

# THE CONSTRUCTION OF 'INDIGENOUSNESS' IN RUSSIAN SCIENCE, POLITICS AND LAW

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In the history of Russian science of the state there have been many approaches to understanding the status of its 'allophonic' (non-Russian) and heterodox (non-Orthodox) population, reflected in numerous administrative, scientific and journalistic works. That variety has expressed itself also in the terms used to describe the status of that population. Historically, the ways of thinking and speaking about the so-called 'indigenous population' continue to influence both the modern terminology and the way in which our politicians, legislators, scientists and laymen think about the problems of those nations. The specifics of the Russian view of the 'small-numbered peoples' situation are the products not only of the evolution of social representations, but also of purely linguistic factors. The latter are in the Russian language special imaginative means such as metaphors and analogies which are different from those in many European languages. Those historical and linguistic specifics are the subject of our study.

It must be noted that since the non-Russian population of national borderlands is a very wide topic, my analysis will be limited to those groups that form the special category of 'indigenous peoples' in contemporary legal literature and that are the focus of a whole set of both international and national laws. The second limitation of the topic is explained by the method selected, which is the analysis of social representations and ideas rather than of the 'actual' history of those groups. I shall be most interested in the notion of 'indigenous people'. But, since modern legal, political and social interpretations of the term are influenced by ideas stemming from the history of the state and society, I shall try to analyze associated terms such as *tuzemtsy* (natives), *inorodtsy* (literally, 'of a different kin, or clan', aliens), *inovertsy* (lit. 'of a different faith, or creed', heterodox, or non-Orthodox), *iasachnye* (fur-tribute or *yasak* payers, *yasak* being a levy which was paid mostly in furs).

Social representations of the population of remote outposts are closely connected to

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the expansion of the Russian state and the development of newly acquired territories. At the deeper conceptual level, the very notions of state expansion and so-called 'development' are rooted in notions of space and time, in the current understanding of the place of Russia in this world, and in related concepts such as those of destiny, fate and power. All those concepts were reflected in the terminology under discussion. Let us start by analyzing the term *tuzemtsy*.

### *Tuzemtsy*

The term *tuzemtsy* together with the term *inorodtsy* was used at a very early stage in the opening up Siberia and the Asian North. For Russian speakers the meaning of the term is evident: *tuzemtsy* are people who inhabit 'those lands' (*te zemli*). V.I. Dal's dictionary defines the term as "locally born person, natural inhabitant of the country in question" (Dal' 1994 (4): 441). The entry *Zeml'a* (~land, earth) also contains such terms as *zemets* ("a landowner; person who works the land, though not his own; provincial layman on service"), as well as *edinozemets*, *odnozemets* and *sozemets* given as synonyms to such words as *zemlyak* and *zemlyachka* ("persons born in the same country, area or locality") (Dal' 1994 (1): 679). According to V. Dal', the word *zeml'a* has many meanings, including: "country; people and space occupied by them; State; estate; oblast; krai; okrug"<sup>1</sup> The second meaning of the word *zeml'a* that may be related to the semantics of the root in the term *tuzemets* ('that-lander', native) is "an area of land surface distinguished by natural conditions or by right of ownership" (Dal' 1994 (1): 678).

A system of oppositions of the word *tuzemets* to such words as *edinozemets*, *odnozemets* and *sozemets* must be complemented with opposition to words *inozemets* and *chuzhezemets* (both meaning 'foreigner' or person from other countries or lands). *Edinozemets* (persons from the same land) are united by common bonds to *zeml'a* (according to V. Dal', "*zemlyachestvo* is a community of persons born in the

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<sup>1</sup> Examples from the Dictionary: "In German lands customs are strange". "And the Rostov lands came there". The latter example is marked as "old" and accompanied with interpretation "people", "troops". The commixing of the notions "people" and "troops" is generally characteristic of Indo-European languages (compare, for example, the German word *Volk* that has the same Indo-European root as the Russian word *polk* - regiment), and explains a quite common mistake in Russian historical ethnography in which the ethnonymic character has been ascribed to the names of military formations, with the result that ethnicity is declared 'primordial'. One example is the interpretation of military formations' names in the Bekhistun inscription as names of 'peoples'.

same land; mutual relations among such persons"). But *inozemets* and *chuzhezemets* may be born in different countries, and they constitute the category of aliens in the Russian state. Unlike foreigners, *tuzemtsy* are not regarded as aliens, but neither are they regarded as citizens of the country: they are relegated to a category of a special kind of citizens. Natives as population of 'those lands' were incorporated into the state in the same manner as the lands where they lived were 'attached to', developed, and incorporated into Russia.

Anyone familiar with the history of the Russian Empire would know well the dubitable statement that Russian colonization was different from Western, because it did not aim at destroying the population of colonized territories but at turning 'aliens' into 'our own'. The term *tuzemets* characterizes one of the early stages of that process.<sup>2</sup> In international terminology based on Greek and Latin roots, giving rise to such terms as 'aboriginal', 'autochthonous' and 'indigenous' and widely used today by Russian scientists, politicians and legislators, the term *autochthons* derived from Old Greek roots *αυτος* (auto, own) and *χῆωνος* (land), is the closest in meaning to 'natives'.<sup>3</sup> But the term *samozemets*, despite the common root with 'tuzemets', is closer in meaning to the terms that have semantic components grouped around the notion of 'persons born in a certain locality'. Thus one can say that the Latin word *indigenos* is a loan-translation of the term *autochthon*, emphasizing the primary meaning of the term (and not using the literal *terra*, but a more exact word *genos*).

The term *tuzemets* (native) does not only single out a certain category of the population. The root *-zem-* (~ land) also implies a classification of lands. The boundaries between 'these' (our, developed) and 'those' (remote and to be developed) lands were rather in symbolic or sacred geography<sup>4</sup> reflected in folk images of Russia and its limits than in physical geography. These boundaries constantly shifted as new territories were 'converted' into 'ours'. In the case of Siberian natives, however, the boundary was rather stable and delineated by the Urals. 'Those lands' began 'behind

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<sup>2</sup> It was quite common in documents of the 17th and 18th centuries concerning Siberian peoples for the terms *tuzemets* (~native, 'that-lander') and *inozemets* (~stranger, foreigner) to be interchangeable. Many examples are given in a recent publication, Anon.1997.

