

Models of Ethnic Adaptation to the Natural and Social Environment in the Russian North

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Methodological Approaches

Ethnos and culture, as means of adaptation to the natural and social environment, form the methodological basis for the development of models of ethnic adaptation to the natural and social environment. Cultural diversity, or the particular cultural knowledge of individual ethnic groups, gives them the means to adapt to the natural and social environments they must deal with (Arutiunov 2000, 86; 1983, 83). Ethnos represents a self-organizing system for human adaptation to their environment (Susokolov 1990, 7). Its structures and properties change over time under particular environmental impacts as the culture adjusts to ensure that development is sustainable. The capacity to take advantage of stored cultural information is what give ethnos its stability and viability (Sokolov 1972, 85). Specific changes in the framework of an ethnos, or ethnic group, occur under particular historical conditions, and these allow us to view it within the framework of the model of adaptation to the social environment. We look at the ethnos as an entire system, one in which ethnicity – a set of particular features in ethnos' culture and ethnic identity – is continually being reproduced.

Among the best-known scholars who have employed these concepts is Sergei A. Arutiunov, whose investigations have focused on culture and ethnos as they relate to adaptation. He developed general methodological approaches to this problem. He applied the concept of ethnos' adaptation first to the natural, and later to the social environment; then he brought in the concept of cultural polymorphic adaptivity and other elements (Arutiunov 1989). The concept of cultural polymorphic adaptivity emphasizes the significance of ethnic culture as an adaptive device during times of anthropogenesis and ethnogenesis (Arutiunov 1993). Arutiunov has highlighted: (a) the continuous development of cultural specialization, which serves as a form of adaptation to varying natural and climatic conditions (using as an example the Eskimos of northeastern Asia); and (b) the emergence and existence of specific cultural phenomena (in this case, occupations), which can exist only in particular local systems (using Chukchi reindeer herders as an example). Concluding with reference to the laws of cultural evolution, the author emphasizes the importance of polymorphism as an adaptive function that helps an ethnos to subsist and, therefore, survive.

Another scholar, Igor I. Krupnik, has offered arguments that are similar to Arutiunov's. His approach to ethnoecology focused on how traditional land use, social organization, and the ways of life of particular ethnic groups all interrelate. From this he developed his own model of traditional land use and drew conclusions about how the cultures of reindeer herders (Chukchi and Nenets) and sea hunters (Eskimos) have adapted to the natural environment (Krupnik 1989, 16).

The development of models of ethnic adaptation to the natural and social environment was promoted due to the systematization and analysis of multiple investigations into subsistence systems of the traditional and modern societies. Our own study of ethnic adaptation to the environment has concentrated on the numerically small indigenous peoples of the Russian North. These indigenous peoples share certain general characteristics relating to how they manage natural resources and their livelihoods, as well as somewhat similar demographic parameters and mental sets for dealing with particular behaviors and goals. The specific ways indigenous cultures adapt to the natural environment were seen as being dependent mainly on natural and climatic conditions, which for these groups include polar deserts, tundra, forest-tundra, and taiga. Practically all elements of culture, beginning with subsistence procurement activities and extending right up to social organization and the formation of the ethnic community itself, are tied to a people's particular natural niche.

Consequently, by the middle of the 20th century, scientists were studying Russia's indigenous peoples across a wide range of regions, such as Kamchatka-Chukotka, Amur-Sakhalin, eastern Siberia, Yamal-Taimyr, Altai-Sayan, and western Siberia, and they combined these peoples into one distinct Siberian historical and ethnographic province (Levin and Cheboksarov 1955, 4). Since the last decades of the 20th century, the numerically small peoples of the North have organized an indigenous movement aimed at finding an appropriate status and place for these peoples in the modern world.

The existing scientific literature includes hardly any investigations that deal with the essence and structure of ethnic adaptation to the natural and social environment. A traditional society – as a uniform, relatively closed society with common value orientations – breaks up into different groups under particular historical conditions, usually under the impact of external social factors. Due to the latter, there is a change in the methods and orientation of the education provided to the new generations, and increasing social differentiation among the indigenous people themselves. In this connection, it is essential to understand correctly the directions and tendencies of ethnic development in response to contemporary situations.

Thus, achieving an understanding of the essence and structure of ethnic development and developing models of ethnic adaptation to the natural and social environment are both aimed at solving this problem; they are also concerned with promoting particular trends on the development of indigenous peoples in the modern period. The basic purpose of this study is to analyze ethnic development in the framework of models of adaptation to the natural and social environment.

