

# **A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN ACTIVITIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES OF THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

How many Japanese have a concrete image if he or she is asked about Siberia? Most Japanese may have vague images of the Trans Siberia Railroad, a vast wilderness with white birch, or the miserable fate of Japanese prisoners of war after the defeat of the Japanese puppet state in Manchuria. As the vast Siberia lies just across the Sea of Japan, the Japanese sometimes consider it as a neighboring country. After the Second World War, this region was in a vulnerable situation because the interests of various big powers such as the United States, Russia and China concentrated attention on Northeast Asia during the Cold War. This geo-political situation led the Japanese people and government to conceive of Siberia as a place very far from Japan. Although they are Japan's neighbors, most Japanese do not have close feelings toward China and Russia, whereas they do feel close ties to America which is quite far across the Pacific Ocean. Basically, among the Japanese there still remains an attitude of indifference to China and Russia.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian economics and politics took steps towards 'perestroika' and their previously closed trade and diplomacy were opened to the Western world. In October 1993, Russian President Yeltsin visited Japan and signed the Tokyo Declaration regarding the Kuril Islands issue and the Economic Declaration for promoting economic investment from Japan. At the meeting of the Keizai Doyukai on 24 July 1997, Japanese Prime Minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, proposed "Eurasian Diplomacy" which suggested a new Japanese economic strategy towards Russia and the Central Asia with long-term perspective. At the Japan-Russia top level meeting in Krasnoyarsk in November 1997, the leaders of both countries reached complete agreement that the deadline for the conclusion of a peace treaty would be the year 2000. The political relationship between Russia and Japan has been improving, as mentioned above and economic exchanges have expanded as well. In connection with oil and natural gas developments in the Northeast Asia, the Sakhalin I Project has been developed by four Japanese, American and Russian companies and the Sakhalin II Project by five Japan-America-Europe joint ventures, including the Japanese big businesses of Mitsui and Mitsubishi. Recently many Japanese institutes and friendship organizations have been established in the prefectures along the Sea of Japan in order to research the investment conditions in the Northeast Asia. This area attracts public attention mainly from the economic perspective.

The impression of Russia and Siberia among the average Japanese, however, is not so favorable because of recent negative events such as the news of abandonment of Russian nuclear-powered submarines in the Sea of Japan, and the oil spill and pollution accident caused by the Russian ship Nakhodka which occurred offshore of Japan's Hokuriku region in January 1997. A prosperous relationship between Russia and Japan has been anticipated from only the economic perspective, particularly natural resource development. There exist very few discussions about negative issues, for example, environmental damage caused by resource development, exchanges of peoples between Japan and the Kuril Islands or Russia, and the recent difficult conditions for the indigenous peoples. For many Japanese Siberia is still a strange land.

In this report I will write about the activities of Russians in the Russian Far East from the historical viewpoint, particularly the relation between the Russians and the indigenous people. Moreover, I would like to discuss future issues.

## **AN OUTLINE OF THE FAR EAST**

### **1. Geography**

From the geographical point of view, Siberia is divided into three regions: Western Siberia, Eastern Siberia and the Far East. At present the Far East is economically defined as the eastern part beyond Yakutia and Amur Oblast. However there has been some dispute as to whether the Republic of Sakha belongs to the Far East. The Lena River, 4,400 kilometers in total length, flows inland. There are Central Siberia Plateaus on the western side

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of the Lena and the Northeastern Mountains on the eastern side. On the southern side of these mountains the Amur River, 4,444 kilometers in length and the second longest river in Russia, flows from west to east in a great S-shape. On the eastern side of the Lena lie the Verkhoyanskiy Mountains, Suntar-Khayata Mountains, and Cherskogo Mountains which include 2,000-3,000 meter summits and the Yana, Indigirka, and Kolyma Rivers which flow to the Arctic Ocean from the mountains. The region is the coldest in the earth, with the exception of the the Antarctic Continent. On the eastern part of the mountains, the Chukotskiy Peninsula lies facing North America over the Bering Sea. The Yablonovyy Mountains and Stanovoy Mountains, which are above 2,000 meters in height, range from the east edge of Lake Baikal to the Sea of Okhotsk. At the southern part of the mountains the Shilka and Arugun join to the Amur to flow to the east. The Amur flows through the valleys between Stanovoy Mountains and the Taishingan Ling and reaches through the fertile plain at the juncture of Ussuri River in its midstream. Dzhugdzur Mountains and Sihote-Alin' Mountains are located along the Sea of Okhotsk and the Sea of Japan respectively. In the Kamchatka peninsula, there are mountains about 3,000 meters in height. The mountains are relatively new and active volcanoes stretch south to the Kuril Islands and the Japanese Archipelago.

