



# Inter-ethnic Communications and Life-Sustaining Technologies of the Indigenous Peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin Region

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## Abstract

*Purpose:* The purpose of the article is to show the impact of inter-ethnic communications between the Tungus-Manchu and Paleo-Asian peoples, the natives of the Far East and the East Asian ethnic groups on the development of life-sustaining technologies. *Design/methodology/approach:* theoretical developments on the structure and essence of communication of a differentiated system (Knorozov in Selected works. MAE RAS, St-Petersburg, 2018) and the concept of folklore communication (Neklyudov in Tradit Cult: Sci Almanac 3:3–4, 2002) were used as a methodological basis. Knorozov implied that strengthening the process of interaction between the units of the system helps to increase its organization: it is more organized, the less it depends on the environment, and the more it can affect this environment. An excessive increase in the components of the structure of units can lead to a decrease in the stability of the system. S. Neklyudov defined the communicative component as the main content of the folklore tradition, which is manifested in four components: in the substantive (symbols, images, picture of the world), in the structural (folklore), in the technological (mechanism of preservation and transmission of folklore), in the functional, defining the specifics of these processes. *Findings:* the obtained results can be used to build a regional theoretical model of inter-ethnic communication, both within the Tungus-Manjur world, and in the field of contacts of these peoples with the Paleo-Asians, with representatives of Slavic and East Asian civilizations, with life-supporting technologies. *Originality/value:* The originality and value of the results obtained lies in the fact that they can be used to distinguish the functions of ethno-cultural technologies: broadcasting, providing conditions for the reproduction of

society; developing the necessary for the revival of ethnic identity; differentiating, with the help of which the ethnos is aware of its peculiarity and uniqueness in the territory of the Amur and Sakhalin basins; integrating, which allows Aboriginal people to borrow the best of world values. The perception and preservation of ethnic culture takes place through folklore, myths, legends, beliefs and rituals. An analysis of these forms of culture shows that as a result of inter-ethnic communications, the traditional life-supporting technologies of the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region are being transformed.

## Keywords

Amur-Sakhalin Region • Natives • Immigrants • East Asian peoples • Life-supporting technologies • Inter-ethnic communications

## JEL Classification

N7 • N750 • Z1 • Z12 • Z13

## 1 Introduction

Ethnocultural life-sustaining technologies are, in many ways, incorporated as major components in traditional culture. They are necessary to maintain and revive ethnic traditions, processes of ethnic identification, integration, ethnic identity, language, to preserve cultural identity, ethnocultural space, crafts, everyday life, art, inter-tribal mechanism for translating cultural values (Fedorova, 2016; Grigoryeva, 2014). The evolution of ethnocultural technologies depends on the natural course of life of the ethnic group itself, on the gradual, outwardly poorly visible, but inevitable changes in the socio-cultural sphere, as well as on the intensity of inter-ethnic communications. Arutyunov (2002) emphasized the peculiarities of inter-ethnic communications of powerful

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civilizations and few ethnic groups, leading in many ways today the traditional lifestyle of hunters, fishermen, see hunters and reindeer herders on the basis of the first economic and cultural type. As a result of such communications, the indigenous peoples of the region become recipients and perceive ethnocultural components from their more industrialized neighbors. The indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region (Nanai, non-Hidal, Nivkhi, Orochi, Udegey, Uilta, Evenki), East Asian ethnic groups, throughout their ethnic history, actively contacted each other. The culture of Chinese, Koreans, Manchus and Japanese before Slavic immigrants influenced the life-supporting technologies of the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region in the field of worldview, fishing rituals, beliefs, holidays (Berezniatsky, 1996; Pavlinskaya, 1999). Some aspects of Eastern culture indirectly, in the form of remaining codes, continue to affect the Amur peoples today.

These important and complex phenomena of inter-ethnic communication can be traced on the basis of an analysis of the ideas of indigenous peoples about the universe, about natural objects, sacred rocks, about supernatural beings, werewolves. Important are mythological traditions about the structure of the Universe, shamanic, Buddhist and Christian beliefs and rituals, iconography and cult sculpture, fishing rituals and life-cycle rites.

