

ETHNIC BOUNDARIES, THE STATE, AND THE PEOPLES OF NORTHERN SIBERIA. ETHNICITY TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE OLERINSKA TUNDRA (YAKUTIA)

WOJCIECH LIPIŃSKI

INSTITUTE OF ETHNOLOGY AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

In this article I try to show how the nationality classification used by the state administration apparatus can affect the nature of the ethnic phenomena. As an example, I describe the Andryushkino settlement, located in the Olerinska Tundra in the north-eastern part of the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). The settlement's residents include among others, Eveny and Yukaghirs. The process through which these former members of the nomadic tundra families began to identify with nationalities will expose the complexity of the substratum of today's ethnic structure of northern Siberia and emphasize the importance of specific local factors determining the impact of the nationality categories introduced by the State.

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W niniejszym artykule pokazuję, w jaki sposób klasyfikacje narodowościowe stosowane przez aparat administracji państwowej, mogą wpływać na charakter zjawisk etnicznych. Analizuję przykład osady Andriuszkiño, położonej w Tundrze Olerińskiej, w północno-wschodniej Jakucji, gdzie obecnie mieszkają między innymi Jukagirzy i Eweni. Proces, w efekcie którego dawni członkowie tundrowych rodów zaczęli identyfikować się z tymi narodowościami, pokazuje skomplikowanie podłoża znanej dziś struktury etnicznej północnej Syberii oraz siłę oddziaływania ustanawianych przez państwo kategorii narodowościowych.

K e y w o r d s: ethnicity, nationality categories, Peoples of the Northern Siberia, Yakutia

In the face of numerous publications on ethnicity and the gamut of approaches to this issue, one can point to an underlying belief common to them: "ethnicity has something to do with the classification of people and group relationships" (Eriksen 1993, 4). By adopting as a starting point for this paper the shrewd statement of Thomas Hylland Eriksen which began his reflections on ethnicity and nationalism, I will endeavour to add an additional factor of significance that may variously affect the nature of ethnic phenomena, namely the classification used by the state administration apparatus. Classical papers devoted to ethnic groups, both Polish (Obrębski 1936) and western (Barth 1969), emphasized the relational nature of ethnic phenomena, noting



Andryushkino, photo by W. Lipiński, April 2004.

that the sense of belonging constituting ethnic identity is connected with identifying with a given group as well as being classified to one. The latter was usually understood as being classified by members of other ethnic groups, while less attention was paid to the fact that classifications can also derive from institutions. For example, these can be classifications used by the state, research scholars, or the system of administration. Their importance is particularly evident in the case of multinational empires, including Russia, both today's Federation and its political predecessors: the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire. Regardless of Russia's political transformations and altering borders, Siberia remains a permanent component of the Russian political space.

Within the framework of the vantage point thus defined, I will focus in this paper¹ on a concrete area of the north-Siberian tundra; the basin of the Alaseya River. It was formerly part of the so-called Western Tundra in the north of Yakutia extending from

¹ This paper is the result of research on the ethnic situation in north-eastern Yakutia conducted in the years 2002–2007. The project involved fieldwork carried out in the settlements of the lower Kolyma region (Chersky, Andryushkino, Kolymskoye, Pokhodsk), archival searches in Chersky and Yakutsk and library queries in Yakutsk and Moscow. The project was funded by a grant from the Foundation for Polish Science (KBN No. 2 H01H 004 25) under the title “Yakutia a hundred years after Sieroszewski. An ethnographic study of the culture of Yakuts and other indigenous communities in the Republic of Sakha”, and from research supervisor grant No. 1 H01H 009 30 “Identity in a multi-ethnic community. A study of ethnic relations in north-eastern Yakutia.” The supervisor of both grants was Prof. Lech Mróz.

the Indigirka to the Kolyma Rivers. In the mid-twentieth century, during the Soviet transformations, a settlement called Andryushkino was founded on the Alaseya, where gradually most of the current residents of the tundra settled. During that time, part of the former Western Tundra between the Big Chukchee River and the Alaseya Plateau came to be called Olerinska Tundra, a name derived from the Great and Small Olër lakes, located in the centre of the area. Today Andryushkino is one of the villages of the Nizhnekolymsky ulus (Lower-Kolyma district) in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). The settlement has less than a thousand residents, among them Eveny and Yukaghirs. In this article I will try to retrace the process through which the former members of the nomadic tundra families began to identify with these nationalities. This will expose the complexity of the substratum of today's ethnic structure of northern Siberia and emphasize the importance of specific local factors determining the impact of the nationality categories introduced by the State.

NOMADIC CLANS IN THE WESTERN TUNDRA

When the Russians began to arrive in eastern Siberia, north-eastern Yakutia was inhabited primarily by Yukaghirs. They occupied at the time a huge area from the mouth of the Lena to the Anadyr river. This vast territory in the basin of the Alaseya, from the Sundrun in the west to the upper course of the Big Chukchee river in the east, was inhabited by one of thirteen Yukaghir tribes – Alayi (IJASSR 1957, 15). It was a small group, numbering less than six hundred², consisting of wild reindeer hunters and fishermen. They also kept herds of reindeer, which at least some of them, would use for riding on. Probably for this reason, Ivan Bieliana, who stayed on the Alaseya in 1643, called the local people “Yukaghir Tungus” (Tugolukov 1979, 16–17).

Over the next decades, conflicts caused by the arrival of the Russians, and most of all outbreaks of previously unknown diseases, decimated the Yukaghir population (Yukagiry 1975, 16). The decrease of their number was accompanied by a gradual increase in the size of other ethnic groups in the region. In the eighteenth century, Tungus arrived on the Alaseya from the south (Tugolukov 1979, 33). These areas also began to be explored by the Lamuts from the east bank of the Kolyma and the basin of the Indigirka. To the south of the Alaseya tundra, in the taiga zone, Yakuts began from the end of the seventeenth century to settle. (Kolesov 1991, 55–56). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the coastal stretches of the tundra in the area of the lower

² The quantitative data referred to by Russian authors were estimates based on the entries in *yasak* books. These include data on the number of *yasak* payers, or adult men, at different collection points. Russian historians adopted the principle of multiplying that number by four. Thus, if the *yasak* books of a Cossack winter camp on Alaseya listed 145 adult men obliged to pay *yasak*, the number of the Alaseya Yukaghirs was estimated at 580 people.

Alaseya were occupied by the Chukchi arriving from the east. All of these migration processes occurring within two centuries after the arrival of the Russians changed the situation of the territories on the Alaseya, turning the former domain of the Yakughir into a multi-ethnic area characterised by such phenomena as the inter-penetration of traditions and the blurring of ethnic boundaries.

