

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Status of the Indigenous Regions in Russia: The Case of Khakas People

Svetlana Panikarova

Ural Federal University, Russian Federation
panikarova_s@mail.ru

Indigenous people maintain the traditional economic practices and the cultural outlook peculiarities in spite of strong globalization influence. There is no universal and unambiguous definition of indigenous peoples, but there are a number of criteria by which indigenous peoples globally can be identified and from which each group can be characterized. While definitions of indigenous may vary from institution to institution (International Labour Organization, 1991; United Nations, 2006; European Bank of Reconstruction and Development, 2010), they generally contain three core elements:

- descent from populations inhabiting a region prior to later inhabitants;
- geographical, political, and/or economic domination by late inhabitants or immigrants; and
- maintenance of some distinctive social-cultural norms and institutions.

Depending on the definition employed, estimates of the indigenous world population vary. Rough estimates suggest that there are more than 5,000 different groups living in more than 70 countries. It has been further estimated that there

are approximately 250-350 million indigenous peoples worldwide, representing five percent of the world's population (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2013). The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues estimated that up to 15% of the world's poor, and up to one-third of the rural poor, are indigenous (United Nations, 2006). Table 1 captures three versions of the indigenous population estimates.

From Table 1, it is apparent that indigenous population estimates in countries of Former Soviet Union differ from 0.4 million to 28 million. This differentiation is because there is remarkable diversity of the indigenous peoples. Their communities may have or not have rights to territorial-administrative orders of government or self-government and their members range from traditional hunter-gatherers and nomadic farmers to the expert professionals recognized in industrialized nations. As to the other parts of the world, just like in Russian Federation, some indigenous populations have remained essentially the same for hundreds of years, even into the modern era, while others have been highly integrated into the dominant cultural and economic society (Peredo, Anderson, Galbraith, Honig, & Dana, 2004).

Table 1. *Indigenous Population by Region (Million)*

Region	First version (Stephens, Nettleton, Porter, Willis, & Clark, 2005)	Second version (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2010)	Third version (own estimates by regions based from World Bank, 2010)
China	91.00	105.23	106.40
South Asia	60.00	94.90	94.90
Former Soviet Union	28.00	0.40	0.40
Southeast Asia	26.50	29.84	29.84
South America	16.00	19.53	16.00
Africa	14.20	21.98	21.98
Central America/Mexico	12.70	19.07	12.70
Arabia	5.00	15.41	15.41
USA/Canada	2.70	3.29	3.29
Japan/Pacific Island	0.80	0.00	0.80
Australia/New Zealand	0.60	0.46	0.60
Greenland/Scandinavia	0.12	0.10	0.12
<i>Total</i>	<i>257.62</i>	<i>310.21</i>	<i>302.45</i>

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

There are more than 100 ethnic groups in the Russian Federation. Of these, 41 are legally recognized as indigenous—small-number of peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East. The small-numbered indigenous peoples is approximately 250,000 individuals in total. This status is conditional upon a group having no more than 50,000 members, maintaining a traditional way of life, inhabiting certain remote regions of Russia, and identifying itself as a distinct ethnic community. A definition of indigenous without the numerical qualification does not exist in Russian legislation. Therefore, the special government policy is absent to the ethnic group with a population of more than 50,000 members. In reality, the number of members of Russian indigenous ethnic group is about 19.7 million,

and from them 9.5 million indigenous people live in rural areas.

The current socioeconomic circumstances of the Indigenous people in Russia are poor. For example, according to the 2010 census (compared with the 2002 census), in 19 out of the 26 indigenous regions, the socioeconomic situation of the indigenous population is showing a numerical decline. According to the State Statistics Committee (2012), unemployment among indigenous peoples is 1.5–2 times the Russian average. Incomes of indigenous peoples are 2-3 times lower than the Russian national average. Infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, a typical indicator of extreme poverty, cause 60 deaths per 100,000—almost three times the national average of 23 per 100,000 (United Nations in the Russian Federation, 2013). Furthermore, maternal deaths and child mortality are significantly above the national

average. However, ambiguous definition of indigenous peoples prevents monitoring of the socioeconomic conditions of Russia's Indigenous. Undoubtedly, there is a necessity to identify Indigenous people clearly and understand their socioeconomic circumstances to provide relevant government policies.

Three main research questions were placed:

1. What characteristics of Indigenous people definition are the most important to understand the current Russian Indigenous population?
2. How many Indigenous people are in Russian Federation?
3. How can the development of Indigenous territories be provided?

The Russian Federation combines both ethnical and territorial components in the federal system. Constituent units of Russian Federation divide into different types: regions, federal cities, autonomous region. The territories are accommodated by Indigenous people have such special status as autonomous areas, republics, national territories.. The share of indigenous people does not define the territory status, therefore it is less than 30% of the four republics of Russian Federation (Khakasia, Adygea, Komi, and Koreliya). The indigenous communities of these republics have autonomous management—in effect, administrative decisions are generated by the ethnic majority, who are Russians.

