

BELONGING TO THE LAND IN TURA: REFORMS, MIGRATIONS, AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN EVENKIA

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ABSTRACT

Tura is a mixed community where Evenks live alongside other indigenous groups and Russians. The establishment of Evenk autonomy, with the centre in Tura, in 1930 strengthened Evenk ethnic identity and unity through increased political and cultural representation, as well as through the integration of migrants from other regions. In the post-Soviet period, the community witnessed a population loss, a declining socio-economic situation, and the abolition of autonomy. In the long course of reforms and identity construction, the indigenous intelligentsia has manipulated the concept of belonging to the land either to stress or to erase cultural differences, and thus, to secure the access of the local elite to valuable resources. Currently, the most hotly debated boundaries are those dividing Evenks into local and migrant, authentic and unauthentic, urban and rural. The paper* illustrates the intricate interrelations between ethnic, indigenous, and territorial identities from an identity politics perspective.

KEYWORDS: belonging to land • Evenks • reforms • identity politics • migration

INTRODUCTION

Tura¹ is the administrative centre of Evenk Rayon (municipal district, referred to below as Evenkia) situated in Krasnoyarsk Krai, Western Siberia. Its population was formed in the course of state administrative and territorial reforms, migrations, and identity construction politics. With the establishment of Evenk autonomy in 1930, nomads were sedentarised in 'ethnic' villages (*natsional'nyi poselok*) and a labour force was drawn to Tura from district settlements (*faktoriya*) and more distant places. Labour migrants

* The text is based on a presentation made at the Arctic Workshop of the University of Tartu World Routes 3 on June 2, 2012. The author acknowledges the Russian Foundation for Humanities Research (project Neo-religious Component of the Cultural Identity of Numerically Small Peoples of the Russian North and Siberia, grant No. 13-01-00276) and the National Science Foundation, USA (Circumpolar Land Use and Ethnicity (CLUE) project: Social Impacts of Policy and Climate Change, award No. 0755832) for supporting the research that formed the foundation of this paper.

included Evenks from other regions, especially from neighbouring Irkutsk Oblast, as well as Russians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Ukrainians and Belorussians from across the former Soviet Union. The non-indigenous population worked in local wood processing and industrial enterprises, whereas indigenous migrants and locals were mainly employed in traditional industries and agriculture. Education and healthcare campaigns accompanied by political propaganda and targeted at indigenous peoples of the North resulted in increased political representation for the Evenk, the establishment of the ethnic intelligentsia, and strengthening of pan-Evenk ethnic identity.

Post-Soviet administrative reforms lead to the emergence of indigenous numerically small peoples of the North (KMNS)² as a social group, increased interest in their ethnic cultures and languages against the background of general socio-economic decline. More recent changes include the abolition of the Evenk Autonomous Okrug and further curtailing of state support to KMNS. The remaining support mainly reaches people involved in traditional industries and can hardly satisfy the needs of other indigenous populations. Yet, the available social benefits still provoke Northern indigenous essentialism, especially in former ethnic autonomies like Evenkia, and influence people's own motivations and choices in favour of indigenous identities (Beach et al. 2009). The current status of Evenks and other indigenous groups living in the district is reflected in education programmes that include 'ethnic' subjects, culture, and language revitalisation projects implemented by the local indigenous intelligentsia and leaders.

In Tura, the local Evenk intelligentsia has played an ambiguous role in propagating Evenk culture, language, and traditional education.³ At the same time they have played an equally ambiguous role in constructing boundaries, leading to a social conflict⁴ among Evenks and the fragmentation of the community. The constructed cultural differences help the ethnic elite to legitimise their priority access to material (social benefits), symbolic (cultural heritage), and political (administrative power and representation) resources. Thus, the boundaries are drawn along the lines local-migrant, central-peripheral, authentic-unauthentic, indigenous-non-indigenous or Russian, mainly involving Evenks, and, in some cases, Evenks and other ethnic groups.

The primary theoretical assumption of this paper is based on understanding of identity as a process unfolding differently in different situations. Any person has many complementary social identities, and the context decides which of them is activated at any time. Thus, identity, in a broad sense, is neither fixed nor innate, but is fashioned in the encounter between an individual and a social situation (Eriksen 1995: 259). Likewise, "ways of belonging to a group are neither given nor static; they are continuously re-shaped, re-structured, or 're-built' according to the changing situations that individuals experience, or have to cope with" (Kasten 2005: 237).

Territorial identity is based on belonging to a certain landscape, place, or geographically defined community and revealed in the paradigms of mobility-immobility, territorial belonging-de-territorialisation, and rootedness-migration. In the context of increasing mobility, globalisation and competition for resources and lands, the value of territorial identity is growing (Appadurai 1996). Similarly to territorial identity, indigenous identity rests mainly on spiritual or material connection to the land, reflected in people's worldviews. Long-term residence on the land and a special connection to it lie in the foundation of the internationally recognised concept of indigenesness.⁵ It also serves as one of the four main criteria defining the status of indigenous numerically small peoples of the North.⁶

Ethnic identity is, by far, the most important type of identity, which has traditionally been the focus of anthropologists' and ethnologists' attention. According to Barth (1998 [1969]: 6, 14), "ethnicity is a matter of social organization above and beyond questions of empirical cultural differences", and "the ethnic identity is a matter of self-ascription and ascription by others". Kinship and genealogy, traditional economy and lifestyle, native languages, folklore, applied arts and crafts remain classical ethnic identity markers and meaningful categories marking belonging to the ethnic group among Evenks in Tura.

In this paper, I will look at the contemporary identity construction process from the local identity politics perspective. According to this approach, the key factor of identity construction is a competition for resources, particularly between indigenous and local population on the one hand, and non-indigenous and migrant population, on the other. The role of the main agents of such politics in Northern indigenous communities is often played by the local intelligentsia, who define the rules of belonging to the land and the local community applying their essentialist concepts of authenticity, indigeneity and tradition (Sokolovskiy 2012).