Under Russian rule, the peoples of northern Siberia were required to pay *yasak* – a tax paid in pelts of hunted animals (mainly sables and foxes)³. In order to improve the system of *yasak* collection, a division of the Siberian indigenous peoples was eventually introduced into what were called administrative clans. These clans were not in every circumstance based on kinship. The local authorities would enter on their rolls representatives of the various kinship groups or clans, usually those who happened to be near the given settlement (cf. Tugolukov 1979, 20–21). Typically, these were clans of specific nationalities, which were often reflected in their names. In 1769, at the Alaseya settlements, *yasak* was paid by two clans, the Yukaghir Clan and the Tungus Betil Clan (IJASSR 1957, 207; 214). At the end of the next century, four nomadic clans were reported to exist in the region of Alaseya. These were: the First Alaseya Yukaghir Clan, The Second Alaseya Yukaghir Clan, the Second Mountain-Lamut Clan, and the Tungus Betil Clan (Jochelson 2005a, 92). This classification system, which at first glance seemed very orderly, was largely a bureaucratic illusion as the actual system of ethnic relations and identity in the Alaseya tundra was much more complex. Thanks to Vladimir Jochelson's ethnographic research, we can quite accurately characterize the ethnic situation of the region in the late nineteenth century.

At the time, the area stretching from the lower Kolyma through the Alaseya valley to the Indigirka River, was called the Western Tundra (sometimes the Great Western Tundra), as opposed to the Eastern Tundra lying on the other side of the Kolyma. The central part of the area in the basin of the Alaseya was inhabited by Yukaghir, Lamut, Tungus and Chukchi nomads. Their lands extended in the south almost to the forest line, where in the transition zone of forest-tundra they bordered on the territories of the Yakuts belonging to the Kolyma ulus. The Chukchi were recent arrivals in those lands. In the mid-nineteenth century they started migrating from the eastern bank of the Kolyma and occupied primarily the northernmost areas of the coast between the Kolyma and the Indigirka River. Between those and the lands of the Yakuts to the south, four tundra clans roamed whose “ways of life, languages, beliefs and customs are just as intermingled as their tribal composition” (Jochelson 1900, 155).

What remained of the ancient inhabitants of the Great Tundra was the Yukaghir clan, labelled the First Alaseya Yukaghir Clan (while its members called themselves

³ Skins of fur animals comprised some of the main riches of Siberia. It was the desire to obtain them that motivated the Russians to occupy the vast areas beyond the Urals so quickly. At the end of the seventeenth century fur export revenues accounted for one third of the tsars' treasury (Fedorov 1999, 17).

Alayi). Members of the second Yukaghir clan, in official documents usually referred to as the Second Alaseya Clan, called themselves Erbetken or Dudki. According to Jochelson, these two terms were of Lamut origin, the former meaning “goose”, hence the First Alaseya Yukaghir Clan are occasionally referred to as the goose clan, and the latter “a man for whom there are no obstacles” (Jochelson 1900, 155). According to oral tradition, this name had come to the Alaseya area from a land on the Indigirka. The third of the tundra clans that roamed with the Erbetken (members describing themselves by the Yukaghir word *Khodeydzhil*), were officially called the Second Mountain-Lamut Clan, and are said to have arrived from the mountainous areas on the east bank of the Kolyma. The last and most numerous of the clans, officially known as the Tungus-Betil Clan, had wandered to the Alaseya from the south westerly direction of Yakutsk (Jochelson 1900, 156).

All the four clans formed a rather small community, which in 1850 numbered 595 people, and according to census data from 1897, had decreased to 273. These four clans roamed the territory spanning the Big Chukchee River in the east to the ridge separating the basins of the Alaseya and the Indigirka in the west. The First Alaseya Clan, numbering 33 people in 1897, roamed the tundra near the Big Chukchee River. The Erbetken Clan, the smallest because of its meagre total of 13 people, held, together with the Second Mountain-Lamut Clan (62 people), the lands west of the Alaseya. Between the Alaseya and the Big Chukchee River lay the territories occupied by the most numerous of the tundra clans – the Tungus-Betil Clan (165 people) (Jochelson 2005a, 93–94).

Jochelson, who conducted his research in the north of Yakutia, defined this small⁴ tundra community as Tungus-Yukaghir and pointed towards its characteristic feature being the deep intermixing of mutual influences and traditions, providing in the process a number of examples of their mutual interdependence. The first involved the selection of one head or chief for all four clans. One of the effects of the reforms introduced by the First Yasak Commission in the second half of the eighteenth century, was the legalisation of the so-called *Knyaztsi*, who were responsible for collecting yasak within their clan and delivering it to the appropriate authorities (Fedorov 1999, 26). During the functioning of the so-called commissariat in Zashiversk, which included what was later to be the Kolyma district, a chief or head was additionally nominated to represent all the nomadic clans. Up until the second half of the eighteenth century, these heads had been appointed primarily from among yasak hostages

⁴ Statistical data from the previous years allow us to trace the gradual decrease of individual clans. The First Alaseya Clan contained 99 people in 1850, and nine years later decreased to 86. The Second Alaseya Clan, in 1850, consisted of 58 people. The Second Mountain-Lamut Clan had 151 people in 1850 and 141 in 1859. The Betil Clan had 287 people in 1850 and 264 nine years later (Jochelson 2005a, 93–94). Thanks to a document preserved in the Yakut archive we also know that five years before the first All-Russian population census, in the First Alaseya Clan there were 53 people, while the Betil Clan was made up of 227 people (NARSJ f1801d191).

educated at the Russian settlements⁵. When the commissariats were abolished in 1822, the clans occupying the lands east of the Alaseya were subordinated to Srednekolymsk. The head at that time was a member of the Betil Clan who after the administrative change retained his post as head of the four clans of the Western Tundra. According to Jochelson, the retaining of the post of head, which elsewhere was abolished after the reforms introduced by the Yasak Commission, was one of the key factors contributing to the process of acculturation among the groups living on the lands between the Alaseya and the Big Chukchee (Jochelson 1900, 158).

In Jochelson's time, the head's role was only representational. What really linked all the four clans was their way of life. Although they all kept reindeer, herding was not their main occupation, and the animals were not their main source of food. At the turn of the twentieth century, the 66 families belonging to the four clans had between them only 1,020 reindeer. One of these families had 60, and two others had 50 animals each. An average family kept from 10 to 20 animals, and many had only a few⁶. Given this level of herding, reindeer could only serve as a means of transportation, food came primarily from fishing and spring hunts for wild reindeer and water fowl. The Alayi, Erbetken, Betils and members of the Mountain-Lamut Clan spent winters at the line of the forest, near Yakut settlements, where several families would camp together, permitting them to have a better chance of protecting their reindeer from wolves. In spring, individual families would set off for the northern tundra.

