

Mapping Indigenous Siberia: Spatial Changes and Ethnic Realities, 1900-2010

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This article discusses spatial changes in the ethnic territories of Native Siberians from the late nineteenth century to the early twenty-first century. A Geographic Information System (GIS) was developed to model and observe these changes. The GIS also features resource-oriented economic activities, major waterways and railroads. Analysis of the model, textual sources and statistical data made it possible to determine what factors constituted Siberia's ethnographical pattern of the early twentieth century and led to its changes in the ensuing decades and what impact on the indigenous peoples these changes had. Four special maps showing Siberia in the 1900s–10s, 1930s–40s, 1970s–80s and 2000s–10s were produced from the GIS and are included in the article. The current legal status of the indigenous peoples' territories was also examined. This article presents an interdisciplinary macroscale case study.

‘There is evidence that in former times aliens (*inorodtsy*) were in less distress when they had more herds and grounds for hunting and fishing. True, they were not on a high degree of culture, but they ate well’, wrote N. M. Yadrintsev in his famous book *Siberia as a Colony*.¹ Despite the use of the pejorative albeit legal term ‘*inorodtsy*’ for the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the treatment of their cultures as inferior to his own, he was one of the few Russian intellectuals who were truly interested in the hardships of the native population and who spread the word about their extreme poverty and oppression.² This is what Yadrintsev viewed as the main causes of Native Siberians’ problems:

First of all [...] the region occupied by aliens did not stay the same as it had been before the arrival of the Russians; it had been decreasing constantly and finally became rather limited so that the population of the aliens could not increase in total. [...] It goes without saying that most of the best land passed into the hands of the Russian population. Just as the Indians in America are moved to the west, the alien tribes of Siberia were moved to the north and south, whereas small oases and groups of alien population inside Siberia are enclosed by the Russian population. It's natural that with the reduction of lands for trapping, hunting, fishing, with the diminution of pastures and decrease in movement potential, means of subsistence decreased as well. [...] Secondly, the very territories where aliens were driven back to and where they had to settle rarely corresponded with the climatic, topographic and physical conditions of the places they had previously occupied.³

Thus the quantitative and qualitative changes in ethnic territories had a great impact on the indigenous peoples and were closely related to the Russian settler colonisation of Siberia.

Today, modern methods and technology make it possible to study the spatial dimension of the Siberian people's history in more depth. Geographic information system (GIS) technology enables researchers to combine spatial and historical data from various sources into a single set, which enhances its analytical potential, especially when dealing with high volumes of data. In history, GIS creates a unique possibility to unify completely different sources, which due to radical differences in form were not suitable for joint usage and comparison on the substantive level. In addition, GIS makes it possible to analyse spatial changes over time, i.e., to observe historical processes in their dynamics. In order to take advantage of these new opportunities we used GIS alongside traditional historical methods in our research.

Our main objectives were to determine which specific factors affected the changes in the Siberian peoples' territories since the late

nineteenth century and what consequences for the Native Siberians these changes had. By combining information from graphical (historical and modern maps), textual (primary and secondary) and digital (data sets) sources we developed a specific geographic information system, which was used to model spatial changes in the ethnic territories of the indigenous population, resource-oriented economic activities and means of communication in Siberia.

By 'ethnic territories of the indigenous population' we mean areas within the scope of approximate economic and residential usage by a certain native ethnic group. Borders were drawn for the sake of graphical readability and we do not deny that the same territories could be shared by people of different origin and language. The discussion of the terms 'ethnos', 'ethnicity', 'nation' and 'nationality' lies beyond the scope of this paper; the neutral terms 'people' and 'ethnic group' are used interchangeably and non-hierarchically for all ethnic entities instead. In the section related to Soviet ethnic policies the words 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' are used interchangeably, as they are necessary for understanding the political realities of the time.

Throughout history the ethnic composition of Siberia's population has undergone constant changes through internal and external migrations, and processes of integration, disintegration, acculturation and assimilation that started long before the beginning of Russian settler colonisation. Thus it is extremely difficult to determine which ethnic groups can be considered native. We will therefore use the conventional meaning of the term, applying it to all ethnic groups that lived in Siberia before the late sixteenth century and their descendants.⁴ The defining factor for ethnic differentiation is native language for the 1897 census and self-determination for the later ones. Obsolete denominations are also adjusted in accordance with present terms and modern ethnographical knowledge about the past.

The geographical framework of the study encompasses Siberia in the broad sense of the word and namely the territory of the Russian Federation between the Urals and the Pacific coast or the Urals Federal District, the Siberian Federal District and the Far Eastern Federal District. The timeframe covers the general censuses of the population of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union and the

first census of the Russian Federation. The ethnographical maps of Siberia that were produced before 1897 cannot be considered reliable, as they are not verifiable through census records or findings of properly held ethnographical expeditions. Though the study was conducted at the macro level, the developed GIS is applicable for microhistorical research.

Only on rare occasions has established colonial and post-colonial scholarship devoted its attention to Siberia, as it is rarely considered a colony in the conventional sense of the term. However, the notion of settler colonialism is suited to the later periods of Siberian history.

SIBERIA AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

During the first years of their conquest of Siberia the Russians encountered no fewer than 120 languages and many more dialects. In the late twentieth century, Native Siberians spoke 35 languages with up to 18 dialects. That means that 85 or more ethnic groups disappeared without a trace.⁵

The first population census in Russian history was carried out in 1897. Together with the results of several ethnographical expeditions and additional reference data, its returns make it possible to reconstruct the general spatial dispersion of different ethnic groups in Siberia at the turn of the twentieth century (Figure 1). It is firstly apparent that the size of a territory does not reflect the size of the ethnic group occupying it due to the low and uneven population densities and nomadic ways of life of many indigenous peoples. For instance, in 1897 only around 66,000 people in Siberia spoke Tungusic languages (within the territories of the Evenks, Evens, Negidals, Nanais, Oroks, Ulchs, Orochs and Udeges), while on a much smaller territory the population of the Yakuts was about 227,000.⁶