The aim of this paper is to explore multiple aspects and overlaps of territorial, indigenous and ethnic identities, with a focus on the connection of an individual or a group to land – a local community or local landscapes in a more general sense. I will analyse the intertwining identities as "cognitive maps for optional and social networks that are applied in everyday life, or mobilized in certain situations" (Kasten 2005: 237). I will show that combinations of different identity markers, including genealogy and historical memory, way of life, culture and language become relevant for Evenk territorial, indigenous and ethnic identities in different situations. However, the common underlying identity marker, and a salient feature of Evenk people's worldview is "a sense of homeland" (Sirina 2012b: 137). It is characteristic both of nomadic herders and hunters living off the land and the sedentary population attached to the local landscapes through social and economic networks of kinship and exchange.

The case of Tura community, the centre of the Evenk 'homeland' established during the Soviet period with the aim of uniting the dispersed Evenk population, should contribute to our understanding of the complex phenomenon of identity and the factors and actors that underlie the identity construction process. Apart from the state reforms, which have had a major impact on the identification process among the indigenous peoples of the North, I will focus on the ambiguous role historically played by the ethnic intelligentsia at the local level. How did Soviet administrative reforms, migrations and cultural policies, implemented among indigenous peoples of the North, affect Evenk identities in Evenkia and, especially, in Tura? What impacts have the post-Soviet socio-economic crisis, benefits for indigenous peoples, new migrations, and the recent abolition of autonomy had on Evenk identities? What are the main criteria determining belonging to land and rootedness and how are these criteria translated into territorial, indigenous, and ethnic identities in Tura? What identity markers are activated to highlight cultural differences and draw boundaries between the Evenk and other ethnic groups, and, particularly, among the Evenk themselves? How are identities manipulated in social interactions and public discourses? And, last but not least, what is the role of the indigenous intelligentsia in cultural life and identity politics in Tura?

CASE STUDY

The empirical data that form the basis of this case study were collected during my fieldwork in October 2011 in Tura, the administrative centre of the Evenk Municipal Rayon, the successor of the Evenk Autonomous Okrug abolished in 2007 as a result of its merger with Krasnoyarsk Krai. This is a rather large-scale northern settlement with a population of about five and a half thousand people, according to the 2010 census (Perepis 2010). Russians constitute a predominant ethnic group in the village, whereas indigenous peoples account for approximately a quarter of the total population. Evenk residents, who numbered 1,079 in 2002, are the majority among other indigenous populations, which include Dolgans, Kets, and Yakuts.

In addition to the current regional statistics and official records provided by the Department of Agriculture, Traditional Industries, and Indigenous Affairs in the Administration of Evenk Rayon⁷ and the District Employment Bureau, my main sources of information were interviews with local residents – specialists from cultural and education institutions, representatives of local and regional authorities, ethnic leaders, writers, artists, choreographers, and teachers. The ethnic background of the majority of my informants was Evenk, with some exceptions including Russians, people of mixed (Evenk-Russian, Evenk-Latvian, Evenk-Ukrainian) origin and other indigenous individuals living in Tura (Essei Yakuts and Kets). Apart from the abovementioned field materials, I relied on a substantial body of comparative data gathered during my previous long-term anthropological research among the Evenk of northern Zabaikal Krai in 1998–2006 (Povoroznyuk 2011).

The Evenk, the dominant indigenous group, who give their name to Evenkia, represent one of the most widely dispersed nomadic populations in Russia and in the world. Despite the relatively small number of their population,⁸ the territory they occupy in Siberia and the Russian Far East covers over seven million square kilometres (Tugolukov 1969: 11). Such widely dispersed population structure, as well as a long history of migrations and interethnic contacts, resulted in the formation of numerous local groups of Evenks characterised by their own unique culture, dialects, clan composition, economic activities and ways of life. The great cultural, linguistic, and economic diversity of the Evenk people is reflected in the variety of ethnic names circulating among different local groups, such as Evenk, Orochon, Tungus, Hanmigan, Ile, Manegry, Murchen, etc. (Vasilyevich 1969: 3–9). Although many Evenks have at least a passive command of the Evenk language and share a common cultural heritage and subsistence economy, they tend to associate themselves with their local group or clan, which is characterised by a distinct culture and language (dialect), rather than with Evenk people in general.

The territorial identity of the Evenk people is usually associated with geographical objects, especially rivers, which mark the routes of nomadic groups (Lavrillier 2010), as well as with administrative units (districts, villages and towns) where the majority of the sedentary Evenk population is concentrated. The Soviet administrative reforms such, as the establishment of ethnic autonomies⁹ accompanied by changing district and regional borders, helped to engender a greater, and unprecedented, unity among the Evenk. Yet, these reforms could not eliminate intergroup tensions predetermined by the long history of migration, competition, and conflict for lands between different clans and local groups. Today, northern communities, such as Tura, in which various

indigenous social networks overlap, often become centres for such intricate relationships, places where territorial identities are displayed and contested (Sirina 2012a: 66). Territorial identity, earlier associated with genealogies, ancestral lands and nomadic routes, and currently expressed as attachment to a motherland or belonging to the land, remains a prominent type of identity among different local groups constituting widely scattered Evenk people.

The case study of Tura presented in this paper illustrates the complex interrelations between the territorial, indigenous and ethnic identities of the Evenk people. In local identity politics, where the local intelligentsia plays a prominent role, the signs of belonging to the local community, to the category of KMNS, and the ethnic group are manipulated and verified by a number of criteria, including authenticity, indigeneity, and tradition. The competing images and concepts of the 'authentic' ethnic culture, language, traditional economy and a way of life, and even the 'right' anthropological type are propagated by different actors within the same ethnic group. Overlapping territorial, indigenous, and ethnic identities are based on the common sense of belonging to land. Yet, the discrepancy between etic and emic identities predetermined by the history of migrations and administrative reforms and manipulated by the local elite, marks differences within the same ethnic group and engenders a conflict in the community.