<sup>3</sup> Compare with Greek *χῆωνος* - native, indigenous, primordial inhabitant of a country (Veissman 1899:1344-1345).

<sup>4</sup> It can be noted that studies in symbolic geography are very rare in Russian ethnography, if not completely absent. Only geopolitical experts pay attention to the subject. See, for example, Dugin 1994.

the Rock'<sup>5</sup> (the Ural Mountains) despite the fact that predominantly Russian lands were separated from Siberia by the vast Volga-Urals region that was not 'pacified' until the 18th century.

In connection with the classification of lands related to the term *tuzemets* ('these lands' and 'those lands', discovered and not, central and peripheral, own and foreign) one should pay attention to the geography of the term. It is noteworthy that during the 16th and 17th centuries official Russian Government and local administration documents applied the term only to Siberian non-Russians. Peoples living in the Volga River basin and in Urals were called either by their names - Tartar, Bashkir, Cheremis, Votyak, - or by their estate or religion - Teptyar, Magometan, *inovernye* (heterodox), etc. Official documents never applied the term *tuzemets* to the population of Ukraine, Baltics and the Caucasus. Instead, the names of estate groups *kazachestvo*, *pospol'stvo*, *shliakhetstvo* (Cossaks, Polish gentry and nobility) or of nationalities (Ukrainians, Liflandians, Georgians) were used (Laws 1825: documents 10, 16, 823, 4464, 4743, 7026, 7278, 8978, etc.). In Russian frontier regions where they bordered on other countries (for example, in Southern Siberia, on the lands of Altyn-Khans and on Dzungaria) the term *tuzemets* was replaced by the term *yasachnye inozemtsy* (~ yasak foreigners) (Yakovlev 1900:19). That term was applied to a population whose citizenship remained undefined or arguable. These were the so-called *dvoyedantsy* and *troyedantsy* (double- or triple-taxed peoples) who were paying *yasak* (taxes) to Yenissei Kyrgyz, Altyn-Khans, Dzungarian rulers and the Russian Tzar) (Monuments 1885: 321; Potanin 1867: 69; Butaneyev 1990: 28, 39-40, 43). The 'Procedures for Ruling Siberian Aliens' of 1822 defined a special category of people who were "dependent without actual citizenship" or "partially dependent" and who could "enjoy patronage and protection of the Government in all internal affairs only if they request same" (Kistiakovsky 1876: 8).

Such differentiation of terms to identify various forms of citizenship draws attention to one more semantic component of the word *tuzemets* that can provisionally be designated 'statehood'. This aspect appears to be important, because, in my view, it has been fully preserved in the new terms '*korennoie naselenie*' (indigenous population) and '*korennyye narody*' (indigenous peoples). Comparison of the contents<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Siberians still use the expression 'in Russia' meaning in its European, pre-Ural part.

<sup>6</sup> Terminological studies and logic usually mention the extension of a concept (term), e.g. that all phenomena of the real world are covered by a concept or term, and their referential scope (unlike the intention, which is the totality of meanings).

of the concepts *odnozemeti*, *tuzemets* and *inozemets* draws attention to the fact that the term *tuzemets* was usually applied to the population of the territories in the process of colonization and, as such, of lands to be explored, developed and perceived as 'no-man's lands'. The notion did not include the metropolitan lands or population. For example, the expression 'natives of the British Empire' covered the population of colonies and did not include English, Scottish or Irish. The meaning of the notion was influenced by the *terra nullius* doctrine underlying colonial expansion. *Korennoie naselenie* (native population) is contrasted with 'full-fledged' citizens, who are the 'civilized' representatives of mother countries, and the category regarded (along with their territories – 'those lands') as 'potential' or 'partial' citizens, and their lands as in the process of opening up.<sup>7</sup> Since the status of natives remains indefinite and 'incomplete', the state's attitude towards natives differs from that towards 'common' citizens or 'citizens with full rights'. It is embodied in special policies (pacification, indirect rule, and today policies on reserves, national and territorial autonomy, etc.) and special fiscal relations (*yasak*, and today a system of tax privileges and subsidies). Furthermore, the *terra nullius* doctrine influenced the emergence in international and state law of a special set of indigenous rights that are regarded as a separate legal category not to be mixed with the rights of the main population and minorities. In economic policy the *terra nullius* doctrine has become the basis of a number of concepts for the 'development of backward national borderlands' and is reflected in corresponding terminological systems.<sup>8</sup>

Discussion of the meaning of the term *tuzemets* would be incomplete if one failed to mention its romanticization in Russia in the 18th century. This was related partly to the concept of 'a noble savage' and partly to the acceptance of the philosophic ideas of the Age of Enlightenment and of evolution doctrines. Evolutionary systems of

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<sup>7</sup> We still speak of 'development of the North' (*osvoenie Severa*), or the 'development of resources in Siberia' (*osvoenie Sibiri*), but never apply those expressions to the European part of the country.

<sup>8</sup> For example, in the Draft Law 'On Legal Status of Ethnocultural Units Representing Linguistic, Ethnoconfessional and Ethnic Minorities' that went through parliamentary hearings in March 1997, the peoples with traditional life styles (small indigenous or aboriginal peoples) are defined as "peoples (minorities) of the Russian Federation who are *at a lower than majority stage of social and economic development*, whose life styles completely or to a great degree depend on the natural conditions of their habitats and whose legal status is completely or partially regulated by their own customs, traditions or by special legislation" (emphasis added). V. Dal's dictionary entry *tuzemets* (native) happens to contain an example: "Native residents of a part of Oceania are at the lowest stage of human development" (Dal' 1994).