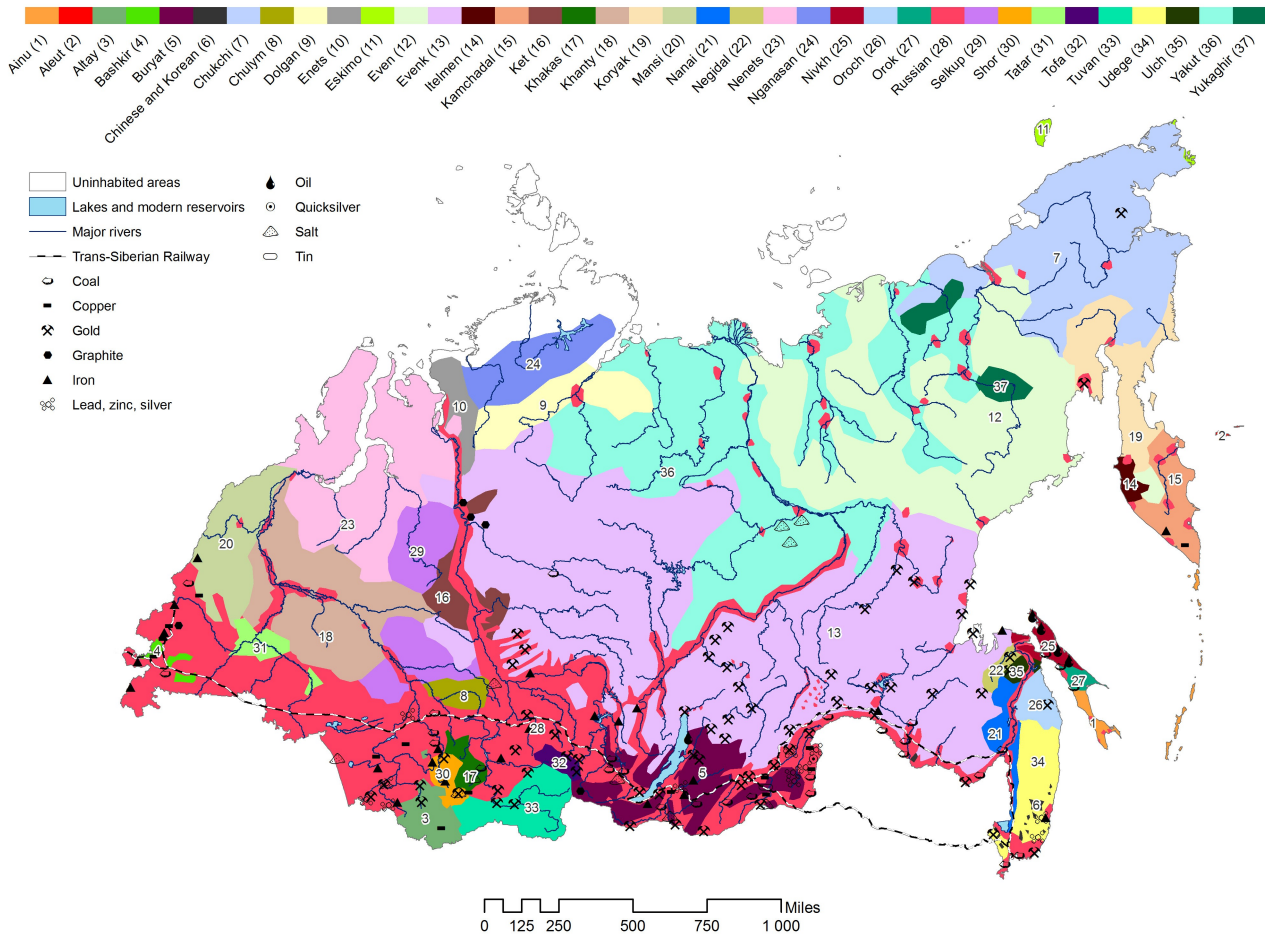


Figure 1: Siberia in the 1900s-10s.⁷

The ethnic territories of the Evenks, Yakuts, Nanais, Khantys and Selkups were divided as a result of the earlier Russian settlement, which had taken place on riversides. The rivers served as the most reliable means of travel both in summer and also in winter; during the latter it was possible to travel on the ice. Towns and forts, which were of great importance during the conquest, were also built alongside rivers.⁸ As can be seen from the map (Figure 1), the Ob, Yenisei and upper Lena rivers, and some of their tributaries were predominantly controlled and populated (though sparsely) by Russians.

The left bank of the Amur was also settled by the Russians after the annexation of the Far East in 1860. In this respect the rivers can be seen as axes of colonial power over Siberia. During earlier stages of the conquest the indigenous peoples were able to retain relative independence in the hinterland, but by the beginning of the twentieth century it was almost impossible to avoid the influence of the state or the payment of tributes. The minimisation of other contacts with newcomers was feasible, however, for reindeer herders and hunters whose dependence on river systems was not very high.⁹

The first overland highway connecting Siberia with European Russia was constructed in the late eighteenth century, and was called the Siberian Post Road (*trakt*). The older and newer routes of the *trakt* connected the main river towns of the region and thereby provided a stable East-West connection up to the Baikal.¹⁰ On the map (Figure 1), the southern (newer) route of the highway coincides to a large extent with the Trans-Siberian Railway. The two considerable deviations of the older (northern) route can be recognised in the two areas where the settlement is the farthest from the railroad. The development and active usage of the Siberian Post Road led to the predominance of the Russian population and made some indigenous peoples (the Mansis, Khantys and Evenks) move northwards. The Selkups and Kets were forced by Russians, Khantys and Evenks to migrate towards the Arctic as well. The change of location and epidemics that followed migrations had a deep impact on the Selkups and Kets, reducing their numbers greatly.¹¹

Several ethnic groups along the rivers and the overland highway were completely assimilated. Four out of six languages spoken along the upper Yenisei (the Yeniseian language family), namely, Assan, Kott, Arin and Pumpokol became extinct in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹² According to statistical data, these groups seem to be an exception to the overall pattern, as the total number of Native Siberians increased steadily from about 200,000 in the early eighteenth century to about 600,000 at the beginning of the twentieth century. Absolute numbers could, however, be misleading. Even though the native population increased over this period, its share of the total Siberian population decreased from 40% to 22%. This means that by the mid-nineteenth century there were more than two million Russians in Siberia.¹³

The predominantly south-western geographical distribution of the Russian population raises the assumption that the indigenous peoples of that region were affected the most. Indeed, the majority of the languages that became extinct after 1700 were spoken in western Siberia. These were (besides Yeniseian) all the Southern Samoyedic languages except Selkup, whose area of distribution encompassed the eastern part of the upper Yenissei basin. Prior to 1700 they were assimilated by the Turkic languages of central Siberia, and later by Russian.¹⁴

Even though there is a clear geographical relation between the Russian settlement patterns and the extinction of languages, there are also examples of indirect relations in north-eastern Siberia. The Yakuts, who migrated in order to avoid the Russians, displaced the Evenks and Evens from their homelands and assimilated many of them.¹⁵ The profound mutual influence of the native peoples (the Itelmens, Koryaks and Chuvans) and the early Russian settlers led to the emergence of a new ethnic group, the Kamchadals. In the nineteenth century the term was used as a synonym for Itelmens; in Soviet times they were considered Russian and nowadays they are recognised again as a separate ethnic entity (Figures 1, 3, 4 and 5).

After consideration of the main highways and the effects they had on the indigenous peoples, it seems logical to determine what attracted so many Russians to Siberia. First of all, it is important to note that the Russian population of Siberia increased mainly as a result of natural growth. The main occupation of non-natives was agriculture, and in the middle of the nineteenth century peasants comprised 90% of the Russian population. The main motivation to move to Siberia was personal freedom and free fertile land.¹⁶ Although the state benefited from Siberian agricultural workers, there was no mass settlement and no real attempt to fully incorporate the colony. On the other hand, a great deal of effort was invested in the conversion of the local population to Christianity.

The major changes began in the 1830s, when the real value of Northern Asia was first understood. This had a lot to do with the discovery of gold. Gold production increased compulsory migration to Siberia, as exiles and serfs were the main labour force in the mines. The region's share in total production increased from 11% in 1830 to 71% twenty years later.¹⁷ The major gold fields that had

been discovered and exploited by the end of the century are shown on the map (Figure 1). The development of Siberian regionalism (or separatism, as it was viewed by the government) fuelled fears of Russia losing its 'golden chest' and finally resulted in a new state policy towards Siberia: the policy of Russification.¹⁸ This included administrative reforms designed to undermine any internal unity of Siberia, promote the economic development of the region (primarily through railroad construction), mass settlement of Russians in Siberia and an accompanying ideological campaign emphasising Siberia's inseparability from Russia.¹⁹ The term 'Russification' concerning Siberia can be understood in a dual sense: settling Russians on the land, and making the Russian language and culture dominant for the native population.

It was not, however, Siberia *per se* that was the sole reason for the change in national policy. Another decisive factor was the acute shortage of arable land in European Russia (especially in the chernozem zone), which became apparent after the emancipation of the serfs in 1861. The first governmental programmes of organised agricultural settlement of Siberia began in the late 1840s, but their implementation was ineffective and included only state serfs. This resulted in rather low annual numbers of settlers during the 1850s–70s.²⁰

The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway (completed in 1916) had major significance for settlement patterns. It was the embodiment of the new Siberian policy, designed and implemented by Alexander III, Nicholas II and S. Y. Witte. Besides construction activities, the Committee of the Siberian Railroad (a temporary supreme organ) had planned and managed the colonisation and development of Siberia since the 1880s.²¹ People were needed for the construction works; for strategic settlement of the Amur and the Russian Far East in order to counterbalance Chinese and Japanese influence there; for development of the infrastructure (mainly the waterways); and for the provision of services for railroad workers and passengers. Settlement along the route of the railway was therefore greatly encouraged.

Sablin and Savelyeva, 'Mapping Indigenous Siberia'.