To start, I will deal with ideas and concepts about changes in the quantitative and qualitative features of the state of an ethnos, trends and rates in social development, patterns of ethnos' self-organization, and the mechanisms involved in constructing ethnic identities. I will first present these as they apply in conditions of relative isolation (the model of adaptation to the natural environment), and then under changing social conditions and exposure to increasing information, i.e. under the impact of the external social environment (the model of adaptation to the social environment). The models used here are structured around the following features: *ethnodemographic* (e.g. structure and functions of the family, family creation, the population's reproductive performance, population growth and mortality); *ethnosocial* (e.g. social organization, the transfer of cultural knowledge across generations, social institutions, the population's social and professional structure, and its settlement patterns and ways of life; and third, *ethnic* features (e.g. indigenous identity, the role and functions of language, cosmology, traditional occupations, cultural changes in foods, dwellings, and clothing, and the professionalization of the ethnic components of culture).

The model of ethnic and cultural adaptation to the natural environment

The natural environment that has shaped the culture of Russia's numerically small indigenous peoples is characterized by three climatic zones. The animal and plant world is rich, but as one moves farther north, it becomes increasingly impoverished. The northern territories of the Russian Federation stretch from the White Sea along the coast of the Arctic Ocean, through Siberia as far as the peninsula of Chukotka, and south along the coasts of the Bering and Okhotsk seas to Sakhalin island and the Amur river. Taken together, the regions north of the polar circle along with the territories of western and eastern Siberia and the Far East comprise an area of 11.5 million square kilometers. This represents 67% of the entire territory of the Russian Federation (Statisticheskii sbornik 1993, 6).

Within the framework of the model of ethnic adaptation to the natural environment, first, anthropogenesis has clearly been an important factor in shaping the conditions for cultural evolution and adaptation to the natural

environment. Additional cultural differentiation has taken place under the influence of natural and climatic conditions. This has served as the basis for primary ethnogenesis (Arutiunov 1993), and with it the formation of language dialects, ethnic identity and cultural specificity. An indigenous people's worldview, folklore, customs and traditions are all expressions of their relationship to the natural world, including its animals and plants. Typical of the cultural characteristics of indigenous groups is a kind of syncretism, an ability to understand the functions and forms of culture (folklore, rites, art, beliefs) in a holistic way.

The formation of an ethnic culture provides the basis and means that help an indigenous people to adapt to its particular natural niche. Cultural information, which is passed down from one generation to the next, assists the indigenous group to adapt its behavior to the demands of a specific natural and climatic zone. In our model, during the development of a local ethnic culture (with polymorphic features to allow the most effective utilization of natural resources), cultural information helps in forming a system of subsistence (Arutiunov 1993, 47). Thus, the natural and geographical environment is turned into a socially organized space, and into a cultural landscape (with dwellings and settlement) that includes a particular subsistence system (Kozlov 1999, 62, 72). The overall lifestyle of an indigenous people (nomadic, semi-sedentary or sedentary) also has an adaptive character with regard to the local resources that are available for their subsistence (Krupnik 1989). The continued existence of an *ethnos* is secured by the transfer of cultural knowledge across the generations of each family. In traditional societies, families usually have several generations living together. Hence, the family becomes an important information channel for passing along; norms of conduct with respect to the given environment; subsistence skills (dwelling, clothing, tools); methods and customs of land use; language, food, folklore, songs and dances. This continuity of cultural values has a decisive impact on the sustainability of an *ethnos*. The group's particular social organization, which is mainly governed by customary law, has a similar effect.

In recent centuries, the indigenous peoples of the North were exposed to the legal and economic demands and requirements of the Russian Empire. But, as with many other traditional societies, they largely retained their self-sufficiency. This helped in the preservation of the existing subsistence system, and of the traditional ways in which they transfer cultural information. The Russian Empire's charter outlining how the indigenous peoples of Siberia were to be managed (1822) anchored indigenous rights to each group's long-held territories and to the resources of the land that

it traditionally used. Although missionaries brought Christianity to the region during the imperial period, this did not deeply affect the worldview of the indigenous peoples, nor did it replace traditional cults and rites, least of all among the Chukchi and the Siberian Eskimos (Alekseenko 1979, 50). One of the clearest measures of the extent to which traditional ways of life were preserved is that, according to the census of 1926, 54.4 % of the entire indigenous population of the region maintained a nomadic lifestyle (Gurvich 1961, 45).