Jochelson observed that in the mix of Yukaghir and Tungus elements making up the common culture of the tundra peoples, Yukaghir components were in the majority. In his opinion, only when it came to marriage customs and anthropological features, did Tungus characteristics prevail. The Yukaghir influences were clearly visible in the economy, but also in held beliefs, with their significance being particularly pronounced in the worship of ancestors (Jochelson 1900, 171–181). The ties between the tundra clans were also fostered by mixed marriages – in Jochelson's time the wife of the *knyaz* of the first Alaseya Clan was a Lamut (Jochelson 1900, 167). Ultimately, the most important

⁵ The so-called amanats, hostages used as a guarantee of subordination and yasak payment. The institution of amanatship functioned until the second half of the eighteenth century, and was abolished under the so-called First yasak reform (Fedorov 1999, 12, 26).

⁶ Kazimierz Roźnowski, when describing the economic condition of the Alaseya basin in 1905, gives an even smaller number. According to him, most Lamuts and Tungus did not have any reindeer, and the remaining families had at most 5 to 10 animals. In his opinion, the main source of food, both for the residents of the tundra and for the Yakuts, was fishing (Buturlin 1907, 174–176). The decrease in the numbers of reindeer was one of the most important factors behind the economic decline of the tundra clans. With the number of the herds being so low, waves of famine affecting the Kolyma district in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were particularly ruinous for its residents. The situation in the region was so serious that in 1905 the Ministry of Internal Affairs sent in its official, S. Buturlin, with the task of examining the economic situation in the region and assessing the need for emergency food supplies. Roźnowski was a member of the expedition.

factor unifying the clans of the Great Western Tundra was language – all its inhabitants spoke, in Jochelson's opinion, a dialect of Yukaghir (Jochelson 1900, 158).

The intermingling of the Tungus (Lamut) and Yukaghir influences did not damage the ethnic diversity of the Western Tundra as from the south, Yakut influences also reached the area. The people of the tundra had ample opportunities to maintain contact with the Yakuts during winter, which they would spend at the edge of the forest, near the Yakut settlements. At the beginning of winter, in October, an annual fair was held at Dulba where Yakut merchants would show up. According to Jochelson, the Yakuts' impact was visible mainly in the language – the inhabitants of the tundra were deemed to have been as fluent in Yakut as in Yukaghir. However, there appeared to be no mixed marriages as Jochelson did not meet even one Yakut woman in the Western Tundra. He believed this was due primarily to the Yakuts' strong belief in their cultural superiority (Jochelson 1900, 182). Waclaw Sieroszewski mentioned proverbs and jokes circulating among the Yakuts that reflected Yakut women's aversion to Tungus men. With regard to the inhabitants of the Western Tundra, he wrote, *inter alia*: "I do not know of one case of marriage between a Yakut and an individual from that tribe" (Sieroszewski 1961. Part I, 226).

When it comes to relationships with the Chukchi, the situation was quite different. Here, mixed marriages were common. As Jochelson wrote:

"A large proportion of the western Chukchis' wives are Lamut, Tungus, and Yukaghir women, and in the tundra clans one can also meet Chukchi women" (Jochelson 1900, 190).

Groups of Chukchi herdsmen who, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, began to occupy the coastal and mountain tundra from the mouth of the Kolyma to the Indigirka River, relatively quickly established contacts with the population of the region. In Jochelson's time the young generation were quite proficient in Lamut, and some also spoke Yukaghir and Yakut⁷. The intensity of contacts with the Chukchi was connected with their wealth, based on their numerous herds of reindeer. Many poor families from the tundra clans who had no animals were forced to camp together with the Chukchi, which afforded them the opportunity to survive the months when food was scarce. Jochelson stresses that the Chukchi almost considered it their duty to feed the starving Yukaghir. This explains the ease with which the inhabitants of the tundra gave their daughters in marriage to the Chukchi. Yet it should also be noted that the acculturation processes took place on both sides. Many of the poorer Chukchi families neighbouring the Yukaghirs or the Tungus began to switch from a nomadic to a more settled lifestyle, and took up fishing (Jochelson 1900, 165, 186–193).

⁷ Sieroszewski says that Kolyma Yakuts "stay in constant contact (...) with the Chukchi, with whom they trade vigorously". According to him, the Chukchi camped for winter near the Yakut village of Yaza (1961. Part I, 229).

A particularly interesting issue is the different groups' ethnic self-identification and their mutual perceptions. The name Yukaghir, which the Russians arriving in Siberia took over from the Tungus or Yakuts, was not then used by the people so labelled. They termed themselves Odul, which in their language means "strong and powerful" (Jochelson 2005a, 47). The Aleseya Yukaghirs spoke of themselves both as Alayi and Odul; the former, according to Jochelson, was supposed to have been the name of the clan, and the latter apparently referred to the whole tribe (Jochelson 2005b, 240). Particularly interesting, is what Jochelson had to say on self-identification by members of the Tungus Betil Clan. The Russian researcher argued that Betils not only took over the Yukaghir language, but also "the national name of the Yukaghir – Odul" (Jochelson 2005b, 239). He continued:

"Having appropriated the Yukaghir language, the Tungus Betils took over the name of the tribe and, as the most numerous clan in the tundra where the language is in use, they – the Tungus – turned out to be the true Oduls" (Jochelson 2005b, 240).

The inhabitants of the Western Tundra, including the Betils, were perceived differently by their neighbours. The Russians living on the Kolyma called them Tungus, but when using this name they meant all the inhabitants of the Western Tundra, without heeding the distinctiveness of the other clans, much smaller in number, poorer and subordinated to the authority of the same Betil *knyaz* (Jochelson 1900, 159). It was a similar story with Yakuts. Sieroszewski wrote that among the Tungus they distinguished "a small tribe travelling with the Chukchi in the lowlands of the Indigirka and the Kolyma", which they named "Khanghai" (Sieroszewski 1961. Part I, 226). According to Jochelson, Yakuts used the term "Khangai" (Yakut: changailär) interchangeably with Tungus (Yakut: tongus), both of which were used with reference to all of the tundra clans, not just the Betils (Jochelson 1900, 159). The term itself derived from the word "khanga" of Mongolian origin, meaning hunt. "Khangai" would therefore mean "hunters" (Jochelson 1900, 159).