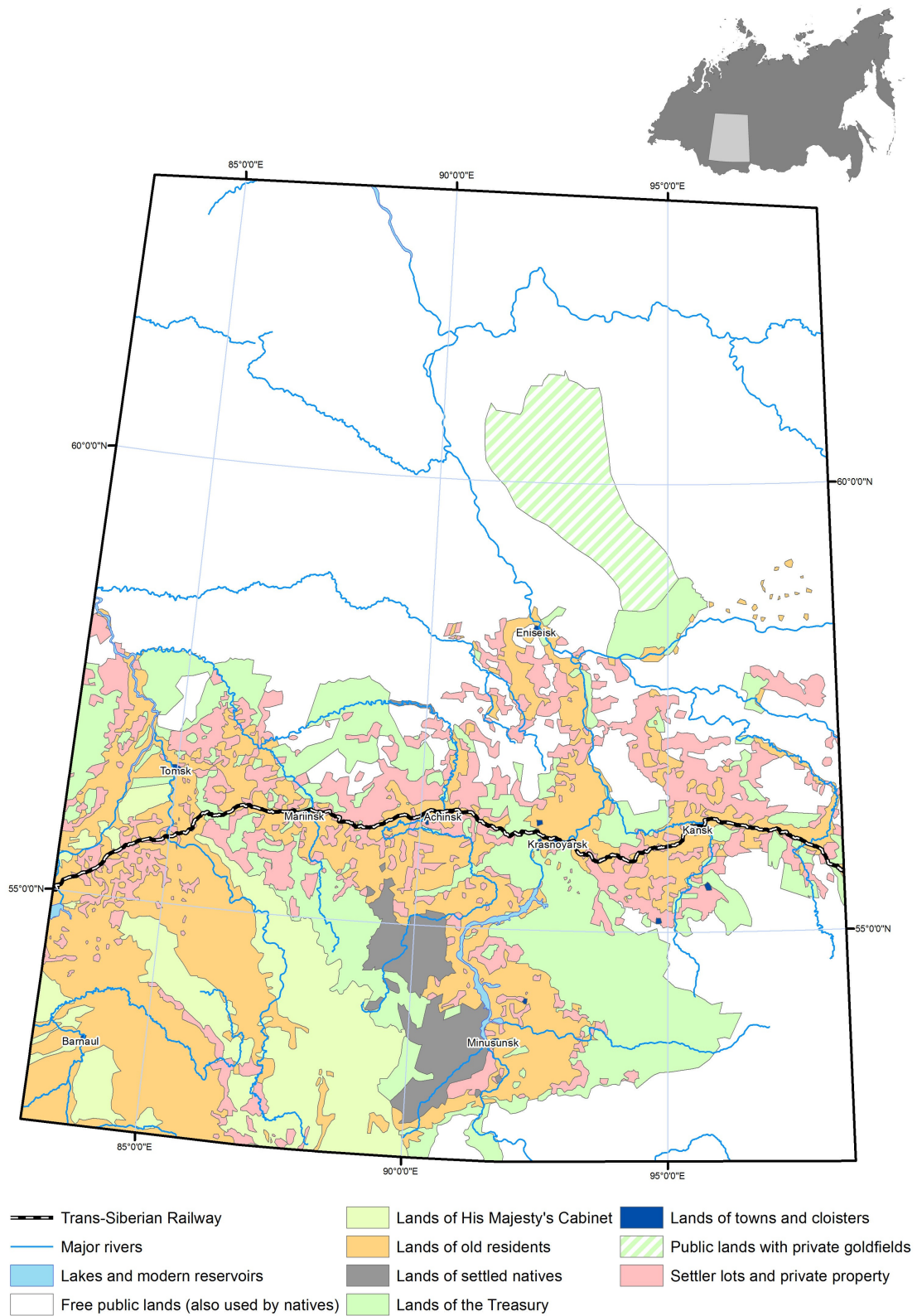


Figure 2: Land use in the Yenisei province in the 1910s.²²

The experiences of the natives with the project were mostly negative. Hundreds if not thousands were deceived by Russian entrepreneurs and traders. Underpayment, heavy debts, alcoholism, diseases and violence came hand in hand with the railroad.²³

The role of the state, however, should not be overestimated. Its main merit was the gradual removal of barriers for official and especially for irregular migrants who moved despite the opposition of landlords in European Russia.²⁴ The reforms that were implemented in Siberia between 1896 and 1916 gradually increased the annual numbers of migrants. A total of 2.5 million peasants settled in Siberia over the two decades.²⁵ The map (Figure 1) shows the dispersion of Russians in the early twentieth century. The total population of Siberia had reached 9.4 million by 1911, of whom the unassimilated native peoples constituted about 11.5%.²⁶ The density of the Russian population on ethnic territories was the most decisive factor in the assimilation of indigenous peoples. Russian became the *lingua franca* in southern Siberia.²⁷

The land policies of the Russian state can be observed on a larger scale (Figure 2). On the 1914 map, the natives (the Khakas, Shors and Chulyms) were marked as a separate category on a much smaller territory than on the ethnographical map (Figure 1). This is hardly a sign of equality, recognition and protection of their land rights, which were guaranteed by an 1822 law. It was in fact very easy to deprive even the relatively more privileged 'settled' indigenous peoples of their land and transfer it into the possession of Russians, as 'the vast majority of Siberian aliens did not have any indisputable property-rights documents'.²⁸ The land rights of nomadic peoples were neglected and their territories are marked as 'public domain'. The mountain districts that were not suitable for agriculture (and therefore Russian settlement) played an important role in extractive industries (gold, coal, iron, salt and copper) and were under state ownership (Figures 1, 2). An exception to this pattern were the Yenisei gold deposits, which were privately owned. The northern areas are designated as 'free', which in this context means 'economically unusable'.

Sablin and Savelyeva, 'Mapping Indigenous Siberia'.

