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Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Arctic

*Paper by Academician V. A. Tishkov,
Doctor of History N. I. Novikova,
and Candidate of History E. A. Pivneva**

The historical specifics of indigenous peoples of the Russian Arctic is that, as early as several thousand years ago, they assimilated into the unique natural environment of this region and created a kind of an "Arctic civilization" with its characteristic distinctiveness and singularity in the population's lifestyle and life-support system. On the other hand, the so-called indigenous small nations of the North long ago securely took root in the Russian state and Russian culture. Moreover, the natives of the circumpolar latitudes are a brand characteristic of Russia's image as a northern country.

Is it necessary to adapt the lifestyle of Arctic inhabitants to that of "mainland" Russia? Or is it a world that should be preserved in its permanent status? Or is there a third option, which we once called culture-oriented modernization? All these questions make one consider what policy we should pursue in the Arctic in the context of sustainable development, environmental safety, and Russia's national interests as a whole.

The history of indigenous peoples of the North covers many millennia; however, when speaking about the history of the Russian state, we should note the periods of certain allied (trade-based) relations between the indigenous population and the authorities of the Russian Empire, its involvement in the Russian tributary system (through paying *yasaq*, i.e., fur tribute) several centuries ago, and full or partial Christianization. We should recall the total and rough Soviet modernization, which included cultural revolution and partial transfer to sedentism, as well as collectivization enforcement and tough social problems of the Soviet era. Overall, the policy relative to the Arctic population was subjected for a long time to utilitarian economic interests, ideological attitudes, and military—strategic considerations. It largely remains the same today, although the new concept of state policy in the Arctic is, so to speak, more sensitive.

In this context, let us consider certain sociocultural realities of the present inhabitants of the Arctic. Academic studies on the history and culture of Arctic peoples have a deep and remarkable background, starting from the first scientific expeditions and descriptions of the peoples living in that region. The Soviet scientific school on studying Arctic peoples is especially meritorious. Studies in this area were dedicated not only to issues of the historical, social, and ethnocultural development of the region's indigenous peoples but also to the search for ways of their development by preserving traditions and applying state paternalism (see, for example, numerous "memos to directive agencies" by associates of the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences in the 1950s and 1980s [1]).

The socioeconomic and political processes that involve these peoples pose new tasks before science. They include determining further perspectives of the development of Arctic communities under the current economic and military—strategic projects. This problem enjoys serious attention throughout the world. The main point to which human society has come is the understanding that it is necessary to reject paternalism with regard to "backward" peoples and to recognize the originality and inherent worth of their cultures.

Studies on the Arctic peoples have become more active of late. Within the basic research program of the RAS Presidium, the project *Indigenous Peoples and the Industrial Development of the Arctic: Coping with Risks and Development Strategies* has been implemented since 2014. A large number of regional historical—cultural and ethnographical studies are being conducted, and joint international projects have been implemented.

The Arctic zone of our country was determined in 2014 by Decree no. 296 of the Russian president On Land Territories of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation. It includes the territories of eight constituent members of the Russian Federation: (1) Murmansk oblast; (2) seven municipal units of Arkhan-

* Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences.
e-mail: tishkov@lea.ras.ru

Table 1. Population of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation*

Administrative-territorial unit	Population, people	Share, %	Share of indigenous groups, %
Arkhangel'sk oblast (individual municipal units)	671083	26.6	0.06
Komi Republic (individual municipal units)	134172	5.3	0.42
Krasnoyarsk krai (individual municipal units)	274133	10.9	2.3
Murmansk oblast	795409	31.5	0.23
Nenets Autonomous District	42090	1.7	17.83
Sakha (Yakutia) Republic (individual municipal units)	33161	1.3	22.66
Chukotka Autonomous District	50526	2.0	33.42
Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District	522904	20.7	7.93
Total	2523478	100.0	3.27

* Tables 1–4 were compiled by V.V. Stepanov.

gel'sk oblast; (3) the Nenets Autonomous District; (4) the urban district Vorkuta of the Komi Republic; (5) the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District; (6) the urban district of Noril'sk, the Taimyr Dolgano-Nenets Municipal Region, and the Turukhanskii District of Krasnoyarsk krai; (7) five *uluses* (districts) of the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic; and (8) the Chukotka Autonomous District. The area of the Arctic Zone of

the Russian Federation is about 9 million square kilometers; its population is more than 2.5 million people, which is less than 2% of Russia's population and about 40% of the population of the entire Arctic. Out of about 250000 people of this category of the Russian population, 82500 representatives of indigenous small nations live in the Russian Arctic. By their ethnic composition, they are Nenets, Chukchi, Khanty, Evenks, Evenks, Selkups, Sami, Eskimos, Dolgans, Chuvans, Kets, Nganasans, Yukaghirs, Enets, Mansi, Veps, Koryaks, Itelmens, and Kereks (Tables 1, 2). Some of them are nomads or seminomads, which implies traditional types of nature use, such as reindeer husbandry, fishery, seal hunting, hunting, and foraging. The majority are settled residents living in villages and towns. According to our estimates, about 20000 people in the Arctic, i.e., about one-fourth of its native population, migrate part-time or year-round. Note that about 60% of the country's nomadic population falls on the Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District [2].

The demographic situation and social problems. Not long ago, our scientists and the public ring the alarm concerning a decrease in the population (and even the "extinction") of the Arctic indigenous peoples. However, the data of recent censuses show that these fears are exaggerated. In reality, the population of the largest Arctic groups (Nenets, Chukchi, Khanty, and Evenks) is even increasing, while the smallest groups manage to preserve a more or less stable demographic dynamics. In the medium term, at any rate, we do not expect any dramatic demographic changes in this portion of the Russian population. We have even fewer grounds to expect that a vast administrative territory will emerge with the dominance of representatives of the Arctic groups, as was the case, for example, in Canada, where this resulted in the formation of a new autonomous territory, Nunavut, dominated by Canadian natives.

At the same time, very topical are social problems associated with the organization of healthcare in

Table 2. Indigenous peoples of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation, 2010

Name of the group	Population, people	Share, among indigenous groups, %
Nenets	41849	50.7
Chukchi	12772	15.5
Khanty	9560	11.6
Evenks	4413	5.4
Evenks	3573	4.3
Selkups	2342	2.8
Sami	1604	1.9
Eskimo	1529	1.9
Dolgans	1180	1.4
Chuvans	897	1.1
Kets	785	1.0
Nganasans	778	0.9
Yukaghirs	632	0.8
Enets	218	0.3
Mansi	169	0.2
Veps	101	0.1
Koryaks	69	0.1
Itelmens	9	0.01
Kereks	1	0.00
Total	82481	100.0