From the description so far, one can see how differently the ethnic status of the residents of the Western Tundra was determined. They identified themselves mostly as Odul (Yukaghir). Their neighbours generally treated them as a single group, and even though they viewed matters differently, they were invariably linked with the Tungus. That is how the Russians from Kolyma saw them, and for that matter their neighbours from the south, the Yakuts. The latter also referred to the inhabitants of the tundra – and their language – as Khangai, applying the term to all four tundra clans. Woodland Yukaghir living far to the south, in the upper reaches of the Kolyma, spoke of all the inhabitants of the Alaseya tundra as Alayi, but at the same time emphatically denied any kinship with them, treating them as Tungus (Jochelson 1900, 159).

In contrast to the unanimous opinion of their neighbours, who recognized all residents of the tundra (except for the Chukchi) as Tungus, the local administration



Reindeer herders, Olerinska Tundra, photo by W. Lipiński, April 2004.

divided the community in question into four clans, treating each of them as a clan of concrete nationality – the Alayi and the Erbetken were called Yukaghir clans, the Betils were classified as a Tungus clan, and the Khodeijil as Lamut. While this classification fairly accurately reflected the origins of individual clans (although certain doubts were raised – cf. Jochelson 1900, 156), as a description of the actual ethnic status of individual clans, at the end of the nineteenth century it was no longer fully valid, as Vladimir Jochelson's studies cited above indicate. The discrepancy between the officially adopted classification and the changing ethnic reality in the tundra on the Alaseya was due to deepen even further during the first half of the twentieth century. This was to happen, among other factors, because of the decisions of the new Soviet authorities which would introduce their own rules for classifying ethnic variegation and for new formally adopted ethnic categories.

THE NEW STATE AND ITS CODIFICATION OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY

After the rise of the Soviet Union, beginning in the 1920s, the term small nationalities of the North (*Malye narodnosti Severa*) was used to refer to some of the Siberian indigenous peoples (Sokolovski 2000, 106–107). This was a manifestation of the

building of a hierarchy within the ethnic structure of the North and Siberia: large nations with their own autonomous republics (Yakuts, Buryats) which had a different status than the numerically small nationalities of the Far North. The creation of this separate group stemmed from the conviction that these communities were economically, politically and culturally retarded, and the argument for grouping them together was their similar source of livelihoods based on reindeer herding, hunting and fishing, and their small numbers (Kuoljok 1985, 36). It was not, in fact, a completely new division. Adopted in 1822, *Ustav ob upravlieni inorodcev* [The Statute of Alien Administration] had introduced a division into the settled, nomadic and vagrant peoples of Siberia. In the case of Yakutia, the Soviet ethnic categorisation overlapped with this former division: in the nineteenth century, Yakuts alone among the local peoples had the status of nomads, while the Tungus, Lamuts and Yukaghirs were classified as vagrants (Abdulatipov 2000, 515; Gogolev 1999, 92). According to some authors, the reasons for the new authority's interest in the peoples of the North – similar to Tsarist times – were mainly economic. James Forsyth says that in the years 1924–26 skins of fur animals represented from 10 to 15.3% of Soviet exports, hence the desire of the authorities to draw these groups into the workings of the Soviet economy, and this made it necessary to introduce certain changes in their way of life and work (Forsyth 1992, 246–248). Thus they sought to preserve their traditional occupations (reindeer herding, hunting, and fishing) while introducing a number of changes designed to improve their effectiveness.

At the same time, the Soviet authorities and scholars faced the problem of bringing some order into the complex ethnic mosaic of Siberia. The gradual emergence of the category of small nationalities of the North was associated with the setting up of special institutions to deal with their problems. Finally, in 1924, the so-called Committee for the North (*Komitet sodiestviya narodnostyami sievnykh okrain – the Committee for assisting the nationalities of the northern borderlands*) was established and over the next ten years it coordinated all initiatives related to the situation of the nationalities of the North. In November of that year, the local Committee for the North had been already established in Yakutsk (Ogryzko 1999. Part II, 521).

One of the initiatives of the people involved with the Committee was a reform of the ethnic nomenclature. The need to change the existing terminology was explained by the inaccuracy of the old names and their external origin (Luks 1930, 99). In most cases, albeit not without resistance, the new names were accepted and functioned in both the language of official documents and in the consciousness of the members of each group. Occasionally, however, some of the new terms were discarded after a time and the traditional names were restored. Such was the case with the Yukaghir and the Chukchi, whom the Soviet administration began to call Oduls and Luorawetlans. This practice was abandoned in the early 1950s, and the previously established names were returned to.

Changes of names were also accompanied by a specific reorganisation of the ethnic map, which is well illustrated by the example of the Tungus-speaking peoples of northern Siberia. Until the October Revolution two names referring to them were in use: Tungus and Lamut (now, respectively, Evenk and Even), although distinguishing between them was sometimes problematic. Before the revolution, the presence of both Lamuts and the Tungus was noted in the district of Kolyma. The former belonged to several clans and were scattered throughout the area, while the latter were mentioned basically in connection with the Betils wandering between the Big Chukchee and the Alaseya. This assignment of names, however, was not precise. In a book presenting the results of the census of 1897, the term Lamut-Yukaghir is used with reference to inhabitants of the Western Tundra, although the language already widespread in this area was called a “dialect of Tungus-Yukaghir” (Patkanov 1912, 796–799). Jochelson wrote that by the time of his research the language of the Betils was called Tungus, and that is how inhabitants of the valley of the Kolyma referred to it also during his studies. Jochelson himself argued that the Betils actually spoke Yukaghir (Jochelson 1900, 158). The first census of the Soviet era revealed in this area, *inter alia*, 43 Lamut, 44 Yukaghir and 20 Tungus families (Pokhaziyavstviennaya perepis 1929, 114).

The problem with a precise distinction between the Lamut and the Tungus applies to the entire eastern part of Siberia, and its evidence can be found in the first accounts written by Russians who came across “Tungus called Lamuts” (Tugolukov 1971, 215). Until the revolution, Evens were called both Tungus and Lamuts, but the latter term did not embrace all Even groups. Similar inconsistencies were pointed out by Soviet ethnographers. A case in point being Vladillen Tugolukov who wrote:

“Descendants of the first Russian settlers in Yakutia called the reindeer hunters-herders from the mountainous areas in the basins of the Yana and the Indigirka Lamuts, and reindeer herders from the polar tundra Tungus, which surprised travellers, who did not notice any difference between the two groups” (Tugolukov 1971, 214).

Both Russian ethnographers and Siberian administrators often got lost in this tangle of local and national naming traditions.

“In the nineteenth and early twentieth century the Lamut ethnonym was used as an unofficial name for the majority of the eastern Even groups, while the ethnonym Tungus remained the official term. Concurrent use of these ethnyonyms caused a mess when it concerned areas where Evenks and Evens were neighbours. Lamut was the name usually given to Evens from the lower reaches of the Kolyma and from Chukotka. Other eastern Evens (east of the Indigirka) were often called Tungus. A concurrent use of both ethnyonyms gave the illusion that not only Evens but also Evenks appeared in these areas” (IKE 1997, 13)⁸.