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## 2 Materials and Method

Traditionally, the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region, in the complex of their life-supporting technologies, were engaged in hunting, sea-hunting, river and sea fishing, reindeer husbandry, gathering edible and medicinal wild deeds, other gifts of taiga and sea, entered into inter-tribal and inter-ethnic marriages, raised children, taught them to care for the environment and respect it. For centuries, these indigenous peoples have been in close ethnic and cultural contact with representatives of East Asian and resettlement European civilizations.

On the empirical and theoretical aspects of inter-ethnic contacts and life-supporting technologies of the indigenous peoples of the North, the researchers (Arutyunov, 2002; Alekseeva, 2012; Gorokhov, 2011; Gyngazova & Ivantsova, 2016; Ivanov & Ivanova, 2017; Ivashchenko, 2011; Niki-forova et al., 2018; Sataev, 2018; Sokolova & Troshina, 2015; Stepanenko, 2018; Yamskov, 2018; Zolotukhin, 2014). Berezniatsky et al. (2020) wrote and studied the features of the process of influence of the Russian authorities, Slavic immigrants on the traditional fishing technologies of the aborigines of Amur and Sakhalin, revealed the main stages of the historical, economic, ethnocultural development of the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin

region, showed a change in their fishing technologies as a result of communications with a foreign ethnic culture.

Ethnocultural life-supporting technologies can be considered as sustainable, regularly repeated cultural forms (Bayburin, 1985). They can be manifested in human behavior, in male and female cultural codes, in intercultural and inter-ethnic communication. In the latter case, this approach can well be used to study the process of ethnocultural interaction in the field of inter-ethnic contacts of the neighboring, alien and indigenous populations of the Amur-Sakhalin region.

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## 3 Results

It is known that the peculiarities of the mentality of European scientists led to the separation of the components of material and spiritual culture when structuring the general ethnic picture of the indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East. The peculiarity of Soviet ethnographic science is also superimposed on this universal Western paradigm by a complex layer, which, under the powerful influence of ideological attitudes, was forced to put on the first place elements of material culture, life and economy, and only on the backbone of this cultural institute to place data on spiritual culture, beliefs, rituals, sacrifices and shamanism. In fact, every ethnographer knows that in the real life of any ethnic group, spiritual and material culture is a fusion complex. Any technological action in the production of tools, transport, food and clothing is filled with an archetypal worldview, mythology, beliefs, ideas about the world and the place of man in it, about the influence on his fate and the whole society of various supernatural beings. In traditional culture, instruments, various devices and mechanisms were understood from the point of view of animism. Ancient hunters and gatherers believed that tools, weapons, utensils, transport are the premises of spirits that help or hinder human activity, depending on his behavior in society. Therefore, the process of making and using these things involves a mechanism of influence on supernatural beings in the form of merciful, protective and other rites and sacrifices. Otherwise, manufactured things, fishing equipment will work poorly and even harm hunters and fishermen.

Once again, this complex picture is layered with foreign-cultural, voluntarily borrowed or forcibly introduced components. It is impossible to consider them all in the volume of the article, so it is advisable to show only the most striking plots. For example, the image of a werewolf fox borrowed from East Asian culture played a large role in the beliefs and rituals of the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region, in social organization, in the institution of marriage, childbearing and other aspects of

life-supporting technologies. According to the Chinese, foxes had supernatural abilities and could be transformed into people. Upon reaching the age of 50, the fox could turn into an ordinary woman; at 500 years old—in a dazzling and seductive beauty, at the age of 1000 she became a celestial creature. Most often, the soul of a girl who did not have time to marry turned into such a fox. For people, these special foxes are dangerous because, in the image of beautiful women, they seduced and brought to death men. To protect against werewolves, the Chinese erected idols and made sacrifices, children were protected with the help of mascots from the wool of a dog mixed with baby hair, which were sewn into the clothes of a child (Alimov, 2008; Dzharlygasinova, 1970; Vasiliev, 1970).

