

## MENTAL PICTURE OF THE WORLD OF RUSSIAN ARCTIC OLD RESIDENTS: THE PRAGMATICS OF CULTURE

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### ABSTRACT

The article proposes to explore the picture of the world of Russian old residents as an expression of the authentic Arctic human mentality. On the base of the works by A.Ya. Gurevich, who substantiated the concept of "mental picture of the world", the author of the article suggests exploring the chronotopes of traditional culture, the value paradigm of existence of "doselnye" (old time) people in a pragmatic aspect on the material of the collections of the Russian Arctic old resident A. Chikachev. In the course of the study, we reveal that "sendukha", tundra, acts not as a landscape object, but as an existential subject. The preservation of the Orthodox faith, the transformation and acquisition of "foreign" traditions of pagan peoples – Yukaghirs and Evens - formed a special type of culture of Russian "doselny" man on the Indigirka, his mental picture of the world.

**Keywords:** *mentality, Russians, Russian Arctic old residents, authentic culture, A. Chikachev, picture of the world, small-numbered peoples of the North, Yukaghirs, Yakutia.*

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of "mental picture of the world", which differs from the habitual picture of the world, requires clarification. This is not only an idea of the world and the Universe, their inhabitants and the specifics of the organization, but also the Word itself. The small-numbered peoples of the North that include the Russian old residents of the Arctic, have epic genres (such as Evenki Ulgurs, Nenets Siudbabts, etc.) that are characterized by the realism of the narrative, the abundance of typical household sketches, details, characterizing the peculiarity of norms of behavior and the entire life-style of the people. The mental picture of the world is first of all reflected in the traditional worldview of the people, in the environment of simple guardians of tradition, and in a special oral genre – tales of Russian Arctic old residents.

In the book "Mentalities of the Peoples of the World", G. Gachev writes that in everyday speech "we speak in the language of supervales, we use philosophical ideas and principles, but we do not realize that we use them unconsciously" (Gachev, 2008: 9). Certainly, fundamental categories and concepts lie down in the day-to-day word usage. The everyday speech of Russkoustintsy (inhabitants of Russkoye Ustye) is Russian, and though old residents were "neither Russians nor Yakuts, people stubbornly spoke in the Russian language, had kept Russian character and self-consciousness" (Chikachev, 2010: 288).

In this case, the observations of the language of supervales of Russkoustintsy on the material of their oral heritage – tales - will be interesting. The supervales of daily life in the limit of human being are "to speak well", learn "the news what is happening in the wide world" (Chikachev, 2010: 106-107). This, in fact, determines the novelty of our research: the culture of the Russian Arctic old residents is described, studied from the standpoint of ethnography (Strogova, 2007; Boyakova, 2012; Telnov, 2012) and linguistics (Druzhinina, 1966; Samsonov, 1993). Recently, the studies of a linguoculturological character have appeared (Berdnikova 2017). But the mental picture of the world was not previously the object of research; moreover, it was not studied from the standpoint of the pragmatics of culture.

The work by A. Vezhbtskaya "Understanding Cultures through Key Words" (Vezhbtskaya, 2001) is extremely useful for us. The purpose of the study is through the spoken Word – folklore and everyday, the authentic meaning of which is recorded in the books by Alexey Chikachev, to present the ethnic mental picture of the world. The combination of historical-cultural and problem-logical approaches allows exploring the picture of the world in a pragmatic aspect.

## **BASIC PART**

### **The protective function of the sounding word**

The realization of the said word "will give us an important means to penetrate into the arsenal of archetypes and principles, into the scale of values that form the national mentality of the people and their culture" (Gachev, 2008: 9). It should be said that the studies of the authentic word of the Russian population of the Indigirka from the standpoint of pragmatics are not enough (Berdnikova, 2017) the cultural landscape of the ethnic group also demands its researcher (Strogova, 2007; Boyakova, 2012).