⁸ In another text Tugolukov writes about a similar terminological mess when it comes to Evens living on the Okhotsk Sea and the upper Kolyma (Tugolukov 1970).

The authorities of the Kolyma district remained under this illusion until the early 1930s, when “Evens were recognized as a separate nationality and their ethnonym gained official status” (Tugolukov 1971, 218). Foundations were then laid for the proper appellations being applied according to which people living in “the north-eastern regions of Yakutia and Chukotka were Evens and not Evenks” (IKE 1997, 14).

The reforms of ethnic terminology introduced by the Soviet state and science institutions were reflected in the documents produced by the local administration and collective farms in the region [ulus] of Nizhnekolymsk. The new names began to appear from about the mid-1930s. The oldest of the kolkhoz reports from the Alaseya lands of 1935 already featured the new names, Odul, Even and Evenk, respectively (ANU f901d183). The prior names are nowhere to be found in documents dating from the 1940s which were produced by collective farms and the administration of the Olerinska Tundra region. The oldest of the documents relating to this area, from 1940, contains information about the ethnic composition of the Olenevod kolkhoz. It is a list of families who were members of the kolkhoz, written down in a logbook specially printed for this purpose. The print is in Yakut and in the section on national composition it contains the following categories: Yakuts, Evens and Evenks, Chukchi and Odul (Yukaghir) (ANU f901d102). Subsequent records of this kind do not have ready-to-fill tables with nationality columns, and sometimes there are no tables at all, or ones drafted by the person filling the book. In these cases, the documents from the years 1941–1953 contain terms such as Yakuts (less often Sakha), Luorawetlans, Oduls, while for the other groups, there are two types of entries – Evenks or Evens/Evenks (as one category) (ANU f901d104-138). It is a similar story with the records of another Olerinska kolkhoz, the Sutanya Uderan, where one can find a very significant correction in one of the entries. The rolls for the years 1941–1942 contain, apart from the names Yakuts, Luorawetlans, and Oduls, the entry Evenks. In a document of 1946, in the Russian word for Evenks (*Evenki*) the ending *-ki* was struck off, and in the subsequent years a somewhat strange entry Even/Evenk (Russian *Even/Evenki*) appears (ANU f901d161-175).

In due course, the collective farms of Olenevod and Sutanya Uderan were combined into one state farm, named Stalin Sovkhoz (Sokolov 1991, 3; Yaglovskiy 2003b, 117). The farm covered the entire area of the Olerinska Tundra, and its headquarters were located at the seat of the Olerinska rural council in Andryushkino, a village being built since 1941. A close look at the commercial ledgers from the late 1950s and 1960s reveals the strange fortunes of individual ethnic names. The ledger of the Olerinska rural council for the period 1960–1962 features a reduced number of nationality categories compared to the older state farm records. First of all, the term Odul had disappeared completely, and among several hundred residents of Andryushkino the book did not mention a single person of that nationality. Nor will you find here the term Evenk or strange combinations like Even/Evenks. Apart from a few Russian newcomers, the

residents of Andryushkino belonged, according to the document, to three nationalities: Chukchi⁹, Even and Yakut (ANU f703d5-6).

In the next book, however, the limited ethnic set, regarding Olerinska realities, began to get complicated. Against the names of six people the entry Odul appears in the nationality column, and in the case of several others the entries were corrected – the term Even was crossed out, and the term Yukaghir was written above it (ANU f703d7-8). In subsequent years, there were more similar deletions, while the term Odul gradually disappeared. In the book for the years 1972–1974 it no longer appeared at all, but instead there can be found as many as 120 Yukaghirs (ANU f701d13-14). Since then, the terminology clearly has regularised – documents produced in the region indicate the presence on its territory of two major groups of small nationalities of the North – Evens and Yukaghirs (there were few Chukchis in Andryushkino).

Some of this naming confusion in the local administration documents can be accounted for by referring to the previously signalled changes – this concerned mainly the appearance, for a certain period, of the names Luorawetlan and Odul and their later replacement with the old names Chukchi and Yukaghir. The frequent occurrence in the collective-farm documents of the name Evenk probably resulted from the strong position held by Betils – the clan referred to as Tungus – among the other groups in the tundra between the Big Chukchee and the Alaseya. Its later replacement with Evens was connected in turn with the adoption of the rule proclaiming that “the people living in the north-eastern regions of Yakutia and Chukotka were Evens and not Evenks” (IKE 1997, 14).

An additional clarification is needed for the temporary disappearance of the term Yukaghir from Andryushkino documentation. Local tradition links this with the activities of the then head of the administration. In the early 1930s, the man in question became head of the first collective farm in the Olerinska Tundra and from 1934 served for many years as chairman of the nomadic council, and then of the village council in Andryushkino. He also held party posts in the local bodies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Yaglovskiy 2003, 102). The nickname “The Soviet” given to him by the inhabitants of the tundra perfectly captured the significance of this figure and his influence. Holding key posts for a number of years, he had full control over the documents of the local administration (*the village council Soviets*), and independently, according to his own beliefs, he shaped the data contained in them. The reasons why for many years “The Soviet” recorded Yukaghirs as Evens in the books are not clear. None of my interviewees were able to offer a clear explanation for the conduct of the head of administration. His efforts to make the number of Evens look larger than it was were usually put down to the fact that he himself was an Even. Some

⁹ In the oldest book covering the years 1957 to 1959 there also occurred the parallel terms Chukchi and Luorawetlan (ANU f703d2-4).

interviewees also evoked the context of past events related to repressions against, and the death sentence on, the first Yukaghir writer and scholar, Teki Odulok. An apparent result of these events was an unofficial “pall of silence” over all matters Yukaghir, thus giving “The Soviet” a pretext for his actions¹⁰. Of some significance could have been the fact that the Yukaghirs were not listed in the results of the national census of 1939, where they did not appear as a separate nationality but were included in the general category of “other nationalities of the North” (Demoscoper). These are mere speculations; for it is not clear whether this was the real reason. Regardless of the cause, as a result of “The Soviet’s” activities in the 1950s and early 1960s, the ledgers at Andryushkino showed that there were no Yukaghirs in the area under the jurisdiction of the Olerinska rural council.