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Enlightenment philosophers placed 'primitive peoples' at the foot of the evolutionary pyramid. After the work by Lafitau (1774) it became common to identify the life of contemporary 'wild tribes' with the life style and morality of ancient ages. The four-stage pattern of human evolution (hunting - herding - tilling - trade) proposed by Turgot and developed by Rousseau placed peoples and cultures on an historical scale. The metaphor identifying contemporary hunting and fishing communities with ancient barbarians later evolved into established knowledge. Having become established, that knowledge had not ceased to be a myth based on metaphor. The discoveries in Oceania (especially reports on Tahiti) occurring contemporaneously with the development of theories of evolution led to still greater romanticization of 'savages'. The term *tuzemets* started to include the population of exotic transoceanic 'no-man's lands' which gave the term an emotional flavor appropriate for poetic language rather than the dry prose of official documents. Because of that romanticization, 'our own' natives came to be regarded as remnants of an ancient population, as 'living antiques',<sup>9</sup> and travels in space were more and more often identified with travels in time. Romanticization of the term allowed its use in another metaphor, as in the 'tuzemets of the Orel Province' (applied to Russian peasants). So romanticization of the term caused by the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment emphasized such of its meanings as *particularity* or *otherness* on the one hand and *patriarchality*, *primordially* or *aboriginality* on the other hand.

Historical grading of contemporary peoples (temporalization), and its reverse side, territorialization of historical time, created a special optics for looking at indigenous populations which was later reflected in symbolic geography and in the language. It penetrated the semantics of the term *korennye narody* (indigenous peoples) so deeply that all subsequent attempts to remove that optics failed. Diminutives became one of the expressions of these ocular habits in both historical and modern contexts. They are lexical and morphological means of expressing diminutiveness. Thus natives inhabited not lands (*zemli*) but 'landlets' (*zemlitsy*), and their clan or territorial communities were headed not by princes (*kniaz'*) but 'princelets' (*kniazik; kniazhets*). During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries the meaning of the terms *kniazik* and *kniazhets* coincided with the meanings of such words as *starshina* (sergeant-major) or *sotnik* (squadron commander). Here one must agree with those historians of Siberia who explained the usage of the terms by the influence of the Tartar military-administrative system on local power structures during the pre-Russian period (Bakhrushin 1955; Stepanov 1963: 28; Martynova 1986: 38-39). One must also keep in mind the changing contexts for using that estate name. It is quite possible that the use of diminutives was dictated both by traditional official style (addressing seniors required

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<sup>9</sup> Even in modern documents we encounter such expressions as "relicto-exotic peoples of the North" (State Program 1994:35).

self-abasement) and by hierarchy and inequality among victors and defeated, the new lords and their serfs. By the end of the 18th century the new 'optics' had prevailed, as proximity to the center (in life style rather than geography) started to be identified with importance, and remoteness from the center with insignificance and sometimes with being the object of a derogatory attitude. The native populations of remote 'landlets' found themselves at the foot of the power pyramid, and no matter what relations with government might emerge later, the semantic components of 'smallness' and 'insignificance' had been incorporated into the evolution of the terminological system and surfaced repeatedly, changing the perception of new terms.<sup>10</sup>

The meanings of the term *tuzemets* which were discussed above do not exhaust the semantics of the word that remains in current use. That term cannot be referred to as historical, because in the process of searching for 'pure' language we come back to politics and science.<sup>11</sup> And since the social context has changed radically (in such cases linguists talk of the pragmatics of the term), changes have occurred in the whole configuration of the semantic field that includes that and related terms.

### *Inorodtsy*

The term *inorodets* was more often than others (including *tuzemets*) used in administrative practices in pre-Soviet Russia. It can be found in numerous documents (laws, instructions, official correspondence) dating back to the 17th to

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<sup>10</sup> Here it would be proper to recall the history of the term *natsmen* (a national minority representative) which evolved from a neutral name for national minority members into a derogatory word. These 'optical' practices are further revealed in the consistently recurrent definition of such peoples as 'small' or 'small-numbered' that has been repeatedly criticized, as yet with no success.

<sup>11</sup> A.V. Golovnev explains its use in the following way:

During the pre-Soviet period the indigenous population in scientific, pedagogical and fiction literature was called natives. For some reason, later it became improper to use that term and it was replaced with synonyms 'aboriginal', 'autochton', etc., though they were not very common for the Russian language. But the notion *tuzemets* (native) identifying residents of certain lands in hearing and meaning completely accords with the topic of the work and, as it appears, has the right to be returned to scientific usage. (Golovnev 1995:33)

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19th centuries. The best known is *Ustav ob upravlenii inorodtsev* (The Statute of Alien Administration) of June 22, 1822 (Laws 1830: 394-411). According to Paragraph 1 of the Statute, 'all Siberian alien tribes (*inorodnye plemena*), hereinafter called *yasachnye*, by their civil organization and current life style' were divided into three main categories, i.e., settled, nomadic and vagrant, each having special rights and responsibilities. Settled aliens, i.e. those "living in towns and villages", were "equal to Russians in all rights and responsibilities" and were ruled "according to universal laws and provisions..." (Para. 13). Nomadic aliens (those "inhabiting certain places changed by the seasons") constituted a "special estate equal to peasant but differing from the latter in the form of government" (Para. 24). Vagrant aliens ("hunters and fishermen constantly migrating along rivers and in forests", and "living scattered in remote places") had the same rights as the nomadic, but under a different regime of land allotment and with relief "of local provincial taxation" (Paras. 1, 61-62). If settled aliens were sufficiently numerous, they formed alien districts, but nomadic and vagrant aliens were to be governed by clan community governments reporting to district governments and through them to district police and courts.

Two features can be noted in the use of this term. The first is related to the special division of administrative and fiscal space by the formation of alien districts. In many Siberian territories a fiscal unit was a *yasachnaia volost'* (*yasak* district) rather than an administrative unit. In other words, the boundaries between districts were not geographic, but personalized. Aliens were not allowed to re-register in other districts. According to some studies this was not an attempt to preserve patriarchal and clan relations, but was dictated by the necessity to delineate fiscal unit borders without costly land delineation (Yu 1995: 96-97). So, through the names of government institutions, the term became associated with taxable categories of *yasachnye inorodtsy* (*yasak* aliens) which is confirmed by the presence of such terms in the documents dating back to those times.

