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## INDIGENOUS GROUPS AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARCTIC



Valery Tishkov (ed.). *Rossiiskaia Arktika: korennyye narody i promyshlennoe osvoenie*. Moscow & Saint Petersburg: Nestor-Istoria, 2016. 272 pp. In Russian.

Over the last years, the interaction between indigenous groups of population and mining companies has increasingly become the focus of attention on the part of anthropologists. The processes currently taking place in the Russian Arctic and the adjacent territories, which have been considered in a number of important works in the past decade and a half (see, e.g., some recent works: Stammer & Wilson 2006; Sirina & Iarlykapov & Funk 2008; Behrends et al. 2011; Novikova & Funk 2012; Wiget & Balalaeva 2014; Novikova 2014; Golovnev et al. 2014; Funk 2015; and others), are no exception either.

The book titled *Rossiiskaia Arktika: korennyye narody i promyshlennoe osvoenie* (Russian Arctic: Indigenous Peoples and Industrial Development)<sup>1</sup> is written by a group of ethnologists from the RAS Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology (Natalia Novikova, Elena Pivneva, and Valery Tishkov), Tula State Pedagogical University (Elena Martynova), N.A. Shilo North-Eastern Scientific Research Institute of the RAS Far East Branch (Oksana Kolomiets), and one independent researcher (Aleksandra Terekhina). The authors set themselves a threefold task: to study the interaction between indigenous ('korennyye') peoples of the Russian North and industrial companies in the context of law, and to "look into current economic and socio-cultural aboriginal practices" as well as to identify risks which industrial development entails, and "suggest ways of mitigating those" (p. 4). And here a rather specific

approach has been chosen to deal with the task. Of the five book chapters two are dedicated to regions, namely the Yamal-Nenets autonomous region (ch. 3, pp. 50–150) and the Chukotka autonomous region (ch. 4, pp. 151–209); two more chapters discuss problems, e.g. “The Arctic as an Area of Responsibility” (ch. 2, pp. 21–49), and “Modern Education in Arctic Regions” (ch. 5, pp. 210–237); and one more is a general introductory text about the history, status, and prospects of indigenous peoples of the entire region (ch. 1, pp. 21–49).

Despite the reservations made by the authors concerning the logic behind their choice of Yamal and Chukotka for research (p. 5), it is this choice, or rather this limitation, that seems quite contestable. Firstly, this is essential in terms of contemporary administrative borders of the Russian Arctic: the book does not consider either the Murmansk region or the Nenets autonomous region or a number of districts in the regions of Arkhangelsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Yakutia. Secondly, the general chapters of the book either go beyond the geographical limits of Yamal and Chukotka or do not cover one of these territories at all; for example, chapter 2 discusses the Russian Arctic issues in general, in some cases making comparisons with Canada<sup>2</sup>, whereas chapter 5 draws on field material from Yamal, Taymyr, Evenkia, and the Republic of Sakha (p. 6).

Yet, the book as a whole and each of the chapters are an important contribution as they provide a thorough picture of the federal and regional legislation, new field material, interesting observations and estimates. The dry statement of individual facts, tables with statistical data and somewhat lengthy quotes here and there are enlivened with vivid excerpts from conversations with informants. Speaking of pluses, the unified structure of presenting the regional material is worth being noted. Apart from general information, both chapter 3 and chapter 4 contain essays: “Indigenous Peoples and Industrial Development”, “Economic Activities and Social Affairs”, and “Ethno-Cultural Sphere”. Each of the essays, in turn, includes thematically rather similar paragraphs, although their structure sometimes differs. Thus, if a paragraph from “Social Affairs” concerning Yamal tells about unemployment, housing provision, and social policies (pp. 109–124), an analogous paragraph on Chukotka offers a look at the issues of excessive drinking and alcoholism only (pp. 192–194), whereas employment is briefly discussed in a separate paragraph (in the text on pp. 185–186 and a few tables). Social problems considered in the book do not represent all the issues out there in Yamal and Chukotka (some of those being crime, youth maladjustment, and health care issues – drug addiction and suicide among the population, to name a few). We believe that continued research will allow collecting material on a wider range of social problems and will enrich our knowledge of the current state of affairs as it is.

Undoubtedly, the book’s advantage is the description of activity of socially-oriented companies, often a detailed one revealing all the complexity of the situation. In our view, some of the foundations and companies the authors draw attention to could constitute the subject of stand-alone anthropological research.

It is difficult to conclude why education is discussed in a separate chapter, and why this matter is at all included in a book about the interaction of indigenous peoples and industrial companies, but it should be said it was this very chapter that left probably the most positive impression of all from reading the book. It provides a detailed review of problems facing boarding schools, of the phenomenon of ‘ethno-cultural’ education and

nomadic and vocational education in several regions of the Russian Arctic. Not only have the authors managed to determine certain problems within the education system, which were repeatedly discussed elsewhere; they have indeed identified a systemic mistake that is the widespread perception about ethnic culture supposedly being translated through traditional crafts that results in the decisiveness of those implementing education policy to make children 'return' to tundra and taiga (p. 237).

The book under review, as has already been said, is by far not the first one of a series of similar research works published, but it will surely be of interest to all those involved in studying the Circumpolar North cultures and in applied anthropology research, despite some controversial approaches we have touched upon in the above.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> E-version is available at [http://static.iea.ras.ru/books/Ros\\_artica.pdf](http://static.iea.ras.ru/books/Ros_artica.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The choice of Canada rather than of the US or Scandinavia is not explained. The authors of the chapter simply point out that Canada is a country that belongs to the Arctic region and is "similar to Russia based on many parameters" (p. 34).

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