I will describe the economic and social situation of one of Russia's Indigenous—the Khakas people. The Khakas is an aboriginal ethnos of Southern Siberia who are traditionally into nomadic cattle breeding, hunting, and gathering of forest product.

In 1991, the territory populated by the Khakas people got the status of a republic. The title ethnos (Khakas) makes 12% of population of Khakasia or 65,400 persons. The contemporary ethnic

composition of Khakasia has been formed rather recently. In 1910, the Khakas people made up 98% of the region's population. The results of the First Russian Population census in 1926 showed the Khakas had made 53% (44,200 persons) of all inhabitants of the territory. Population had sharply increased (3.1 times) from 1926 to 1939. It continued to improve further because of inflow of labor migrants from other parts of Russia. This influx of the Russian-speaking migrants has provoked the acceleration of assimilation of the autochthonic population.

The purpose of this research is to discuss the status of Russia's Indigenous people such as the Khakas people which are «title nation» (largest indigenous ethnic group of region) in sub-federal regions (republics), and at the same time, are minority ethnic group in that region. I am going to prove the stability of traditional economic activities of the Khakas people and examine the uses of these activities for socio-economic development of the Indigenous community.

METHODOLOGY

The article takes an eclectic methodological approach to piece together extant literature and to discover new empirical knowledge about Russian's Indigenous people. To analyze the traditional economic activity, I used results of the questionnaire from 1,500 respondents (from different ethnic groups: Khakas and Russian) in different parts of Khakasia (32 settlements, differ on the number of inhabitants, remoteness from an administrative center, and economic specialization). To estimate the Indigenous Russia's population, I use the 2010 census to select different ethnic groups from all Russian regions and compared them with data on the inhabitant's number of rural territories in a section of regions. I also carried out 20 in-depth interviews with experts from different Russian Indigenous regions for specification of number

of indigenous people and understanding of their current condition.

RESULTS

Khakasia as Part of Russia

The Khakas people have a developed indigenous economy to govern their societies. Their traditional economic systems ensured sustainable utilization of resources, social responsibility, and harmonious relationships through cooperation. For generations, the Khakas have lived in natural ecosystems in which they have developed and practiced lifestyles and belief systems that draw upon their deep knowledge about local plants, wildlife, and ecology. They used different strategies to maintain livelihoods including hunting, gathering, nomadic grazing, fishing, and intensive agriculture. This variety of strategy provided preservation of ecological system (Vlasov, 2010; Popov & Vlasov, 2012).

The territory of Siberia was attached to the Russian Empire in the 18th century. Since then, traditional lifestyle and economic activities of the Khakas people passed a difficult way of evolution. There were some important periods of transformation such as: imperial policy of resettlement of peasants from the Central Russia to Siberia (1890-1913), revolution and military communism (1917-1920), Stalin collectivization and repressions (1929-1938), Soviet planned economy (1940-1990), and market reforms (1990-2000).

Khakasia was given autonomous status in 1930—at first as autonomous region then as republic. Unfortunately, the Khakas people do not influence the authorities' decisions despite the autonomous status of the territory.

The government decisions of a planned economy on agro-industrial development of

Siberia have negatively affected the environment of Khakasia.

Firstly, there was a campaign for tilling virgin soil in 1956-1961 where 46% of farmland of the Republic had been ploughed. Such large scale plowed land without local agro climatic features led to heavy ecological consequences. The steppe territories underwent the strongest wind erosion and soon the arable land were destroyed. To this day, 85% of arable lands are subject to wind erosion and about 30% are in the category of poor—containing only 1.5-2% of humus (Panikarova & Vlasov, 2013a). Therefore, the area for pastures was reduced by many collective farms (collective farms and soviet farms) which compelled cattlemen to take their herd to graze in a taiga at summertime. As a result, hundreds of springs and the wood rivers have disappeared. A lot of rare species of plants became extinct.

Secondly, there was a campaign for development of light industry in the 1960s wherein several powerful industrial complexes had been constructed. It was necessary to increase the sheep livestock to keep up with demand for raw materials (wool). The livestock of sheep in the republic has increased 3.3 times in 30 years and has reached about 1.5 million in 1990 (Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Khakassia, 2015). The cattle breeding was extensive, therefore, the workload of pastures was excessive and by the end of the 1990th, it was five times as high as scientifically proved norm. It has caused a large-scale degradation of the steppe territory in Khakasia.