In the course of adapting the natural environment, northern indigenous peoples developed specific principles and practices that enabled them to live in balance with that environment. These have included: ecologically compatible occupations and means of transport, collective kinds of property relations, particular types of dwellings and clothing, and specific tools for their household activities and use out in nature. In acclimatizing themselves physically to the severe climatic conditions of the North, certain psychophysiological features evolved that required particular types of protein-rich foods (Klovov and Koriukhina 1994, 66–7).

Nature has exerted considerable influence not only on the psyche and worldview of these indigenous peoples, but also on their artistic creations. Their decorative arts, folklore, dances and songs all reflect the intimate relationship they have with their natural environment. Our model of adaptation to the natural environment sees the ethnic group as part of the entire ecological system by virtue of its worldview, its way of life, and the nature of subsistence practices.

Thus, we consider the indigenous group as a traditional society. A traditional society is a society with a particular subsistence system that is adapted to the natural and climatic conditions and is based on traditional kinds of subsistence activities (reindeer herding, sea mammal hunting, fishing, land-based hunting, plant gathering). This society functions within the structures of customary law. The traditional culture combines elements of paganism, syncretism, and collectivism. The social structure in such a traditional society tends to be stable and homogeneous. In this case, it includes such groups as reindeer herders or hunters, fishers, and gatherers. The fundamental and overriding principle of this society is self-sufficiency, i.e. the ability of individual groups to provide for the needs and safety of their members.

In post-Tsarist times, we observe changes in the quantitative and qualitative features of the state of traditional society, trends and rates in its social development that vary in accordance with a number of political, social and economic factors.

The model of ethnic and cultural adaptation to the social environment

Under the rubric of social environment, I include all cultural, economic, and political resources that are largely controlled by the dominant society and its institutions in the modern world. There is a marked difference, in this regard, between relatively traditional societies (i.e. the numerically small peoples of the North) and modern (and in the examples dealt with here, also dominant) ones. The dominant society is usually characterized by an entire array of industrial and post-industrial features and institutions, such as urbanization, rationalization, bureaucratization, democratization, the importance of market relations, and – in particular – a high level of dependence on the rapid transfer of information. In the model outlined here, indigenous peoples must adapt to entirely new conditions of information transfer and to the new norms and values of the social environment, and they must do so while still preserving their core ethnic cultural components. Within this framework, inter-ethnic interaction occurs between the traditional and modern societies and their various cultures and subsistence systems.

The *dominant society*, in the situation under consideration here, is the aggregate of a number of distinct ethnic communities (for example Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars and others), whose culture differs from that of the indigenous peoples of the North with regard to language, religion, value orientations, and lifestyle. It is a society based on modern principles of social organization and social production, and, as such, it also serves as a transmitter of the ideology of the state, which is a major factor in bringing the outside social environment to bear on the northern indigenous peoples.

Our model of ethnic adaptation to the social environment also takes into account the existence of major changes to the traditional society caused by external factors. The most important of these are the impacts of state policy and the cultural influence brought to bear on the traditional society by the industrial, post-industrial, and information society. In the model of adaptation to the social environment, the following changes take place in the traditional society's subsistence system: (a) the type dwelling unit and its use of construction materials changes, along with the organization of the living space and such things as domestic utensils; (b) there is a change in patterns of nutrition, especially involving a transition from high-protein to predominantly carbohydrate foods; and (c) native clothing, well-adapted to the local natural and climatic conditions, is replaced by standardized European clothing obtained through trade with the outside world.

Political factors have also brought about profound changes in how the numerically small indigenous peoples of the Russian North perform

as traditional societies. Whereas, in earlier centuries, these peoples lived and developed in relative isolation, in the 20th century that isolation was undermined by the political events of 1917. The consequences of Russian Revolution eroded the structure of the traditional society of the North, its subsistence system, its inter-generational relationships, and the cultural transfer of the skills needed to live in such severe climatic conditions (Aru-tiinov 1995, 110).

Over time, the policies of the Soviet state toward the indigenous peoples of a North varied considerably. From 1924 to 1935, the Assistance Committee for the Numerically Small Peoples of the Northern Territories (part of the All Union Central Executive Committee of the USSR) was responsible for the indigenous peoples of a North. The main concern of its policies was to preserve traditional lifestyles by creating a number of specific institutions. Their tasks were: (a) to establish national districts and regions, and national councils; (b) to develop and promote written languages for 16 of the 26 ethnic groups; (c) to train government personnel; and (d) to create and develop national literatures and national mass media, which would serve as the basic propaganda channel for communist ideas. The public roles played by indigenous languages were given enhanced recognition: they became the official languages used by governmental bodies, in legal proceedings, and within cultural establishments and public organizations; and they were used in education at school.

