

# Russian Matryoshka: The Hierarchy of Ethnicities and a Matrix of Semantic Shifts

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## 1. Introduction

After the September 11th havoc, American Embassies all over the world reconsidered visa application procedures for foreigners entering the US in order to tighten domestic security. Translated into various languages, one of the forms asked applicants to identify their ethnicity. Somehow, either by negligence or by mistake, ‘ethnicity’ was translated into the Russian language as a ‘tribe’. Politically correct in US public and scholarly discourse about US indigenous people, the term ‘tribe’ stirred up resentment and indignation in the Russian mass media. Terminological inconsistency caused public scandal and grave accusations about a derogatory attitude by the US embassy for inadvertently labeling Russians as ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘barbarous’.

The last decade of Russian scholarly and public discourse on ethnic relations has been marked by a huge influx of North American and British anthropological methodology and terminology, as well as by new approaches to ethnic studies. Nowadays Russian ethnography operates with a potpourri of vocabulary, describing ethnic identity issues. This kaleidoscopic variety incorporates both the legacy of previous Soviet ethnography terms and neo-Russian terminology borrowed from the English language in British and North American academic discourses. Ethnographical convictions about strong dependence on modes of production, socio-economic formations and the cultural evolutionism of ethnic groups have not stood the test of time and have ceased to exist. But what ideas have replaced cultural evolutionism, and what is the

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latest discourse on ethnicity all about? If there are any terminological variations in the discourse on ethnicity and identity, how exactly do they differ? What causes shifts in meaning, and what impact might these shifts have on scholarly research?

The main purpose of this article is to address the issue of terminological inconsistency among the anthropological terms used in Russian, British and North American scholarly discourses regarding issues of ethnicity. This will be analyzed through the specific social and structural contexts which have brought about semantic shifts in terminology across cultures.

## **2. The Concept of Semantic Shift**

Generally speaking semantic shift is an observable change in the meaning of a word. It occurs frequently and naturally as new knowledge is created and old concepts and symbols are modified or supplanted. Words do not have immutable meanings that exist apart from the context. If the linguistic, cultural, or historical contexts change, the word acquires a slightly different meaning or even disappearance from the lexicon. Some scholars assign these shifts to the inherently changeable character of language as an abstract system. Other sources of shifts, which contribute to changes in the mosaic of meaning, are cultural contacts, heavy lexical borrowing, and material culture change.

However, in this paper, the term semantic shift describes a phenomenon slightly different in scale. It refers to changes in meaning which take place across languages in significantly different historical, cultural and linguistic discourses. The semantic shift I am talking about is caused by extra-linguistic, that is, by historical and cultural events in each country. A tentative definition of what should be regarded as a semantic shift of meaning was suggested by the Emeritus Professor of English, Gunnar Persson (2003): “Semantic shift is a word or expression that has a basic meaning in common with the word that is correct in the context, but in addition has a deviant axiological meaning”. For instance, consider the shift in the meaning of the term ‘nationality’ in North American and Russian scholarly and public discourses. In the former it means affiliation with a

state; in the latter it means ethnic heritage and statehood.

Semantic shift is very important in understanding 21st century identity dynamics across different linguistic communities, because it is related to information management and the significant differences in knowledge creation and transmission across cultures. Therefore, understanding linguistic contexts, since language is a major vehicle for the transmission of the cultural beliefs and values, which describe identity continuity, will enhance the communication process and knowledge transfer between culturally diverse communities. This understanding will also provide culturally unbiased and politically correct descriptions of the peoples of Siberia and incorporate Siberian reality into the international discourse on identity.

I shall be considering three emerging semantic shifts in the meanings of concepts used in the analysis of ethnicity. Chart 1 analyzes the hierarchical structure of ethnicities in Russia, Chart 2 identifies the main concepts of ethnic identity in Russia, and Chart 3 presents issues related to the status of indigenous people in Russia.

To conceptualize and emphasize the multiplicity aspect of Russian ethnic and social structure I chose the *matryoshka* as the guiding metaphor. A *matryoshka* is a set of wooden dolls that open to reveal smaller and smaller dolls nested inside each other. The dolls repeat the shape of the biggest doll, but slightly differ either in facial expression or costume design. The vivid imagery provided by this metaphor lends itself to a variety of interpretations. This metaphor provides the links that can be seen between the doll's structure and ethnic relations discourse in the Russian realm. The key linking ideas are: inclusiveness, hierarchical structure, subordination, relative autonomy, and integrity.