Such manipulations were possible because, as it transpired, until the 1950s the changes of nomenclature proposed by Soviet ethnographers and officials and their implementation in the local administration’s records mattered little for the people of the tundra. The naming reform was being carried out at a time when the cultural development of small nationalities of the North planned by the Soviet ideologists was only just starting. Until at least the mid-twentieth century, the way of life of most people in the Olerinska Tundra had not changed radically. They still engaged in reindeer herding, hunting and fishing, except that now they did so as members of kolkhoz brigades. The first school in the Olerinska Tundra was opened at Khara-Tala in 1930. Universal access to education can only be talked about existing from the late 1940s, when the Khara-Tala school was moved to Andryushkino (Nadeyeva and Krigshteyn 2003). At that time, a knowledge of Russian was not common in this region, as the inhabitants of the tundra used local languages. The local administration had long relied on the Yakut language, and Russian only began to take root in the 1950s. On a daily basis, local terms of ethnic classification were used, which occasionally coincided with different local divisions and old clan divisions, almost forgotten by that time.

An important source of information about the ethnic situation of the region in that period are the findings of an expedition organized in the 1950s by the Institute of Language, Literature and History at the Yakut Branch of the Academy of Sciences

¹⁰ Nikolai Ivanovich Spiridonov (pen name Teki Odulok) was the first scholar and writer of Yukaghir origin. He came from an upper-Kolyma group of Yukaghirs, from Nelemnoye. He graduated from the party school in Yakutsk, and then continued his studies at the University of Leningrad. In 1927 and 1928 he stayed on the Kolyma, where he collected materials for his research on the life of Yukaghirs. The fruits of his labours resulted in the article *Oduly (Ūkagiry) kolymского Okrugā* published in 1930 in the journal *Sovetskiy Sever* and a book published three years later *Na krainem Severe*. He was the author of the novel *Zhizn Imteurgina starshego* (first published in 1934) and several short stories, which were the first literary works written by a Yukaghir. He became a victim of Stalinist repressions, was arrested in 1937, and shot dead a year later. He was posthumously exonerated in 1955. For modern Yukaghirs, Teki Odulok has a place in the first row of their small pantheon of national heroes.

of the USSR. The publications reporting on these studies painted a picture of complex ethnic relationships and the striking inability of many of the studied individuals to declare membership in specific nationality categories.

“It should be noted that when the question about their nationality was addressed to old Evens, it was extremely difficult for them to answer; they usually identified themselves as Omoks and did not object to their group being included together with Lamuts, or Tungus, or Evens” (Gurvich 1952, 203).

“In connection with multilingualism and the predominance of mixed marriages among the tundra nomads living on the lower Kolyma, their national identity, especially as far as the Yukaghir are concerned, proved to be extremely vague. Many respondents could not admit to any particular nationality, agreeing to be classified at the same time as Evens, the Yukaghir, and the Chukchi” (Yukagiry 197, 23–24).

The above quotations show the little impact made by the officially adopted ethnic divisions. During the first decades of the Soviet regime, the average residents of the tundra may not have ever come into contact with documents created by the local administrations where the new terms were used (either in the Yakut or Russian version).

The process of assimilating the official ethnic categories proceeded slowly and as it progressed, the local ethnic and clan divisions were being forgotten. Both the local and official modes of classification still coexisted in the 1950s, and their complex interpenetration led to terminological chaos, which the Soviet ethnographers doing fieldwork in the lower-Komyła region had to grapple with. According to their contemporary informants, the ethnonym *Odul* applied not only to the tundra Yukaghir but also to some Evens. The term Yukaghir itself was assigned by the inhabitants of the tundra to the settled Jukaghir living on the Kolyma. The tundra Yukaghir referred to their language as *Khangai*, and to Even as *Ilkan*. At the same time the word *Khangai* denoted, as formerly among the Yakuts, all the tundra nomads except for the Chukchi (Yukagiry 1975, 24). Particularly interesting is what the inhabitants of the Olerinska Tundra said about their own and their parents' ethnicity. A man claiming to be an Even said that his father and grandfather were Evens from the clan of *Khangai*, and his mother was a Yukaghir (*Odul*) from the clan of *Erberken*. Another man defining himself as Yukaghir-*Odul* said that his father and grandfather were Yukaghir-*Oduls* from the clan of *Khangai*, and his mother an Even from the clan of *Khododil* (Yukagiry 1975, 24–25). It also turned out quite often that persons officially recorded as Evens would, in interviews with ethnographers, describe themselves as Yukaghir, and vice versa (Yukagiry 1975, 24).

The picture of the ethnic identity of the inhabitants of the Olerinska Tundra that emerges from these studies is very specific, characterised by liquidity of identification, mutual infiltration of local ethnonyms and official nationality labels, and a rather indifferent treatment of entries in the documents of the administration. This state of affairs was due to change soon, and ethnic identities would increasingly be written

into the framework of the official ethnic categories. This was best exemplified by the Yukaghir, who would again begin to appear in the rosters of the Andryushkino administration. This was to become possible through a plethora of factors that were to turn the chaos of previous categorisations into a clear and consistent classification system, compatible with the official one.

In the second half of the 1950s, in connection with the transformation of collective farms into large state farms – *sovkhazes* – a campaign of closing down settlements whose future did not look promising was carried out. In this way Tustakh-sen was liquidated, the base of one of the existing collective farms in the Olerinska Tundra. The residents of Tustakh-sen, mainly Yukaghirs, were soon relocated to Andryushkino, where Evens and Yakuts predominated (Yaglovskiy 2003, 41–42). The mostly Yukaghir-speaking newcomers found it difficult to become accustomed to the new place, and the ostracism they met with from the Even- and Yakut-speaking majority did not facilitate their assimilation. As if that was not enough, “The Soviet” entered them all into his books as Evens. Around the same time, in the late 1950s, there were more and more graduates of the Andryushkino school. Some of them continued their education away from home, at secondary technical colleges, located in different towns of Eastern Siberia, and in some cases at universities in Leningrad. Thus there were a growing number of people functioning outside the local tundra community for whom it was not inconsequential what ethnic allocation appeared next to their names in the documents of the administration.

It was in this specific period that the Yukaghir expedition, whose findings I quoted above, conducted its research in the lower Kolyma region. Its presence was not without influence on the process of transition discussed here. Some of my interlocutors at Andryushkino pointed to the fact that the Soviet researchers’ interest in the Yukaghir language and culture at that point of time largely contributed to the survival of Yukaghir identity. In circumstances where the entry “Yukaghir” had practically disappeared from the records of the administration, it was like throwing a drowning man a lifeline. This peculiar, though not necessarily intentional, support for Yukaghir identity from the Soviet academy was soon confirmed when in 1959 the first post-war census was held, this time with the Yukaghir as a separate nationality (Demoscope2).

