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**ETHNOCULTURAL INTERACTIONS WITH SLAVIC  
IMMIGRANTS IN THE XVII-XXI CENTURIES**

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**Abstract**

In the process of development of the never seen before endless mountain taiga, tundra, forest, steppe, marine island spaces of Siberia and the Far East by Slavic pioneers, Cossacks, industrialists, and other categories of immigrants, active ethnic contacts with the indigenous peoples of these regions began. The nature of the mutual influence in many aspects depended on the climatic conditions, different civilizational, cultural and ethnic indicators, on the number of contacting communities and the duration of interaction, as well as on the changes in the state policy of the central authorities. The pioneers did not constitute a single ethnos, since they combined not only European, but also Eurasian ethnogenetic components. As a result of frequent interethnic marriages. Most of the pioneers of the first waves were assimilated by the indigenous peoples of the North into a special substrate ethnic society, which was not mentally opposed to the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far Eastern region. As a result of acculturation and assimilation, the Slavs lost some of their ethnographic characteristics under the influence of regional specific cultures. Each territory and the indigenous people living on it had specifics in the field of economy (depending on the economic and cultural type), social relations, in the system of ethnocultural life-supporting technologies, and ideas about the world around. Much less borrowing can be recorded in the sphere of spiritual culture, for the worldview differences between Christians and animists were crucial.

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*Keywords:* Siberia, Far East, indigenous peoples, Slavic immigrants, ethnic contacts



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## 1. Introduction

An analysis of the ethnocultural interaction of the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far Eastern region shows that the culture of the Slavic immigrants had a great influence on the native. As a result of ethnocultural contacts, syncretic rituals and holidays appeared. Indigenous peoples underwent a transformation of the traditional complex of material and spiritual culture, economy, life, crafts, beliefs and rituals. This transformation is explained by a number of reasons: a change in certain areas of the economic and cultural type (resettlement is added for Evenki and Uilta), a boarding school system in isolation from the transmission of cultural property from generation to generation, oblivion of the native language, and the inability to send original rituals. Of great importance is the fact that the institute of shamanism and shamans, who were endowed with special thinking and life experience, disappeared from the spiritual culture, helped society to solve complex problems associated with foreign ethnic influence, maintained the stability of traditional society, and called for the preservation of their native culture. In the Soviet period, there were individual representatives of the ethnic group who helped introduce a new transforming ideology into society. The ethnocultural interaction of the East Slavic immigrants is characterized by various consequences. However, one can also note the reverse influence of native culture on Slavic culture, which, in the 17th-18th and even partially in the 19th centuries, entered into interethnic marriages, perceived some aspects of local culture. This article is devoted to the analysis of this process.

## 2. Problem Statement

The problem of ethno-cultural contacts of Siberian and Far Eastern Aborigines with Slavic immigrants in the XVII-XXI centuries was considered in their studies by domestic and foreign scientists (Artemyev, 2005; Bereznitsky, 2019; Bereznitsky & Primak, 2008; Dameshek, 2017; Gavrilova, 2016; Golovachev, 1902, 1905; Harus, 2020; Karpov, 2020; Lyutsidarskaya, 2006; Oparin, 2016; Sherstova, 2019).

As rightly emphasizes Sherstova (2019), the ethnic mentality of Russian pioneers of the XVII-XVIII centuries differs by amorphousness and fuzziness of ethnic consciousness, by a certain weakness of intra-ethnic communication ties, the cultural diversity of everyday life, and the culture of festivities. However, in the specific climatic conditions of the North and the Far East gradually but inevitably the entire face of the Russian culture was transformed, their economic activity, as a result of a forced departure from the usual developed agriculture to hunting, fishing and marine hunting (Sherstova, 2019). Thus, Sherstova (2019) confirmed the concept of P. M. Golovachev, expressed at the beginning of the XX century that the indigenous peoples of the North were not only recipients, but also donors of certain cultural components. This problem has been considered for several centuries, but still has great prospects for further research. It is necessary to emphasize the fundamental difference between the Russian, Siberian frontier and the North American. The natives of Siberia and the Far East were immediately included in the common Russian system of state, economic, political, social, educational confessional ties. They were obliged to pay tax, as well as other social categories of the Russian population. The American Indians were not considered citizens and ruthlessly destroyed, so that their land was captured by European immigrants. The Slavs in Siberia and the Far East region settled in the river valleys to engage in farming, so they did not interfere

with the aborigines hunting and fishing, doing sea hunting, reindeer and dog breeding. In general, the analysis of the ethno-cultural impact of the indigenous population on the resettlement, in the opinion of the authors, is promising and interesting.

### **3. Research Questions**

The issues that need to be addressed for a comprehensive study of the stated problem lie in two areas: theoretical and practical. The first involves the use of existing concepts about the nature of the development of Russia over the vast territory of Siberia and the Far East. But, most likely, due to the existing scientific pluralism, there was such a wide range of opinions that it would be more expedient to develop our own concept in the form of a separate monographic work. The second area includes the analysis of empirical material.

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to identify the main stages and results of the ethnocultural impact of the Siberian and Far Eastern natives on the Slavic immigrants of these regions.

### **5. Research Methods**

To solve this problem, historical and ethnographic methods of collecting field material were used. The main theoretical methods were cross-cultural, which made it possible to comparatively identify the cultural characteristics of the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far East on the culture of Slavic settlers.