As described above, in Russian scholarly discourse, the terms defining nation, people and ethnic group represent an integrated ethnic vertical hierarchy system, based on the number, degree and stage of economic and cultural 'development' of ethnic groups. From this perspective, the metaphor will be analyzed starting from the numerically largest body of people:

- Nation (*natsia*)
- People (*narod*)
- Indigenous people (*narodnost*)
- Small numbered people (*malochislennie narodi*)
- Tribe (*plemya*)

## 2.1. Hierarchical Structure of Ethnicities in Russian Discourse

Chart 1

Russian term	Meaning in Russian discourse
Natsia	Type of ethnos. A numerically large group of people who share common language, territory, economy, public culture, national character and national consciousness, living in the same country under one national government. Bound to advanced historical stage of societal development.
Narod	A community, group, nationality, nation. A people who share common customs, origins, history, and language.
Narodnost	Type of ethnos, a community of people sharing historically common language, territory and economy. Usually used in reference to indigenous people.
Malochislennie narodi	Small numbered peoples, especially of the Russian North and Far East.
Plemya	A tribe. The earliest known type of 'ethnos' in primordial society. A unit of people who share common origin, language and social relations. 'Plemya' is bound to the earliest stage of development. Extremely derogative.

### English equivalents

Translation	Meaning in English discourse
Nation	A nation state considered especially in terms of the common or shared culture of its people. A relatively large group of people organized under a single, usually independent government. Ethnically homogeneous nation-states rarely exist. So a multicultural society involves, on the one hand, the acceptance of a single culture and a single set of individual rights governing the public domain and, on the other, a variety of folk cultures in the private domestic and communal domains (Rex 1996).
People	A body of persons living in the same country under one national government; a nationality. A body of persons sharing a common religion, culture, language, or inherited condition of life.

Small nations	Ethnic groups and minorities.
Small numbered nations of the Russian North	Indigenous people of the Russian North. Numerically small ethnic groups, including the Arctic nations, a collective name for the indigenous peoples living in the circumpolar region between the North Pole and the Northern timberlines of North America and Eurasia.
Tribe	<i>A tribe</i> is a loose-knit organization of groups that recognize a relationship to one another, usually in the form of common ethnic origin, common language, or a strong pattern of interaction based on intermarriage or presumed kinship (Friedl&Whiteford 1988). The tribe is a decentralized descent-and kinship-based grouping in which a number of subgroups are loosely linked to one another. Leadership is informal, and constituent subgroups form cooperative alliances, but these can easily shift or break up. There is no centralized system of authority, decision making, or social control, but the potential exists to unite a large number of local groups for common defense or warfare (Bates&Fratkin 1999).

Russia's territorial expansion and subjugation of indigenous people contributed to the emergence of a hierarchy among ethnic groups. In the former USSR, all territories were part of a hierarchy of four administrative levels: fifteen republics, twenty autonomous republics, eight autonomous regions, and ten autonomous areas. This system of territorial-administrative units was based on the assumption that the most 'developed' peoples had the highest awareness of their ethnic identity, thus granting bigger chunks of territories to the republics, smaller ones to autonomous republics, regions, and areas respectively. Territorial delineation, which could be termed Russian 'Stalinmandering,' caused the physical displacement of ethnic minorities, which became a major feature of Russia's gerrymandering policy. To name a few, even though Armenian (Orthodox) populated Nagorno-Karabakh was included by Stalin in Azerbaijan (Turkic people), Armenia and Turkey are ancestral enemies. Germans ended up in Kazakhstan, and ethnic Koreans were deported to Central Asia. Uzbekistan became a new homeland for the majority of ethnic Koreans. Borders between administrative units were redrawn, and big portions of Buryat (Lamaist Buddhists) territory were granted to the Irkutsk (Russian Orthodox) and Chita regions (Russian Orthodox), increasing the size of the Buryat diaspora.