It was also a time when the first generation of the Yukaghir intelligentsia could speak out. Also for them the Yukaghir expedition was of great importance; several students from Andryushkino studying at Leningrad’s Herzen Institute participated in its work. One of them was the later well-known Yukaghir linguist, poet and activist Gavril Kurilov. He was invited to participate in the expedition by Yerukhim Kreinovich¹¹,

¹¹ Yerukhim Kreinovich (1905–1985), Soviet linguist and ethnographer, specialising in the languages of the peoples of the North, a student of Lev Shternberg. Initially, he studied the language of the Nivkh people. Arrested in 1937, he spent many years in labour camps, where he continued his linguistic research,

responsible for the linguistic aspect of the commission's research. Kreinovich had previously corresponded with Gavril's elder brother Semyon (Ogryzko 1999. Part I, 343–344). At the time, Semyon Kurilov was trying his hand as a journalist on the *Sovetskaya Kolyma* and gathering material for a planned novel about Yukaghirs while leading a private campaign to restore the name Odul/Yukaghir in the Andryushkino documentation controlled by “The Soviet”. Many of my interlocutors pointed to Semyon Kurilov as the person who first began to demand that the presence of Yukaghirs in the region be acknowledged. This activity reflects the process of reinforcing the term Yukaghir. Initially, Semyon Kurilov fought for the Odul. One of his early articles in the *Sovetskaya Kolyma* began with the words: “I am an Odul's son” (Kurilov 1957, 3). It was only later, perhaps under the influence of his contacts with Kreinovich, that he consistently used the term Yukaghir.

All of these processes and activities were soon to be reflected in the records of the Andryushkino rural council. While in the early 1960s the first deletions of Even appeared, both Odul and Yukaghir were entered in their place. In subsequent years, the former term gradually disappeared, but there were more and more entries of Yukaghir. In 1969, Semyon Kurilov published his first novel *Khanido i Khalerkha* [A Young Eagle and a Gull]. This book about the dramatic fate of a Yukaghir couple garnered enthusiastic reviews and was widely read across the Soviet Union. Six years later Kurilov's second novel appeared, *Novye liudi* [New People], depicting the fates of Yukaghirs in the days immediately preceding the advent of the Soviet system. Both perfectly fulfilled the role of literature written “to cheer the hearts” and integrate the community. These novels were also significant in another, perhaps even more important way: by gaining recognition, they confirmed in a way the Yukaghirs' separate identity. Even before Kurilov's second novel appeared, more than 120 people were entered as Yukaghir in Andryushkino's books.

At the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century the process of departing from the old ethnonyms and methods of identification took place in the Olerinska Tundra, where clan divisions intersected in different ways with ethnic divisions. Their place was taken by official ethnic categories, the names of nationalities confirmed by official Soviet ethnography that the residents of Andryushkino began to identify with. Even and Yukaghir identities constructed around them were not simple extensions of any of the old categories. The reinforcement of these new identities was connected with the processes of the institutionalization of nationalities and with transformations that boosted their local effect.

studying Yukaghir among other languages. After his release, he defended his doctoral thesis on the Yukaghir language. In the late 1940s he was again incarcerated in a gulag. Only after being exonerated and regaining his freedom after the death of Stalin was he able to concentrate on scholarly work (Roon and Sirina 2004).

THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF NATIONALITIES AND LOCAL TENSIONS

The paradox of the Soviet system was that while aiming to create a transnational socialist society, it simultaneously reinforced the existent administratively decreed ethnic classification. According to Rogers Brubaker, this happened because in the Soviet Union multi-nationality was institutionalized (1998, 28). Ethnic heterogeneity in the USSR was subject to official codification objectified as national diversity. The institutionalization concerned national and nationality structures, and in its first dimension it was combined with the territorial organization of politics and administration, and in the second with the classification of persons (Brubaker 37). In the latter case, the tool of its application was primarily the passport system, but also the entire system of bureaucracy at various levels. Throughout his/her life, in different situations and at different stages, each inhabitant of the Soviet Union repeatedly filled in the box “nationality”. And it was not some irrelevant box that could be ignored because its content could decide on one’s admission to college, allocation to army unit, etc. At the same time, there was no room for discretion. Just as peasants in the Soviet Union were ascribed to land, workers assigned to factories, and women to men, so each individual had to be assigned to one particular nationality (Slezkine 1994, 444).

Although the passport system was introduced in the 1930s, more than two decades of various reform attempts had to pass before a uniform set of ethnic categories was adopted for some of the small nationalities of the North. The special place occupied by this aggregate category in the nationality structure of the USSR resulted mainly from the belief in the “backwardness” of the peoples in question. In connection with this assumption, the Soviet state sought to influence their situation in such a way as to pull them out of that “backwardness” and bring them into the main stream of transformation towards a socialist society (Slezkine 1992). High stakes were put on education, which led to the formation of a school for the people of the Olerinska Tundra – first in Chara-Tala, and then in Andryushkino. This included secondary level education. Schools and institutes that were set up in different centres specifically for small nationalities of the North only confirmed the distinctiveness of this category in the process of institutionalizing nationalities; one of the most important institutions of this kind in the late 1950s was the Leningrad Herzen Pedagogical Institute.

The policy towards small nationalities of the North, like Soviet nationality policy in general, kept evolving. After a period lasting until the second half of the 1930s, when their distinctness was stressed, foundations were laid for territorial autonomy and many other initiatives were undertaken for these communities; over the next two decades, their problems, or even their very existence, tended to be kept secret (Sokolovski 2004, 73)¹². An important signal indicating a change of attitude was the

¹² For example, as late as 1956 it was still difficult to find on the pages of *Kolymskaya Pravda*, the local newspaper of the lower-Kolyma region, the names of ethnic groups inhabiting the area. Articles on the

Council of Ministers of the USSR adopting special provisions for taking action for the economic and cultural development of these communities. One of the paragraphs of this document obliged the local administrations to support initiatives directed at the development of writing and literature of the small nationalities of the North (Ogryzko 1999, 531). It was then that Semyon Kurilov embarked on his journalistic career and started work on his future novels.

Provisions similar to that of 1957 were also adopted by the authorities in subsequent decades (Ogryzko 1999, 531–535). And although many of the plans included in them remained unfulfilled, some of their effects were certainly visible in Andryushkino. In the late 1970s, under a special programme for the construction of so-called model settlements for the small nationalities of the North, modern multi-family houses were built. In the early 1980s the teaching of the Yukaghir and Even languages was introduced at the local school (Vakhtin 1991, 16).

