (Palchin, 2013).

On April 30, 1999, the Federal Law No. 82-FZ “On Guarantee of Rights of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples of Siberia, the North and Far East of the Russian Federation” was passed. In the Tax Code, Land Code, Federal Law “On Fauna”, Federal Law “On Mineral Resources”, Federal Law “On Environment Protection”, “On Fishing and Biological Resource Preservation” and some other laws the rights of indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia are emphasized due to the major content of the laws.

During the last 18 years the Government of Russia has passed and has been actualizing three federal target programs, a great variety of regional target programs regulating payment of subsidies from the federal and regional budgets to representatives of the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia. All 28 regions of the Russian Federation, where such peoples live, have their own registers of the small-numbered indigenous peoples which may enjoy the state support.

Therefore, significant economic support is provided exactly to those people who admit their ethnical and cultural identity as indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia. At the same time the Russian Federation sets numerical framework for the ethnocultural groups which can enjoy the support, which is 50 thousand people. We can suppose that under the global processes the indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia resident in the Russian Federation determine their ethnocultural identity seeking for the profit they may receive under the federal and regional legislation.

At the same time the old residents of the Northern and Arctic territories of the Russian Federation, who identify themselves as “Russians”, do not receive any of such economic preferences.

The most important cultural practice of the post-Soviet period used for forming positive ethnocultural identity of the indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia in the territory of Krasnoyarsk Region is so-called “museumization” of the original culture of such ethnocultural groups.

Some information about the ethnocultural group of the Nganasans is quite representative for the processes of ethnocultural identity. The Nganasans live in Taymyr Dolgano-Nenets Municipal District of Krasnoyarsk Region. The area of their compact residence covers the settlements of Ust-Aava (Dudinsky District), Novaya (Khatangsky District), Volochanka (Dudinsky District). Besides the Nganasans, these settlements are populated with Nenets, Dolgan, Russian people.

The Nganasans call themselves “nia” and explain that this word is close in meaning to “comrade”. In the Russian Empire the Nganasans were usually called Tavgy Samoyeds. Researchers

suggest that the word “Nganasan” is related to “nenesa”, which means “human”. They speak Nganasan language which belongs to the Northern Samoyed group of Uralic languages. Linguists outline two dialects of Nganasan language: Avam and Vadeev dialects. The Vadeev Nganasans also speak Dolgan. Almost all modern Nganasans speak Russian. Nganasan language has no writing.

According to information provided by Krasnoyarsk scientist V.P. Krivonogov (Krivonogov, 2007), the main “ethno-preserving” activity of the Nganasans, reindeer breeding, is almost extinct: if in the year 1994 3,6% of men were engaged in it and 15,5% claimed that reindeer breeding was the beginning of their working life, in the years 2003-2004 only 1,1% of men were engaged in reindeer breeding, and 12,5% began their work with it. In the year 1994, 3,1% of women were engaged in reindeer breeding (and 6,9% mentioned it as their start-up), and in the years 2003-2004 there was not a single one, while 3,6% said that it was their first job. The second traditional sphere of activity, fishing and hunting, enjoys better prospective: in 1994, it was a profession for 27,3% of men and 1,8% of women, and in the year 2004 it was a job of 22,5% of men and 4,3% of women. 33,0% of women in 1994 were engaged in making traditional costumes, but in 2004 there were only 4,7%; many workshops were closed. In total, in 1994 30,9% of men and 37,9% of women were engaged in traditional crafts, while in 2004 there were 23,6% of men and 9% of women. Unemployment rate in 2004 was 33,7% for men and 26,3% for women.

52% of the Nganasans speak their native language, and 47% of children aged under 18 also know and understand it. Therefore, Nganasan language is anticipating the extinction process. Almost all Nganasans can speak perfect Russian, for 79% of them Russian is the “main” and “native” language.

Consequently, it can be stated that one of the basic ethnogenetic process, cultivation of the native language as the main one, is the symptom of assimilation processes for the Nganasans.