The present day administrative division of Russia divides the nation's territory into 89 areas classified according to the size of their territory and the size of their ethnically indigenous population. These include regions (*krai*), relatively independent republics, autonomous regions, called *oblast*, and autonomous areas, or *okrug*. Each ethnic group is assigned to a certain 'territory', where the majority of this ethnic group lives. Nevertheless, autonomy does not mean that these territories have the right to secede from the sovereign territory of the Russian Federation. In these regions, the languages and writing systems of the region's autonomous ethnicity are used; administration has representatives from the minority populations who can administer local finances themselves within the framework of financial planning done by the central government.

The term 'natsia' in Russian discourse means a large group of people who share common language, territory, economy, culture, and 'possess' a national state. This term is bound to an advanced stage of economic and social development of a society, characterized by a common domestic and national economy, national language, and common material culture. Russian (Slavic) people are granted the status of a nation forming people in the former Soviet Union and present day Russian Federation. The term 'narod' has a generic meaning in Russian discourse, and it is used to define any group of people with no reference to their ethnic origin, place of birth, or social status. 'Natsia' is made up of various 'narodi' who have happened, by the virtue of history, to share the common territory of a state. They form the majority of the nation, which is sometimes called a 'subnation'.

This concept evolves from Bromley's (1974) theory of *ethnos*. Extremely primordialist and theoretical, it holds that the process of ethnicity formation inevitably passes through the stages of conceptualization, development, maturity, 'aging', and finally, under certain circumstances, 'dying out'. The analytical ingredients in Bromley's formula for *ethnos* include: mode of life, common culture (which is understood as the totality of non-biological activities specific to human beings), the personal culture of an individual and the culture of a community (which determines norms of behavior and rules of social relations

between its members). Explicit features of *ethnos* are manifested in language, material culture, folk art, folklore, and the name of an ethnic group. The crucial point of the theory is the idea that *ethnos*, as ‘ethno-social organism’ represents a stable core of ethnicity. The core remains the same over history, although some of its features might be affected by migration or prevailing economic, political and physical environments.

At the end of the twentieth century, the theory of *ethnos* became widely discredited as an analytic category. The very existence of *ethnos* as an objective reality was rejected as a highly theoretical, ideal construction created by ethnographers for the purposes of the racialization and institutionalization of Russia’s ethnic groups into the state structures.

The term *narodnost* constitutes another layer in the *matryoshka* metaphor. The former is used in reference to the indigenous people of the Russian Far East and North, that is, to the numerically smaller nations compared to the mainstream, ‘nation-forming’ ethnic Russians. Frequently, the term *narodnost* is translated into the English as nationality. *Narodnost*, however, is a term, which defines only small nations living in geographically limited areas of the Russian Far East and North. Consequently, *narodnost* cannot be translated as ‘nationality’, because in Russian discourse nationality indicates belongingness to a particular ethnicity by birth, and might also imply the lower social status of the smaller nations compared to the mainstream ‘advanced’ nation. A typical question, ‘What is your nationality?’ is asked throughout multiethnic Russia, not to affiliate a person with a nation state, but to place him or her in a vertical hierarchy of ethnicities.

Another terminological discrepancy can no doubt be noted between the North American term ‘tribe’ and the Russian term, *plemya* (tribe). In North American discourse a ‘tribe’ commonly means a unit of sociopolitical organization consisting of a number of families, clans, or other groups who share a common ancestry and culture. In addition, the term, ‘tribe,’ refers to economically and politically organized Native American nations, their economic, social and political structure. However, in the Russian language *plemya* has a

derogative meaning if used in connection with indigenous people, because it describes the earliest known ancestors in a historical timeline. Thus, *plemya* connotes economically, politically and culturally 'backward' societies who share a common origin, language and clan relations.

Alongside the term *plemya*, another concept, *obshchina*, functions as a category describing the social structure of the indigenous people of Siberia. It can be considered synonymous to the Canadian perception of First Nations tribal organizations. The term, *obshchina*, is being revived now and gaining more popularity among indigenous people in the Russian state, since it fully reflects and describes the intimate nexus between kinship ties, efficiency of self-governance and tribal resource distribution. Defined by Pika (1999), an *obshchina* is a small indigenous ethno-territorial community, based on kin or non-kin groupings. It also includes clan-based local governments, which take in associations, councils of elders and tribal corporations. The status of *obshchina* is not officially recognized by the state, and no legislative initiative is granted to it officially, but it is recognized at the grassroots level as a significant authority which exercises a legitimate power of self-governance among indigenous people.