The two official names, Eveny and Yukaghirs, came into local use, pushing out the older identifications. The above-mentioned activities and initiatives, fitting the institutionalization of the nationality pattern outlined by Rogers Brubaker, created the conditions for the consolidation of modern Even and Yukaghir identities. At the same time, the specific local context worked in favour of maintaining a distinct separateness of the two groups in Andryushkino. The introduction of the official terminology and its manipulation in the mid-twentieth century, as well as other activities from this period, had the effect of stirring opposition to Yukaghirs from Eveny (and partially from Yakuts), hence those displaced from Tustach-sen met with ostracism from the Even- and Yakut-speaking residents of Andryushkino; the manipulation in documentation did not confine itself in just erasing the word Yukaghir, but in replacing it with the term Even. These two dimensions of the impact, stemming from both the institutional character of Soviet policy and from the local specificity of inter-relations between the groups, were to determine the character of the ethnic situation of Andryushkino even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This was particularly evident in the 1990s. In the nascent Russian Federation, the pattern of the institutional approach to ethnic diversity was largely replicated, as evidenced by the rise of national republics which are dependent on the Federation, among them the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The Russian Constitution and legislation also confirmed the separate status of the small nationalities of the North, only changing the name of the category to: the indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East of the Russian Federation, and significantly extending the list of communities belonging to it (Donahoe et al., 2008). In post-Soviet Yakutia, as in many other regions of the Russian Federation, the political and cultural trend known

tundra settlements contained terms such as collective farmers, reindeer herders, fishermen, hunters, but not the names of their nationalities.

as the national revival evolved dynamically. This was true about the Yakuts themselves, but also about the numerically small peoples of the North, among whom Yukaghirs proved to be one of the most active participants in the process.

The first initiative undertaken by the Yukaghirs in Andryushkino involved an economic transformation. In place of the declining state farms, the so-called *Obshchinas* were created in Yakutia; it was a new form of economic activity, intended to replace the Soviet farms while allowing the peoples of the North to maintain their traditional activities: reindeer herding, fishing and hunting. In 1991, a Yukaghir Chaila *obshchina* was established in Andryushkino, which initiated the process of fragmenting the assets of the former Olerinska state farm. In 1992, an Even Alaseya *obshchina* was set up, from which one of the teams separated a year later to form – for a brief period – the Orolchach *obshchina* (Problemy 1996, 51). For many residents of Andryushkino, the collapse of the Olerinska state farm – a millionaire *sovkhos* as it was called in the Soviet times and an object of pride – was in itself a huge blow, affecting the stability of ties within the local community. However, what was particularly difficult to accept for many who were brought up on the ideals of internationalism was the fact that the breakup took place along ethnic lines. In a situation when economic and ideological foundations were shaken, it was all too easy to upset the fragile ethnic balance. The bone of contention was the very process of dividing the state farm's property among the *obshchinas*, something that was glaringly unfavourable for the Yukaghir Chaila (Problemy 1996, 51–53).

Together with the rise of the Chaila *obshchina* came the idea to rebuild the Tustach-Sen settlement, the seat of the former Yukaghir kolkhoz Olenevod. Yukaghir activists obtained a grant from the President of the Republic of Sakha for the implementation of their national-revival initiatives. The plans to rebuild Tustach-Sen were never realized, but discussions around this idea further divided the residents. For the generation that still remembered the terrible conditions in which they had to live in Andryushkino in the first years after resettlement from Tustach-Sen, and the animosity they experienced from some of the residents, the idea of rebuilding Tustach-Sen seemed to be a legitimate redress for their grievances. For the idealistically-minded Yukaghir leaders, on the other hand, it was the fulfilment of the Yukaghir dream of independence and an attempt to halt the ongoing processes of assimilation. In fact, it was a completely unrealistic idea, both for economic reasons and because of the very deep integration/intermingling that had occurred within the Andryushkino ethnic community.

The upshot of the controversy over the rebuilding of Tustach-Sen was that another Yukaghir initiative failed to receive wider support. The leaders committed to the Yukaghir national revival came up with the idea of introducing Yukaghir autonomy, the so-called Suktul. It was to be a form of national self-government functioning in places where there were clusters of Yukaghirs. In the 1990s, the idea was discussed in

the Yakut parliament, but at grassroots level opinions on the introduction of autonomy were divided. It was supported by some Yukaghirs, but the majority of the population treated it with reservation.

These briefly presented revivalist initiatives of the 1990s reflect the measure of their significance for the ethnic situation of Andryushkino. The common feature of the discussed projects was to achieve clear separation of Yukaghirs from the settlement's community, to reorganise its socio-economic life in such a way as to create clear boundaries of their separateness based on concrete institutions (autonomy, settlement, *obshchina*). These initiatives were accompanied by a clear boost to identity awareness, which in the case of the Yukaghirs was based largely on the belief in the nation's tragic fate, brought about over the last half-century by distortions of the Soviet policy implemented by local officials (usually Evens, as the interviewees claimed) unfavourably disposed towards Yukaghirs. Thus the tendency of antagonising relations between Yukaghirs and Eveny, visible from the late 1950s, was consolidated, and the 1990s passed in Andryushkino in an atmosphere of Yukaghir-Even conflict which would come to the surface on the occasion of national revival initiatives, although in fact it involved ongoing competition for influence in the multi-ethnic community of the settlement.

* * *

The processes that I have tried to reconstruct here involving the replacement of the local system of ethnic identification and recognition with official nationality names, applied, of course, to the whole of Siberia, although the course they followed and their final results differed. Studies from other regions show the durability of the old identifications which also remain in circulation today (e.g. Anderson 2000; Krzyworzeka 2004). In the Alaseya basin, the local terminology also retained its importance long after the official nationality categories were introduced. During the second half of the twentieth century, however, the new officially recognized names not only came to be widely used in Andryushkino and the Olerinska Tundra, but were also relatively quickly adopted into the official matrix of identity terms. For this to happen, the official terminology of course had to be implemented in the first place, and the whole mechanism of institutionalizing nationalities had to be set in motion. However, all of this only prepared the framework within which the new identities, Yukaghir and Even, could evolve. It provided – to evoke Eriksen for the last time – a new system of classifying people. On the other hand, the ethnic inter-relations which have developed around these new classifications, the content with which the grid was filled, was the result of an interplay of many factors. When we juxtapose the processes, the people and the events that make up this mix of factors, we obtain a rather strange list: relocation

of the population, a local official intent on a specific kind of ethnic cleansing of the documentation, a scientific research expedition, a Leningrad linguist with a labour-camp past, and a writer and his novels. Each of these factors tend to have a link to the broader social and political processes, but are playing themselves out locally and having the greatest impact on the local community. The list is probably incomplete, but I think it indicates sufficiently clearly how varied the determinants of changes in ethnic identity in the remote parts of the Siberian North may be.

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Translated by Stefan Sikora

Author's address:

Wojciech Lipiński Ph.D.

Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology

The University of Warsaw

ul. Żurawia 4, 00-503 Warszawa, POLAND

e-mail: w.lipinski@uw.edu.pl