The specificity of the word of Russkoustintsy is that Russian Arctic old residents are carriers and translators of the Orthodox faith. Moreover, this faith survived in the process of close, incestuous interaction with pagan peoples, peoples with a Shamanistic worldview – Yukaghirs, Chukchi and Evens (Crate, 2003). The preservation of the Orthodox view of life (the ancestors of Russian Arctic old residents never belonged to Old Believers) in close interaction with shamans, capable to enter the changed state of consciousness and to travel over universe worlds, qualitatively distinguish the mental picture of the world of Russian old residents from the picture of the world of Russians and the picture of the world of indigenous peoples of the Arctic 9 (Vezhbitskaya, 2001). It is known that Yakut and Yukaghir shamans, when performing a shamanistic ritual for Russian old residents, at first recited an Orthodox prayer, crossed themselves, having turned to the East, and then in the native language called the spirits-assistants.

The attitude to the word sounding by the Russian old residents of the Arctic is special. In the memoirs of his grandfather A. Chikachev wrote: "Our grandfather had a small library. The old man strictly observed that at reading not a single word was omitted. If someone happened to miss or distort the word, he unceremoniously stopped him... Such a strictly conservative attitude to the word, to the accuracy of its transmission was a tradition and contributed to the fact that our ancestors managed to preserve and transfer the wealth of Old Russian folklore" (Chikachev, 2010: 18). Of course, this is determined by the memory of tradition: the tradition of not playing with the word goes back to paganism with its belief that the word has a protective function. The distortion of the word, especially its loss, is unacceptable, because the Russian old residents' word has a sociocultural and existential strategy. For Russian old residents, the manipulation of the word is unacceptable. The word pronounced without distortion and correctly resists chaos; it is the guarantor of the preservation of culture.

### **Mentality and long-remembered culture of Russian old residents**

The mental picture of the world includes the national logic of Russian Arctic old residents, their thinking pattern. Russkoye Ustye is a place of compact settlement of Russian Arctic old residents on the Indigirka. This is a Russian village, which has preserved "all our roots – cultural, spiritual, economic, and state, from there comes all the so-called mentality of the people. From there comes common sense" (Rasputin, 2012: 182).

The mentality of Russkoustintsy is defined by the traditional collective-family, patrimonial way, rooted in history. Cohesion is one of the mental traits of the Russian character, which is preserved in Russkoye Ustye. G. Gachev has designated the mentality of Russians in such a way: "in the infinite expanse of Russia, man cannot stand alone... A man needs to know – to feel his belonging to the unity – house-family, village, country". The long-remembered culture of Russkoustintsy stores the archetypal opposition – own/foreign. The interest of the old men in the origin of one of the most famous Russkoustintsy, Alexey Chikachev, is the mental trait of Russkoustintsy, living in the environment of indigenous peoples: "When I informed that I was a grandson of Chikachev – Gavrilenko, they've thrown up their hands disconcertingly. When I clarified that my grandfather was also called Shell, they shouted joyfully: "I know, I know you're a grandson of Shell". And memories began...." (Chikachev, 2010: 17-18). A grandson of Shell is their own, and hence there is a derivative mental trait of Russkoustintets, self-sacrifice in the name of extension of life of the tribesman, the brother on blood and spirit.

The village Russkoye Ustye was originally marked by the ethnonym – "Russkoye", the space belonging to them – Russian old residents. But over time, they themselves became part of the terrain, understood that they are not Russians and not Yakuts, and something average, becoming an accessory to the terrain, not ethnicity..." (Rasputin, 1988: 8). The terrain is the river Indigirka and tundra-

sendukha, etc., and therefore they are people of the Indigirka and sendukha. Thus, in our opinion, the autochthonous culture of Russkoustinty is manifested, which has preserved the most important innate mental trait, which G. Gachev designated metaphorically: "For Russians, Space is more domesticated... and for Russia that is "infinite expanse", horizontal ideas are preferential – distance, width, Way-road... and the images of movement in it – a bronze horseman, Rus-Troika..." (Gachev, 2008: 19, 29). Vaclav Seroshevsky in the ethnographic work "Yakuts" called the North-East of Siberia "the *Limit of Sorrow*" (limit – a spatial marker, meaning a boundary, border, the irresistible). But this morbid region, which for the European Seroshevsky was the limit, for a Russian resident of the Arctic was *Mother sendukha*, which was often mentioned in the paremias – sendukha that would rescue, that would train.