At the same time positive ethnocultural identity of the Nganasans is supported by a series of cultural practices, such as preparation and consumption of traditional Nganasan food, performance of traditional rituals made on birth of a baby, on wedding day, farewell ceremonies for the dead etc.

A very efficient practice of forming positive ethnocultural identity of the Nganasans is “museumization”, which was carried out in the 1980-1990s by Oleg Krashevsky. Since 1987 he has been engaging himself in studies on Bioenergetics, gradually acquiring a “title” of a “white-skinned Russian shaman” among the Nganasans (Krashevsky,

2010). He creates his private collection of cult belongings the Nganasans used in their traditional religious ceremonies, collects folklore tales of the cult places where Nganasans used to do their rituals. Near Lama Lake, 150 km away from Norilsk, Oleg Krashevsky created a private natural park called “Putoransky” acting as a farm-unit “Bunisayak”. In the territory of the farm-unit he placed over 1000 exhibits connected to the history of culture and religion of the Nganasan ethnocultural group. He created a virtual version of his museum on www.putorany.ru. In the catalogue contents, Oleg Krashevsky introduces his own reconstruction of religious outlook of the ancient Nganasans. Describing it, he operates the term “Arctic civilization” and claims that the Nganasans have been living in the territory of Taymyr for over 4000 years.

It seems relevant to subsume the activity of Oleg Krashevsky under post-Soviet Neo-Shamanism (Campbell 1976; Mille 1980; Eliade 2004; Harvey 2003; Jenkins 2004; Winkelman 2000; Znamenski 2004, 2007; Noel 1997), where cultural heritage of the indigenous Nganasans is used under modern conditions not only for restoration of their archaic religion, but for visualization of this exotic culture and creation of a certain fundament for modern non-traditional medicine practices Oleg Krashevsky engages himself in. Within culture of Modernism, the archaic cultural heritage acquires new traits: it is desacralized, put on display. Its main purpose is to legalize professional activity of Oleg Krashevsky as a non-traditional medicine practitioner. From the point of view of archaic culture, where the shaman figure is the centre of social life, the shaman belongs to its family by birth right, not by the right of operating these or those things, performing any medical activity. For this reason the title of a “white-skinned Russian shaman” is clearly ironical. The activity of Oleg Krashevsky is a distinctive example of Neo-Shamanism, typical of modern culture, which has no relation to the archaic or traditional culture of the Nganasans.

Modern indigenous peoples of the North and Siberia, resident in Krasnoyarsk Region of Russia, are discreet communities which have their own collective interests. The existence of such ethnocultural groups of indigenous peoples in the Region generally reflects the universal world tendencies. On one hand, these ethnocultural groups do not fit in the logic of creating and running a nation-state; in respect with them, the value of “justice” requires a special interpretation. They have a positive collective identity, clearly distinctive collective interests supported by post-Soviet cultural practices. On the other hand, modern nation-states turn to internationally recognized rights of the indigenous peoples to expand their own borders with the idea of “reunion” of scattered tribal

communities and clans resident in the territories belonging to different nation-states.

Corresponding Author:

Prof. Natalia P. Koptseva
Department of Cultural Studies, Siberian Federal University
79 Svobodny, Krasnoyarsk, 660041 Russia
decanka@mail.ru