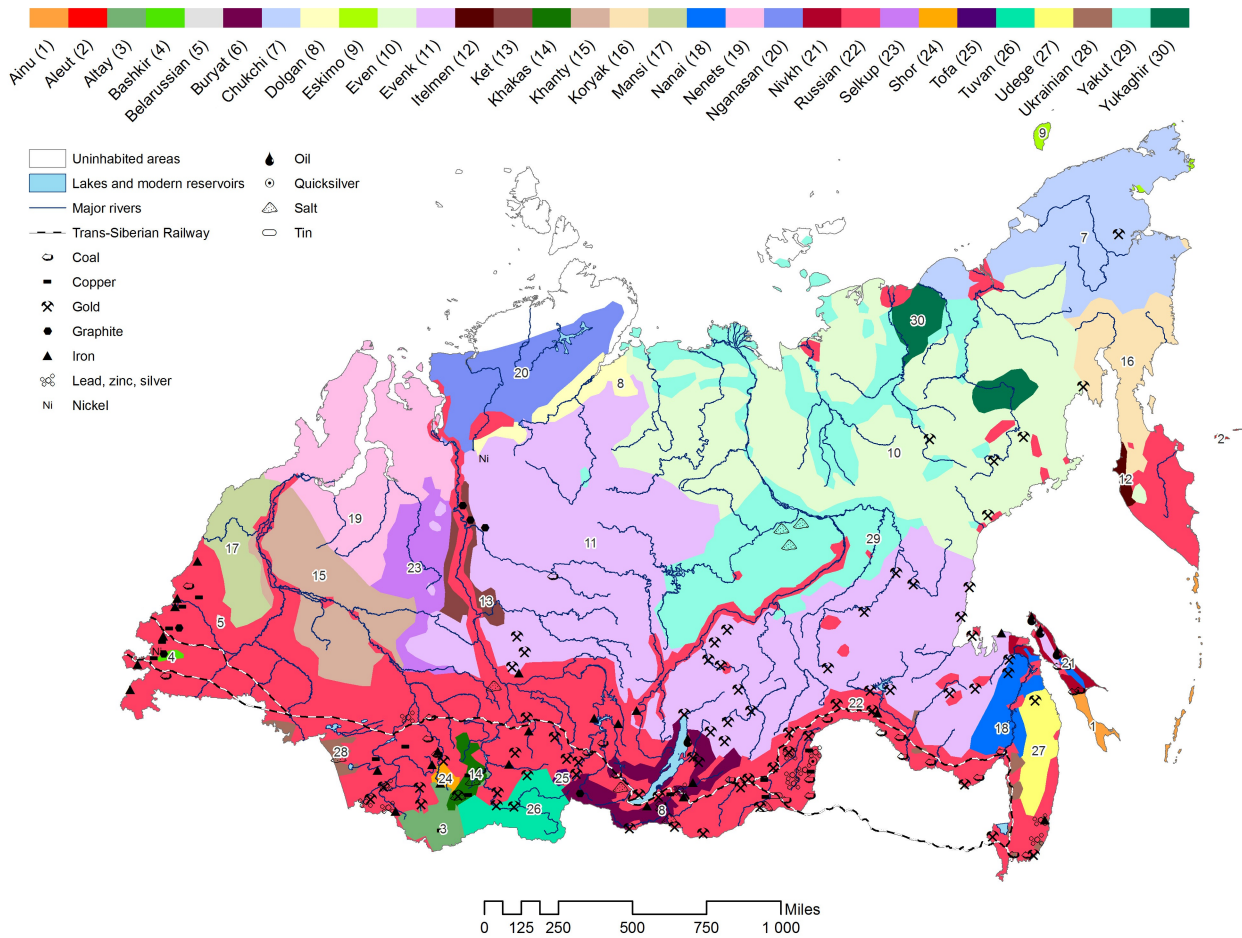


Figure 3: Siberia in the 1930s–40s.²⁹

The most important factors affecting indigenous peoples' ethnic territories in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the discovery of gold and the subsequent changes in governmental policy, the construction and operation of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and the mass settlement of Siberia. The spatial changes in Siberia and increasing contacts with Russians had a predominantly negative impact on the cultural and linguistic diversity of the indigenous population as a whole and caused debts, impoverishment, alcoholism and diseases in individual communities and ethnic groups.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DURING THE FIRST DECADES OF SOVIET RULE

After consideration of the major processes shaping Siberia's ethnographical pattern by the early twentieth century let us now examine how this pattern changed over the ensuing decades.

A lack of reliable sources makes modelling the Siberia of the 1930s (Figure 3) a complex undertaking. The last of them is the *Siberian Soviet Encyclopaedia*, which was prepared in the 1920–30s but not published completely, as the authors fell victim to political repression.³⁰ Despite its ideological orientation, the *Encyclopaedia* contains a considerable amount of reliable data. The ethnographical maps of the period, however, fail to stand up under close scrutiny as they are simplistic, politically motivated and to a large extent reflect the desired settlement pattern. The quantitative sources enjoy even less credibility. The returns of the 1937 census were never officially published and its promoters were executed, as the total population after the famine, mass repressions and dispossession of kulaks did not meet Stalin's expectations. Therefore, the main task of the officially published 1939 census was to obtain the necessary numbers. The representation of the population's territorial dispersion is also not very accurate, since the large numbers of prisoners in Siberia were never reported in the census.³¹ Self-determination was supposed to be the guiding principle defining the ethnicity of Soviet citizens, but there is some doubt that it was implemented properly. It is therefore essential to bear all these points in mind when trying to carry out an accurate analysis.

In comparison with the previous period (Figure 1), Figure 3 demonstrates the further increase of the Russian presence in Siberia through agricultural migration and consequent pressure on the indigenous peoples. The Khantys and Mansis in the west and the Udeges and Nanais in the south-east had to move northwards. The Yakuts were concentrated more around their initial homeland on the Lena. The territories of the Buryats decreased in size as a result of the increased Russian population in the area around the Baikal and along the Chinese border. Some Evenks were also displaced due to the Russian and Yakut presence. The territories of the Dolgans and Kets underwent certain changes in size and were moved further

north. The lands populated predominantly by the Southern Selkups, Shors and Tofas diminished greatly, while the Tatars, Chulyms, Enets, Negidals, Orochs, Oroks, Ulchs and Kamchadals disappeared from the map completely.

There were two major reasons for this: assimilation by the Russians and larger indigenous communities, and the Soviet nationalities policy. The Shors mixed with the linguistically and culturally kindred Altays and Khakas and on many occasions changed their language and identity. The appearance of the written Shor language and the spread of literacy in the 1920s led to a certain growth of ethnic self-consciousness, but could not stop the process of assimilation.³² The fact that the Shors were not granted an autonomous province unlike the neighbouring Altays and Khakas is one of the reasons for this process.

The dramatic reduction of the Tofa and Southern Selkup territories can be attributed to the Soviet anti-nomadic and literacy policies directed against their traditional way of life.³³ Like many other Siberian peoples, the Tofas did not enjoy the official recognition larger ethnic groups received, and their numbers cannot be determined from the 1899 or 1939 censuses.

The 'disappearance' of the Chulyms can be partly explained by their assimilation with the Khakas and Russians and partly by the fact that the Soviet government did not recognise them as a separate ethnicity. Similarly, the Enets were registered as either Nenets or Nganasans and the Kamchadals as Russians in the censuses of the USSR. The Oroks, Orochs and Ulchs were considered to be separate ethnic groups in 1926, but in 1939 they were likely to be registered as either Udeges or Nanais, which means that the territories of the latter did not move northwards, but rather decreased in size.³⁴ The Negidals were also recognised as a separate ethnicity, but were listed in the 1939 census as Evenks. The Tatars who lived in Siberia were not considered as being indigenous to the territory and the Tatar Autonomous Republic lay to the west of the Urals. Many European Tatars demanded a broader expansion of their territory. Stalin was against this, so providing evidence of dense Tatar settlements in Siberia by marking them on official ethnographical maps was out of the question as doing so would lend considerable weight to their claims for a larger territory.

The Soviet nationalities policies were nevertheless more accommodating than those of the tsarist government. One of the first documents of the Soviet government was the Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia, which proclaimed the equality and the sovereignty of the peoples of Russia and their right to self-determination (including a right to secede and form independent states). Even though there was a great deal of debate among the Bolsheviks regarding institutional arrangements, the final decision was made in favour of a federation. Most of the ethnic territories were, however, constructed by the government and not by the local population. The process of 'ethnic construction' lasted throughout the 1920–30s. Unequal distribution of different ethnic groups, mixed population on many territories, and different levels of ethnic self-consciousness complicated the process of administrative demarcation of ethnic territories. Forced integration and disintegration processes and selective recognition reduced the overall number of the country's 'official ethnic groups' from 196 to fewer than 100.³⁵ Another component of the Soviet nationalities policy was the so-called 'indigenisation' aimed at the creation of native political and economic elites and intelligentsia in the newly created ethno-territorial entities. There was, however, no notion of socioeconomic and cultural equality of different peoples and the right to self-determination could not be exercised through choice of the type of government that people wanted to have. The form of government had to be universal; therefore, a special legislature and agencies were created for the purpose of political 'development' of many Siberian peoples (i.e., for organisation of local Soviets, or councils).