The second feature is the almost complete disappearance of the term after the Revolution. Initially it was successfully replaced by the term *tuzemtsy*. *Inorodnye upravny* (non-Russian district governments) were also replaced by *tuzsovety* (native Soviets) and *tuzRIK* (native Revolutionary Executive Councils) and the documents of the new authorities were full of such expressions as *tuzemnye plemena* (native tribes) and *tuzemtsy Severa* (natives of the North). One of the last works to use the *inorodtsy* term was Serebrennikov (1917). In later scientific works *tuzemtsy* firmly replaced the term *inorodtsy*. One of the reasons for the replacement could be incompatibility with the official doctrine of internationalism that made the term *inorodtsy* 'politically incorrect'. Today it seems impossible to reconstruct all the connotations that followed the term during different historic periods, because here we are dealing with such a subtle matter as perception of meaning by persons of different social status, views and



political affiliations. The main meaning of the term ('a person born among other, alien tribe or people' (Dal' 1994 (2): 46) or its synonym *inoplemennik* (a person of another tribe') reveal the ethnocentric classification of the country population into *soplemenniki* (members of own people) and *inoplemenniki* (members of other tribes), which also influenced the destiny of the term during the Soviet period. Today the term is reappearing in the press, but only as part of the vocabulary of rightist nationalists.

It is also worth mentioning that the extensions of the terms *tuzemtsy* and *inorodtsy* did not coincide. While the term *inorodtsy* applied to old Russian colonies (the territories of former Kazan and Astrakhan Khanates) and to the Steppe South of the Empire, the term *tuzemtsy*, as was mentioned above, applied only to new colonies during the period in question. Today, both terms may sound 'grating on the ears'<sup>12</sup>, but until the 1920s and '30s they were perceived as neutral.

### *Inovertsy*

If we compare the discussed terms in respect to their influence over the contemporary concept of 'indigenous peoples' and over the manner of perceiving and describing these peoples, *inovertsy* (lit. 'of a different faith, or creed', heterodox, or non-Orthodox), seems to exert the least influence over current discourse. Perhaps the long Soviet period played a role here, having 'levelled' to a certain degree different confessions in their lack of rights in an atheist State. This explains the discontinuity in the history of the semantic field covering the relationship between major (Orthodox) and minor confessions. Notwithstanding all the difficulties encountered in the reconstruction of the field during different periods of Russian history, the living language has preserved many 'fragments' of the semantic field, and that gives hope for more or less reliable reconstruction.

V.I. Dal' defines the word *inoverie* as "teaching and rituals of another religion not dominating somewhere". Thus, an *inoverets* is defined as "a person of another religion not dominating in a State" (Dal' 1994 (2): 45). The domination noted by Dal' is important because it allows us to see that the indigenous population was 'at the foot'

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<sup>12</sup> S.A. Stepanov writes:

A contemporary reader will at once see the archaic terminology. The expressions *inorodtsy* and *tuzemtsy* are grating on the ears, though one can say that during those times the terms were commonly used and did not have the derogatory meaning. (Stepanov 1993)

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of power structures and served as a certain *zero reference point* for classifying not only peoples and lands, but also confessions. Turning Orthodox served as a kind of social elevator allowing 'newly baptized heterodox persons' potential for economic and social development. One can assert that in the Russian Empire of the 17th and 18th centuries the custom of being baptized was (in terms of elevating a person's social status) as powerful as joining the Party or graduating from a university during the Soviet period.

The first attack on the rights of the Volga region heterodox population was launched even before Peter the Great's times. The Edict of 1681 prescribed that all Moslem aristocrats who had orthodox peasants in their land and estates were to turn orthodox Christian under the threat of losing their estates. It also prescribed that all Mordovians "discovering the blessings of the Greek Orthodox Church should be baptized, after which they shall be granted privileges in all taxes for six years..." ('Confiscation of estates from Tartar aristocracy', Filippov 1992: 190)

Under Ivan IV baptized heterodox persons were relieved of conscription for life and of per capita tax for three years. It must be noted though, that despite many decrees, religious integration of many Volga Region and Siberian nations was superficial, and newly baptized often kept their affiliation to old cults. The situation was duly reflected in the language where the expression *kreshchionye inovertsy* (baptized heterodox persons) appeared ('On building no mosques in villages where Russians and baptized heterodox persons live', Filippov 1992: 220). But the emergence of such expressions could also be explained by metonymy, or the substitution for the name of the whole of the name of the part. In case of the term *inoverets* (which names only one qualification of the population) metonymical expressions such as *inovercheskie derevni* (heterodox villages) and *inovercheskie iasyki* (heterodox languages) (Filippov 1992: 217) led to the substitution of confession-derived names for the names of ethnic groups and cultures. The word *inoverets* acquired an ethnic aspect of meaning which allowed the use of such expressions as *kreshchenye inovertsy* (baptized heterodox persons).

The semantic field in question also contained many other terms related to the notion of *inoverets* by opposition and similarity: *krest'ianin* (in Russian the words 'peasant' and 'Christian' are homonymous), *magometanin*, *busurmanin* (Magometan, Moslem; in modern political vocabulary also 'Islamite'), *pravoslavnyi* (Russian Orthodox), *pravovernyi* (lit. Orthodox, but applied only in respect of Moslems), *iasychnik* (Pagan), etc. A frequently used synonym for the term *inoverets* was the word *idolopoklonnik* (idolater; lit. idol worshipper) with its synonyms *idol'shchik*, *idolosluzhitel'*, *idolochtitel'*, *kumirshchik* (borrowed from the Finnish *kumartaa* – to

bow) as well as such words as *poganyi* (pagan, 'dirty')<sup>13</sup> and *nechistyi* (lit. unclean; impious). There were many other old and obsolete words reflecting the perception of other worshippers by the Russian-speaking Orthodox majority such as *idilobesnyi*, *idolozhrets*, *idolozdatel'*. The second edition of the dictionary by V. Dal' (1881) contains an illustrative example: "The idols of Greeks [are] elegant marble statues; the idols of Kalmyks and Chinese [are] ugly copper castings; the idols of Samoyeds [are] carved wooden dummies" (Dal' 1994 (2): 8). The Samoyed heathen temple in Arkhangelsk Province was called *Bolvanskaia sopka* (~ Dummies' Hill) (Dal' 1994 (1): 110).<sup>14</sup>

The notion of *inoverets* covered all non-Orthodox population of the Empire, like the term *inorodets* encompassing roughly all non-Russian population. But, like most socially significant categorizations, this 'equalization' was subject to many reservations and exceptions and there were many borderline cases. For example, there was a special church term *inoslavnye* to identify members of other Christian but non-Orthodox Churches. To call the flocks of those Churches *inovertsy* had not been considered proper in many historical periods, although it sometimes happened. In the same manner not all heterodox persons were considered pagans, though in many contexts those terms were seen as synonyms and could replace each other.<sup>15</sup>