However, the question of the legislative status of *obshchina* is more complex than that because it also requires the solution of the issue of membership. It represents a complicated issue, because the tribes themselves have different standards for self-asciption. For instance in eastern Siberia, Buryat people attach themselves to the particular piece of geography and ancestral roots make them distinct. The Buryats keep both written and oral records of each family and clan genealogical roots going back to famous military leaders of Genghis Khan's family clan. Belongingness to a particular lineage will determine clan membership. For instance in the US, blood quantum is frequently used as a means of identification and belongingness to a tribe (Harris & Wasilewski 1992). Some governments might enroll those people with 1/256 of Indian blood, others follow an old practice of the US government, classifying as Indian anyone with one-quarter indigenous ancestry, while other governments demand a quarter of Indian ancestry from the maternal wing of the family.



Nowadays, the terms ‘narod’, ‘ethnos’, ‘ethnischeckaya gruppa’ (ethnic group) and ethnicity are used loosely. The whole conception of binary dichotomy of smaller and bigger nations is less clear, and their division into ‘developed’ and ‘backward’ nations is obsolete.

## 2.2 Melting Pots and Ethnic Salads

In the US the ‘melting pot’ analogy, interpreted as a purposeful process of burning off cultural differences and moulding immigrants into a single, culturally enriched American nation was thought to represent the essence of cultural assimilation. Bromley introduced a strikingly similar metaphor to Soviet academic discourse, and assimilation was called an ethnic ‘salad’ or ‘vinaigrette’. The concept of ‘friendship’ between smaller and bigger nations, that is ethnic and non-ethnic Russians, proclaimed a new type of interethnic relations, which stressed the idea of equality, harmony, and tolerance of diversity. These ‘Soviet people’ grew to be the heart of a collective identity. The main intent of the Soviet policy in this regard was to replace ethnic identity with a non-ethnic affiliation, which helped in a way to obliterate ethnic identities, to discourage separatist sentiments and to enforce loyalty to Russia. Rhetoric about the long-term ‘rapprochement’ of the Soviet peoples and efforts to assimilate the non-Russians focused on education, linguistic integration, migration, and intermarriage.

Issues resulting from the hundreds of diverse ethnic groups with different modes of life within Russia’s borders brought about a sense of Russian cultural superiority over the conquered peoples of Siberia, who were frequently demonized and characterized as savage, uncivilized, and backward. The mainstream ethnic Russians saw themselves as missionaries and carriers of modern civilization to the rest of the non-Slavic world. This was apparent, especially in Siberia, where schools became a cultural battleground between Russian and indigenous languages. Russian was first taught in boarding schools for aboriginals as the *lingua franca*, and then later in 1937 it was declared the national language. The result of state language policies was a steep decline in aboriginal languages being spoken and the blurring of the borders between

the mother (aboriginal) languages and the national (Russian) language, with the latter becoming the dominant ‘native’ language of indigenous people. For instance, from 1959 to 1989, the aboriginal languages speakers group shrank from 75% to 53%, and in 1989 a total of 36% of the Indigenous People of the North considered Russian their native tongue (Materials of the Russia Congress 2000). In addition, the overwhelming majority of ethnic Russians, 99.38%, remained monolingual and made no effort toward ‘minority’ language acquisition (Mastyugina& Perepelkin 1996).

## 2.3 Main Concepts of Ethnic Identity in Russian Discourse

**Chart 2**

Russian term	Meaning in Russian discourse
Natsionalnost	Ethnicity. Belongingness to and affiliation with people who share a common ethnic identity. Characteristic of or peculiar to ethnicity, relating to or belonging to a nation as an organized whole, as in ‘national borders’.
Ethnicheskaya gruppa	Ethnic group. A group of people who hold in common cultural traditions, language, historical continuity.
Identichnost	Identity. It is understood as sameness or equivalence, and as a system of ethno-differentiating symbols, values, stereotypes, ethnic belongingness to and unity with one’s own ethnic group.
Etnicheskoe samosoznanie	Ethnic consciousness. Mutual identification and differentiation by the members of the same ethnos. A feeling of belongingness to a common origin, manifested in the use of a common name, which an ethnos gives to itself (Bromley 1974).
Samoopredelenie	The right of people to freely determine their own form of government, political status, economic, social and cultural development without interference from the outside.