We defined the culture of Russian old residents as long-remembered culture. Memory is a chronotropic category (M. Bakhtin). Russkoustinty have special relationships with time. In the authentic culture of Russians, it has first of all sociocultural filling, but not economic (such as "time-money"), and historical. Time in the mentality of the Russians is perceived as "spindle, rotation, the idea of a circle-cycle" (G. Gachev). The knowledge of holidays was dictated not only by devotion, but primarily by economic necessity. Life in the tundra, polar day and polar night are certain natural-climatic and labor cycles, which are caused by the passage of the sun and the interchange of crafts (Vitebsky, 2002). The category of time lies in the basis of self-identification of Russians – "Indigirka people": by affiliation of time, Russkoustinty belonged to "doselnye" (old), and foreign people, "who were in view of history", "strange", visitors from the central part of Russia, including exiled, were called local. The Volga River, which has never been seen by the majority of Russkoustinty, is not just a river for them, not just a hydronym. Mother Volga reflects the cultural memory of the ethnic group; it brings it to the status of the sacred landscape, which has not lost its significance for a Russian old resident, who had already lost physical connection with the mother river. But the long-remembered culture of Russian Arctic old residents actualizes new space of "doselny" life, life away from Novgorod and Mother Volga. The sacred landscape for Russkoustinty becomes tundra which Russian old residents call Mother sendukha.

### **The ethnolandscape of Russian Arctic old residents**

Sendukha is a topographic text of the cultural memory of Russkoustinty, in which the present is made more meaningful, necessary in the light of the new ethnic history. In the coexistence with pagan peoples – Yukaghirs and Evens, Russkoustinty developed new forms of interaction with the sacred landscape. As pagans, Russian Arctic old residents fed fire and water (Balzer, 1999). The essay by A. Chikachev "Innocent-Kukaki" testifies to the rooting of the pagan rite among Orthodox Russian old residents of the Arctic: "It was interesting to watch the drinking ritual. Before pouring to the glasses, a spoon of vodka was necessary to be poured into the fire. Then everyone took a lap..." (Chikachev, 2010: 134). They gave presents to Sendushny – the spirit of tundra (*sendukha*). The colored shreds were tied to willow shrub. On the Christmastide, they disguised themselves, went to the houses and sang Christmas carols. They worshipped Stikheya (force of nature) and expressed themselves in the address to the sea, the river, threw a gift to the water, saying: "Father Blue Sea, stop the weather!" or when crossing the river after ice drift: "Mother Kolyma, take a gift from us" (Chikachev, 2007: 93).

Mother sendukha is not only tundra, but in general the surrounding natural world. Stopping in a way, Russkoustinty, as well as indigenous peoples of Yakutia, necessarily not only fed fire, but also left shreds on sticks. Russkoustinty's tale "Shaman Uppar" testifies to the rooting of the rite among tundra inhabitants: "Long time ago one old man lived on Alazee, whether he was Chukchi or Yukaghir... We came to them in yaranga and told: "Grandpa, brace yourself with something and mature. Satu-le, something-le get down...". He sat for a while, kept quiet, and said: "Pals, you'll stay today overnight at my place. Just bring something to feed fire..." (Chikachev, 2010: 62-63).

Sendukha in the perception of Russian Arctic old resident was an animate object. From Russkoustinty's tale "Shaman Uppar": "Long time ago on Alazee one old man lived... With Sendukha, as with his mother-le, sister-le, spoke. Whatever he asked, Sendukha gave him everything. Wanted a deer – a deer, wanted Arctic fox – an Arctic fox. Morok (darkness, fog) was necessary – pulled on morok" (Chikachev, 2010: 62). This tale testifies to the special etiquette and ethics of interaction with the sacred space that was fixed by V. Jochelson at Yukaghirs. Yukaghir etiquette was borrowed by the Russian population of the Indigirka: following the Yukaghirs, Russian old residents

believed that a man owned an animal only when "the master of them was supportive to him" (Ivanov 1995, p. 22). Thus, the person was not the master in sendukha, it was sendukha that was or was not favorable to the person. Russkoustinty thanked and gave presents to sendukha – "where the man stroked the fire, where drank tea, rejoiced the place during three years" (Chikachev, 2007: 93); or in the tale "Grandfather's acreage" we read: "there is an abandoned field area "Long Viska". We came here with brother Veniamin. Came ashore. We made a bonfire. We fed a light, drank tea – remembered grandfathers and went on" (Chikachev, 2007: 112). Hunters never used such words, going hunting to sendukha, as "to kill", "to get", "to hunt". They usually said: "*Let's go to sendukha*", "*let's go on the chaps*", "*let's go to guard*". It is obvious that the verbs of movement in space, moving in it are more prioritized than the verbs of purposeful action.