In the mid-1930s, this well-established state policy was replaced by a different one that emphasized *integration*. During the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, the state forced the indigenous peoples of the North to integrate with the larger Soviet industrial society, in accordance with a non-capitalist conception of development. There was an intensification in state campaigns against religious belief systems, traditional customs, cults, and the rites of indigenous peoples. State ownership of property was established as a universal rule. Ownership of practically all reindeer herds was transferred to the collective and state farms. Collectivization was enforced, and this often took place in violent ways. Indigenous people were forcibly removed from the traditional territories where they were accustomed to live, and put into new, more compact settlements. The nomadic society was transformed into a sedentary one. The industrial development of the northern territories was also intensified on a broader scale. In the social and political sphere, no account was taken of distinctive ethnic features in traditional resource use, or of how people had traditionally managed their territories. Thus, there arose a contradiction between the new social and industrial ways of managing these territories and the character, lifestyles and traditions of the indigenous peoples. At official occasions and within

local governing bodies, the use of indigenous languages was curtailed, and at school there was a transition to Russian as the language of education. The publication of literature in the indigenous languages was considerably reduced. During this period and later, the indigenous family was excluded from education, and children's education at the boarding schools came to be based primarily on the use of Russian, and on new, non-traditional methods of education that looked to Europe for their inspiration.

Between the 1960s and the 1980s, official policy toward the less populous ethnic groups of the North could be characterized as a form of *state paternalism* that aimed to encourage their social and economic development under conditions dominated by technological progress. Overall, this meant a transition to a sedentary and European lifestyle, ethnic assimilation, and integration into industrial society. Traditional occupations such as reindeer herding, sea hunting, land-based hunting, and fishing were all re-organized to accord with these principles. The peoples concerned were living in governmental units that had the official status of an autonomous *okrug*, but this still left largely unresolved the precise nature of indigenous rights to local government and toward the use of land and the resources found on it.

By the end of the 1980s, the Gorbachev and then Yeltsin eras, a new – *neo-traditional* – approach was implemented that involved a turning away from practices emphasizing socialist modernization. The official aim of this new approach was to recover and revive certain traditional forms of economic activity (albeit combined with the use of new technologies), and to grant legal support to indigenous groups in all of society's spheres of life in accordance with new socioeconomic programs. The Decree of the President of the Russian Federation from June 3, 1996, "On the Main Principles of Regional Politics in the Russian Federation," foresaw special programs for indigenous development in the North. These would offer state support to indigenous peoples to encourage their culture, assist in the preservation of their languages, and provide for the creation of territories for traditional resource use.

Thus, from 1917 to the present, the state adopted a variety of approaches toward the indigenous peoples of the North, from the humanitarian to the extremely rigid, from those that adequately supported indigenous culture to those that were overtly coercive or even violent. In general, the policy was aimed at the forcible integration of indigenous peoples into industrial society, which involved changing from a nomadic to a settled way of life, bringing the socialization of children into line with "European" standards, and developing a written language, literature and press. This also meant, of course, the development of a different education system, training children

in the Russian language, and the industrial development of lands that had traditionally been occupied by indigenous peoples. In other words, the main thrusts of the policy inevitably led to acculturation and assimilation.

The accelerated integration of the indigenous peoples of the North into industrial society – a major change in their social environment – brought about the loss of traditional life styles and the inherent values that accompany them. In particular, it was the weakening of the nomadic way of life that led to an inevitable crisis in the pursuit of traditional occupations in the 1980s and 1990s. It brought about a high level of unemployment, and led to the growth of marginal groups that had lost the motivation to work. Educational policies at the boarding schools followed European norms led to a shortage in the indigenous youth' skills needed to manage the traditional occupations successfully. Due to this education new western orientations have appeared in their value system, in its norms, aims, and models of behavior.

Along with social causes that were in conflict with traditional occupations, certain economic factors have played a negative role as well. Among these have been the impacts on reindeer pastureland of industrial development, which brought with it hazardous waste, insufficient rentability, and frequently poor management of the pre-existing (native) economic units during the transition to new forms of market economy that occurred toward the end of the 20th century. According to the statistics for 1995, during the past 30 years the total area of reindeer pastureland in the Russian North shrank by 20 million hectares. The overall area of degraded reindeer pastureland had amounted to more than 230 million hectares, or 68% of the entire area of that land. The number of reindeer was reduced to 400,000 head, or only 18.2 % of the number being kept in the 1930s (Sokolova 1995, 283). There has been a decline in fish and fur harvesting as well. On the whole, because there has not been a harmonious modernization of the traditional occupations or a smooth transition to the new forms of management, and because the processes of industrialization continue to take their toll, the crisis in traditional land use has persisted. And not only in Russia, but worldwide as well (Tishkov 1997, 18–9).