### English equivalents

Translation	Meaning in English discourse
Nationality	Nationality is the status of belongingness to a particular nation by origin, birth, or naturalization. The most important distinction between Russian and North American discourses on ‘nationality’ is its existence as a state in the latter.

Ethnic group	Identity with or membership in a particular racial, national, or cultural group and observance of that group's customs, beliefs, and language. Ethnic group is a self-perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact. Such traditions typically include 'folk' religious beliefs and practices, language, a sense of historical continuity, and common ancestry or place of origin (Vos and Romanucci-Ross 1975)
Identity	The set of characteristics that somebody recognizes as belonging uniquely to himself or herself and constituting his or her individual personality for life. Identification is also constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation (Hall 1996)
Ethnic awareness, ethnic consciousness	Ethnic identity is defined as that part of the totality of one's self-construal made up of those dimensions that express the continuity between one's construal of past ancestry and one's future aspirations in relation to ethnicity (Weinreich 2003)
Self-determination	The right of people to determine their own form of government without interference from the outside

The modern English language has a number of substantive forms containing 'ethnic' in their core, including 'ethnicity', 'ethnic group', 'ethnic dress', 'ethnic food', and 'ethnic music'. However, in Russia the term 'ethnic' is used only in the academic discourse on ethnicity. The terms, 'ethnicity', 'ethnic identity' and other sophisticated terminology on 'ethnic identity,' only came into Russian scholarly discourse in the beginning of 1990s. Prior to that the terms, 'nationality' and 'ethnic consciousness', represented what was thought to be the core of both the social and psychological aspects of interethnic relations.

Though most dictionaries recognize that *identity* involves characteristics of sameness, of essential or generic character in different instances, in this article identity is considered under the premise that it does *not* mean sameness. It involves those characteristics that distinguish one individual from another (Seelye&Wasilewski 1996), it refers to the continuity of self in relation to changing situational contexts, to the totality of one's self-construals in the present, past and future aspirations (Weinreich&Saunderson 2003), and to the cultural construction of meaning by a social actor (Castells 1997). The 'totality'

of identity is not divorced from considerations of other aspects of identity and does not treat them as discrete objects; it incorporates all its component aspects of, for instance, gender identity, social identity, ethnic identity, occupational identity, indigenous identity, and so on.

In Russian discourse, the term *identity* is blended only with ethnicity, and its other aspects are absent. The range of ethnic identity interpretations varies considerably from primordialism to constructivism, plus instrumentalism and psychological interpretations. In the last decade, when ethnic mobilization, sort of a Russian ‘brother’ to American affirmative action, and violent conflicts (especially in Chechnya) became integral features of inter-group dynamics within the Russian realm, it became very popular to couple ethnicity with instability and conflicts. Constantly produced as an explanation for inter-group clashes (Tishkov 1997), ethnicity itself does not make clear why conflicts should necessarily run along ethnic divides.

What Russian scholars have in common is the shared idea of ethnic identity as a conscious process of identification with one’s own ethnic group, which provides a sense of belongingness to a common origin, manifested in the use of a common name and language. These assumptions led to the construction of a number of significant features of ethnic identity, including:

#### The Structure of Ethnic Identity

1. Affective component: significance of ethnic membership, emotional belongingness to ethnic group.
2. Cognitive component: knowledge of one’s own ethnic group, knowledge of other ethnic groups, common history.
3. Connotation component: common language, strategies of interethnic relations, shared cultural values and religion.

#### Ethnic Identity Variables

1. Demographic: gender, age, territory of living, education
2. Social: historical development of ethnos, cultural development, state’s ethnic policy, economic situation.
3. Ethnic socialization: individual psychology, ethnic group psychology,

language of education, and spoken language.

Some scholars (Arutyunyan 1999) argue that ‘ethnic consciousness’ and ‘ethnic self-consciousness’ are emanate aspects of the self on a micro level, while others understand them as part of ‘national consciousness’ on a macro level. Indicating a fairly broad semantic range, the terms ‘ethnic consciousness’ and ‘ethnic identity’ differ in the particular phenomena they designate. The term, ‘ethnic consciousness’, emphasizes the cognitive aspect of belongingness to a particular ethnic group. In spite of a sense of affinity with the old term the newly popularized concept of ‘ethnic identification’ stresses the process and the trajectory of ethnic identification.