### **Semiotics of the world's value picture**

The sacred landscape of Mother sendukha is impossible to imagine without dogs in the culture of Russian Arctic old residents. A dog in the tundra is movement, it is life. Among the aborigines of the North, the residents of the Indigirka were called "doggy people", their settlement – "the heart of the "Doggy Country", and Nizhnekolymsk in ancient documents was called "Doggy prison" (Chikachev, 2007: 24; Vinokurova, 2004: 3; Birkengof, 1972). Dogs are an integral part of the picture of the world of the "Doggy Country" population: "Whoever has more dogs is the greatest gentleman" (Chikachev, 2004: 8). The dog served for Russian tundra people, was a reliable transport, and a member of the ceremonial sphere. The groom carried the bride to the church in a dog sled, which was decorated, according to A. Chikachev, with red and green cloth (Chikachev, 2007: 80). It is important for us to indicate the color of dog sled – red and green. Our interest is caused by the fact that color is one of the abstract ways of space exploration (G. Gachev). Color obviously has the associated symbolism. The color grade of sled is very indicative and is conditioned by the mental memory of the motherland – "Sophisticated Rus". Red color symbolizes life, holiday, beauty, and green color in the wedding sled of Russian old residents has the semantics of continuation of life and is a symbol of youth. It is interesting to address in this context the tale "From the Life of the Gavrilenkovy". There we will find a symbolic remark of the narrator about his trip to Primorye: "We have the land – white, and they have everything green" (Chikachev, 2007: 131). Own/foreign is manifested in the perception of color; for the "doselny" people, green color, unlike white, was still "foreign". The semantics of white color are probably close to the values that are fixed in the dictionary of V. Dahl: the Russians called the white their "faith, czar and fatherland" (Dahl, 1981: 153). It is obvious that in the phrase "we have the land – white" the homeland, fatherland is encrypted, and this phrase is also associated with the concept of freedom, liberty, and independence. Green color, which for "local" Russians is associated with "reviving nature and verdant plants" (Voyevoda 2012, p. 120) does not occupy such a place for Russkoustinty in their picture of the world, the world of Mother sendukha. The memory of Sophisticated Rus was preserved in the fact that a dog was called "an animal", and a kennel – "a band"; it is the verbalized memory of pastoral culture of the Russians. But meanwhile, under the influence of indigenous peoples of the North, Yukaghirs and Chukchi in particular, another cultural phenomenon appeared in the culture of Russkoustinty: the nicknames of dogs were often used for the name of the infant (Chikachev, 2007: 82). Russkoustinty also observed the custom of "animal feeding": at birth, sons were given, along with the traditional name, also a canine name. Later, they called puppies with these names that were bred by teenage boys. Such dogs were called "fattened". This had not only a utilitarian character – children were taught to care for the animals, they learned to manage the dog sled and helped in simple works around the house. Already by being ten years old, according to informants, teenagers made significant trips (Folklore of Russkoye Ustye, 1986: 342; Chikachev, 2007: 208). Such custom and tradition require consideration in the focus of beingness. In general, the indigenous peoples of the North revered dog as a creature capable of averting trouble from man. It can be assumed that the naming of a baby by a dog's nickname has a pagan rationale and is perceived from Yukaghirs – a dog's name is needed to make the spirit of the disease take it for the puppy. Thus, the sled dog in the value picture of the world of Russian residents of the Indigirka comes first. In the report by F.P. Wrangel "Remarks about Dog-Driving", we read: dog "as though by the nature itself is intended to be a fellow of the person, to protect him, to follow him on hunting, capable like him to stand all climate conditions, to get accustomed here to that which in other countries is not peculiar for dogs at all" (Wrangel, 1948: 141). "Dog – white Arctic fox – sendukha" is an existential triad of Russian old residents. The book "Sledge-Dog Breeding of Yakutia", which is based on reliable information from the personal archive of the researcher and ancestral memory, says that from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the "Arctic fox period" of the development of tundra zone began. The type of