One more inconsistency in the terminological system in question is contained in the pair *pravoslavnye* - *pravovernye* (Christian Orthodox and lit. 'true believers'). By normal semantic standards, the word *inovernye* would be opposed to *pravovernye*. But that niche in the semantic field is occupied by the words *pravoslavnye* or *khrisiane* (Christians). The term *pravovernye* turns out to be identified only with

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<sup>13</sup> The term *poganyi*, i.e. 'unclean from religious point of view', 'pagan', 'heterodox' (Ya 1993: 47) is common for many Slavic languages (Belorussian, Bulgarian, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Russian, Ukrainian, Czech) and is derived from the Latin 'religio pagana' meaning village or peasant beliefs. As is well-known, in Rome Christianity was originally an urban religion.

<sup>14</sup> Exoticization explains radical changes in perceptions of the art of native cultures. Today a visitor to the Oriental Arts Museum would never think of calling a statue of Bhudda 'a copper monster'.

<sup>15</sup> Another example from V. Dal's Dictionary: "If you are a Jew, why do you live as a pagan, not as a Jew, [and] why do you make other peoples [*yasyki*] live as Jews?" The word *iasyk* (lit. tongue) in Old Church Slavic means another, strange people, a people belonging to other tribes or religions. The example given in the dictionary excludes Jewish people from the category of pagans and demonstrates the difference in the extensions of the terms *inoverets* and *iasychnik* (pagan).

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Moslems ('Magometans', *busurmans* etc.<sup>16</sup>). *Pravovernnye* (~true-believing) Moslems were simultaneously perceived as *nevernye*<sup>17</sup> by Christians and they in their turn called Christians *nevernye* (*kafiry*, *giaury*, that is, infidels).

The analysis of the terminology describing indigenous peoples from the point of view of religion supports the assertion that the religions of those peoples were commonly perceived as dark pagan and 'impure' cults. In all fairness, this was not an exceptional attitude in interconfessional relations during the periods in question. Despite such a disdainful attitude to other creeds, Orthodox Church senior officials and state authorities employed every measure, coercive and otherwise, to convert the peoples of colonized lands. Despite severe measures against those who left the Church or secretly adhered to the old worship, the Church remained open and did not limit its activities to one culture, language or estate. The general trend of 'joining' (*prirodnenie*) natives was demonstrated in the religious sphere also.<sup>18</sup>

### *Yasachnye*

The term *yasachnye* (*iasashnye*; fur tribute paying peoples) as well as previous terms was very often used in official documents of the Russian Empire and even served as an official name for certain groups of indigenous population of Southern and Middle

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<sup>16</sup> For example, in 1729 Sylvester, an Orthodox Bishop, wrote: "... and today there are newly Baptized (*novokreshchionye*) villages among the *busurman* villages behind the Kama River, near Bashkirians" (Mozharovsky 1880: 52).

<sup>17</sup> According to V. Dal', *nevernye* (infidels) are those "who do not have true and pure beliefs, not enlightened by the word of God, non-Christians, especially Moslems, *busurmans*" (Dal' 1994 (2): 508).

<sup>18</sup> The incompleteness of that 'joining' was reflected by the appearance in the language of such terms as *kreshchenye inovertsy* (baptized heterodox persons) or *novokreshchenye* (newly baptized). There is an interesting description of the latter term dating back to the 18th century:

Nagaibak fortress is 64 miles from Menzelinsk. From old times people of two estates (*sostoiania*) lived around the fortress, both *novokeshchenye* and *inovertsy*. As for the former, a more proper name for them would be *starokreshchenye* (long-baptized). They say themselves, and it is confirmed by documents, that they had been baptized during the times of Ivan the Terrible having been Moslems and idolators (*idolopklonniki*) (Rychkov 1887).

Siberia (Chulyms, some groups of Siberian Tartars, Teleuts).<sup>19</sup> The geographical scope of the term appears to be much wider than that of the term *tuzemtsy*, and the extensional competes with that of the notion *inorodtsy*, since it includes not only a significant part of the populations of the Northern, Siberian, Urals and Volga Regions,<sup>20</sup> but also some communities of Russian peasants, especially those long settled in Siberia.

As is known, the term itself, along with some others,<sup>21</sup> was borrowed from the Turks and Mongols. *Yasak* was levied in furs and sometimes in cattle, and from the end of the 18th century (in Siberia the 19th century) in monetary form as well. This evolution reveals the standardization of attitude to the population of the Empire, conditioned both by the ideological goal of *prirodnenie* (~ the conversion of aliens into 'ours'; acculturation and assimilation) of its many nationalities and by Enlightenment ideas on regular, rational government.

Although whole nations with natural economies based on hunting, fishing, reindeer herding and the hunting of sea mammals were referred to as *yasak* peoples, *yasak* taxation was based on relations with central authorities and citizenship criteria rather than the forms of economic activities. Central authorities granted tax privileges exactly because the 'indigenous population' was perceived as a special category of subjects whose integration into the population of the country was not seen as absolute. Because of that, the status of 'yasak persons' was attractive to Russian peasants whose local and other taxes could be much higher than those of their neighbors. Tartar migrants to Siberia also tried to join the category of *iasachnye inorodtsy*. They registered as 'group members by birth' (*zapisyvalis' na porodu*), that is, they were

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<sup>19</sup> As in the cases of previous terms, the self-apellation *iasachnye* could function as an ethnonym, and then it became metonymic. Thus one of the aspects of economic life gives a name to a whole group and the term loses its definitiveness and terminological character and comes to mean another ethno-cultural community rather than an estate.

<sup>20</sup> The mutual adaptation of fiscal and religious policies is very illustrative. According to a Senate Decree of 1723, "yasak Cheremis" avoiding the census were not to be punished. They were to be "baptized in the Greek Orthodox Church..., and if later other such *inovertsy* are found to conceal [the number] of 'souls' (*dushi*) and they express a desire to be baptized, they are not to be punished either" (Anon. n.d.: 193).

<sup>21</sup> For example, *amanatstvo* - taking hostage 'prominent clansmen' to guarantee payment of *yasak*.