The government policy on industrialization of Siberia from 1960 to 1980 has strongly destroyed habitual life of the aboriginal people and has not offered any other alternatives of employment. Later, physical and mental health of the Khakas people have been dramatically deteriorating in light of the Russian reforms at the end of the 20th century. The Khakas people have poorly adapted to the new socio-economy institutes

Table 2. *Traditional Agricultural Activity*

Type of traditional agricultural activity	Shares of household economy are involved in traditional agricultural activity	
	% of Khakas respondents	% of Russian respondents
Vegetable growing	90.3	94.1
Potato cultivation	95.8	89.5
Cultivation of fruits and berries	32	51.3
Poultry-keeping	28.2	24
Cattle-breeding	41.8	14.7
Pig-raising	31.3	12
Rabbit-breeding	1.8	4.2
Sheep-breeding	10.1	2.4
Cereals-growing	6.2	3
Horse-breeding	5.3	1.7
Bee-keeping	0	0.9

and the alien means of generating livelihoods. Social problems, including alcoholism and suicide behavior, are prevalent in the Khakas communities (Taliyanova, Tolmacheva, & Korobitsyna, 2010). In this connection, the Khakas communities are characterized by the lowest level of economic improvement and life quality.

Thus, various government policies that aim to modernize, standardize, and scale up rural production as well as increase manufacturing demand almost destroyed the system of traditional knowledge which was existing for many hundreds years in the Khakas territory.

Stability of Traditional Economic Activities of Khakas People

The purpose of this paper is to prove that traditional economic activities of the Khakas people remains in local communities on the contrary to assimilation and negative state policy consequences for ethnos. This study aims to analyze traditional economic activity of Khakas

with the help of the questionnaire of 1,500 respondents (Russian and Khakas) from different parts of Khakasia.

The results of empirical research have shown that in Khakas holdings, cattle breeding still prevails (Tabl. 2) 1). The livestock of Khakas holdings is about 25-50% more than of Russian holdings.

The visible land-user differences exist between Khakas and Russian holdings. The Khakas people are using the smaller area of the land as fields and gardens than the Russian and greater part of land is used for haymaking and pastures.

Traditional wildlife management takes a significant place in maintaining livelihoods of Siberian inhabitants. For example, about 40% citizens of Khakasia are involved in gathering. Table 3 describes that more Khakas people than Russian are involved in gathering.

Thus, despite strong influence of the Russian migrants on indigenous people, in Khakas communities, traditional kinds of activity are extended and they are of great importance for

Table 3. *Traditional Wildlife Management Activity*

Tape of traditional wildlife management activity	Shares of household economy are involved in traditional management activity	
	% of Khakas respondents	% of Russian respondents
Hunting	1.8	3.0
Gathering eatable roots and plants	9.7	4.2
Preparation of fuelwood and building wood	12.8	3.8
Gathering pine nuts	12.3	5.2
Fishing	10.6	10.5
Hay preparation	27.7	7.3
Gathering wild-growing fruits and berries	48.9	28.6
Gathering mushrooms	47.2	33.6

the people as as ever (Panikarova & Vlasov, 2013b).

Stability of economic activity of the Khakas people can mean that indigenous economic development governs the way of life of the Khakas community. The guiding principles of national policies on indigenous economic development could recognize the rights of indigenous people to establish traditional economic activity. Besides, such rights does not have to be limited to the “indigenous, small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East” but will apply to all indigenous people of the Russian Federation.

How many Indigenous Peoples in Russia?

The Khakas people are indigenous people if we are to follow the international legal practice instead of the Russian laws for these reasons: (1) they are descendants of the people that inhabited a region prior to Russian inhabitants; (2) the Khakas are exposed to political and economic domination of the Russian majority; and (3) they maintain some elements of traditional lifestyle and economic institutions. The purpose of this

paper is to estimate real indigenous population in Russia today.

The economy of indigenous people of the Russian Federation at the beginning of the 20th century included a set of traditional types of extensive economy, such as different combinations of agriculture, cattle breeding, hunting, fishery, gathering wild-growing plants, crafts, and trade. There are some types of traditional economy in the Russian territory and estimate of the Indigenous Russia’s population (Table 4).

Some of these types of indigenous economy practically disappeared today or were cardinally transformed, such as traditional sea hunting, reindeer hunting, north taiga type of hunting and gathering economy, and traditional fishing economy. Others, on the contrary, were revived in the period of a long economic crisis of the 1990s and now make essential impact on the economy of national regions and territories, for example, reindeer husbandry, *taiga* type of cattle husbandry, steppe type of nomadic herding, and traditional agriculture with hunting and gathering.

