

FaR 2021**International Forum “Freedom and responsibility in pivotal times”****THE ROLE OF DIGITALISATION IN PRESERVING THE
CULTURAL HERITAGE OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

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Russian Federation, jav1@mail.ru**Abstract**

The article examines the current state of the traditional culture of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, the problems of preserving identity, the role of digital audiovisual archiving for the transmission of cultural and linguistic heritage to future generations. There are tendencies of interruption of the transgenerational transmission of ethnic culture among the northern ethnic groups. This entails the loss of traditional knowledge, beliefs, language and ethnic identity. Language and customs are much better preserved among the nomadic population. The main thesis of the article: digitalization makes it possible to present culture in its real existence, to fix the vernacular languages, the features of verbal and nonverbal communication of the peoples of the North. The author suggests applying a culturological approach to the digitization of cultural heritage objects, which assumes the importance of understanding and taking into account the cultural peculiarities such as syncretism, sacralization of objects and actions, deep connection with nature; the need to record explanations of representatives of the ethnic group about the semantics, application field, gender characteristics of the functioning of things; professional selection of field material. The article analyzes the causes of the gradual loss of authentic culture (historical, economic, socio-cultural). The main factors of transformation of traditional culture are considered on the basis of the materials on Evenki. These are factors such as ethnic history, a wide geography of interethnic relations, features of the worldview and traditional economy, socio-economic transformations of the Soviet era and modern globalization processes.

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1. Introduction

A significant number of projects, government programs, concepts, and legislative acts (the federal law "On Guarantees of the Rights of Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation", the Concept of Sustainable Development of Indigenous Minorities of the North, Siberia, and the Russian Far East, the Program of State Support for Traditional Economic Activities of Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation in the Arctic Zone, the law "On Nomadic Activities of Indigenous Peoples of the Russian Federation," the Law "On the Rights of Indigenous Minorities of the Russian Federation") are all dedicated to the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East in Russia. The special attention paid by the academic community, administrative structures/governmental agencies, and public organizations to the problems of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia, and the Far East is due to the current situation when the distinctive culture of these peoples experiences sufficient gradual loss caused by different reasons, such as historical, economic, and sociocultural ones.

2. Problem Statement

The indigenous peoples of the North and the Arctic for many centuries mastered the Arctic landscapes, adapted to the extreme natural and climatic environment, developed an original culture in permafrost conditions and lived in harmony with the surrounding world without disturbing the ecology of the fragile northern nature. Today, the indigenous peoples of the North and the Arctic are experiencing the challenges of the time: globalization, the development of man-made civilization, the active industrial development of the native habitat of Arctic ethnic groups have a devastating impact on their traditional way of life. All these processes have led to the fact that indigenous peoples are on the verge of an ethnic crisis, which threatens to lose the unity of ethnic characteristics, such as language, culture, way of life, traditional forms of farming (reindeer husbandry, hunting, fishing).

Anthropologists ascertain the interruption of the transgenerational transmission of cultural heritage among northern ethnic groups: when the older generation is gone, the last bearers of language and culture, traditional knowledge, beliefs, and native language disappear. The use of the native language in everyday life in a number of indigenous settlements today looks more like an exception than a rule. Researchers note that the language and traditions are much better preserved among the nomadic peoples. Nomads still retain their oral folklore tradition, especially its smaller genres; the traditional clothing, food and household items are also still being used. This is a good chance for all interested parties to preserve samples of speech and authentic cultural artefacts of northern ethnic groups, thus preventing their extinction.

3. Research Questions

3.1. At the present stage of development of the information society, we are witnessing processes of unprecedented speed of information transfer. The rapid development of the Internet has served as an impetus for the development of social networks, as a result of which a new environment for multicultural communication has emerged, in which there are no boundaries, distances and time constraints. The Internet makes it possible to communicate in many languages of the peoples of the world. The development of the