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integrated into the *tuhm*<sup>22</sup> system of Siberian Tartarshich did not exist among the Volga Tartars (Kuleshova 1995: 43). The traditions of special fiscal policy towards indigenous population were not discontinued even during the Soviet period, so one can say that the foundation for contemporary Russian State fiscal policy towards those peoples was laid as far back as the 15th and 17th centuries.

The analysis of the evolution of language and thought patterns concerning *tuzemnye narody* (native peoples) allows us to note several changes of style coinciding, it appears, with the different stages of naturalization of 'new subjects' within the framework of the Russian Empire and the development of newly acquired Siberian lands. Students of the evolving forms of government of the Siberian population (L.M. Dameshek, V.A. Zibarev, A.Yu. Konev, V.G. Marchenko, N.A. Minenko, A.I. Murzina, I.V. Ostrovsky, A.I. Parusov, L.S. Rafienko, V.V. Rabtsevich, L.I. Svetlichnaya and others) identify several stages of that evolution. These extend from pre-contact 'military democracy' through direct colonial rule to indirect rule, and later to religious integration and administrative reform leading to the enhancement of state control and regulation in many aspects of the lives of indigenous peoples. The content of those 'epochs' was effectively summed up by A.V. Golovnev:

The period of the 16th and 17th centuries can be regarded as the time of military establishment of Russian statehood or the epoch of Yermak. After the turbulent 17th century, as the main military and political centers of the native population were defeated or incorporated into the administrative system of colonial government, the center of gravity of social relations moved to religion. It was not real warriors that became the symbols of group unity but their sacred embodiments, that is idols. The role of society and legal leaders went to spiritual leaders, the shamans.

That military assault was followed in the 18th century by the second attack on natives, in the form of forced conversion to Christianity. During that period idols and heathen temples were destroyed and shamans killed. ...The period could be called the Leshchinsky epoch, after the main initiator of the movement to baptize [natives].

The 19th century, thanks to the passing of the Statute of Alien Administration of 1822, saw the third stage, 'legal seizure' of the native population. Regulation of life from the top down became

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<sup>22</sup> From an Arabic word denoting consanguine ties, lit. semen.

even stricter; democracy was just a phantom: the real government and court powers belonged to local native governments headed by Russian officials and to district and provincial governments. That period of Russian influence over natives can be called the Speransky epoch, after the initiator of the 1822 reforms. (Golovnev 1995: 90).

The language of these epochs reflected the play in the meanings of basic terms: *tuzemtsy* were replaced by *inorodtsy* or *inovertsy* and *iasachnye*. The referential scope of the terms and their geographical distribution as well as their use by different population groups were constantly changing. Political doctrines and governmental reforms were reflected in the language, and the language itself created space for emergent political thought, uniting authorities and subjects into a living network of social categorizations.

### *Korennye Narody*

The lexical meaning of the word *korennoi* (~indigenous; lit. 'rooted') can be disregarded because it is transparent to any Russian speaker. It should be mentioned, perhaps, that the metaphor of rooted-ness employed to denote the aboriginal population is practically absent in West European languages. The tree and plant metaphors (as denotations of human groups) seem to be more characteristic of Slavic and Turkic languages, but as I am ignorant of etymological works treating this particular aspect, I shall focus on the content of the concept itself rather than terminology.

The policy of state control over all aspects of the life of indigenous peoples continued after the October revolution of 1917. The new authorities saw it as a vital necessity to sever the ties with the previous regime and ideology, even through purely symbolic means. This policy was conditioned by the political attitude of the Bolsheviks to the entirety of the past, including all socially significant classifications such as those of estate, class, or linguistic, cultural or ethnic groupings. The slogan of total destruction of the old world, as applied to language and thought stereotypes, was at the same time utopian, paradoxical and dangerous. Inventing a new language, the authorities risked losing ties with their 'flock'. It was extremely difficult to invent a language which would both be clear to people and simultaneously sever the connections with the hated past. The problem was resolved by combining Party jargon with old terms carefully selected on the basis of ideological compatibility. The terminology lost the word *inorodtsy* and stopped using the terms *inovertsy* and *iasachnye* (especially in official documents). Of the old words, only *tusemtsy* and *plemia* (tribe) remained, and they were used to the exhaustion of their signification potential. They were also used to form a long list of derivatives.

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The period from 1924 to 1932 was a peak of terminological and legal innovations. More than 50 documents concerning indigenous peoples appeared, containing about 20 new terms. But the word *korennoi* was used only once. This was in the Decree of the All-Russian Central Executive Council of December 21, 1931 which, along with such expressions as *korennye narodnosti Severa* (indigenous ethnic groups of the North) and *korennoie naselenie Dal'nego Severa, Sakhalina i Kamchatki* (indigenous population of the Far North, Sakhalin and Kamchatka) contained such word combinations as *tuzemnye narodnosti Severa* (native peoples of the North) and *natsmen'shinstva* (national minorities).

The language of official documents in that period was rather original, which gives a basis to diagnose a separate style. Moreover, that period saw the creation and to some extent reconstruction from old times of many expressions and thought patterns which have been used up to the present. To save space and time, I shall quote the expressions without reference to specific documents: *tuzemnoe naselenie* (native population), *tuzemtsy Severa* (natives of the North), *tuzemnyi Sever* (native North), *tuzrik* (native Revolutionary Executive Council), *tuzsovet* (native Soviet), *kochsovet* (nomadic council), *tuz. raion* (native district), *tuzemnye narodnosti* (native ethnic groups), *malye tuzemnye narodnosti Severa RSFSR* (small native ethnic groups of the RSFSR North), *tuzemnoe naselenie severnykh okrain* (native population of Northern borderlands), *plemena severnykh okrain* (tribes of Northern borderlands), *narodnosti severnykh okrain* (ethnic groups of the northern borderlands), *severnye narodnosti* (Northern ethnic groups), *malye narodnosti severnykh okrain* (small ethnic groups of Northern borderlands), *melkie narodnosti Severa* (little ethnic groups of the North), *malye narodnosti Severa, vedushchie kochevoi i polukochevoi obraz zhizni* (small Northern ethnic groups of nomadic and semi-nomadic life style), *tuzemnye narodnosti i plemena severnykh okrain* (native ethnic groups and tribes of Northern borderlands), *narodnosti nerusskogo iazyka* (nations of non-Russian language), *narody Krainego Severa* (peoples of the Extreme North), *severnye narody* (Northern peoples), *natsmen'shinstva* (national minorities), *natsional'nosti* (~ethnic groups), *natsmenovskii sel'sovet* (national minority rural council).