The economic and cultural measures of the state had a dual nature: on the one hand, the Soviet government put an end to the trade exploitation of Native Siberians and their heavy debts, rendered economic support to the most depressed communities, and organised economic systems that did not contradict traditional communal norms. On the other hand, economic cooperation was often forced and was subject to strong administrative pressure. The elementary associations for joint reindeer herding and fishing, with deer and boats remaining in private ownership were prematurely transformed into kolkhozes, and individual farms were eliminated through requisition. The spread of public health services, schools

and the introduction of access to higher education raised the socioeconomic status of indigenous peoples, but at the same time affected their way of life and led to traditional economic, curative and spiritual knowledge and skills being forgotten. However, the development of written languages for the Nenets, Evenk, Khanty, Mansi, Even, Koryak, Chukchi, Eskimo, Nanai, Udege, Nivkh, Ket and Selkup peoples was very important for the emergence of a native literature and schooling and increased ethnic self-awareness. At the same time, not all languages and dialects were granted such privilege. The dominance of the Russian language and state educational standards turned schools into instruments of Sovietisation and Russification.³⁶

The proclaimed objectives of the Soviet nationalities policy were not uniformly pursued and different ethnic groups did not receive equal recognition. The legal subordination of different ethno-territorial entities and the unequal distribution of rights and privileges between 'titular' ethnicities and minorities constructed an artificial hierarchy. The level of recognition by the state could be measured through the status that ethnic territories obtained within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and through its changes over time. The Yakuts and Buryats with populations of more than 200,000 each were in a privileged position and received the right to form autonomous republics. The Altay (of several ethnic subgroups), Khakas and Tuvan (after annexation to the USSR) territories achieved a status of autonomous provinces (oblasts). The Jewish population of the USSR also received its own territory in the Far East in the form of an autonomous province. The Evenks, Koryaks, Chukchis, Khantys (with the Mansis), Nenets of the Yamal Peninsula, Dolgans (with the Nenets and Nganasans) obtained national regions (*okrugs*). Some Evenk and Even territories which had been located within other administrative subdivisions now became national districts (*rayons*). The Chukchis, Evens and Yukaghirs also received a common national district beside the lower Kolyma River. Initially many more areas populated by the indigenous peoples were recognised, but the national regions of the Evens and Evenks were soon abolished (although one of the regions assigned to the Evenks still remained), as were the national districts of the Selkups, Shors, Tofas, Nanais, Nivkhs and Koreans.³⁷

Most of the abolished territories can be seen on Figure 3 as coinciding with the most important mineral deposits known at the time. The knowledge about Siberian natural resources increased during the first decade of the twentieth century but then stagnated until the late 1930s when new expeditions were launched and thousands of workers and prisoners were brought to remote regions for the extraction of known and newly discovered resources. As in earlier periods, most of the deposits lay along rivers and the Trans-Siberian Railway. The increased Russian presence in the Kolyma region in the 1930s is due to the fact that it was a major centre of the Gulag camps erected to extract gold and platinum. The most decisive factor here was the rapid industrialisation of the USSR, an undertaking that demanded access to more and more natural resources and capital. Even though most of the new factories, power plants and highways were built in European Russia, some industrial development also took place in Siberia. The major centres were the bordering Ural region and south-western Siberia, where the Ural-Kuznetsk industrial complex for the production of iron, steel, aluminium, chemicals and machinery was formed, and Norilsk, where major nickel mining and smelting works were built.³⁸

Thus the main spatial changes in the first decades of Soviet rule were predominantly caused by a further increase of the Russian presence, nationalities policies and administrative pressure, growing demand for resources and capital because of industrialisation, and the first stages of the region's industrial development. These changes had diverse effects on the indigenous population. On the one hand, there were certainly improvements related to their legal status (and the official status of their territories), economic and educational possibilities. On the other hand, no real equality was introduced and Native Siberians were as much deprived of political rights as the rest of the population. The so-called 'cultural development' had a few positive effects on the preservation of some native languages, but at the same time it posed a major threat to unique cultures and led to further Russification and Sovietisation.

SOVIET SIBERIA IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The development of Soviet ethnographical and demographical science, the end of Stalin's regime, and the subsequent, albeit not constant, growth of information transparency in some spheres of public life led to the emergence of much more reliable sources for modelling Siberia between the 1970s and 1980s (Figure 4). Cartographic and statistical materials are easily accessible and can be considered as reliable, as it is possible to verify the data by comparing information from different (not only Soviet) sources.

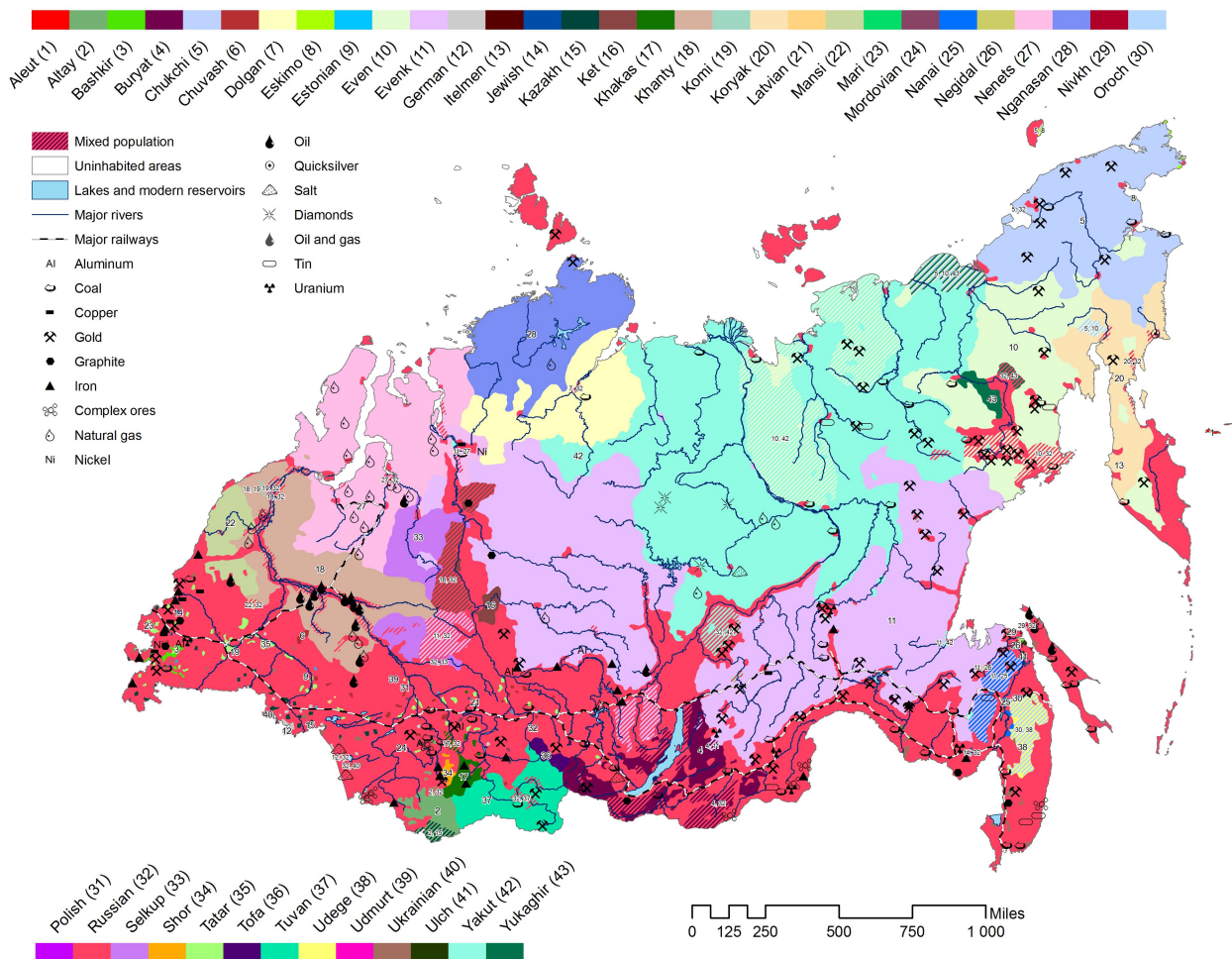


Figure 4: Siberia in the 1970s–80s.³⁹

A comparison of the ethnographical maps of Siberia during the first (Figure 3) and last (Figure 4) decades of the USSR shows the emergence of large mixed-population territories, which could be explained by increased Russification and mutual assimilation of all ethnic groups. The emergence of these mixed territories could be explained by increased Russification and mutual assimilation of all ethnic groups. The most important factors included interethnic marriages, joint schooling, universal military service (introduced in 1939), communal residence and economic activities, the domination of the Russian language and Soviet ideology, and outlying placement of graduates. Although all this was meant to foster Sovietisation, in practice it often resulted in Russification.⁴⁰