A CENTURY OF MIGRATIONS AND REFORMS

The History of Collectivisation and Cultural Construction

The history of Tura starts with the foundation of a culture base (*kul'tbaza*): the first buildings, including a boarding school, a veterinary station, a hospital, a tuberculosis dispensary, a *banya*, and a 'native's house' (*dom tuzemtsa*) were constructed here in 1927. The establishment of a culture base in Tura was among the first reforms in the framework of the Soviet cultural construction project implemented among indigenous peoples of the North. In 1930, The Tura culture base became the centre of the Evenk Autonomous Okrug by Decree of the Organisation of Autonomies of Indigenous Peoples of the North. Five years later, the Okrug had a population of around 6,500 people governed by 18 indigenous nomadic councils (Uvachan 1971: 166, 204).

One of the ideological goals that Soviet planners pursued when establishing the Evenk Autonomous Okrug in Krasnoyarsk Krai was creating a pan-Evenk homeland by uniting the widely dispersed Evenk population within the borders of one territory. Indeed, the Evenk population stimulated by state support and the system of distribution of specialists¹⁰ started arriving from neighbouring Irkutsk Oblast, and later, from Buryatia, Yakutia and the Far East. In the early 20th century, Evenk emigration from the Angara River basin increased as Evenk hunting grounds and pastures were alienated in the process of expansion of Russian merchants and manufacturers' economic activities in that region (Savoskul 1970: 180–181). According to a survey conducted in 1988–1989, 64 per cent of Evenk respondents arrived in Evenkia from the Katanga Rayon in Irkutsk Oblast, and 15 per cent from the Turukhansk Rayon and Taimyr Autonomous Okrug, Krasnoyarsk Krai (Zolototrubov et al. 1992). In the early Soviet period, the Russian

population of the Evenk autonomous area grew because of immigration while the proportion of indigenous people remained the same or declined slightly. Between 1965 and 1974 the population of Tura grew from 3,500 to 5,990 people, with the Evenk population remaining 10–11 per cent through this period (Savoskul 2006: 285–286). In the 1950s and the early 1960s, the concentration of the local population in the district's main settlements¹¹ was connected with agricultural reforms, a merger of kolkhozes and the establishment of sovkhazes, whereas in the 1970s and 1980s, population growth had been determined by oil and gas industry development and an inflow of geologists and other qualified industrial workers. The arriving population included Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, Tatars, Khakases, and other less represented ethnic groups.

Collectivisation unfolded in Evenkia faster than in other more remote regions of the Soviet North. The expropriation of private property started from reindeer, the main equivalent of power and wealth among nomadic population, and ended with hunting traps. According to some data, the proportion of collectivised households increased from 16.2 per cent in 1932 to 98.5 per cent in 1940. By 1939, the kolkhoz sector officially constituted 84 per cent of the local economy and by the early 1960s, there were 13 kolkhozes in Evenkia (Koviazin and Kuzakov 1963: 54–56). The Northern kolkhoz economy was based on reindeer herding, hunting and fishing, as well as on breeding fur animals, agriculture and raising cattle. However, significantly subsidised by the state, indigenous people's traditional industries, especially reindeer herding, were steadily growing in scale: by the 1990s there were up to 15 thousand reindeer in the district (AFM 2011: interview with S. Ch.). Older-generation Evenk informants recalled their childhood memories of the dekulakisation campaign and hard everyday labour in the kolkhozes:

Life was hard. As soon as children turned eight, they started working in the kolkhoz. We cleared fields, made hay. In the kolkhoz, we learned both Russian and Evenk life. My uncle worked in reindeer herding and took us to the taiga in the summer. He always wore Evenk clothes and lived in the taiga. (AFM 2011: interview with S. Ch.)

Although there were no collective farms in Tura, a district timber industry enterprise (*lespromkhoz*), a fish processing plant, as well as two mining enterprises extracting graphite and feldspar were located there. While the former two organisations mainly employed people from the local population, the latter two attracted specialists from all over the country. In addition to working in organisations in Tura, the local population was always involved in subsistence hunting and fishing. People who spent their childhood in Evenkia and lived in Tura for many years feel deeply rooted in the place. Their sense of belonging to the local landscape relies on personal genealogies connected with the district and memories of the collectivisation and post-war years when their survival depended on traditional industries and living off the land.

Paternalistic Soviet cultural and education policies were aimed at the elimination of illiteracy among the nomads, nurturing an ethnic intelligentsia, and the promotion of indigenous peoples' political representation¹² in local and regional bodies. According to the system of quotas for indigenous students, the majority of school graduates were sent to study in universities in Leningrad and Khabarovsk, where they specialised in Evenk language and literature, and to pedagogical schools in Igarka, Krasnoyarsk Krai; they were also sent to Nikolayevsk-na-Amure, Khabarovsk Krai, where they were

educated as primary school teachers. Upon graduation, specialists were usually sent to work either back home or in a neighbouring region.

The interviews show that people changed their jobs and places of residence quite often. Looking for better opportunities and living conditions, they travelled across the district and, sometimes, to and from neighbouring regions, finally settling down in Tura. The proportion of Evenk employees in local state organisations was growing, regulated by the same quota system as in education and politics. The emerging Evenk intelligentsia included poets, singers, writers, teachers and scientists, who were either born in Evenkia or arrived from other regions. Remarkably, a prominent role in the formation of the 'local' intelligentsia in Evenkia was played by Evenk migrants from neighbouring Katanga Rayon, Irkutsk Oblast (Savoskul 1970: 183). The increase of the local intelligentsia led to the increased political influence of the Evenk, the popularisation of their ethnic culture, and the strengthening of Evenk identity in Tura as the centre of an ethnic autonomous area. At the same time the social, education and professional status of the Evenk population in other counties or 'peripheral' district communities was considerably lower than the rest of the population, which affected their identities:

Here, in Ilimpiya,¹³ the indigenous population is self-respecting despite its humility; they make others respect them too. In Baykit, the authorities were represented by migrants. I worked there and they treated me well. Only there I noticed that discrimination [against indigenous people] for the first time and it shocked me. The whole kolkhoz office was Russian. When we, young guys, came I could feel that attitude at once. I consider myself an Evenk because I grew up here. I always liked breaking stereotypes: I am an indigenous person, but I will show you how to work. (AFM 2011: interview with A. O.)