### **6. Findings**

Golovachev (1902, 1905) examined in detail the process of influence of Siberian aborigines both on the first Russian pioneer Cossacks, who simply got dissolved among the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far East, and on immigrants of the 19th - early 20th centuries. On the first place in the transformational impact not only on culture, but also on the appearance of Slavic migrants Golovachev put severe environmental conditions, enormous difficulties for farming and growing cereals and vegetables, and a completely different economic and cultural type of local peoples: primarily hunting and fishing, gathering wild plants, raw food diet. The problems of the ethnocultural and social order also had an equal impact: the Siberian indigenous peoples were of a different racial, civilizational, ethnic and cultural type. As a result of gradual contact with the natives for several centuries, the Russian old-timers acquired new qualities: the ability to speak local languages, trade and fight with the peoples of Siberia:

... As a consequence to these historical and geographical reasons ... the Russian watchmen of Siberia, Siberians, acquired various, very persistent features in character, in mental storage and even in appearance.

... the harsh nature and hunting practices developed in him enterprise, practicality, resourcefulness, a well-known temper of character; the absence of serfdom developed independence, the desire for

equality; the proximity and acquaintance with foreigners instilled in him a calm and tolerant attitude towards all faith ..., a mocking mentality. On the other hand, from a long-secluded life in the mountains and forests, the indigenous Siberian population became roughened, from foreigners learned wildness, ... a passion for profit, ... a cold, calculating look at everything, the prevalence of personal interests over public ones, self-interest; the habit of constantly cunning with foreigners ... developed secrecy and distrust in the Siberians. In appearance, the indigenous population of Siberia differs from the Great Russians: in Siberia, black or dark hair, black or brown eyes prevail, a darker skin color, not so strong facial vegetation ..." (Golovachev, 1902, p. 54-58, 1905, p. 72).

According to Golovachev (1902), the Russians adopted the centuries-old experience of adapting to the harsh natural conditions from the natives, and under the influence of Buryat beliefs and rituals, many Russian settlers began to believe in Buryat spirits and make their images.

In the Far East, one can see not numerous, but vivid examples of such an influence of indigenous peoples on Slavic migrants (Arseniev, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Artemyev, 2005; Berezniitsky, 1992, 1997, 1998a, 1998b).

Quite often Russian hunters take in the rituals of treating the spirit of fire at halts and upon arrival in hunting huts. The rite consists in feeding fire pieces of food and drops of alcohol. Many Slavic fishermen and hunters perform the ritual of treating the owner of the fire, not only to get luck, but also to get rid of troubles and gain good luck and happiness. It is also always repeated for every successful prey of the beast. Sacred cliffs along the route are also served to get good luck in the field. In general, only rare beliefs and rituals were borrowed by Russian hunters from the indigenous population of the Amuro-Sakhalin region. Amur nivkh M.G. Ikan, who lived in 2001 in the village Beloglinka of the Ulsky district of the Khabarovsk Region described how, under the influence of the Nivkhs, a Russian hunter began to observe a ritual of worship in relation to the bear's skull (Berezniitsky, 2019). The text is called "Bear Tree": "One day about 1948-1949, I and a group of women went to pick up cranberries. We rode, rode and arrived. The women began to collect berries, and I went for reconnaissance. I'm going, I'm walking, and then suddenly I feel - that someone is looking at me. And I see - a bear is sitting on a fallen tree 15 meters away from me. What to do? I took aim with a rifle, shot and killed the bear. Killed right away. Went back and told the women. But the women do not believe me. Laughing, fools. They say: "You fucking lie, you're lying all in a row." Then I led them to that place and showed the bear. Well, the women quickly butchered it. They did it as it should be done. The meat was cut on the joints. And the head was thrown right here. The meat was loaded immediately into the boats. Well, on place, in the taiga, of course, they cooked a little and ate. They did not do any rituals. Only the bones from which we cut the meat were neatly stacked in one place, under a tree. Previously, of course, hunters had special trees on which they hung the skulls of bears. This and not only did Nivkhs, all hunters should do so. For example, there was such a Russian hunter Makoveev. He looked at us, Nivkhs, looked, and he himself learned. He himself began to hang bear skulls on a tree. Such a tree - larch tree stood on the Aksha River. Or maybe it still stands there now. Because larch is a strong tree, it stands for a long time. This is, approximately, from our Beloglinka up the river, about 40 kilometers, in the taiga. The current there is very strong. You won't get there yourself. It is only possible to go with the

conductor. What are you! On that tree hung more than 100 skulls of bears. In general, there are rarely anyone who gets there now. And skulls need to be hung only on a living tree. Previously, the Nivkhs have always done this. And now no one does. Although there are a lot of bears had breded lately. Their meat is tasty and they don't get sick" (Bereznitsky, 2019)

As one of the rare cases of the influence of the culture of the indigenous peoples of the Far East on the culture of East Slavic immigrants today, one can note an interesting fact of the preparation and holding of a folk festival in honor of the connoisseur of Nanai culture - PongsaKile. In 1997, ethnographers attended a rehearsal of one of the staging of the upcoming celebration in the Amur City Museum of Local Culture (Amursk city). Russian children wore Nanai costumes and learned Nanai songs. Museum staff explained that the Nanai children showed no desire to participate in the celebration of their famous countryman.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the ethnocultural interaction of Slavic immigrants with the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East is a centuries-old and multifactorial process. Despite the fact that many valuable works have been created on this problem, many unresolved issues remain. One of them is associated with the influence of the natives on the Slavic population. The results of the analysis help to understand this process not only at the regional, but also geopolitical level. Over the centuries, as a result of contacts with representatives of indigenous peoples, representatives of European immigrant civilization perceived certain aspects, filling their culture with foreign ethnic content. Borrowing added variety to Russian culture as a whole, which in many ways ensured an increase in its viability and level of adaptive capabilities to other natural and ethnosocial environments. The complexity of these phenomena undoubtedly requires further investigation.

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