www, the blogosphere, digital libraries form global and local communities that produce, exchange and disseminate knowledge. The World Wide Web provides tremendous opportunities for users in terms of ensuring freedom of expression, education, preservation and development of culture and spirituality. Phenomenal development is observed in the field of mobile communications, the efficiency of which has increased due to integration with the global Internet. The introduction of mobile applications such as "Vkontakte", WhatsApp and Instagram received nationwide recognition, as a result of which a new environment for communication and prompt transfer of all types of information began to form. The birth of a new environment for multicultural communication is becoming the basis for the dialogue of civilizations, cultures, religions, which will determine the worldview and sustainable development of new generations. All peoples inhabiting our planet should be represented in this single and boundless information space. It is necessary to state the fact that you can receive information and communicate on the Internet only in the dominant languages. For example, people whose languages are not represented on the web (and only more than 400 out of 6,700 existing languages are used on the Internet) cannot adequately participate in information exchange. The Russian Federation, like many other states of the world, is multi-ethnic, but it is the only country that, despite the zigzags of history, was able to preserve the indigenous peoples with their traditional way of life. More than 160 ethnic groups coexist and live on its territory, of which 45 belong to the indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation. Of these 45 peoples, according to the order of the Government of the Russian Federation "On the approval of the list of indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation", 40 peoples belong to the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. Each language is a unique repository of information about ethnicity and culture, about its evolution. Throughout the history of mankind, some languages were born and others died out. In general, in the world over the last three generations of human life, about 200 languages have disappeared. This is information from the "Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearance", published by UNESCO. The issue of the UNESCO Courier, prepared for the International Mother Language Day (21 February 2009), is dedicated to an alarming phenomenon: endangered languages take with them not only words, but also worldview systems, communication, valuable knowledge, whole worlds of different ways of thinking (Kuzmin & Plys, 2008, pp. 111-129).

3.2. Modern digital technologies should be at the service of science, education and culture today, since anthropological descriptions do not create a real picture of living culture, and in any case corrupt reality, passing through the prism of the author's perception. Linguistic descriptions of language, in turn, do not necessarily reflect the pronunciation and intonation of the speech, which are so important for its acquisition. The digitalization of both cultural and linguistic heritage makes it possible to present traditional culture in its living reality, to record the dialects and the specifics of verbal and non-verbal communication of the peoples of the North. Audiovisual archiving serves the purposes of UNESCO Programs, Recommendations and Agreements that deal with the protection of the cultural heritage and access to the documentary, such as the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2002 Memory of the World: General Guidelines to Safeguard Documentary Heritage, and the 1980 Recommendation for the Safeguarding and Preservation of Moving Images (Edmondson, 2004).

The authors of the article "Standards for Digital Audiovisual Archiving of Cultural Heritage" note that "audiovisual archiving aims to maintain the authenticity and integrity of the resulting material. It should be protected from damage, censorship or intentional distortion" (Nepomniachtchi, 2012, p. 312).

3.3. While dealing with the objects of ethnic culture, it is important to understand and take into account the semantics and features of culture as a whole: syncretism, existence of sacralized objects and actions, and the deep connection with nature. Not only mythology, folklore, ornament, ritual, but even the arrangement of things in the people's life have many signifying functions. The material and spiritual objects are not separated from each other in traditional culture; every object carries a sacred meaning. The process of digitalizing the object world should therefore record the cultural speakers' descriptions of the semantics, scope, gendered functioning of the thing, the prohibitions associated with it, as well as different proverbs. Not only the museum description, attribution of objects for the virtual museum, but also their additional interpretation by the ethnophore should be presented.

3.4. When digitizing objects of cultural heritage, attention should be paid to the professional selection of material. Specialists in the field of ethnocultural studies, ethnography, folklore studies, and anthropology should be engaged in such work. Sometimes it is difficult even for scientists to separate an authentic object from a new-made one. Traditional culture is more and more influenced by globalization processes, which leads to the change of worldview, numerous cultural borrowings and ethnic culture transformations. There is a loss of traditional performance and semantics of rituals, dances, clothing and arts and crafts of indigenous peoples. In the case of large-scale digitization of cultural and linguistic heritage, student volunteers, or even representatives of indigenous peoples themselves, should be involved in training seminars, as well as an expert review of the footage.

4. Purpose of the Study

Identifying the role of digitalisation in the process of preserving and actualizing the cultural heritage of the small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East, let us study the example of one of the small indigenous peoples - the Evenks - the causes of the loss of identity and the main factors of the transformation of the traditional culture of the Evenks.

5. Research Methods

The analysis of these phenomena requires the use of both general scientific and philosophical methods of knowledge (classification, questioning, observation, analogy, analysis and synthesis, hypothesis, text analysis, determinism) and methods of cultural research (evolutionary, diachronic, typological, semiotic, structural and functional).

6. Findings

The Evenks are the most widely dispersed ethnic group across the country. Evenki settlements are dispersed throughout Tomsk region, Irkutsk region, Buryatia, Transbaikalia and Chita regions, Taimyr (Dolgano-Nenetsky District of Krasnoyarsk Krai, Evenki municipal district of Krasnoyarsk Krai, Sakha (Yakutia) Republic – from Olenka to Iengra rivers, Amur region, Khabarovsk Krai, and even

Sakhalin island. The specifics of the Evenki worldview, household, interethnic relations and other factors caused this unusual phenomenon. With the help of reindeer the Tungus tribes were able to overpass the most difficult landscapes, inaccessible and insurmountable to others. G. M. Vasilevich identified three main purposes of the Evenki bogatyr travels in the heroic legends: the desire to see "the edge of the earth"; searching an opponent or foe to test their strength and agility; searching for a friend, or a partner (wife). The desire to see and discover the land is often motivated in such a particular way: "Sitting on the top of that mountain, looking around at the earth, he said: "But what is the size of the world?" (as cited in Varlamova, 2002, p. 249). The Otani-bogatyr wants to discover new lands in order to find new hunting grounds. The historical movement to the east is the main and central theme of many legends, and it is expressed usually in such motifs as: "to travel, to explore new lands", "to see the world", "to discover the size of the earth", "to discover all the ends of the earth".