#### **2.4 The Issue of the Number of Members of a Nationality in Russia**

The problems of ethnic classification and the struggle to cope with cultural diversity in Russia are apparent in the ‘nationality’ issue, which is reflected in the question which aims to classify people into a particular ethnicity in the Russian national censuses. In the 1926 census respondents were asked about their ‘*narodnost*’ (smaller nation), while in subsequent censuses this was changed to ‘*nationality*’. Since that time ‘*nationality*’ has been a basic category on official forms and questionnaires. Adding to the confusion, the last census (2002) had two more categories, which in a way expressed the same idea, but with somewhat different connotations: ‘What nationality (or people, or ethnic group) do you belong to?’ The State Committee of Statistics, the main authority empowered to develop ethnic standards adopted the ‘Official List of Nationalities of the Russian Federation’. The number of ethnicities was chosen as the main criterion for classification within the list. Originally, the 1926 census listed 194 ethnic groups, but in 1937 the list was reduced to 168 ethnicities. The official list of ethnicities in the census of 1989 consisted of 128 ‘nationalities’, including a new category ‘Numerically Small Peoples of the North’. The shrinking number of different nationalities within the confines of the Soviet Union was explained by their merging (Khazanov 1995) or assimilation with other, usually bigger ethnic groups. However, in the micro census of 1994, the list was reconsidered

again and included 143 nationalities. By 2002 the official list was expanded and 27 more ethnicities were added, increasing their number to a total of 198 (Stepanov 2001). The key argument used to support the enlargement of the list was that each ethnic group of the Russian Federation should be granted official representation in the census.

Some other multiethnic countries, which have to cope with the diversity of their population, have adopted various approaches towards counting their ethnic groups. For instance, India maintains a list of 'scheduled tribes' that enjoy constitutional protection, a fact that has not saved them from discrimination. China has 56 recognized nationalities, among which 55 are national minorities. The mere fact that minorities in China were granted a 'nationality' status is of great interest. The majority of these ethnic groups are concentrated on critical borders with Russia, Mongolia and other countries (Neuman 2004). Japan opted to deny a place of minorities in the society. Geographically dispersed minorities are ignored on the basis of 'blood purity', which promotes cultural homogeneity. The current American demographic structure, Hollinger's 'ethno-racial pentagon' (1995) distinguishes between Caucasians (sometimes white), Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanics (sometimes called Latinos), and Indigenous Peoples (or Native Americans).

This is quite different from Russian discourse, in which the term 'Caucasian' does not signify race, but people native to the mountainous Caucasus region, which includes the countries of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, as well as the Russian republics of Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia, Alania, and Adygeia.

Another long existing issue in Russia's discourse is the problem of giving up one's own ethnicity in exchange for a more 'prestigious ethnicity'. This was encouraged by the political climate in the USSR and motivated by the economic and social benefits guaranteed by state and local governments. From this perspective, it is not surprising why people preferred to opt otherwise and change their official 'natsionalnost'. They changed their 'Evenk-ness' to 'Russian-ness', because choosing to become Russian gave them access to

a more prestigious ethnicity than that of Evenk or Chukchi and guaranteed greater opportunities for higher education, offered better employment prospects, and improved their social status and possibilities to occupy higher rungs on the social ladder. In the last decade, given the magnitude of assimilation and ethnic intermarriage patterns, a debate over the necessity of fixed ‘ethnic classification’ has erupted. As a result, in 1997 ‘natsionalnost’ as a fixed category on identification documents was abolished, but it was left in the national census and is a key classificatory category for all the diverse ethnic groups living in the present-day Russian Federation.

## 2.5 The Status of Indigenous Peoples in Russia

### Chart 3

Russian term	Meaning in Russian discourse
Korennye narodi	Official political, judicial, social and cultural status of indigenous people of the Russian Federation. ‘Korennoi narod’ implies nativeness to a particular place. The concept is enjoying increasing popularity as a term of ethnic pride and respect.
Aborigeni	The earliest known inhabitants of a place, native. It implies lack of economic development and cultural backwardness. The term might have a derogative meaning if used to refer to modern indigenous peoples’ cultural backgrounds.
Titulnaya natsia	Titular nation. Native to a given place, aboriginal group or community, officially recognized by the government. Official political, judicial, social status of the native people in the former Autonomous Republics of the Soviet Union. Both Buryats and Russians are considered to be native to Siberia, but only the former are a titular nation in the Republic of Buryatia.
Istoricheskyi prishlyi (narod)	Non-native population. <i>Prishlyi</i> means ‘arrived’ to a place. It is opposite to native and aboriginal. However, it is not synonymous to immigrant, when used to refer to Russian people.