The Russian presence in Siberia continued to grow during this period with the most striking increases being in Primorsky Krai, the Kolyma region, on Sakhalin, on the Kuril Islands and on several Arctic islands. The territories occupied by the Russian population in south-western Siberia also indicate considerable gains. The main causes for this migration had begun to change in the previous period with the shift away from agricultural production. Now, the industry and natural resources of Siberia made it an appealing destination. At least two thousand factories and over 10 million people were evacuated to the Urals and West Siberia during the first years of the Second World War. Most stayed after the war was over. Those resettled in Siberia not only included Russians, but also members of various ethnic groups of the European USSR (Figure 4).⁴¹

The process of regional industrialisation continued after the war and was generally based on the vast natural resources of the region that were discovered by frequent geological expeditions. Mining, processing and energy industries (including hydropower plants) started dotting the region. The tremendous increase in the knowledge and the usage of Siberian mineral deposits can be seen on Figure 4. These include gold and other non-ferrous metals, coal and graphite deposits that could also be seen on previous maps (Figures 1, 3). New deposits of major importance found in Siberia in the 1960–80s are most certainly those of oil and natural gas. Diamonds and uranium are also important but it was Siberian hydrocarbons that played the most important role in the region's development during the second half of the twentieth century. The

territories where most of the deposits were found are traditionally those of the Khantys and Nenets, which are already marked as occupied by the Russians. The tendency of northward migration of some indigenous peoples is also characteristic of this period. The Nganasans and Eastern Evenks had to move once again, with the former pushed to the very coast of the Arctic Ocean (Figure 4).

Geological and military activities also led to the emergence of Russian enclaves within territories that previously had little contact with Russians, namely within those of the Chukchis, Koryaks and Eskimos (Figure 4).

Another major change was the increase of Yakut territory; its expansion over the entire autonomous republic and the consequent decrease of predominantly Even and Evenk territories. The population of the Yakuts increased from 241,889 in 1939 to 326,531 forty years later, while the population of the Evenks decreased from 29,599 to 27,278 over the same period. The population of the Evens, however, increased by 2,500 and comprised 12,215 people in 1979. The Yukaghirs had almost doubled their numbers from 440 in 1959 to 801 thirty years later, even though the territory of the latter underwent a serious reduction after 1939 (Figures 3, 4).⁴² Population increase has a lot to do with the revival and development of the Yukaghir language and traditional culture. Uluro Ado (Gavril Kurilov) was the first to publish his writings in Yukaghir. His literary, scientific and educational works, together with literary and artistic works of his brothers Semyon and Nikolay, contributed greatly to modern Yukaghir culture and increased interest in the language.⁴³

The territories of the Shors, Khakas and Altays continued to decrease because of continuing mutual assimilation by the Russians, and because their territories hosted rich mineral deposits and bordered one of the main centres of the Russian population and industry in Siberia. The activities of well-educated indigenous intelligentsia, however, slowed down assimilation processes and increased popular interest in native languages. Elektron Chispiyakov, a prominent Shor intellectual, did a lot for the preservation of the Shor, Teleut, Chulym and Siberian Tatar languages by collecting words from the most remote settlements. He also created a centre for the Shor language and literature that later became a subdepartment in the Novokuznetsk State Pedagogical Institute.⁴⁴

The apparent increase of Tofa and the re-emergence of Tatar territories (Figure 4) can be explained by political changes across the whole country and a different level of recognition by the state. The Tofa population increased by one hundred over twenty years and stood at 576 in 1979. The Altay population grew from 44,654 to 58,879 and the Khakas from 56,032 to 69,247 over the same period, corresponding to the overall demographic pattern of the country after the Second World War. There exists, however, dependence between population increase and the availability of a recognised ethnic territory in western Siberia: the Selkups decreased in numbers, and the populations of the Shors and Kets remained about the same which went against the general patterns.⁴⁵

The most dramatic changes occurred in the south-eastern region of the USSR, where the Ainu people disappeared completely. As the Soviet Union annexed their traditional territories after the Second World War, they were driven away from their homelands and deported to Japan, where they became almost completely assimilated into Japanese society.⁴⁶ The territories of the Nivkhs decreased greatly, while those of the Nanais and Udeges became shared with the Evenks and Orochs, respectively (Figure 4). The mixed territory of the Udeges and Orochs emerged mainly because the level of official recognition of the latter was raised, and they were recorded separately in the 1959 census. The two peoples often lived together, but collectivisation mixed them even more.⁴⁷ The Ulchs were also recognised in 1959, while the Negidals had to wait until 1979.⁴⁸

The qualitative changes in the ethnic territories of Native Siberians and the territories already taken by the Russians were even greater and had a lot to do with the economic activity of the latter. The first major problem was deforestation in the Southern Selkup territories, the Yakut territories between the Lena and the Vilyuy, the Nanai, Udege and Oroch territories near the point of intersection of the Baikal-Amur Mainline (BAM) and the Amur and along the Trans-Siberian Railway from Khabarovsk to Vladivostok, and in some other areas along the railway. Another problem arose due to land, air and water pollution as a result of mining and heavy industry. The affected regions can be seen on Figure 4, where mineral deposits were located in territories occupied by the Russians, or in territories

shared with the indigenous peoples. The most severe pollution was in the south-eastern Ural region, in the Kuznetsk Basin, around Norilsk and Irkutsk, and in the Kolyma region. The destruction of reindeer pasture and river pollution as a consequence of oil and natural gas production and transportation could be considered as a separate serious problem, especially affecting the Khantys, Mansis and Nenets, as almost all regions marked with the oil and gas symbols became unsuitable for their traditional activities. The construction of a railroad through their territories in the 1970s fostered further resource development. The construction of gigantic hydropower stations on the rivers of Siberia after the Second World War led to inundations, the emergence of artificial reservoirs (marked as modern reservoirs on the maps), malfunction of river regimes; fish depletion, and irreversible destruction of ecosystems. Large Siberian cities also became centres of pollution.⁴⁹ The construction of the BAM (completed in 1984) was another threat to the Siberian environment because of its purpose as a gateway for further exploration and extraction of regional natural resources. The construction works, which lasted almost half a century, attracted thousands of workers, both volunteer and conscript. The BAM did not, however, have a similar effect to that of the Trans-Siberian Railway and did not lead to any considerable permanent Russian settlement along its route, even if it extended the area of the Russian economic presence in Siberia (Figures 4, 5). Many of these tendencies continued after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

NATIVE SIBERIANS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

The returns of the 2002 census made it possible to model the settlement patterns of practically all the indigenous ethnic groups of modern Siberia. Even such low-numbered peoples as the Kereks and Yugs, with total populations of only 8 and 19, respectively⁵⁰, are now recognised. The Kumandins, Telengits, Teleuts, Tubalars, Chelkans, Oroks, Enets, Chulym, Alyutors, Chuvans, Kamchadals, Soyots, Tazes, Tozhu Tuvans and Siberian Tatars could also exercise their right to self-determination (Figure 5). Indigenous groups with populations of fewer than 50,000 people received special status as indigenous small-numbered peoples of the Russian Federation.⁵¹

It is reasonable to consider the spatial dimension of current legislation concerning indigenous peoples. Certain clauses about traditional territories can be found in several federal and numerous regional laws.⁵² Indigenous peoples are defined spatially and in order to retain their status are supposed 'to live on their ancestors' traditional territory'. Their 'original habitat' is defined as 'a historically formed area, where small-numbered peoples undertake their cultural and everyday activities, and which influences their self-identification and way of life'.⁵³ These ambiguous definitions leave a great deal of room for speculation. It is not clear if the peoples who do not live on ancestral traditional territories cease to be classed as indigenous, where these territories are located, and how far back into the past their ancestry must be traced. No mention of restitutions or compensations for 'the lands, territories and resources which they [indigenous peoples] have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent' can be found in Russian legislation.⁵⁴ Therefore, international norms are not followed.