Post-Soviet Tura

Post-Soviet reforms and the socio-economic crisis of the 1990s drastically affected the population of Tura and Evenk Rayon. The demographic phenomenon of mass emigration of non-indigenous residents, known elsewhere in the North of Russia (Krupnik and Vakhtin 2002: 7–8), was accompanied by the concentration of the indigenous population in the district centre. As a result of these multidirectional migrations, the district population decreased from 24,769 in 1989 (Zolototubov et al. 1992: 35), to 17,967 in 2002 (Perepis 2002), and 16,253 in 2010, while the total population of Tura was 5,990 in 1984 (Savoskul 2006: 286), 5,836 in 2002 and 5,535 in 2010 (Perepis 2010). At the same time, the indigenous population in Tura increased from 11 per cent in 1984 to almost 25 per cent in 2012.¹⁴ Thus, the insignificant outflow of non-indigenous population from Tura was compensated by the inflow of Evenks from the district's remote villages, especially in the period when sovkhoses and infrastructure were collapsing. The majority of immigrants settled down in Tura, even if they could not find a job there.

Another wave of immigrants came to Tura from the former Soviet republics, especially from Central Asia and the Caucasus. Currently, they occupy low-skilled jobs in state organisations, or work as individual entrepreneurs, primarily, in the service sector. One more migration pattern, spreading in the Russian North, is connected with the introduction of shift work in industry, administration and the public sector. The

increasing number of low-skilled migrants from Post-Soviet countries, as well as qualified shift workers (oil and gas industry specialists and managers) from other regions, who spend some of their time in Tura, is not reflected either in the population census or in local statistics. These migrants are the most fluid and de-territorialised population cohort, often seen by 'locals' as lacking emotional attachment to the land and community and looking for immediate profit.

In the course of the federal administrative reform of the 2000s, which led to the abolition of ethnic autonomies throughout Siberia and the North, the Evenk Autonomous Okrug was merged with Krasnoyarsk Krai and succeeded in 2007 by the Evenk Rayon. The new administrative unit formally acquired a special status, but in practice lost the main financial preferences that the previous autonomous period enjoyed. The reform further aggravated the socio-economic conditions in the district, including infrastructure and living standards, due to the lack of federal investment and the curtailing of support programmes (Komaritsin 2014). At the background of the general problems of Evenkia and the changing political agenda, indigenous issues, including political representation, ethnic education and language revitalisation projects are losing their relevance. Thus, the new political status of Evenkia affects the Evenk people, with material and administrative resources becoming scarcer.

I witnessed the existence of the Evenk Autonomous Okrug here: although not much money was allocated, life was different, things were humming. We realised that we had our own legislation, our flag, our anthem and our emblem [...]. Now we are delegated powers in the spheres of land use and agriculture to the same extent as any other municipal district in Krasnoyarsk Krai [...]. I can foresee our sad life in the future. The state will provide basic social guarantees, but there won't be that dynamic life as it used to be. The programmes are gradually stopping, outside leaders are promoted during election campaigns. (AFM 2011: interview with A. O.)

The majority of the Tura population works in the state sector – education, cultural and healthcare institutions and government bodies – where the most stable and well-paid jobs are found. Most of the men from the indigenous and local populations are still engaged in traditional industries – hunting and reindeer herding. In 2011 there were nine enterprises registered in Tura in this sector, including six indigenous *obshchinas*, a municipal unitary enterprise, a limited liability company, and an agricultural production cooperative.¹⁵ The largest municipal enterprise, Traditsionnoye Khozyaistvo Severa, headed by an Evenk leader and based in Tura with branches in other villages, is a socially oriented enterprise providing seasonal employment to local hunters. It supplies hunting equipment and weapons, buys wild deer meat and processes and sells fishing and hunting products. Evenkia's major and reindeer herding production farm, Surindinskiy, a successor to the sovkhoz of the same name, is based in the village of Surinda and has over four thousand reindeer.¹⁶ From the economic point of view, hunting and other activities play a major role in the subsistence of the whole local population of Tura, including hunters and herders' families, as well as their more distant relatives and other ties connected to them through informal market and exchange networks.

In indigenous leaders' discourses, traditional industries are presented as an important ethnic symbol, a cultural resource and a necessary prerequisite for the preservation of ethnic cultures and languages. This essentialist interpretation of tradition (i.e. tradi-

tional economy and traditional lifestyle) underlies the legal definition of indigenous numerically small peoples of the North and explains why the lion's share of state support to these people goes to hunting and herding enterprises. However, in practice, it is not only Evenk but also other local populations that are involved in hunting and herding although they cannot claim the special status granted to KMNS. Their subsistence activities are usually described as beyond the paradigm of tradition and indigeneity, despite economic dependence on and spiritual attachment to the local landscapes of Evenkia.

Post-Soviet reforms have also had negative impacts on the indigenous education system in Evenkia. Present day ethnically and culturally oriented school education programmes include a so-called national and regional component. The Evenk language is taught as an obligatory subject in the boarding school in Tura and as an elective course in other schools in the district. Other ethnic subjects include cultural heritage, decorative and applied arts, and ethnic sport. With the demise of the quota system, the curtailment of university courses in indigenous languages, literatures, and cultures, and the closing of the pedagogical school in Igarka, indigenous school graduates no longer have reserved seats in higher or secondary education institutions. Neither do parents have financial opportunities to send their children to be educated in the regional capital of Krasnoyarsk. These changes, breaking the continuity in preparation of the local intelligentsia, decrease the education, professional, and social status of the indigenous population and affect their ethnic identity and cultural and political representation.