The processes of stratification in these traditional societies have also accelerated in recent decades under the influence of the already-mentioned new economic and social developments. There have been major impacts on three distinct groups: (a) rural populations that had been engaged in traditional occupations (such as reindeer herding etc.) have moved toward a more settled nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle; (b) rural populations that were not engaged in traditional occupations have been affected by

changes in the external environment, often moving them from non-traditional employment to marginalization (Diatchkova n.d.); (c) the indigenous urban population, living in close proximity to the dominant society (Sokolova 1995, 37), has grown steadily. The percentage of peoples of the North among the total urban population of the region's towns and cities has risen from 17.5% in 1970, to 22.1% in 1979, and to 25.9% in 1989 (Chislennost 1992, 8).

The changing political climate that began in the second half of 1980s has resulted in an activation of ethnic self-consciousness among indigenous peoples. There arose an indigenous movement, RAIPON (Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North), that committed itself to promoting indigenous interests and assisting in their realization. Huntington's theory of modernization (Huntington 1968) refers to the high degree of political mobilization that tends to occur in traditional societies during periods of transition. According to this theory, indigenous peoples use education and the mass media to create new institutions, for example representative offices, associations and councils. That is, they take the institutions of the dominant society itself and turn them to their own advantage. The Russian experience of the 1990s validates Huntington's ideas. In the transitional period, the Russian indigenous movement aspired primarily to attain sustainable development, to achieve a social status based on the principle of equality (with the dominant society), and to master the surrounding social space with all of its cultural, economic and political resources. The institutionalization of indigenous culture was realized by means of the widespread professionalization of its key components. An indigenous literature emerged with professional indigenous writers. The native newspapers also had native journalists. And there were ethnographic museums, native schools, and ensembles performing native dances and songs.

In the Russian North, the main thrust of ethnic adaptation to the social environment has involved mastering a social space (cultural, economic and political resources) that is dominated by larger ethnic groups. In the 1990s, indigenous peoples first set out to create new social institutions to represent their interests, including the need to defend and encourage traditional occupations, to promote economic and political development, and to establish information networks. Among the new institutions were: RAIPON; committees in the Russian parliament, or Duma, focused on issues of the North, representative offices of the indigenous peoples of the North in the United Nations, the Arctic Council, agencies to represent the indigenous population in Moscow, and offices with modern equipment and communications facilities in the various regions. RAIPON is responsible for building self-management institutions on the basis of

the experience of international indigenous organizations. Using modern communications methods and technologies, it organizes scientific and practical conferences. Its activities, a new trend in adaptation to the social environment, represent an *institutional* policy, that is, one in which a social institution is called upon to help indigenous peoples adapt to modern social conditions.

The earlier inability of the political system in Russia to solve indigenous problems – because of the absence of the necessary legislative base and the absence of judicial protection for indigenous rights – has led inevitably to the development of a body of indigenous legislation. The development of a clear and solid legal status for the indigenous peoples and their territories has been a major new departure for Northern peoples. Thus, *legislation* is the second important trend in adaptation to the social environment. In the 1990s the following laws were adopted: “On State Warranties and Indemnifications for People Working and Living in Regions of the Extreme North and Similar Territories” (1993), “On the Principles of State Regulation of Social and Economic Development in the North of the Russian Federation” (1996), “On the General Principles of Organization for Local Government” (1996), “On Warranties for the Rights of the Smaller Indigenous Peoples of Russia” (1999), “On General Principles of Organization for Communities of the Smaller Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East” (2000), “On the Territories of Traditional Management of Nature of the Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation” (2001), and others. However, federal laws defining the status of the indigenous peoples, the forms and institutions of their self-government, and the status of their territories dedicated to traditional nature use have not, as of yet, been adopted.

For indigenous peoples, it is often difficult to use the legal system. On the one hand, this is mainly due to a lack of knowledge and the absence of legal experience. On the other hand, there are also problems that arise from the declarative nature of the indigenous legislation, the way it contradicts and conflicts with certain other legal principles, and the absence of enforcement by the authorities that control it and supposedly seek to secure the rights of indigenous peoples (Materialy 2000, 131–3). The political transition to a federal system in the 1990s, combined with the simultaneous and often-uncontrolled transformation to a market economy, had a particularly heavy impact on the indigenous peoples of the North. The result was that deliveries of foodstuffs were halted, wages could not be paid, and unemployment reached a critical high. Indigenous peoples were forced to struggle for simple physical survival, especially in Chukotka.