Existing 'regulations on the protection of indigenous peoples are expressed in the subjunctive and have not been implemented so far because they do not include any implementation regulations', which makes many Native Siberians feel that their rights are not being protected.⁵⁵ Recent legislative amendments made the situation even worse. Since 2009 it is the government and the federal constituent authorities who have decided which territories and occupations are 'traditional' and which peoples are 'indigenous', not the peoples themselves.⁵⁶ Recent attempts by Kamchatka Krai parliament to exclude some activities and territories from the common lists met with the opposition of regional indigenous peoples. There is, however, no legal recourse to change the situation and the only hope for those affected is the rejection of regional initiatives by the federal government.⁵⁷

Kamchatka Krai itself owes its existence to other recent changes in Russian legislation and namely the merger of regions. All of the mergers that took place between 2005 and 2008 affected the ethnic territories of indigenous peoples. The regions that ceased to exist include Evenk, Taymyr (Dolgan, Nenets and Nganasan), Koryak

and two Buryat autonomous regions.⁵⁸ Even though a number of indigenous districts were granted some privileges within larger entities, their loss of status as federal subjects leaves no legal barriers preventing native territories from being delisted. Changes in legislation concerning the environmental condition of traditional territories, industrial development, and land ownership have been criticised as well.⁵⁹

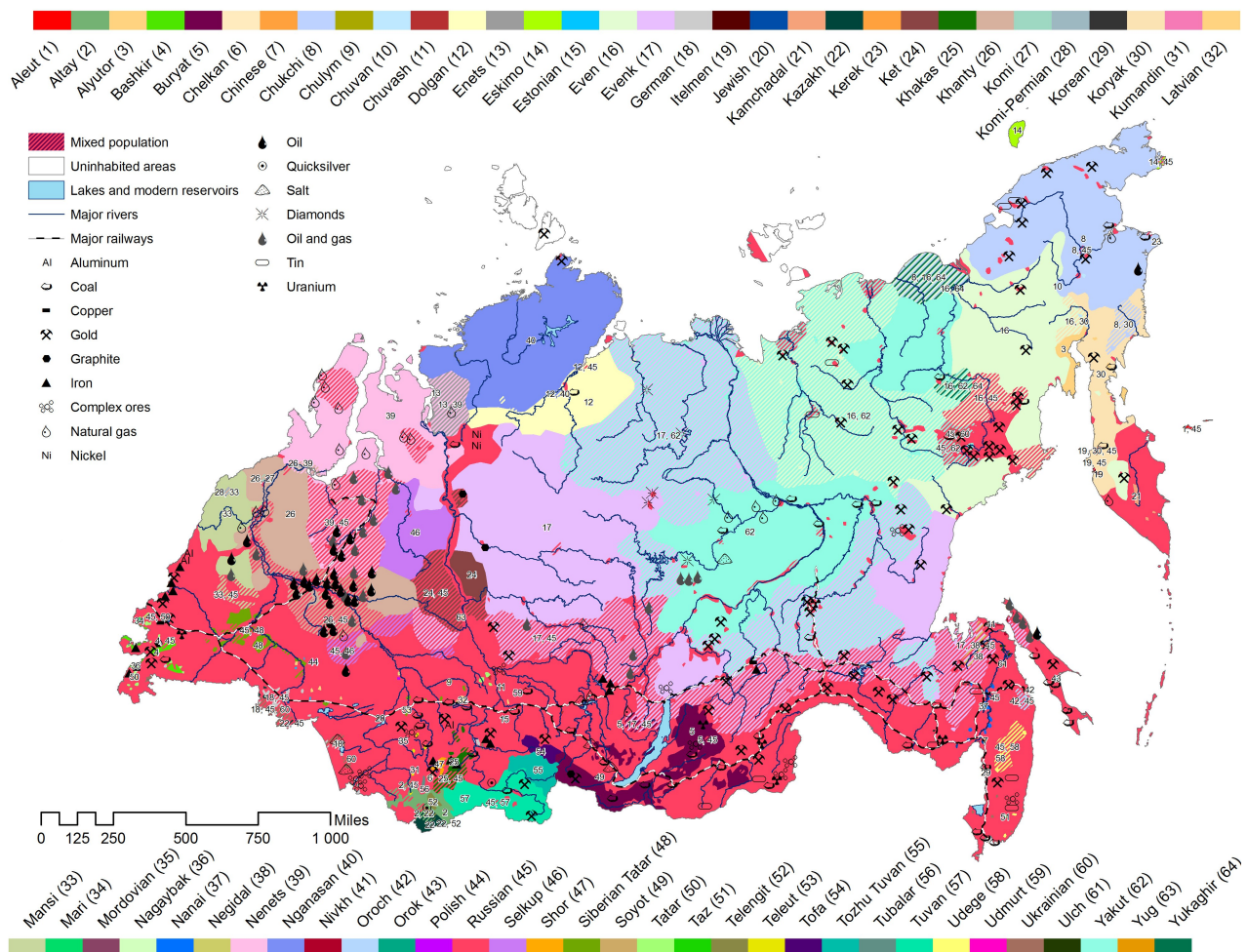


Figure 5: Siberia in the 2000s–10s.⁶⁰

It is noticeable that many more oil and natural gas deposits have been discovered and exploited in Siberia since the 1980s, most of

them being on Khanty, Mansi and Nenets territories (Figures 4, 5). The Russian economic presence there has had serious consequences. The total irretrievable loss of reindeer pastures through oil and gas production on Khanty, Mansi and Nenets territories had amounted to 11 million hectares by 2002, more than 100 rivers and streams have been polluted, and more than one thousand tons of valuable market fish are destroyed annually. The rate of deforestation is also alarming. Irreversible environmental changes are undermining the traditional economy. Massive violations of environmental and land laws by oil and gas companies have led to frequent conflicts between Khantys and Russians. Socioeconomic consequences are also very important. The reduction of communal herds due to a lack of pastures has resulted in high unemployment rates. Unemployment leads to poverty, alcoholism, sickness, crime and high mortality rates. There are also tensions between unemployed natives and private herders who manage not only to keep the total number of deer constant, but actually to increase it.⁶¹

A similar situation is occurring in other oil- and gas-bearing regions of Siberia (Figure 5). The exploitation of the Okhotsk Sea and Sakhalin deposits mostly affects the Nivkhs and Oroks. Active production of oil within their territories began in the late 1950s and has created serious environmental problems for the entire region. Local reindeer herders were deprived of more than 70% of their lands. The oil industry is about to dispossess the Oroks from their last pastures. This situation caused mutual territorial claims and tensions between the Oroks and Nivkhs. The recent development of the Okhotsk Sea deposits in traditional fishing and sea-mammal hunting areas of the Oroks and Nivkhs is another serious problem. Pollution of the Amur and low competitiveness of native fishing companies have affected the Nanais, and their territories have diminished greatly (Figures 4, 5).⁶²

The problem of deforestation is also urgent for the Far East. The deterioration of the environment and the reduction of hunting grounds in the area have affected the Orochs and Udeges the most. Attempts to allocate their forests to a joint Russian-Korean enterprise have been met with fierce resistance. Pavel Sulyandziga, an Udege intellectual and indigenous rights activist, managed to meet with

Boris Yeltsin and convinced him to intervene.⁶³ Even though this company had to withdraw, others have tried to fill its place.

The ethnic territories of the Enets, Dolgans and Nganasans are not very rich in terms of explored natural resources (Figure 5) and therefore environmental conditions there are not particularly worrying. Even the negative impact of the Norilsk nickel works can be considered unimportant. The lack of economic interest in the region has, however, serious socioeconomic consequences. Unreliable fuel and equipment supplies, closures of unprofitable enterprises, unemployment, allocation cutbacks, and a poor supply of basic provisions are particularly worrying.⁶⁴

Environmental and socioeconomic problems are also acute in central areas of western Siberia. Industrial development within the Ket and Selkup territories has had a deep impact, even though their lands seem to be rather poor in terms of mineral wealth (Figure 5). Constant prospecting activities within the territories of the Kets, extensive pollution (including radioactive pollution) of the Yenisei and deforestation undermine the basis of their subsistence: fishing and hunting.⁶⁵ The planned construction of the North-Siberian Railway (between the railroad system of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and the BAM) will most certainly lead to further environmental deterioration.