Such beliefs about the evil spirit in the image of a five-hundred-year-old fox, which is introduced into a person, brings him suffering and leads to madness, fell to the Udegeites (Arsenyev, 1907). According to the Nivkhs, a werewolf fox in the form of a beautiful woman of easy behavior can kill any man. The werewolf could be identified by spitting chewing fish caviar at it, which returned to the spirit its zoomorphic appearance. But only a strong shaman could finally save a person from this evil spirit (Arsenyev, 1949). The main danger of the fox woman was that because of her, the man abandoned his wife and family, and eventually died of incredible love with the werewolf. In accordance with traditional life-supporting technologies, a woman is obliged to be a craftsman in the manufacture and decoration of ornaments and in the production of dried fish. A werewolf woman, taking advantage of her beauty, did not do household chores, which ruined the entire economy. In other words, in any such case of unnatural behavior of hunters and fishermen, the werewolf fox was considered the culprit of the destruction of the family.

An analysis of the cult of the rocks of the indigenous peoples of the region also shows cases of inter-ethnic communication with the Chinese and Manchus. Thus, a certain Chinese influence in the field of folklore can be identified when analyzing the ideas of the Iman Udegeians regarding the sacred rock, into which a certain mysterious old man who came from China turned out (Startsev, 1975). Bikinskaya udegeika E. I. Kyalundziga told the author a version of the legend about this sacred rock, in which the main character (Old Man) was called a Chinese priest. Iman Udegeets A. I. Sulyandziga told another version of the legend about this stone old man, calling him “the God of ginseng.” After the old man petrified, the Chinese came to him for some time and treated him to a rock for good luck. Subsequently, the ritual of treating the rock with foods and Chinese smoking candles was also learned by local Udegeites, who asked her for happiness in life, hunting fart and health. In the fishing culture of hunters and fishermen of the Amur-Sakhalin region, there are sacred rocks that bear

Chinese names, but the technologies are carried out in accordance with traditional beliefs.

A significant layer in the traditional culture of the Udegeans, Orochs and some groups of Nanai occupied the New Year according to the lunar calendar, which they began to celebrate under the influence of the Chinese. Hunters treated spirits with vodka and food, decorated with royal silver rubles and sable skins with cloth icons with the deities of the Buddhist pantheon depicted on them.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the culture of Slavic immigrants began to exert a powerful influence on the entire system of life-supporting technologies of the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region. It was expressed in a change in the nature of the settlement of aborigines (from the ancestral principle to the territorial one), in attempts to instill in reindeer herders a sedentary lifestyle, in a new technology for the construction of housing, the production of sea and land transport, the design of fishing equipment, the creation of samples of clothes, shoes, food. Irreversible changes occurred in spiritual culture: some of its components disappeared forever (shamanism, the cult of twins, a bear festival), others survived, but were filled with foreign cultural elements (fishing rituals, calendar holidays, folklore). Life-supporting technologies in the field of life cycle rituals, folk pedagogy have been transformed as a result of the introduction of European medicine, health systems and education.

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## 4 Conclusion

In such a way, the study showed that as a result of a long process of inter-ethnic communication of Slavic and Eastern civilizations with the indigenous peoples of the Amur-Sakhalin region, a gradual transformation of the complex of aboriginal life-supporting technologies is taking place. However, in traditional culture, contacts constantly took place between different territorial groups of the entire ethnic massif of Amur and Sakhalin. At the same time, sea hunters shared knowledge of their fishing and taiga hunters revealed the secrets of their technologies. There was a similar exchange between nomads and settled residents of the coasts of large rivers and the sea. The emerging European modes of land, air and sea transport have not yet completely replaced the traditional means of transportation, even attempts to revive driving dog breeding can be noted. Hunters, sea worms and fishermen still have the intuitive ability to unmistakably find prey and take its prey. Despite the powerful impact of all-Russian festive culture, many traditional elements are preserved in the form of folklore holidays, dances and ethnic music. Mythological texts, legends and traditions are not forgotten and transmitted to the younger generation, but, of course, not in the previous

volumes and forms. The most important factor should be the preservation of the mentality of the indigenous peoples of the region, which is the basis of their ancient culture aimed at the humane use of natural resources, despite the inclusion of certain non-ethnic technologies that contribute to the further positive development of society and adherence to global standards. It is this feature that allows the entire ethnic system of the indigenous peoples of the region to maintain its stability in the present conditions of inter-ethnic communication.

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