Another trend in adaptation to the social environment involves *information*. In the transitional period, the growing need for information and communications among the indigenous peoples of the North resulted in the steadily increasing use of the mass media. The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed a notable change in information density within the cultural space of these indigenous peoples. During the 1990s many ethnic groups undertook efforts to create their own indigenous media and use modern information technology to revive their languages and cultures and generate public interest in indigenous movements. Most of these efforts have continued to bear fruit in the current decade.

The state TV and radio committees in the regions of the North produce radio programs in such languages: *Taimyr* in Nenets, Dolgan, Enets, Nganasan; *Gevan* (Republic Sakha, (Yakutia) in Evenk, Even, Yukagir; *Khenglen* (Evenkiiskii Autonomous Okrug) in Evenk; *Zapoliarie* and *Yamal* in Nenets; *Komsomol'sk* (Khabarovskii Krai) in Nanai; *Dal'nevostochnaia* (Primorskii Krai) in Ul'chi and Negidal; *Yugoria* (Khanty-Mansiiskii Autonomous Okrug) in Khanty, Mansi; in the Koryakskii Autonomous Okrug a television program is transmitted once a week in Koryak, along with radio programs in Koryak, Chukchi and Even. The TV and radio committee in Chukotka produces nearly six hours of radio broadcasting in Chukchi a month in 1990s and more than three hours in Eskimo. Among the weekly programs in Chukchi are shows with such titles as *Today in the Region*, *In Districts*, *In Villages*, *In Brigades*. In Eskimo, the shows include *Nunavut* and *We are Aborigines*. Television broadcasts in Chukchi have existed since 1967. In 1999, the time allotted to broadcasts in the Chukchi language increased to four hour a month. There are weekly TV news shows in Chukchi, such as *Pynyl'te* (The News), and *Eygyskin* (The Native Land), along with such other TV programs as *Tradition* and *Genealogy*. During the 1990s, a televised festival of throat singing and rapid speeches was held, called *Eynet* (Songs). Russian state television (the *Gosteleradio Fond*) has bought rights to the best Chukchi TV documentary films, such as *A Feast of Language*, *When the Men Cry* and *Stone Sail*.

The number of native language periodicals published in the Russian Federation has increased by 35% since 1998, from 300 to 406 (Mal'kova and Ostapenko 2000; Mal'kova 2005). In the Koryakskii Autonomous Okrug the newspaper *Narodovlastie* has articles in the Koryak, Itelmen, Chukchi and Even languages. In the Kamchatskaia Oblast' the newspaper *Aborigen Kamchatki* has contributions in four languages: Aleut, Koryak, Itelmen and Even. In the Chukotskii Autonomous Okrug a supplement to the Russian-language newspaper *Krainii Sever*, called *Murgin Nutenut* (Our Land) is published in the Chukchi language.

The volume of ethnic information published and broadcast, information on ethnic issues affecting the various peoples, has increased (Mal'kova and Ostapenko 2000, 42). Newspapers articles frequently feature ethnicity as a characteristic and often-contested phenomenon. Major themes covered in the mass media relating to peoples include problems of their welfare, inter-ethnic relations, and the relationship between the federal government and the various regions. Thus, the creation and development of the ethnic massmedia and the increased ethnic content disseminated by them have established new channels for the expression of ethnic self-consciousness and the regulation of social attitudes. The mass media have become a stabilizing factor for ethnic communities.

Another important trend is the development of an *ethnic direction* within many institutions. Already during the Soviet period, native ensembles performed indigenous songs and dances at the existing *houses of culture*. Since the 1990s, the indigenous peoples have used a whole range of new institutions to revive and preserve their indigenous cultures. In light of the complex language situation, organizations have been established to preserve indigenous languages. Ethnic and cultural centers have been set up to support indigenous arts and crafts and to host folklore ensembles and children's dance groups. New ethnographic museums have been established. Recent years have also seen the revival of native feasts, sports and traditional rituals, which now take place at various levels, such as among villages, cities, regions, and across the entire Russian Federation. Such processes of institutionalization of ethnic culture are promoted under the new social conditions in order to preserving indigenous languages and for their cultures to develop. This strongly expressed ethnic direction in adaptation to the social environment reflects the desire of the indigenous peoples to retain their unique cultural features, and it serves as "a protective response to alienation and the inhumane influences of certain aspects of modern civilization" (Tishkov 1997, 13).