Current Russian ethno-cultural policies in the North include the propaganda of indigenous languages and cultures through local and district mass media, houses of culture, and education centres. Officials and the Evenk intelligentsia organise culture festivals and ethnic holidays and launch small-scale language revitalisation projects as the main measures for the preservation of cultural diversity in Evenkia. The Evenk language as an official language of the municipal district is formally used in the public sphere. One can notice signs both in Russian and Evenk on administrative buildings, yet research shows a declining level of command and informal usage of the language (Mamontova 2010). However, the ethnic culture of the local group (Ilimpiya Evenks) and the literary dialect of Evenk language are still presented as exemplary or standard for all Evenks due to the persisting image of the district as the Evenk 'homeland', where all cultural resources are concentrated, education and language policies are shaped, and ethnic identities are forged.

IDENTITY POLITICS AND SOCIAL CONFLICT

Territorial Identities: 'Locals' and 'Migrants'

Territorial identity in Tura rests on belonging to the land, which should be interpreted both as the local community and the local landscapes. Evenk informants often describe their rootedness in terms of psychological comfort and emotional attachment to the land and the nature of Tura and Evenkia.

Even when there was no electricity in the settlement, I was not going to leave because it's my motherland. I look around and see the taiga nearby. I like it when

you walk and see a bear on the other riverside. I like this suddenness. I like to hear cranes and geese calling in spring. I like to watch seasons come and go here. My heart fills with joy, I feel satisfied, I feel good. (AFM 2011: interview with A. O.)

Territorial identity is articulated in the classical opposition between locals (*mestnye*) and non-locals generally referred to as migrants (*priezzhie*) or temporary residents (*vremenshchiki*). In Tura, the most visible non-local others include unskilled labour migrants from the Post-Soviet republics seeking opportunities to stay in the village or the district for longer periods. The second category of non-locals includes specialists who moved from mainland Russia (*materik*) to work, often on a shift basis and with short-term contracts in order to earn money in the North and spend it back in their home regions. Labour migrants from the Post-Soviet space tend to find self-employment in the spheres of trade and services, whereas shift-workers from other regions fill well-paid positions in the oil and gas industry and administration.

The tension between the permanent and shift/temporary population is rooted in the competition for jobs and natural resources. The expanding kinship and social networks of Kazakhs and, especially, Tajiks with their distinct cultures, languages and beliefs, unfamiliar to the North, threatens the local population. The high adaptability and entrepreneurial spirit of Central Asian migrants helps them to find an economic niche in the community and expand their activities. For example, upon their arrival to Tura one Tajik family organised a shoemaker's shop where local people could have soles attached to their semi-finished fur boots (*unty*). Quite soon, they mastered the technology of making the boots themselves, entering into competition with the local Evenk women who sew and sell traditional winter clothes and boots in the community. The migrants' working ability and qualities also create competition for low-skilled jobs in the service and public sectors, at which the indigenous population also aims. Local discourses like 'Tajiks are better workers' offend Evenk job-seekers who oppose their own innate patience and modesty to Tajik perceived assertiveness and imprudence.

I heard them say it several times in Tura: "It's better to employ a Tajik". Then I heard it on a TV programme that they are better employees than us. But here we face it in practice: they are no better. When a vacancy is open, they will prefer a Tajik because they are so active, assertive and ambitious. Perhaps it's good, we don't want to offend others, but we perceive it as some kind of impudence, disrespect [...]. (AFM 2011: interview with V. K.)

The second category of migrants, mainly Russian shift or temporary workers, are often criticised for their consumerist attitudes to the North. The local population sees them as coming to the community only for the sake of making profit, devoid of any emotional or other attachment to the land. In Tura, such local opinions are especially typical in respect of specialists and managers from other regions or big cities like Moscow who work in district administration or federal level offices. According to an Evenk informant, incoming officials "never stay long in the district, and have no idea about the local culture and business" (AFM 2011: interview with T. S.). The complaints of the local community about the work of the district administration relate to federal politics, big business, and corruption, which conflict with local needs and interests and are becoming more serious as the socio-economic situation in the district becomes worse.

The indigenous identity in Tura is shared by Evenks and other groups, such as Essei Yakuts, Kets, and Dolgans who live in Evenkia. This identity rests on formal inclusion in the category of KMNS and the historical memory of peaceful co-existence of aboriginal peoples in the territory of Evenkia. Evenks express their positive attitude towards other indigenous peoples who carry out similar economic activities and lead similar ways of life and have a similar social and legal status. In 2011, Evenk informants expressed their sympathy for the Essei Yakuts who, since the abolition of autonomy, have unsuccessfully tried to regain the regional status of an ethnic entity equal to KMNS in order to become eligible for state support.¹⁷

From time immemorial they [Essei Yakuts] were mentioned in decrees as an ethnic group, which has the same privileges. Now the fact that there are no Yakuts on the list of KMNS creates some tension. I absolutely don't mind that Yakuts should be included in the list. They live a really hard life, hunting like us and using the same lands. There are also Kets who receive benefits here. Many people now come from Taimyr to study – they also receive benefits. (AFM 2011: interview with V. K.)