fishing the Russian old residents were engaged in was closely connected with the sledge-dog breeding. This was due in no small part to the fact that the neighboring Yukaghirs also were engaged in dog breeding. But, in the opinion of the researcher, dogs for Yukaghirs were primarily a means of communication among neighboring families. Only with the arrival of Russians and the development of fishing and Arctic fox hunting, the transportation of freight or people by dogs for considerable distances has been developed. A dog played a big role in the everyday life of Russian Arctic old residents (Druzhinina, 1966). "Even at tea meetings in winter evenings there were endless conversations about dogs, about their habits, about the best riders", etc. (Chikachev, 2004: 23). From the ethnographic story "In the hut of Aunt Aprasenyia": "Uncle Yegor suddenly started fussing. He needs to take care of his four-legged friends, feed them well, make a snow fence from the cold shelonnik (south-wester) strong wind)..." (Chikachev, 2010: 70). "We, brother, were forced to have deer. And we refused. We do not know from which side to come to the deer..." (Chikachev, 2010: 109). In a letter, A. Chikachev offers a refinement to the essay of V. Rasputin about Russkoye Ustye that is very informative for us: "The expression "has not yet untied the dogs" is not quite correct, because when they return from hunting, dogs are not tied, but unharnessed, i.e. they remove breast-bands from them and enchain them. Therefore, it is better to say "has not yet unharnessed dogs"..." (Chikachev, 2010: 287).

The life of Russian old resident, soldered with sendukha, is verbally and behaviorally codified, because following/not following unwritten rules entails death or the preservation of life. And the notions of life and death of Russian old residents and Yukaghirs coincide. From the letter of A. Chikachev to the writer V. Rasputin: "... I have a firm belief in reincarnation, and I really want you to believe, too. According to our ancient northern legend, the soul of a good man does not die with a temporal body but separates and after a while resettles in a newborn. At us, Russkoustintsy and Pokhodchane (citizens of Pokhodsk, settlement of Russian Arctic old-timers in the north of Yakutia), this belief is called "to come *oyavi*" (means "rebirth within the gens"). Someone's dream, the life statement of the deceased, any birthmark stain, and also other peculiarities (for example, left-handedness) helped to discover reincarnation (Chikachev, 2010: 311-312). Note that Yukaghir people have a similar idea about the resettlement of the soul that they call *nunni* (in the Lower Kolyma dialect means "soul").

The consideration of the mental picture of the world of Russkoustintsy will be incomplete without reference to the male/female dichotomy (Samsonov, 1993). Initially, the culture of Russians was dominated by the female principle, which was reflected in such expressions as mother earth, Mother Volga. This is not only a memory of tradition, but also an updated ethnocollective memory of the ethnic group that arises in the danger of complete extinction of the past. So, from the essay "Innocent-Kukaki": "And around are snows, snows and silence... Only a scrunch under a hoof of a deer or a bell jingled on his neck can be heard. Tired by road, lulled with an affectionate quiet melody and familiar rustles of Mother Sendukha, with bliss you fall asleep..." (Chikachev, 2010: 135).

The male/female cultural dichotomy is reflected in Russkoustintsy's sayings, proverbs and references to the elements: "Eh, father. The tzar is fire, give morok – clouds (totally overcast sky)..." The house of the Russian Arctic old residents was also divided into male and female halves. Men were not let into women's affairs. The hostess set out the table. The treatment of skins and sewing was exclusively female occupation (Chikachev, 2010: 50-51). A woman-Russkoustinka must take fish, go hunting, drive dogs. "Women's daily work began with making fire early in the morning and ended only with going to bed" (Chikachev, 2010: 32). The birth of a boy in a family of Russian Arctic old residents was more important than a girl. And accordingly, the status of a woman in the society of Russian Arctic old residents was lower than that of men: the right corner in the house, the so-called "front seat", belonged to a man, and left – to a woman. On the left side of the house there was "women's table" where women ate. The consideration of the mental picture of the world of Russian old residents of the Arctic from the standpoint of pragmatics has made it possible to conclude that it is a system of traditional representations about the world and the person in it, reflected in folklore and the very worldview of old residents, with a projection in the culture of everyday life, and samples of folklore and emerging artistic word-tales, "naive letter", etc.