Despite the length of the distances separating the ethnic groups of the Evenks, they all have a common material and spiritual culture and language. As the Evenks moved across Siberia, they were influenced by many different peoples (referring to the impact in dress, economic activities, and worldview): Selkups, Dolgans, Yakuts, Buryats, Yukaghirs, Evens, and many others. The Evenks' culture has also been influenced by these peoples, many of whom assimilated them in some areas. Large numbers of Evenks nowadays do not speak their native language mainly due to the strong Russian influence. For example, the Evenks of Yakutia speak Yakut language in Olenok and Bulun district. But their identity remains Evenki, and they have a great desire to revive the ethnic culture. This task is made easier by the fact that the type of the household, native clothing, traditional mythological worldview are still alive.

The Evenks living on the banks of Lower Lena have contacted with the Evenki clans of Yakutia. That's why the ethnic clothing of the Evenks living in the Arctic part of Yakutia is so close to the other Evenks' dresses in its' color scheme – a combination of white and blue beads on a light rovduga is a distinct feature of traditional clothes. The Evenks are generally characterized by bright colors in costume ornaments - green, red, yellow and blue. Such embroidery can be found among the Evenks of the Krasnoyarsk region. The winter clothing sets retain their traditional appearance even today, although the Evenki, who have been influenced by Yakut culture, can use Yakut curvilinear ornaments in their winter clothes made of reindeer fur; the same applies to the decoration of footwear. Today, few Evenki villages preserve their authentic dress and costume ornamentation. One of the last strongholds of Evenki distinctive culture is the village of Iengra, Neryungri district, Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). There are tailors, original masters of their craft, who observe all the traditions of making the ethnic clothing – up to the ancient ways of dyeing rovdugs using ochre and even elder. The costume is embroidered with multicolored beads, colored threads, while sinewy threads are used to decorate the shoes. The whole culture is kept here in a complex as reindeer breeding is still practiced, which forms the basis for the preservation of the language, national cuisine and traditional rituals. In the neighbouring Amur region, the Evenki have been influenced by other Tungus-Manchzhurian peoples. The clothes and shoes are embroidered with mouliné thread, the patterns are curvilinear and floral. This territory has historically always had a larger non-ethnic population - the gold miners, the exiles, the workers employed at the construction of the Baikal-Amur railway. The assimilation process was more active there. There are very few Evenks in Khabarovsk Krai, on Sakhalin, which also affects their assimilation by the neighbouring peoples.

The ethnic history of the Evenks and the history of interethnic relations is one of the factors in the transformation of traditional culture. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Evenks were in active contact with other indigenous peoples of Siberia. In the 18th century, the Russian ethnos began the large-scale development of territories inhabited by the Evenks. One of the ways of bringing them under the hand of the Tsar was Christianisation. As a result, there is a religious syncretism among the Evenks: Christian saints are included in the pantheon, the image of Jesus is superimposed on the ancient ideas of the upper world, of the ancestor bear, who came to be called Amaka-Christos. The funeral rites are carried out according to Christian customs (burial in the ground, installation of a cross), while the traditional type of burial for Evenks is air or ground burial.

The introduction of taxation in the Evenki areal also affected the economy of the Evenks – sable hunting became commercially important, but time-consuming, and as a result, less time was devoted to the main branch of the Evenki economy, reindeer herding. In Yakutia, the development of gold mining and the associated trade also seriously affected reindeer husbandry. It became more subservient to the needs of cargo transportation, which increased the demand for reindeer and made them a commodity for sale. The transformation of reindeer husbandry led to the renewal of the material culture: it was not profitable to kill reindeer for making fur clothing and tent covers. Reindeer leather has been replaced by woven materials and cow skins supplied by Yakuts. The tributary policy of the Russian Government promoted the development of Yakut-Tungus relations: to pay *yasak*, the Yakuts had to purchase furs from the Tungus in exchange for iron goods and livestock. Thus, changes in the socio-economic situation and interethnic contacts influenced the transformation of the appearance of the Evenki national costume. Its material, styling, and ornamentation changed.