That long list enables us to restore the topology of thinking on the indigenous population of Siberia and the North. Despite the abundance of new terms, thinking had not changed significantly since the pre-Soviet period. The new authorities, having begun with the carefully chosen, abstract, and for proletarian masses hardly comprehensible terms of *natsional'nost'* (~nationality, ethnic group), *natsional'noe men'shinstvo* (national minority), and *etnograficheskaya gruppa* (ethnographic group) ('Declaration of the Rights of Russian Peoples' adopted by a Congress of Soviets on November 15, 1917), later returned to the usual stereotypical perception of remote natives. The first legal acts of Soviet power did not contain any explicit references to



Siberian and Northern peoples. It was struggling to bring to its side the politically active elites of Ukraine, Volga Region and Caucasus. The Commissariat for National Affairs used general terms – *narod* (people) and *natsional'nost'* (nationality).<sup>23</sup> The first Decree mentioning *tuzemtsy Severa* appeared only in January, 1924.

To see the *topoi* of discourse on 'indigenous population', it is sufficient to note the content of the above concepts and those characteristics of that population that, for various reasons, are singled out for the purpose of group denotation. The above terms of the '20s and '30s *smallness* (not of peoples, but of *plemena* and *narodnosti*).<sup>24</sup> It must be noted that the numbers of a nation were an inalienable attribute of thinking about indigenous population groups of Siberia and the North, but not about others. Certain small-numbered peoples of European Russia (Vod', Izhora, Veps, etc.) were officially denoted as 'small-numbered' only during *perestroika*. As far as Caucasian peoples are concerned, the term *malochislennyi* (small-numbered) was never applied to them in legislative practice until recently.

The second subject which is repeatedly mentioned in relation to indigenous peoples is their *remoteness from the center* (in phrases such as peoples of the *Extreme North*, *plemena* of the Northern *borderlands*, peoples of the *Northern regions*). The Committee for Assisting the Nations of the Northern Borderlands, established in 1925 under the Presidium of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, started active legislative procedures. The terminology was reflected in 1926 through the creation of the phrase '*tuzemnye narodnosti i plemena severnykh okrain*' (native peoples and tribes of the Northern borderlands) which went from document to document for three years and was eventually replaced by the expression '*malye narodnosti Severa*' (small nationalities of the North). It is not even worth emphasizing that the names of other population groups rarely contain any reference to either their geographic position<sup>25</sup> or their remoteness.

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<sup>23</sup> An example from a Decree adopted by the All-Russian Central Executive Council in 1920: "Every nationality within the territory of the RSFSR shall appoint to the People's Commissariat of Nationalities ... special representative delegations consisting of a chairperson and two members".

<sup>24</sup> The term 'people' as applied to the indigenous population of the North was used in the documents of that period only once, and not by legislators or State officials, but scientists. Here we refer to the Decree 'Status of the Institute of the Peoples of the North under the All-Russian Central Executive Council' adopted by the Council on March 30, 1930.

<sup>25</sup> But there is an exception in the references to 'Oriental Peoples'. On the topology of perceptions of oriental peoples see Said (1979).

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Identifying an indigenous population as a special category which requires a special policy to be adopted towards it may also be singled out as another *topos* in perceptions of the population of Siberia and of the North. No traces of a *romanticizing* of the perception of those peoples can be found in official documents, but scientific reports and field diaries are full of them. The brief list of stable topics prompts the thought that, despite significant changes in terminology, the perception of those peoples during the twenties and thirties was not much different from that of earlier times.

The late thirties provided no new concepts in this field. The term *narodnosti* (~nationalities) permanently replaced the term *plemena* (tribes). The number of documents addressing those 'nationalities' dropped sharply and later reached zero. From 1937 to 1957 Government documents never mentioned these peoples. The Government cared only about the all-inclusive Northern population and its economic activities. Only in 1957 did the RSFSR Council of Ministers pass Decree No. 501 'On Additional Measures for the Development of the Economy and Culture of Northern Nations'. The expression *malye narodnosti Severa* (~small nationalities of the North) was in use until the mid-'80s, when the phrase '*malye narody Severa, Sibiri I Dal'nego Vostoka*' (small peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East) gradually replaced it. The vocabulary of that period was standard and deficient (only one or two terms were used) as compared with the vocabulary reflecting 'the development of Siberian resources' historically related to the doctrine of no-man's land, which was used more actively and was more variegated.

The period of *perestroika* was characterized by a radical change in terminology. It seems that 'the architects of *perestroika*' faced a problem of dissociating themselves from the terminology of the previous period similar to that of the Bolsheviks of 1917. The word *narodnosti* disappeared from official use along with the word *malye* (small). They were replaced by the terms 'peoples' and 'small-numbered' (*malochilennye*). Before 1993 the expression *korennye narody* (indigenous peoples) had appeared in official documents only twice, both times in Presidential Decrees. Decree No. 118 of February 5, 1992, proposed ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries, and Decree No. 397 of April 22, 1992, contained instructions "to prepare, before the end of 1992, and propose for the consideration by the RF Supreme Soviet Draft Laws 'Concerning the Legal Status of Indigenous Peoples of the North' and 'Concerning the Legal Status of National District, National Rural and Village Councils, and Clan and Commune Councils of Indigenous Peoples of the North'".

The 60-year-long taboo on using the term 'indigenous peoples' and its replacement with the expression 'small' or 'small-numbered peoples' (nationalities) was not

accidental. It was explained by the official position expressed by the USSR representative at a session of a UN Indigenous Population Working Group. According to that position, the use of the expression 'indigenous peoples' was appropriate only in a colonial context. According to that position it was declared that the USSR had no 'indigenous peoples' according to the strict legal definition within its territory (Barsh 1986).