## CONCLUSION

The study of the mental picture of the world of Russian old residents in a pragmatic aspect obviously has its value and opens the prospect of cultural and anthropological study of authentic cultures of the peoples of North-Eastern Siberia.

The mental picture of the world is knowledge, objectified both in everyday domestic realities of an ethnic group and in symbolic forms – oral folk art (tales, family stories, songs and fairy tales), paremias, in the signs of space (house, dog, chaps), and the space itself (Sendukha). But it is necessary to admit that in the post-Soviet time the processes of the blurring of not an identity (Gernet, 2006) but of the indigenous language of Russian Arctic old residents are very active. This is generally characteristic of the indigenous cultures of the Arctic – Evens and Yukaghirs (Vitebsky, 2005). It is obvious that assimilative processes involve the change of the mental picture of the world of Russian Arctic old residents, and at the same time the change of the whole way of life. The appeal to the pragmatics of the picture of the world gives valuable material and opens prospects for studying the mentality of Russian people, their self-awareness and self-identity.

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1. RUSSIA'S ARCTIC POLICY AT THE INTERPLAY OF DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL Discursive production and decision-making mechanisms The Arctic as a flagship for Putin-style statehood An internationally recognized "brand" for Russia The Arctic, a soft power tool for bilateral relations? 2. a territory or an identity? THE HIGH NORTH IN RUSSIA'S STATEHOOD The Imperial and Soviet memory of the Arctic What administrative status for Arctic regions? Indigenous peoples as marginalized stakeholders? The nationalist reading of the Arctic: Russia's new Lebensraum. 3. RUSSIA'S SPATIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGES Russia's Arctic Doctrines. 9 16. Assessing the Problems of the Russian Arctic. 21. Russia's Relations with Major Arctic Players U.S.-Russia Canada-Russia Russia-Norway Russia-Denmark Russia's Relations with East Asian Countries NATO and Russia in the Arctic EU, Russia and the Arctic. For example, some commentators hold that the importance of the Arctic in world politics is increasing due to globalization, and should be seen beyond the traditional aspects of power, conflict and cooperation (Heininen 2012). While falling short of a new Cold War in the Arctic region, potential national or nationalistic responses by Arctic states could securitize Arctic cooperation. And yet most of the Arctic, especially offshore, remains essentially unexplored with respect to petroleum. The Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation (AZRF) is the northern end of the European and Asian parts of the Russian Federation, located along the shores of the seas in the Arctic Ocean: Barents, Kara, Laptev, East Siberian and Chukchi. It is Russia's longest maritime boundary. About the Arctic Investor. 2,5 million. Population of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation. 5 million sq. km. Total space occupied by Russian dominions in the Arctic. 9 regions. Making up the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation. Discover more than the tip of the iceberg: discover the entire Arctic! The Russian Arctic occupies an enormous area stretching across the Arctic Ocean from the Barents Sea on Russia's Western border to the Chukchi Sea in the Far East. Both seas are covered with drifting ice almost all year round. Photo credit: Sergey Anisimov. In summer the sun shines here round the clock and in wintertime a remarkable phenomenon occurs when the Northern Lights illuminate blue icebergs and glaciers. Murmansk is the largest city anywhere in the world beyond the Arctic Circle, as well as Russia's most important Arctic port. Barentsburg on Svalbard archipelago, a Norwegian territory where Russia enjoys special privileges, is the main town and starting point for all tourists going to Spitsbergen. Depending on the itinerary, tourists may either stay here or travel further on. Russian Arctic Indigenous people are vulnerable to COVID-19 and afflicted by the lockdown as well as climate change. With the onset of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the world has found itself in a global health emergency, which has caused a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and brought normal life around the world to a halt for the better part of a year. The Arctic Institute's COVID-19 series offers an interesting compilation of best practices, challenges and diverse approaches to the pandemic applied by various Arctic states, regions, and communities. After the onset of the lockdown, residents of the Far North asked that authorities allow nomadic reindeer herders to move between settlements and the tundra.