Finally, there is the *economic and ecological* trend. In order to preserve their traditional occupations, northern indigenous peoples have attempted to exert control over traditional territories that are undergoing industrial development, and to preserve the natural environment by applying modern technologies and through new contractual relations. The requirement for such contractual relations is stipulated in the most fundamental federal document, the Constitution of Russian Federation (articles 9, 69, 72), as well as in other acts. In the 1990s, reindeer pasturelands, hunting and fishing grounds were transferred to the indigenous peoples for their own use in some regions. However, there has not yet been final legislation regulating issues of land rights.

Developing and applying new technologies for native enterprises has become increasingly important, especially given the transition to a market economy, growing market competition, the emergence of new forms of ownership, and the globalization of the world economy. In a number of villages, business plans have been formulated for the construction of mini-plants to process fish, meat and berries (Khanty-Mansiiskii and Chukotskii Autonomous Okrug and others) (Materialy 2000, 52). However, traditional industries, especially reindeer-herding, are often still based upon much less advanced technologies of product processing. Some raw materials, for example, are wasted rather than processed to yield valuable pharmaceutical products, and there are still big losses of meat and leather and fur. Among the constraining factors are a lack of the experience and knowledge needed to innovate and introduce new technologies, and also the absence of a normative and legal base for implementing the required transformations and transition to new ways of managing natural resources (Ukaz Prezidenta 1991, Postanovlenie 1991).

Serious problems affecting territories occupied by northern indigenous peoples have been caused by industrial development and its environmental hazards. One example is the degradation of reindeer pastureland, which in 1999 amounted to 230.6 million hectares. 46.6 % of the land was degraded to an average degree of degradation and 32.0 % to a high degree (Materialy 2000, 96). There is usually no compensation for the damage caused by industrial enterprises to native communities, even when this brings with it real losses of income for them. In most parts of the Russian North, no adequate system of environmental monitoring has been installed. It is nevertheless clear that the extent of anthropogenic damage exceeds the ability of the natural systems to repair themselves. Unless this changes radically, the situation will become critical, and ecological systems that are healthy at present will become far less productive. The degradation of northern lands can be seen all the way from Vorkuta, in the European part of the Russian North, to Val'kumei (Chukotka), with its industrial centers of mining, oil, gas, and metallurgy (Yablokov 1996).

Meanwhile, better ways of using of natural resources have only very slowly been introduced and brought into everyday use by industry and the representatives of indigenous peoples. One new direction, however, has been the negotiation of agreements on environmental protection and the management of natural resources. Their main goals are to entrench rights for the management of natural resources by requiring licenses, imposing strict obligations on developers to fulfill measures of ecological protection, and establishing other legal means for encouraging the proper use of natural resources. Among these are new institutional forms of environmental

protection, such as by creating reservations and national parks on territories inhabited by indigenous peoples (for example, Bystrinskii park in Kamchatka). To preserve nature, indigenous peoples must have their skills and capabilities enhanced by providing them with training in modern forms of management. A start in this direction has been made by a number of organizations that were formed in the mid-1990s, such as the Russian Reindeer Herders Union and the Chukotka Sea Hunters Association, and the establishment of indigenous information centers.

The Russian Reindeer Herders Union develops its activities on the basis of the exchange of experience (aimed at the preservation of reindeer herds) not only among Russian reindeer herders but also with those from Scandinavia. Also discussed at their congresses are issues relating to the skillful management of native enterprises, and to the transition to market relations and new management forms (such as native family and cooperative enterprises). The Chukotka Sea Hunters Association tries to use the international experience in managing and regulating sea mammal hunting, building enterprises to process marine products, and setting up the infrastructure needed to operate such businesses.

Of the three key dimensions of social space (the cultural, economic and political), northern indigenous peoples have so far succeeded best in the areas of culture and economics. Politics and the creation of political resources are another matter. And it is essential here to recognize that for decades other ethnic groups, such as Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians etc. held dominant positions in the territories where northern indigenous peoples live. Starting in the 1990s, however, greater participation by indigenous peoples in the political activities of the social space has led to the creation of new committees and departments and to the representation of northern peoples in regional governments and local bodies of authority. As for the future involvement by indigenous peoples in the political life in Russia, we envisage the following kinds of activities (Uchastie 2003):

- Holding round tables on self-government and indigenous representation in the bodies of state authority;
- Concluding agreements between RAIPON and state bodies of authority on cooperation in the solution of indigenous problems;
- Developing a concept of indigenous peoples' involvement in the legislative process;
- Presenting an initiative to reform legislation relating to indigenous peoples with the purpose of better specifying the subjects and powers of state bodies of authority, and especially to distinguish between the subjects of federal governance and those of local governing institutions;

- Developing experience in self-government and with new forms of indigenous representation in the bodies of state authority, such as the right of indigenous organizations to launch legislative initiatives;
- Enhancing indigenous representation in legislative bodies of authority by initiating a quota for indigenous representation, establishing authorized representatives of the indigenous peoples, creating a council of indigenous representatives in local bodies of authority, and creating bodies of executive authority in regional and local governments;
- Introducing the principle of proportional representation for indigenous peoples with quota allocation at the federal level;
- Developing draft federal laws on forms of indigenous representation in federal bodies of authority.