If one pays attention to the use of the term outside legal contexts and analyses its semantics and pragmatics,<sup>26</sup> the contradictions between language and speech meanings become evident. Many researchers drew attention to the controversial nature of the 'indigenous peoples' concept and to its vagueness as applied to the Siberian population. One example will suffice. Analyzing the criteria according to which during the 1920s and '30s 'indigenous small-numbered peoples of the North' were defined, Z.P. Sokolova concludes that those criteria are: 1) small population numbers; 2) traditional subsistence economies (reindeer herding, hunting, fishing and sea hunting, foraging), 3) life style (semi-settled, nomadic) and 4) low levels of social and economic development. She also concludes that only the first criterion is indisputable. Traditional economic activities employ only a quarter of the able-bodied population; part of the peoples are highly urbanized. As for the fourth criterion, she considers it fair, but remarks that the situation among the majority of Russian population "is no better than the situation in the North" (Sokolova 1995: 34-36).

The semantics of the term *korennoi* point to primordality of the population in question. But essentially it means only the presence of a certain population group's ancestors in Siberia during its opening up by Russia. Even that meaning ignores the large-scale movements of different groups both within and outside Siberia, for example, the forced movement of ancient Khakassian to Dzungaria and their return. Using modern terminology, those movements turned certain population groups into *prishlye* (newcomers), *pereselentsy* (lit. re-settlers), and 'migrants'.

The metaphors of this word lead even further. The phrase *kochuiushchee korennoie naselenie* (lit. nomadic rooted population) is as much an oxymoron as 'hot snow'. If nomadic indigenous groups are really 'rooted', that is not in the soil, but in their life styles and in migrating reindeer herds, fish schools and bird flocks. The practice of settling indigenous population reveals the inconsistency of 'floral' metaphors as applied to constantly moving 'rooted' populations.

The pragmatics of the word *korennoi* points out one more meaning. 'Indigenous' here

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<sup>26</sup> This term was introduced by C.W. Morris during the 1930s to identify the functioning of language symbols in speech (speech tactics, aims of a speaker, rules of revealing concealed meanings) and to identify the field of related studies.

means a people, already named, established, and with more or less recognized historical and linguistic genealogy, which is very important where there may be name changes, who inhabited a territory at the time of colonization. But this is true only if two conditions are present: 1) there is continuity in succession to power in the colonizing metropolis; 2) there is real or imagined succession from 'new subjects' of the colonization period to contemporary ethnic communities. If either of the two conditions is violated, the term 'indigenous' cannot be applied properly. This becomes evident in considering borderline cases. The power of Yakut nomadic cattle breeders who had come from the South and pushed out 'indigenous population' was interrupted by the Russian State that replaced it. Thus the term 'indigenous people' (with certain reservations) applies to Yakuts. If the location of power had not changed, Yakuts would have been regarded as newcomers in their present land.

Another borderline case is represented by Russian old settlers in Siberia, who have been included in the lists of 'indigenous peoples' in some law texts. It might be presumed that such inclusion became possible not only because these groups led a so-called traditional way of life (an arguable notion requiring clarification), but because during certain historic periods they opposed the Russian state, and consequently these 'newcomers' could not be identified with the authorities.

Still another borderline case is the usage of the concept 'indigenous' in modern Estonia and Latvia. Here it is opposed to the so-called 'occupants' to 'titular population'. Here the *sema* of colonization (occupation) sounds most clearly. 'Indigenous population' is opposed to *perekati-pole* (~'rolling stones'), 'migrants' and *limitchiki* (~restricted settlers). The Constitution of Ukraine also contains the term 'indigenous peoples', but there is no statutory definition of the concept.

Concerning the uncertainty of the notion *korennoi*, there are many problems with the definition of the category 'indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russia' which is used in several draft laws. For example, Article 1 of the 'Basic Principles of Legal Status of Indigenous Small-Numbered Peoples of Russia' contains the following definition:

The indigenous small-numbered peoples of Russia (hereinafter small-numbered peoples) are the peoples that inhabit the traditional territories of their ancestors, preserve an original life style, amount to fewer than 50,000 persons in Russia and recognize themselves as separate ethnic communities.

The new Draft Law 'On the Legal Status of Ethnocultural Units Representing Linguistic, Ethnoconfessional and Ethnic Minorities' also contains the definition of 'peoples with traditional life style (small indigenous or aboriginal peoples)' already

cited (footnote 8).

Apart from quoting the above stereotyped perception of indigenous peoples, these definitions contain many disputable notions such as 'tradition', 'territory of traditional ancestral habitat', and 'stage of social and economic development', that have not yet been agreed upon in either scientific or political circles.

## Conclusion

Let us summarize the results of our analysis of the concepts used to define indigenous peoples. That analysis allows us to note a number of inherited elements uniting contemporary thinking and discourse with historical perceptions of those peoples already established by the 16th and 17th centuries. Those elements include:

- 1) The perception of the indigenous population as a special entity and, as such, as a special object of national, economic and religious policy.
- 2) An emphasis on the small numbers of those peoples conditioned by special optics formed already at the early stages of their integration into Russian State.
- 3) That romanticization of the perception of indigenous peoples and their cultures.
- 4) The view of the lands of those peoples as being 'opened up' proceeding from ethically vulnerable and presently unrecognized provisions of the *terra nullius* doctrine.
- 5) A public perception of racial difference stemming from the *inorodtsy* notion that is expressed to-day in derogatory names, stories and attitudes, especially from the non-permanent population of the North.
- 6) The extreme politicization of discourse and thought on indigenous peoples, related to the struggle of political, economic, financial and national elites for the profits received from selling the resources of the territories inhabited by those peoples today.

This topology of perceptions of indigenous peoples allows me to reconstruct a 'public image' of those peoples which stems from the archetype of the absolute Other. What does it mean to be absolutely different in the standard thinking of an average Russian industrial center inhabitant? It means to be born and to live in remote rural areas, to speak a different (non-Russian) language, to be a member of a different (non-Orthodox) confession, to have other values, life-style and culture, and a profession not typical for urban areas, to be poorly educated with absolutely different needs and requirements. It appears that this portrait coincides with the reverse side of definitions

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that nullify the general humane intentions of their authors. The pathology of common thinking, allowing us to decide the destinies of others (especially of the absolute Other), also nullifies the rationality of projects aimed at improving the life of indigenous peoples.

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