The current Russian legislation, which tends to define indigeneity in terms of traditional economic activities, draws an invisible boundary between hunters and herders and the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population. In practice, this means that the major state support programmes are aimed at indigenous populations involved in traditional industries. The majority of the indigenous population in Tura does not meet this main criterion – their way of life is similar to the rest of the local population, with the exception of hunters leading seasonal semi-nomadic lives. Indigenous individuals who meet one of the other criteria – retirement age, low income level or employment in municipal healthcare, education and cultural institutions, receive minor support in the form of the reimbursement of travel expenses connected with health resort treatment and education, free dental care, and medical kits for new-born babies. However, enterprisers or individuals who work in reindeer herding, hunting and fishing, in addition to the benefits listed above, are eligible for major support, such as equipment, snowmobiles at reduced prices, air transport for hunters to hunting grounds, free sable hunting licenses, lump-sum assistance for preparation for the hunting season, fuel, compensations for reindeer fodder.¹⁸

Another boundary – between indigenous people and the rest of the local population – appears in situations in which the funds, formally allocated to KMNS by targeted socio-economic support programs, are spent on local community needs in general, whereas indigenous peoples are publicly blamed for being dependents on the state:

In a newspaper they published that 50 million [roubles] was allocated to KMNS [...] while we, ordinary people, don't get anything: the community is confused. Now that unemployment has increased, this 50 million for KMNS is like a red flag to a bull. People think: "These dependents get money again". But this goes to a herding brigade, buying a snowmobile or something else, or is spent on culture – a folk group or books. My parents, who have lived all their lives in the taiga, and now my brother and sister, have never received a kopek from the state. I think

that the information about the 50 million creates tensions. I witnessed situations in which this money was spent buying a truck, paying for a helicopter or a hotel reservation for doctors from Krasnoyarsk – all the population used their services, but, in reports, it was stated that this money was spent on KMNS. (AFM 2011: interview with V. K.)

Remarkably, indigenous individuals of ethnically mixed backgrounds usually have double identities, which play out differently in different contexts and social environments. Living in a primarily indigenous environment, a higher or a special secondary education in indigenous cultures and languages, among other factors, encourages interest in one's background and shapes indigenous identities, as with the case of a woman from a Lithuanian-Evenk family:

My father wanted me to be registered as a Lithuanian, but my mother insisted that I register as an Evenk. She would not have cared about it, if it was not for the benefits provided to indigenous school graduates at that moment. My consciousness awoke during my studies at university – my roots revealed themselves. I liked it very much and said to my father: "I am sorry, I am a one hundred per cent Evenk, but I promise to never change my family name". So, that was our deal. (AFM 2011: interview with I. V.)

The emic concepts of indigeneity are deeply incorporated in people's lived experiences, which extend beyond legal frameworks. Indigenous identity is then defined not only by inclusion in official lists but also by economic and spiritual connection to the local landscape, expressed in the practical skills required to lead a traditional lifestyle, as well as language, arts and crafts. A definition of an indigenous or 'aboriginal' identity given by an Evenk female informant included a minimum set of 'required' criteria: an experience of living in the taiga and seeing reindeer, a command of the native language, practical survival skills (for example, cleaning fish), arts and crafts (for example, embroidery). (AFM 2011: interview with S. Ch.)

Ethnic Identities: Cultural Differences and Authenticity

Whereas Evenks have a similar sense of belonging to a place and lead a similar lifestyle to the majority of the population in Tura, more specific identity markers become relevant in situations in which a need arises to stress their ethnic identity in interactions with other groups or to mark cultural differences among Evenks. Ethnic identity markers most frequently listed by Evenk informants include knowledge of the ethnic language and folklore (ethnic literature, songs), the practical skills necessary for living a traditional way of life in the taiga (for example, processing skins and hunting game, sewing clothes and bedding for women, and landscape orientation, hunting and herding for men), arts and crafts (making souvenirs and sewing clothes with ethnic ornaments and an ethnic colour palette), everyday cuisine and dress with ethnic features, and even an anthropological type (eye shape or 'blood factor').

Evenk ethnic identity is articulated in different ways in interrelations with Russians, on the one hand, and in encounters with migrants from Central Asia, on the other:

I have finally learned my own psychology. With Russians I am a Russian: I know [their] sayings and proverbs, I can sing songs and recite couplets, and can dance. With Evenks, I am an Evenk: I can speak [the language], I know a lot, I can embroider. But with Tajiks I am a pure Evenk, I can't stand them, they are so self-assured! (AFM 2011: interview with L. Ch.)

The famous triad of race–culture–language (Barth 1998 [1969]: 11) that underlies Northern indigenous essentialism is currently part of local ethnic identity politics in Evenkia. Some Evenk leaders say that the combination of the 'right' anthropological type, a command of the ethnic language (particularly its literary dialect), and a 'traditional' way of life, which implies involvement in the traditional economy, is a formula of authenticity that gives one the 'right' to call oneself Evenk. Despite the fact that, in everyday life people are more critical of these criteria, such concepts still influence their experiences and worldviews.

Who is an Evenk, at least, what do they look like? If you have big eyes, you are not an Evenk. People have stereotypes even about the appearance that an Evenk should have. Why is it so? For example, Russians and Ukrainians can also have different types of appearance: some of them are dark-haired while others are not. Why can't I be registered as an Evenk if I don't look like one? [...] But local Evenks say that an Evenk is one who has Evenk blood. Maybe they are right, because there are many mixed blood people now. But ethnicity has never been determined by appearance. (AFM 2011: interview with V. K.)

The command of the ethnic language and involvement in traditional economy are the cornerstones of every local discourse and concept of Evenk ethnicity in Tura. Paradoxically, the 'paradigm of local migrant', which is also part of territorial identity, most vividly reveals itself in interrelations between representatives of the different ethno-territorial groups that presently constitute the Evenk community in Tura. For example, different local dialects of the Evenk language serve as cultural markers manipulated by leaders who highlight even minor language differences between 'local' (speaking literary Evenk) and 'migrant' (speaking other local dialects) Evenks. The language and cultural purism practiced by the Evenk intelligentsia in Tura is thriving despite a reduction in the number of Evenks who consider their ethnic language to be native and a decline in language competence (Mamontova 2013).