At present, however, due to their undeveloped political status and lack of mechanisms for executing their rights, indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation continue to face major problems with regard to self-government and their full involvement in state politics and legislation (Uchastie 2003). My research in Chukotka in 2001 only confirmed the persistence of such problems. There is an indigenous organization in practically every Chukotka settlement. According to the Chukotka Charter, all district associations must take part in the discussion of regional laws on sea hunting, reindeer herding and the development of the traditional sled dog breeding business, and they must offer suggestions on the drafts of these laws. Some village organizations deal with such problems by having their representatives serve directly in the local administration. But even these positions have their limitations. According to the head of the association of the village of Markovo, they are unable to supervise or control administration on many issues concerning the indigenous peoples. In some settlements, many representatives of indigenous organizations have complained of the lack of interaction with the local administration (Egvekinot, Provideniya) (Diatchkova n.d.).

In one public survey, villagers complained that their organizations are weak and ineffective. The results show that the regional political goals of indigenous organizations are undeveloped, and that their status in the political hierarchy is still insignificant. Among the reasons for a weak organization of the indigenous movement in the region of Chukotka, the following were given: a lack of financial assets; lack of information on indigenous rights and legislation; lack of understanding between the local administration and indigenous organizations (obstacles of the Nazarov administration 1996-2000); the shortage of competent organizers; lack of interaction between indigenous organizations; depression among the

people; absence of trust in the ability of indigenous peoples to obtain justice, and the dissociation that results thereby. Despite such criticism, the majority of respondents still believe that indigenous organizations are necessary (Their answers were “Yes” – 126, “No” – 7, “Don’t know” – 17). In the opinion of respondents, these organizations should: (1) protect indigenous rights; (2) create employment; (3) improve social programs.

Overall, research has revealed a low level of participation by indigenous organizations in the decision-making process on the socio-economic and political affairs of the territory, and a low level of knowledge with regard to legislation. In spite of this, the creation of the political organization *Chukotka Revival* (which existed from the late 1990s into the early years of the new millennium) demonstrated the importance of mastering political consciousness. It promoted the election of the Chukchi representative V. Etylen as the Deputy of State in the Duma of the Russian Federation. Since the elections of 2003 to the State Duma, however, no indigenous representatives have been serving at the federal level.

Conclusions

To summarize, then, models such as this one help us to understand the main directions taken by the indigenous movement and their adaptation to changing social environments. The model of adaptation to both the natural and social environments has helped to define the basic trends in *ethnos development*. The model of ethnic adaptation to the natural environment was directed by stabilization and self-organization at the expense of self-sufficiency, by the ability to live off the land, and by the general transfer of ethnic information through families. In the model of ethnic adaptation to the social environment, indigenous people are seen to be mastering cultural, political and economic resources.

During the development of this mastery of social space, the most fundamental trends have been institutional, law making, informational, ethnic, commercial and ecological. *Institutional*: Creating social institutions as mechanism of adaptation to modern social conditions; *Law-making*: Working out the legal status of indigenous peoples and territories of traditional land-use; *Informational*: Using mass-media as an expression of ethnic self-consciousness and reviving native languages; *Ethnic*: Professionalizing the ethnic components of culture – language, dance, rites, and customs; establishing a native press, literature, system of education, folkloric ensembles; *Economic and ecological*: Using new technologies in traditional forms of land use and controlling industrial enterprises on the territories of traditional residence and preserving the nature. In each of these trends, ethnic

components of indigenous culture have been institutionalized through the use of new technologies.

In short, there is an ongoing process of self-organization and ethnic adaptation to the social environment. The basic means of this adaptation is the creation of social institutions. Social institutions encompass every sphere, including property, family and marriage, education, the economy, politics, ideology, management, and information transfer on the basis of modern legislation. Thus, we see that northern native peoples are adapting to the social environment to obtain political justice, create the infrastructure for their indigenous movement, and institutionalizing their ethnic identity.

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