Much has changed in the life of the Evenks since the advent of Soviet power. The historical processes of the twentieth century are difficult to assess unequivocally. The peoples of the North received writing systems, education, medical care, financial assistance, and new industries such as farming and fur farming. In exchange for economic benefits, the government dictated its cultural policy: conversion to sedentarization, enlargement of villages, the atheistic ideology, and the system of boarding schools which eventually disrupted intergenerational continuity. The aim was to bring the backward peoples up to speed culturally. But it also meant abandoning certain traditions. Shamanism, ritual and festive activities were the first to suffer. Calendar holidays were replaced by industrial ones - Day of Reindeer Breeder, Day of Fisherman, Youth Day etc. The state needed a citizen with a unified Soviet identity. On the whole, Evenki youths did not mind; those who grew up in boarding schools still remember their educators and teachers with great warmth. Quite sincerely, the Evenki Komsomol considered the culture of their parents a relic of the past. The language, too, was disappearing in a non-violent way. There was no need to speak it, because its sphere of operation was traditional culture, which was gradually being lost. The transformation of culture in the 20th century has embraced all its elements. The national costume, especially the summer costume, is now almost out of use. It has been replaced by cloth clothes and rubber shoes. The photographs from the 1970s show the Evenks at the feast in the village of Bomnak wearing stylised costumes reminiscent of the Chukchi. These are stage costumes, generalized northern costumes, made of cloth. The winter set is better maintained as it is difficult to think of anything more practical in the harsh weather conditions.

In general, it should be noted that during the Soviet period, collective farm reindeer herding was increasing, the herds were growing, but the traditions of nomadic life were forgotten. The last storytellers of the Evenki people managed to be recorded by researchers, who published a number of volumes containing folklore, fairy tales, and myths. By the end of the 20th century the storytelling traditions had all but disappeared. Thanks to the great scientists - G. M. Vasilevich, V.A. Tugolukov, A.I. Mazin, G.I. Varlamova, A.N. Myreeva – and many others, Evenki culture had been described in detail, and today we can rely on their works in the reconstruction of different cultural elements.

7. Conclusion

Thus, we have identified the factors that have influenced the formation and transformation of Evenki culture over the centuries. And our task is to preserve, and in some cases revive, its main original elements. The digitalisation of the cultural and linguistic heritage of the small indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East can play a decisive role in this process.

Today, in the conditions of the formation of the information society, it is necessary to pay special attention to the contradictions between the global processes of the formation of the information society and the preservation of the national identity of any nation. One of such contradictions, as noted in the work of Siganatulin (2006), is the clash of globalization and national identity. Information and communication technologies contribute to the development of globalization processes and the erasure of cultural and linguistic diversity, but, on the other hand, they play an integrating role in creating a new world order, open up new opportunities for representation in the world information space of all peoples, contribute to the preservation languages and cultures of different ethnic groups. The task of today is to preserve the traditions, culture, language and traditional life of indigenous peoples with the organic use of modern information and innovative technologies, which must be directed not at the destruction of language and culture, but, on the contrary, at their preservation and development. Taking into account the above situation, since 2011, the UNESCO Chair of the M.K. Ammosov University, the project "Preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage on digital media and in cyberspace" was implemented. For digital recording of the language and culture of the indigenous peoples of the North of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) (Evens, Evenks, Chukchi, Yukaghirs and Dolgans), Chukotka (Chukchi, Eskimos), Kamchatka (Koryaks, Itelmens) and Khabarovsk Territory (Nanais, Negidals and Udege) were expeditions organized. The digitized materials were presented on the www.arctic-megapedia.ru portal. Information on the implementation of the project is reflected in a number of publications (Zhozhikov & Zhozhikova, 2013, 2017; Zhozhikov & Timofeeva-Tereshkina, 2019). On September 21, 2021, the All-Russian Scientific and Practical Conference "Digitalization of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic" was held in Neryungri. The event was organized by the Siberian Federal University, M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (UNESCO Chair), Experimental boarding school «Arctic» and the regional public organization for promoting the upbringing of the younger generation in the traditions of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the North "Omakta erin" (New breath) of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). More than 20 representatives of educational and scientific institutions and public organizations from Moscow, St. Petersburg, the Komi Republic, Khanty-Mansiysk autonomous region, Krasnoyarsk, Khabarovsk, Ulan-Ude, Blagoveshchensk, Yakutsk, Neryungri, and representatives of local

government took part in the conference. The conference was devoted to the problems of preserving and developing the languages and cultures of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic on digital media and in cyberspace. The discussion was based on the project “Digitalization of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the indigenous peoples of the Arctic”, which received the status of an Arctic Council project. At the plenary session of the conference, 5 greetings and 22 reports were heard. Then the protocol on the establishment of a consortium of universities (M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (Yakutsk), Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (Moscow), Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia (St. Petersburg), Siberian Federal University (Krasnoyarsk) was signed. Under the agreement, large-scale cooperation on the implementation of the project is planned.

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