Remarkably, local concepts of the revitalisation of the Evenk language and culture are inseparably connected with the preservation of 'traditional industries' (herding, hunting and fishing), which are believed to be the only suitable environment for language revival and the main or only sphere of communication in Evenk. The following are the words of an Evenk politician who is the head of a large indigenous enterprise in Tura:

We understand that the reindeer herder is the main native speaker. We have relieved social tensions among people living in the taiga in the conditions of the Far North. Unfortunately, the quality of reindeer herders' lives has not improved since the 18th century: iron potbelly stoves and nothing really new. Nevertheless, people lead such lives, and the Evenk language is 80 per cent connected to reindeer. We understand that this activity should be sustained in order to preserve the ethnos. (AFM 2011: interview with A. G.)

Similar discourses reiterated by political leaders and activists and incorporated into the current legislation on indigenous people have become internalised by the Evenk population at large. The 'local' ethnic intelligentsia perceives Evenks who migrated from other regions or communities in the comparatively recent past as Russified, unauthentic and assimilated, alluding to their long-term contacts and interactions with Russians, which, presumably, lead to the loss of the language and traditional way of life. From their perspective, migrants from Irkutsk Oblast, who constitute a large part of the ethnic intelligentsia in Tura, cannot be considered pure Evenk. Neither should they have the right to access the most valuable symbolic resources, 'authentic' Evenk language and culture, or the support allocated for the preservation of this cultural heritage. In fact, discrimination based on the criteria of authenticity extends to other spheres and resources such as representation in local and district bodies and indigenous organisations.

In their turn, 'migrant' Evenks consider their 'local' counterparts more aggressive, envious, 'unwilling to share their spiritual fare' with others, and feel offended by the discriminatory statements of 'local' ethnic leaders. In response to this politics of exclusion, 'migrant' Evenks emphasise their rootedness in Evenkia as their second motherland and promote, at least declaratively, the ideology of community integration based on inclusion and interethnic tolerance. In doing so, they often refer to the Soviet constructivist concept of pan-Evenk culture, language and identity forged in Evenkia. These are the words of an Evenk woman who migrated to Tura from Irkutsk Oblast over 20 years ago:

I wonder why they perceive us like this: if we come from other regions, we don't have any rights, we are birds of passage, we hunt for luck [...]. In contrast, when I came here, I was happy to discover that there is such a territory as Evenkia. All of us work here with pleasure, to the benefit of our people. We recognise them as Evenks, but here they say: "You are not Evenk", especially if you don't speak their dialect [...]. Our culture is not about this kind of discrimination. For me, Essei Yakuts, Kets, as well as Russians and Tadjiks are equal people. All ethnic groups live a good life in Evenkia. (AFM 2011: interview with V. K.)

Evenks who migrated relatively recently from remote villages (*faktoriya*) constitute another group of 'migrants' in Tura. This boundary between 'local' and 'migrant' Evenks is based on an administrative centre-periphery opposition. According to popular stereotypes, *faktoriya* migrants are 'dumber', less educated and can hardly adapt to life in Tura. In contrast, 'local' Evenks are more independent, unconventional and self-confident. In some cases, Tura Evenks emphasise their local identity, referring to their higher social and education status in relation to recent migrants. At the same time, those Evenks who were born in remote villages but settled down and succeeded in Tura remember their origin and feel sympathy for those who come from the 'periphery' but still represent themselves as part of the local community.

CONCLUSION

Thus, despite traditionally strong commitment of ethnologists and anthropologists to the examination of ethnicity and ethnic identity, this is not the only or the prime aspect

of identity. Neither can it be understood and adequately interpreted as separate from other significant types of identity, such as territorial and indigenous identities based on a strong sense of belonging to land – a local community, the local or ancestral landscapes. The case of the Evenk as an ethnic group constructed in the process of the state policies of unification of widely dispersed and culturally distinct local clans, demonstrates complex interrelations and overlaps between territorial, indigenous and ethnic identities. These identities play out in especially intricate ways in Tura – the capital of the Evenk Autonomous Okrug, declared to be their ‘homeland’ by Soviet reformers.

The processes of Evenk identity construction have been unfolding in the context of state reforms, administrative and territorial divisions, migrations and interethnic contacts in the heart of their autonomous district. The Soviet collectivisation and cultural construction projects increased the education level and political representation of indigenous people, leading to emergence of the local intelligentsia and strengthening of Evenk ethnic identity in Tura. Post-Soviet socio-economic and political reforms, as well as indigenous rights movement of the 1990s and 2000s fostered indigenous and ethnic identities in the Russian North that fostered strategic essentialism. This stimulated the construction of ethnic community boundaries on the basis of genealogies and emphasised the connection of indigenous peoples to tradition and to the land (Sokolovskiy 2012: 81). The changing political climate, abolition of the Evenk Autonomous Okrug in 2007 and the continued withdrawal of state support from indigenous people increased competition for scarce resources and predetermined local identity battles, in which territorial identities based on belonging to land became an even more valuable resource.

In Tura, different identity types are played down or employed in one’s engagement with the social environment, depending on the situation. Whereas territorial identities are activated in a locals–migrants opposition, indigenous and ethnic identities become relevant in interrelations between different social groups within the local community. Ascribed migrant identities may come into conflict with the people’s own consolidating sense of belonging to land, the local community and the ethnic group. Paradoxically, boundaries based on the local–migrant, authentic–unauthentic, central–peripheral dichotomies mainly divide the Evenk ethnic community. To legitimise their special status and exclusive rights to benefits, ‘local’ Evenks emphasise their authenticity rooted in territorially defined cultural differences – the literary Evenk language, the ‘right’ anthropological type and ‘authentic’ culture and way of life. Even minor cultural differences are manipulated in order to declare ‘non-local’ Evenks ‘unauthentic’ and, thus, to exclude them from competition for valuable resources.