### English equivalents

Translation	Meaning in English discourse
Native	Existing or belonging to one by nature, by birth, by origin. A member of the original inhabitants of a particular place.

Native, Indigenous	The United Nations defines indigenous peoples as follows: Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them.
Aboriginal	Aboriginal describes what has existed from the beginning; it is often applied to the earliest known inhabitants of a place. Usually used to refer to Australian indigenous people.
Titular nation	First Nation (Canadian), Native American (American), Aboriginal (Australian).
Historical people, population	There is no exact equivalent of this term in English.

The basic question, which arises out of the debate on the legal status of indigenous people, is what ethnic groups can be included into the category of native people in Siberia? The Republic of Buryatia's multiethnic dynamics reflect the full intricacy of the concept of nativeness. According to the Constitution of Buryatia, three ethnically distinct nations have 'native' status (State Committee on Statistics 1990):

Native populations		Non-native populations	
Buryats	249.525	Ukrainians	22.868
Evenks	1.679	Tatars	10.496
Russians	726.165	Belorussians	5.338
		Armenians	2.269
		Germans	2.126
		Azerbaijani	1.679
		Chuvashi	1.307
		Kazakhs	1.270
		Jews	1.181

However, the number in a group is not the main criterion for assigning ethnic groups into the 'native' category. 'Native' is defined by the virtue of originating from or being born in a particular piece of territory during the time of settlement in Siberia. The time span is of great significance, because it



justifies the status of ethnic Russians in Siberia. For instance, the ethnic Russian population is customarily divided into *starozhilyi* or ‘old residents’, who came to live in Siberia from the dawn of its settlement, and *mladozhilyi*, or ‘new residents’, who came to Siberia a generation or two ago, but who have not been able to acquire ‘true roots’ (Zateev 2002). Peasants, freed from obligatory labor after the emancipation of serfs in 1861, Old Believers, Cossacks, former convicts and their descendants constitute the *starozhilyi* or ‘old residents’ category.

Cossacks, as a culturally distinct community, present a difficulty in terms of assigning them to a particular ethnic group. Generally, in Russian scholarly discourse there is no officially accepted category of ‘Cossack ethnicity’. In Czarist Russia Cossacks belonged to a military class, and their communities included diverse ethnic groups of Russians, Ukrainians and aboriginal groups who served in the eleven Cossack regiments across Russia. Among indigenous people, Buryats and Evenks also served as auxiliary Cossack troops on the Mongolian frontier in 1727 (Forsyth 1992). Old Believers represent another group of Russian settlers, deported to the Altai and Buryat regions. They are people who refused to accept changes in the Orthodox Church ritual introduced in 1654. They shunned contact with the rest of the population and were extremely conservative in their social customs, marriage patterns, folk traditions and dress. Therefore, it is problematic to use Old Believers’ confessional affiliation as an ethnic group marker differentiating them as a separate ethnic group. Similarly, former convicts, most of whom were Poles, Germans and Jews, as well as recent migrant Ukrainians and Belorussians, represent difficulties in terms of ethnicity choice.

Ethnic Russians, in terms of their legal status, are described as *‘istoricheski prishlye’*, which can be translated as ‘historical people’. This category was constructed for the purposes of explaining and justifying territorial expansion and the subjugation of ethnic minorities in Siberia. The word, ‘historically’, in this term does not mean history; it signifies that this group has acquired the status of a ‘legitimately native’ population. The phrase is politically correct, since Russian scholars generally view the conquest of Siberia as a peaceful settlement of ‘newly

discovered' territories, which were perceived as *terra nullius*, or empty no-man lands. Some three hundred years of tumultuous transitions, the magnitude of interethnic marriages, and the huge influx of migrants, added a new 'ethnicity free' identity to the Siberian realm. The term 'Siberians' has emerged to signify a 'historically-ethnographic' group of Russian people, who associate themselves with a particular piece of shared social history and piece of territory.

