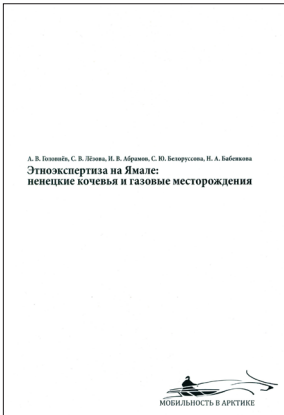


NORTHERN CULTURES UNDER THE PRESSURE OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT



A. Golovnev & S. Lezova & I. Abramov & S. Belorussova & N. Babenkova. *Ethnoekspertiza na Yamale: Nenetskie kochev'ia i gazovye mestorozhdeniia*. [Ethno-Expertise on the Yamal Peninsula: Nenets Pastures and Gas Fields.] Ekaterinburg: Izdatel'stvo AMB, 2014. 232 pp. In Russian.

There exists a wide variety of literature devoted to the role of the oil and gas industry in post-Soviet Russia, which includes not only scientific research on the impact of oil development on the Northern peoples (see, e.g., some recent works: Wiget & Balalaeva 2010; Stammer 2013; Stammer & Wilson 2006; Wiget & Balalaeva 2014; Sirina & Iarlykapov & Funk 2008; Khaknazarov 2011; Novikova 2014; Miskova 2014, and others), but also works in line with the

so-called ethnological expertise. Although there exist a number of typically Russian well-known features (see, e.g., Bogoyavlensky et al. 2002; Zvidennaia & Novikova 2010; Martynova & Novikova 2012), the latter in general fit into the generally accepted understanding of the scientific and practical research defined as a part of applied anthropology and anthropology of development.

The presented collective research refers to the genre of Russian works on “ethnological expertise” (basically known in the anthropological practice as social impact assessment), but at the same time has its own features that make this work worthy of special attention.

The book *Ethno-Expertise on the Yamal Peninsula: Nenets Pastures and Gas Fields* is written by Andrei Golovnev, a renowned specialist on the culture of the North – in particular Samoyed cultures – in collaboration with his students, members of the Institute of History and Archaeology of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The results of an actual expertise carried out in the area of geological exploration in the territory of the Kruzenshtern gas field (on the western coast of the Yamal Peninsula, July–August 2013) and the subsequent report that was prepared based on its results, lie at the heart of the reviewed work. As noted in the introduction, the report – quite acceptable for experts – would be too impenetrable for the general reader. In this regard, the authors decided, on the one hand, to greatly facilitate the language of the text, while on the other hand to talk not only about the results of the work, but also about the course of the research. The authors were perfectly able to reach their goals. The book is easy to read (you can say in one sitting) and a great number of colour illustrations (over 60), charts, and maps contribute to this greatly.

This collective monograph, which is how one could define the genre of this work, consists of two parts virtually equal in volume: the research itself (*Kochevniki i nedropol'zovateli* (Nomads and mineral developers), pp. 12–107) and appendices (*Istochniki i bazy dannykh* (Sources and databases), pp. 108–223).

There are four chapters in the research part of the work that are presented successively: the context of carrying out the expert evaluation, description, and analysis of

the boundaries of nomads and specifics regarding the organisation of Nenets' nomadic cultures, the "voice of the tundra" (statements of indigenous peoples about the future industrial development of their lands), and foresight reflections of the authors.

The presented work wins the reader over with the abundance of recent field data and the actual voices of people whose problems are being discussed. The use of several methods of fixing/describing the movement of herders, GPS-recordings of human movement during the day, maps of nomadic migrations (with annual coverage of the process) and the footage of movements/actions including photographic and video material (p. 56) should be highlighted among the authors' undisputed research achievements. A similar technique has already been used in the Russian field (Safonova & Sántha 2013a; Safonova & Shanta 2013b), but in relation to the Nenets it seems that indeed it has been used for the first time.

The final chapter of the main part of the book includes scenarios and recommendations. It represents the main factors of pessimistic (pp. 99–100) and optimistic (pp. 100–102) scenarios, as well as recommendations on compensation (pp. 102–103, 106–107), largely based on the "Declaration of co-existence of indigenous peoples and the oil & gas industry in the Nenets and Yamal-Nenets autonomous regions and other territories of the Russian North", generated by our colleagues from the Arctic Centre, University of Lapland, in the years 2007–2008.¹

The section of appendices to the book includes a general characterisation of historical sources, a short story about the traditions of the nomads on the Yamal Peninsula, and an essay presenting analogues of ethnological expertise of recent times in Russia (as performed by the staff of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the RAS) and abroad (project ENSINOR). The section also contains characteristics of the legal framework with regard to indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation and the Yamalo-Nenets region in particular, and a thorough analysis of the situation with regard to the cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the North (pp. 108–143). In addition, the section of appendices is completed by unique primary materials of the 1926–1927 census of the indigenous population of Yamal, which is the first time ever for these materials to appear in print (pp. 143–223). The latter appendix is extremely informative, although without comments or analysis or a description of the logic of how this document refers to the contemporary problems of herders caused by the industrial development of the tundra, it remains, in my opinion, an independent text in the book.

There are at least two more general observations to be made on the provided expertise, which emerge within the context of broad reflections on the status of expert-analytical works of Russian ethnologists.

The text presented for the judgment of colleagues (as a result of the expertise) was created incidentally: this "ethnological expertise" was not ordered by industrial companies, local authorities, or by public organisations of the Nenets. Ethnologists were simply invited (p. 9) by ecologists, who conducted their own environmental expertise in the above-mentioned area of the Yamal Peninsula. This clearly describes the situation of "ethnological expertise" in Russia, whose necessity and rules of conduct have remained without legislative consolidation and regulation on the federal level for about 15 years.²

There is another problem, which is closely associated with the one above: The ethnologists participating in the project considered "the possible consequences of geological exploration without any clear picture of the planned industrial development of the ter-

ritory” (p. 15). The lack of plans for industrial development “complicated the expertise, forcing to guess about the scale of industrial invasion which they would have to deal with” (ibid.). The legislative optionality of the ethnological expertise and its informal nature led to inability to obtain the required documents and extremely complicated the task of the experts. As a result, an attempt was made to assess the possible consequences of such development on the territory of the Kruzenshtern gas field “by analogy”, by focusing on the already existing models of industrial impact on the Yamal tundra.

Through trial and errors Russian applied anthropology is trying to find entrance into the world of uneasy relations between science and the state, business, and local populations, which live in the impact zone of management decisions on a daily basis. There is no doubt that the collective monograph *Ethno-Expertise on the Yamal Peninsula: Nenets Pastures and Gas Fields* with its advantages and some, perhaps, controversial approaches is a useful step in this progressive process. This book will be of interest to all those involved in the cultures of the reindeer herders of the circumpolar world and in research in the field of applied and public anthropology.

Dmitri Funk

Moscow State University / Tomsk State University

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Notes

¹ See description of the project ENSINOR on the site of the Arctic Centre of the University of Lapland, Finland (<http://www.arcticcentre.org>).

² About 15 years since the term was used for the first time in the legislation of the Russian Federation. It appeared in the law “On the guarantees of the rights of indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation”, adopted in 1999.

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