References

- Bromley Yu. Essays on Ethnos Theory. Moscow, Librokom Publishing Hous, 2009.
- Khomich L.V. Nentsy [The Nenets] Saint Petersburg, Drofa Publishing House, 2003.
- Volodin A.P. The Itelmens, Saint Petersburg, Drofa Publishing House, 2003.
- Northern Encyclopaedia. Moscow, Evropeyskie Izdaniya, 2004.
- Berry John W., Poortinga Yre H., Segall Marshall H. and Dasen Pierre R. Cross-Cultural Psychology. Research and Applications. Cambridge University press, 2002.
- Branch C. The many faces of self: ego and ethnic identities. *The Journal Of Genetic Psychology*, 162(4), 2001: 412-429.
- Greene M.L., Way, N., Pahl, K. Trajectories of perceived adult and peer discrimination among black, Latino, and Asian American adolescents: Patterns and psychological correlates. *Developmental Psychology*, 2006, 42, 218-238.
- Kiang, L., Witkow, M. R., Baldelomar, O. A., & Fuligni, A. J. Change in Ethnic Identity Across the High School Years Among Adolescents with Latin American, Asian, and European Backgrounds. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence*, 2010, 39(6): 683-693. doi:10.1007/s10964-009-9429-5
- Kiang L., Yip, T., Gonzales-Backen M., Witkow M., & Fuligni, A. J. Ethnic identity and the daily psychological well-being of adolescents from Mexican and Chinese backgrounds. *Child Development*, 2006. 77(5): 1338-1350.
- Phinney J. S. & Ong A.D. Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 2007. (54): 271-281.
- Kirko V.I. & Zakharova K.N. Traditional economic activity is the ethnic saving lifestyle. *Arctic and North*. 2013 (12): 24-31.
- Koptseva N.P. & Luzan, V.S. State cultural policy in the Siberian Federal District: concepts, issues, research: Monograph. Krasnoyarsk, Siberian Federal University, 2012.
- Amosov A.E., Bokova V.I., Kistova A.V., Kirko V.I., Koptseva N.P., Krivonogov V.P., Libakova N.M., Sertakova E.A., Pimenova N.N., Semenova A.A., Luzan V.S., Rafikov R.G., Zamaraeva Yu.S., Nozdrenko E.A. 2012 Indigenous and small in number peoples of the North Siberia under the global transformations (on the material of the Krasnoyarsk Territory). Part I. Conceptual and methodological basis of the research. Ethno-cultural dynamics of Indigenous Peoples of the Krasnoyarsk Territory. (Ed. N.P. Koptseva), 2012, Publishing House of the Siberian Federal University.
- Pal'chin S.Ya. The Current Social and Economic Data on the Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of the North as of 2012. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* 6, 2013 (6): 913-924.
- Semenova A.A. Modern Practices of Foresight Research of the Future of Social-Anthropological Systems, Including Ethnical Cultural Populations. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* 5, 2010 (3): 667-676.
- Feagin J. R. Racial and Ethnic Relations. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1984.
- Francis E.K. Interethnic Relations. An Essay in Sociological Theory. New York, Oxford & Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1976.
- Gordon M. Toward a General Theory of Racial and Ethnic Group Relations. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* I Ed. by N. Glazer & D. Moynihan. Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 1976, 84-110.
- Helm J. Bilaterality in the socio-territorial organization of the Arctic Drainage Dene. *Ethnology*. 1965. Vol. 4. (4): 361 - 385.
- Reznikova K.V. Preservation and Transformation of Certain Aspects of the Traditional Way of Life of the Indigenous and Small-Numbered Peoples of the North, Living in the Settlements (Posyolki) of Turukhansk and Farkovo. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences* 6 2013 (6): 925-939.
- Krivonogov V.P. The Peoples of Taymyr in Early XXI Century. Krasnoyarsk: RIO KGPU, 2007.
- Krashevsky O.R. The Nganasans: Culture of the People in Everyday Life Attributes: Catalogue of the Ethnographic Museum on Lana Lake. idea by Inna Liss, Norilsk, APEKS, 2010.
- Campbell J. The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology. 1976 (1959; reprint), New York and London: Penguin Books.

24. Mille R. ed. *The Don Juan Papers: Further Castaneda Controversies*. Santa Barbara, CA: Ross-Erikson, 1980.
25. Eliade M. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. (1964; reprint) Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
26. Jenkins Ph. *Dream Catchers: How Mainstream America Discovered Native Spirituality*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
27. Winkelman M. *Shamanism: The Neural Ecology of Consciousness and Healing*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2000.
28. Znamenski A. ed. *Shamanism: Critical Concepts*, 3 vols. London: Routledge, 2004.
29. Znamenski A. *The Beauty of the Primitive: Shamanism and Western Imagination*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
30. Noel D. *Soul of Shamanism: Western Fantasies, Imaginal Realities*. Continuum, 1997.

4/11/2014