The Soviet Government substituted the category, *inorodtsi* (of different origin), used in Czarist Russia for the Smaller Peoples or Numerically Small Peoples of the North, and called these nations, 'aboriginal peoples', or *korennye narodi* (literally, 'having roots'). However, in the beginning of its use the term *korennye* did not have the meaning of 'native'. It was used to designate a so-called 'Indigenization campaign' aimed at converting the nomadic and semi-nomadic peoples of Siberia to a sedentary life style. By giving up their nomadic way of life and beginning gradual settlement around the fixed center of a state farm, they were thought to grow 'roots', that is to become sedentary. The policy of indigenization granted ethnically non-Russian groups preferential treatment in education and employment: that is, ethnic quotas were introduced in order to create and encourage the growth of 'aboriginal' elites at the local level. To maintain the balance of power, especially in the ethnic territories, ethnic quotas were customarily arranged in the proportion of roughly 70:30, where 70% ethnic Russians assumed overriding authority, but delegated 30% to other ethnicities. This form of representation was maintained in all political, administrative, educational and social structures of the society.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union this customary arrangement, which to some extent maintained stability in interethnic relations, was abolished, opening up more opportunities for native and aboriginal participation in local governance. Empirical evidence demonstrates strong tendencies toward active opposition to previous 'ethnic quota' arrangements. For instance, at the level of local governance representation in eastern Siberia's current ethnic equilibrium is comprised of 53% Buryats, 44% ethnic Russians and 3% other ethnicities.

The delineation of territorial borders and the establishment of rights over

land and control over natural resources represent other issues, which further complicate any potential solution of the issue of who is native. After the break up of the Soviet Union there were 180 territorial claims within the territories of various ethnic communities across the Russian Federation. After 1996, there were 140 disputes left unsettled (Arutyunyan 1999). The present day indigenous people of the Russian North and Far East are sitting on the bulk of the Russian Federation's natural resources, including 50% of its timber, furs and water resources, 90% of its natural gas, 75% of its oil, 80% of its gold, 90% of its nickel and almost all of its diamonds, platinum and uranium (Materials of the Russia Congress 2000). Given the enormous significance of these resources, the issue of the locus of power over control of resources represents a key challenge to the geopolitical security of the nations and to the stability of interethnic relations in Siberia. And it will be those who have access to decision making in Siberian space who will determine the policies regarding the status of indigenous people and their control over those resources.

## **Conclusion**

This paper presented the overall ramifications of and overlapping discourses about the cross-cultural categories and problems involved in the discussion of ethnicity. It disentangled the multiple semantic shifts in North American and Russian terminology, as well as provided a foundation for the discussion of the forces behind the hierarchical structure of ethnicities in Russia. The constantly changing realm of human interactions makes it extremely difficult to capture the diversity of and to provide a seamless interface between past and contemporary narratives on the terminological contextual variations across cultures and time. Hopefully, further research will open ways to articulate diversity and to navigate, not only the current theoretical debate on, but the practical reality of, interethnic relations in the Siberian realm.

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## エスニシティとロシアにおける国勢調査のパラドックス

### < 要 約 >

エレナ コツリナ

エスニシティとアイデンティティーの継続性を巡るロシアの学問上および一般の議論では、曖昧な「人種関係」、アメリカの「民族・人種五角形」のジレンマ、アフリカ系アメリカ人に対する奴隷制度と差別待遇という問題にかつて直面したことがない。元からロシア人のアイデンティティーは過剰に拡大した領土、地方の経済的な後進性、民族的・言語的・文化的に異なるシベリア原住民の少数民族を含める帝国時代の遺産から結果として生じる問題に取り組んでいた。シベリアの領土拡大とその狩猟採集生活をしている遊牧民の征服は当然と認められ、ロシア人は「野蛮な世界」へ現代的な文明を運ぶ伝導師と自認していた。それは民族集団の上下関係の出現を生み出した。

この原稿はロシアと北米の学者が使用しているエスニシティとアイデンティティーの継続性を記述する人類学用語に関する用語矛盾を研究し、ロシア連邦の原住民族のステータスと階層制の構成を分析する。その分析は、言語間の用語の食い違いを生ずる特別な歴史・社会・言語の文脈を利用している。その問題は三つのグラフに表示されている。多様な用語矛盾を解きほぐすことはシベリアのアイデンティティーのダイナミクスをロシア語でも、英語でも理解できる記述的な枠組みを設けると期待される。