Thus, the number of indigenous people living in the territory of Russia makes about 2.4

Table 4. Types of Indigenous Economy in the Russian Territory

Type of indigenous economy	Ethnic group	Indigenous population estimate (thousand)*
Reindeer husbandry	Nenets, part of Komi people, Chukchi people, North group of Yakuts, Koryaks, Sami people	63.7
Taiga type of cattle husbandry	Yakuts	284.1
Steppe type of nomadic herding	Tuvans, Buryats, Altayans, Khakas people, Kalmyks, Bashkirs, Kazakhs	1,907.8
Traditional sea hunting	Eskimo people, part of Chukchi people, Aleuts	3.4
Reindeer hunting	Nganasans, Enets, Evenks, Evens, part of Khants and Mansi, Selkups, Dolgans, Tofalars	68.0
North taiga type of hunting and gathering economy	Teleuts, Orochs	1.7
Traditional fishing economy	Part of Khants, Chulyms, Kets, Ulchs, Udege, Nivkh people	15.8
Traditional agriculture with hunting and gathering	Veps, Karelians	28.2
<i>Total</i>		2,372.2

*according to the 2010 census

million. Indigenous economic system is part of a socioeconomic totality that connects and governs the lives of Russia's Indigenous community. Unfortunately, the indigenous economy cannot survive in the conditions of the modern market without the state support. Articles 3 and 20 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people would therefore be important rallying points to push for the recognition of indigenous economic systems. However, Russia has not ratified ILO Convention 169 and abstained from voting in the UN General Assembly on the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

CONCLUSIONS

The major points covered by this paper may be summarized to say: the status of the «title nation» (largest indigenous ethnic group of region) in autonomous republic is useless for the minority ethnic group of Khakas people. Current Khakas communities are characterized by the lowest level of economic improvement and life quality. The results of empirical research have shown that in Khakas communities, traditional kinds of activity are extended and they are of great importance for the people up to now. Therefore, stability of traditional economic systems has to

be considered in enactment of a government policy. The definition of indigenous people both in international law and in the law of the certain states should be more concrete and clear. The international organizations and the authorities of the certain states will then be able to form special science-based policy for development of all indigenous territories.

REFERENCES

- European Bank of Reconstruction and Development. (2010). *Indigenous peoples: Guidance note*. Retrieved from <http://www.ebrd.com/downloads/research/guides/indpr.pdf>
- International Labour Organization. (1991). *Convention concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries* (C-169: Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention) Geneva: Author. Retrieved from http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C169
- International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. (2010). *The indigenous world 2010*. C. Mikkelsen (Ed.). Retrieved from http://www.iwgia.org/publications/search-pubs?publication_id=505
- International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs. (2013). *The indigenous world 2013*. C. Mikkelsen (Ed.). Copenhagen: Author. Retrieved from http://www.iwgia.org/publications/search-pubs?publication_id=613
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Khakassia. (2015). *History of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of Khakassia*. Retrieved from http://www.mcxpx.ru/?p=about_history
- Panikarova, S. V., & Vlasov, M. V. (2013a). Traditional knowledge and intuitions in socio-economic development of aboriginal community. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 8(18), 32-41. doi: 10.5539/ijbm.v8n18p32
- Panikarova, S. V., & Vlasov, M. V. (2013b). Traditional institutions and knowledge of Siberian Aboriginal community. *Modern Economy*, 4(9), 576-583. doi: 10.4236/me.2013.49061
- Peredo, A. M., Anderson, R. B., Galbraith, C. S., Honig, B., & Dana, L. P. (2004). Towards a theory of indigenous entrepreneurship. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 1(1-2), 1-20. doi: 10.1504/IJESB.2004.005374
- Popov, E. V., & Vlasov, M.V. (2012). Dependence of research productivity on transactional costs. *Actual Problems of Economics*, 5, 427-437.
- State Statistics Committee. (2012). *Regions of Russia. Socio-economic indexes*. Retrieved from http://www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/ru/statistics/publications/catalog/doc_1138623506156
- Stephens, C., Nettleton, C., Porter, J., Willis, R., & Clark, S. (2005). Indigenous peoples' health—why are they behind everyone, everywhere? *The Lancet*, 366(9479), 10-13.
- Taliyanova, T. I., Tolmacheva, T. V., & Korobitsyna T. V. (2010). Narcological pathology in native population of the Republic of Khakasiya. *Siberian gerald of psychiatry and addiction psychiatry*. 5(62). 74-76.
- United Nations in the Russian Federation. (2013). *Climate change impact on public health in the Russian Arctic*. Retrieved from <http://www.unrussia.ru/sites/default/files/doc/Arctic-eng.pdf>
- United Nations. (2006, May 15). *Action programme for second indigenous decade launched as UN forum opens two-week session at headquarters* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/hr4888.doc.htm>
- Vlasov, M. V. (2010). Resource differentiation of knowledge. In: *Proceedings of the 11th European Conference on Knowledge Management*, 2, 1057-1063.
- World Bank. (2010). *Indigenous peoples, poverty and development* (Draft manuscript). G. H. Hall & H. A. Patrinos (Eds.). Retrieved from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTINDPEOPLE/.../full_report.pdf