In this way, contemporary Evenk identities appear to be flexible and contextual to the extent that permits navigation between different identities. While many Evenks declare a strong affiliation to their ethnic group, which is marked by cultural, linguistic and other specific features in some cases, they generally tend to stress their indigenous and, particularly, territorial identities. The latter are displayed in a special way in the case of the Evenk people, who were historically constituted by a number of highly mobile, dispersed, and culturally diverse local groups whose identification depended on the attachment to ancestral lands rather than on belonging to one people. Today, conflicting territorial and ethnic identities with their underlying sense of belonging to land are used to draw cultural and social boundaries between Evenks in the context of local identity politics, which is aimed at restricting access to scarce resources and state support.

NOTES

1 Tura had the status of urban settlement (*gorodskoye poseleniye*) until 2011. Despite the fact that the settlement had a population of over 5,535 people, according to the 2010 census its status was changed to rural.

2 KMNS refers to the Russian abbreviation of the term *korennyye malochislennyye narody Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka* (indigenous numerically small peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East). The legal status and special rights of KMNS are provided for in federal legislation, such as the Federal Law on Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Numerically Small Peoples of the Russian Federation (1999), the Federal Law on General Principles of the Organisation of Obschinas of KMNS (2000), the Federal Law on Territories of Traditional Land Use of KMNS (2001), to name only a few.

3 By this term I mean so-called nomadic schools, an alternative form of bicultural education aimed at indigenous children and functioning in several Northern regions in Russia. The local intelligentsia in Tura, headed by well-known Evenk linguist Zinaida Pikunova, initiated one such nomadic nursery school, attended mainly by reindeer herders' children and based in the taiga, in the vicinity of the Evenk village Surinda (AFM 2011).

4 The term conflict is used here in its wide sense as applying to "all relations between sets of individuals that involve an incompatible difference of objective [...], a desire on the part of both contestants to obtain what is available only to one, or only in part" (Dahrendorf 1959, cited by Fink 1968: 432). Such generalist interpretation of conflict relations always includes competition as an underlying motive for, or initial stage of, social conflict.

5 For example, International Labor Organisation Convention No. 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and other fundamental international laws.

6 The main criteria that defines belonging to KMNS category include: residence in the traditional lands of the ancestors, a traditional lifestyle and economic activities, population size, and a distinct ethnic identity. The place of residence presuming the existence of ethnic 'homelands' served to produce a list of 'traditional territories' for each indigenous ethnic group and, thus, became an important factor in determining KMNS status (Donahoe et al. 2008: 994). Currently, the federal list of indigenous peoples of the North includes 40 indigenous ethnic groups eligible for special state support and benefits. On the wave of the international indigenous rights movement, with which Russia became actively involved in the 1990s, the population of some indigenous groups of the Russian North increased due to large-scale switching to 'indigenous' identity, stimulated by social benefits (Beach et al. 2009). The recent political changes and curtailing of state support to KMNS (Yakel 2012: 16–18) may aggravate their situation and lead to a decrease in the indigenous population due to a reverse identity shift.

7 I thank Galina Sultanova and other specialists of the Administration of Evenk Rayon for useful information on the demography, economy, culture, and education of the indigenous peoples of Evenkia.

8 According to the Census of 2010, their number constituted 37,873 people in Russia, see Perepis 2010.

9 Between 1930 and 1938, Vitimo-Olekminsk National Okrug, another Evenk autonomous area, existed in East Siberia (Zadorozhnyi et al. 1995: 15–16).

10 By to the Order of the USSR Ministry of Higher and Special Secondary Education No. 220 of 18.03.1968 On Personal Distribution of Young Specialists Graduating Higher and Special Secondary Institutions, the state obliged young graduates to work, according to their professional profile, usually in their home or neighbouring regions, and also in other parts of the country, for three years before they could choose their place of work themselves. Several employment options were usually offered, considering the specialists' health, family, and other circumstances.

11 According to the administrative division, there were three districts in the Evenk Autonomous Okrug, including Ilimpiya Rayon with its center in Tura, Baykit Rayon with its center in Baykit, and Tunguso-Chunsk Rayon with its center in Vanavara. After the 2007 administrative reform, these counties were turned into 'clusters of settlements' (*gruppa poseleniy*) and Tura remained the administrative centre of Evenkia.

12 This indirect mechanism of state control was popularly called by the term 'indigenisation of power' (*korenizatsiya vlasti*).

13 Ilimpiya Rayon, according to the former administrative division of the Evenk Autonomous Okrug.

14 AFM 2011: the data of the Department of Agriculture, Traditional Industries, and Indigenous Affairs, the Administration of Evenk Rayon.

15 Information on *obschinas* and other indigenous enterprises involved in commercial and subsistence hunting on the territory of Evenk Rayon (AFM 2011: The archive of the Department of Agriculture, Traditional Industries, and Indigenous Affairs, Administration of Evenk Rayon).

16 The dynamics of the reindeer population in Surindinsk municipal experimental production farm (AFM 2011: The archive of the Department of Agriculture, Traditional Industries, and Indigenous Affairs, Administration of Evenk Rayon).

17 On the federal level, Yakuts living in the Republic of Yakutia as an ethnic group do not qualify for inclusion in the list of KMNS due to the fact that their number exceeds 50 thousand people. However, their local ethno-territorial groups in other regions may be considered as independent unique cultures and ethnic entities. In 2013, a law was passed granting the Essei Yakuts, a large indigenous group in Evenkia, KMNS status at the level of Krasnoyarsk Krai.

18 According to Krasnoyarsk Krai law No. 7-2658 On the Social Support of Citizens Living in the Evenk Rayon, Krasnoyarsk Krai, ratified on December 18, 2008.

SOURCES

AFM 2011 – Author's field notes and audio recordings:

- Interview with A. G.
- Interview with A. O.
- Interview with I. V.
- Interview with L. Ch.
- Interview with S. Ch.
- Interview with T. S.
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