Nuclear dumps in Seversk (Tomsk Oblast), Angarsk (Irkutsk Oblast), Krasnoyarsk Krai and Chelyabinsk Oblast pose a serious threat to the whole of Siberia, its nature and population. Waste is stored in open-air parking lots in Seversk and Angarsk, and in Chelyabinsk Oblast and Krasnoyarsk Krai radioactive pollutants are frequently discharged into rivers.⁶⁶

Considerable changes of Evenk and Even territories are a result of the increased Russian and Yakut economic presence, mainly because of the operation of the BAM, the current construction of the Amur-Yakutsk Mainline and because of further mining operations in the Kolyma region. Areas along railroads and other regions of resource production are suffering from environmental problems (Figure 4, 5). A new hydropower plant on the territory of the abolished Evenk autonomous region will displace 6,700 people from six Evenk settlements including Tura, the administrative centre (as

many settlements will be flooded). The only legal possibility for the Evenks to defend their rights is public protest.⁶⁷

The problems of the easternmost peoples are similar to those of the Nenets, Mansi and Khanty, as mining operations reduced the total pasture area of modern Chukotka by several million hectares between 1970 and the late 1990s (see Figure 4, Figure 5). The remoteness of the region led to an even more difficult situation regarding fuel, food and medicine than in other depressed northern regions of Siberia. By the beginning of the twenty-first century the socioeconomic situation in the region had become so aggravated that direct intervention of the federal government and humanitarian aid were needed. A fundamental improvement coincided with Roman Abramovich's election to the gubernatorial post in 2001. In 7 years he managed to turn one of Russia's most depressed regions into one of its most prosperous. Natality increased 11.4 times, the region's gross domestic product increased 3.4 times, average income quadrupled and budget revenues were up 7.3 times.⁶⁸ Abramovich became a hero among the indigenous peoples of the region (the Chukchi, Eskimo, Kereken and Chuvantsy), and his resignation was seen 'as a great loss'.⁶⁹ The development programmes started by the former governor continue to be implemented and make regional further advancement possible. The environmental situation was also improved and the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug was ranked second in a 2010 nationwide environmental wellbeing survey.⁷⁰

Chukotka is unfortunately the only positive example in north-eastern Siberia. Even though there were only slight changes in north-eastern Siberia's ethnographical patterns (Figures 4, Figure 5), the socioeconomic problems of Kamchatka Krai are acute and similar to those faced by other northern Native Siberians. For the Aleut population of the Commander Islands, these problems are aggravated by their territory's remoteness from the continent, and the islands' status as nature reserve has deprived the Aleut of their native lands.⁷¹

The size of the ethnic territories of the indigenous peoples of southern Siberia has continued to decline. Regional problems are similar to those in the northwest. The extensive development of mineral deposits and the pollution of major rivers have made environmental conditions on some parts of Shor, Teleut and Khakas

territories unfavourable. Such problems, however, can bring people together, and the Shors, whose identity is closely connected with their homeland, provide an example of resilient community response.⁷² The peoples of the Altay Republic (the Altays, Telengits, Chelkans and Tubalars) and the Tofas live in much better conditions in terms of environment, as their lands are of little interest to industrial corporations (Figure 5).

The ethnic territories of the Tuvans, Buryats, Khakas, Altays and Yakuts lie predominantly within the borders of their ethnic republics (Figure 5). Separate republics are certainly of great importance for the ethnic self-awareness of these peoples. The Yakuts are the largest ethnic group in Yakutia, but it is only the Tuvans, who constitute an overwhelming majority in their own republic and who are therefore the least exposed to assimilation.⁷³ This is also true for the Tozhu Tuvans, who retain their unique cultural characteristics, religious beliefs and folk arts within the Tuva Republic. The abolition of elected heads of federal subjects lowered indigenous peoples' potential for political participation within their republics.⁷⁴ Even though there was little hope of electing a Native Siberian anywhere except Tuva or Yakutia, 'titular' peoples could still act as lobby groups and defend their interests.

These interests have in fact a tangible pecuniary dimension. The natural wealth of Yakutia (Sakha) includes gold, diamonds, fossil fuels, uranium and many other minerals (Figure 5). In the 1990s, elected Yakut elites with Mikhail Nikolayev as their leader did their best to keep at least some of the revenues within the republic.⁷⁵ Resulting from these attempts, ALROSA (Diamonds of Russia-Sakha) controls about one third of the world's diamond supply and is in joint federal-regional ownership.⁷⁶ A certain degree of political independence from the federal centre was also achieved during the 1990s, but most privileges were repealed during the following decade. This was epitomised in recent amendments to Yakutia's constitution and removal of the word 'sovereignty' from the text.⁷⁷ The constitutional reform is especially symbolic at a time when the almost completed Amur-Yakutsk Mainline is about to open a new gateway to Siberian natural resources (Figure 5).

The Yukaghirs no longer live on separate territories (Figure 4, 5). Relations with other indigenous peoples in multiethnic

communities cause them little concern, but assimilation processes do. The Council of Elders and the Foundation for Revival of the Yukaghir people founded in 1992 plays a very important role in ethnic survival. Increasing interest in native language, culture and religious beliefs has even started some discussions about returning to abandoned settlements in order to recreate Yukaghir traditional environments.⁷⁸

Extractive industries are once again the main cause of spatial shifts in Siberia. Representatives of indigenous peoples refer to the current processes as the 'inner colonisation of indigenous peoples' lands, their pastures, hunting and fishing grounds, and sacred sites by extractive companies'.⁷⁹

There are few legal possibilities to stop or slow resource depletion, violations of environmental and land legislation, environmental deterioration, disruption of traditional economic activities, and reforms aimed at further depriving indigenous peoples of their rights. A difficult socioeconomic situation, unemployment, alcoholism, and high sickness and mortality rates make the future of many Native Siberians bleak. An extractive economy and chronic corruption do not leave much hope for any fundamental improvement in the near future.⁸⁰

CONCLUSION

The model shows that spatial changes in Siberia's ethnographical patterns were predominantly caused by an increasing Russian presence. The reasons for this presence changed over time. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was arable land that attracted the newcomers. One hundred years later it was oil, gas, diamonds, timber and other natural resources. The form of the Russian presence changed as well. In the past it increased mainly through numerical growth and led to predominantly quantitative territorial changes. The number of Russians in Siberia is now slowly declining, but their economic presence through oil derricks, pipelines, railroads, hydropower plants, logging and nuclear dumping is ever more tangible. Air, water and land pollution, loss of wild animals and fish and other irreversible environmental changes are another sign of the Russian presence. The reduction of pastures and

herds, falling numbers of fishermen and hunters, and chemical and radioactive contamination of fish and meat are direct consequences of this. Amid fuel shortages, unfair legal barriers, environmental and land law violations, poaching, dispossession of land, and deprivation of political rights, the competitiveness of native fishing and hunting has lowered, and thousands of people remain unemployed. Alcoholism, lack of medical care, a shortage of basic commodities and poverty, together with poor implementation of inadequate legislation compound these problems.

The case of Siberia is a good example of a complex entanglement between settler colonialism and colonialism. The settler colonial forms dominated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and affected mostly the south-western parts of the macro-region. Personal interest and political compulsion were the main forces behind the Russian settlement in Siberia. Due to the geographical features of Siberia, the land suitable for agricultural colonisation was soon cultivated. The growing knowledge about Siberian mineral resources and the increasing demand for them due to industrial development triggered the re-emergence of colonial forms with severe environmental consequences. The exploitation of natural resources occurred in Siberia in an unusual way, as it involved the permanent settlement of Soviet citizens of the European part of the country in the east. The political regime enforced the continuation of settler colonialism in northern Asia even after all of the more or less attractive territories had been settled.

Today it is possible to state that though the active phase of settler colonisation may be over, the actual phenomenon is not. The assimilation and Russification of indigenous peoples continues, and their ethnic territories are gradually losing special status. But the change in the political system after the collapse of the Soviet Union has also allowed indigenous peoples to voice their most urgent problems. The issue of ethnic territories is one of them, as 'well-being and ethnic survival has always been inseparably linked with their land'.⁸¹

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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