## **2. Climate**

In the Lena valley the climate conditions are similar to the Middle Siberia Plateau in East Siberia. It is hot in summer and is very severe in winter. In Yakutsk, at latitude 62 degrees north, the average temperature in July is around 19 degrees centigrade and sometimes the highest temperature reaches 40 degrees centigrade. The lowest temperature, 68 degrees centigrade below zero, was recorded at the vicinity of Verkhoyansk and Oymyakon. The Far East is strongly affected by the oceanic monsoon. Winter is cold and dry with small snowfall because strong high air masses flow to the east from the inland of Siberia. The precipitation in winter is only 10-15 percent of the annual rainfall. The summer monsoon is greatly influenced by the south or southeast wind and the monsoon storms from the south frequently sweep through the area. There is a great amount of rainfall and humidity. In the Amur valley and Primorskiy Krai precipitation is greater than evaporation in the hot season because of strong monsoon. The climate in the coastal area of the Sea of Okhotsk and the Northeast is considerably chilly because of strong cold winds from frozen sea at high-latitudes. Gales and blizzards are common in winter. The summer is cold and cloudy, and comparatively humid. The average temperature in January of the southern part of Primorskiy is minus 12 - 14 degrees centigrade and it of the coastal area of Okhotsk minus 20 - 25 degrees centigrade. In the inland it reaches around minus 40 - 45 degrees centigrade. The average temperatures in July of the southern part of Primorskiy is 14 - 20 degrees centigrade, the coastal area of Okhotsk 11 - 12 degrees centigrade and the northern part 10 degrees centigrade. The annual amount of rainfall is around 500 - 900 millimeters in the coastal area and 300 - 400 millimeters in the central part of the Far East. As Kamchatka juts out into the ocean, the climate is strongly influenced by atmospheric stream of the Sea of Okhotsk and Northern Pacific Ocean and weakly by the inland. The coastal area of Far East is also slightly affected by a cold current.

## **3. Forests**

The forests in the North-east are not so dense as taiga on the western side of the Lena. There is a gradual change from tall larch cover to short dense Himalayan cedar - pine shrub, covering low mountains in the coastal area of the Pacific Ocean. On the western side of the upper valley of the Amur where the Selenga, the Shilka and the Arugun valley are located, there dominate grassy steppes instead of tree species such as larch, Himalayan cedar and pine. On the upper valley of the Amur the weather and vegetation are similar to the Central Siberian Plateau. As rainfall increases in the middle and lower valley of the Amur due to the monsoon from the Pacific Ocean, the vegetation of this area differs from the inherent of Siberia. In the low mountains the forests consist mostly of deciduous trees such as oak, maple, walnut, and ash instead of coniferous tree. Several kinds of deer, black bear and tiger live in the forests, shrubs and flood plain. In the Kamchatka Peninsula thick deciduous forests with tall grass widely grow because of the abundant humidity caused by the maritime climate.

## **4. Administrative Regions and Population**

In the Far East there are the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) on the Lena, Amur Oblast, Jewish Autonomous Oblast, Khabarovsk Krai and Primorskiy Krai on the Amur, Magadan Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug,

Koryak Autonomous Okrug and Kamchatka Oblast in the North-east and Sakhalin Oblast in the Pacific Ocean (Fig. 1). The total area of the Far East is some 6,215,900 square kilometers and the population is about 7,500,000 (Tab. 1). The biggest administrative region in the Far East is the Republic of Sakha, with an area of around 3,103,200 square kilometers, 8 times that of Japan. The Republic is also the biggest administrative district in Russia. The Republic is autonomous. Its population is about 1,000,000 and the Yakuts account for one third of it. The Russians is about half of the total population. The region with the highest population in the Far East is the Primorskiy Krai, which is about 165,900 square kilometers with more than 2,000,000 people.

According to the 1989 census, there lived 10,000 - 25,000 northern peoples in Yakutia (Sakha), Khabarovsk Krai, Koryak Autonomous Oblast, Chukotka Autonomous Okrug and Magadan Oblast respectively (2). On the other hand, in Amur Oblast, Primorskiy Krai, Kamchatka Oblast, excluding Koryak Autonomous Okrug and Sakharin Oblast, there were only 1,000 - 3,000 and percentages of them were less than 1 percent in each region. The regions, where the indigenous peoples were more than 25 percent of total population, were only Koryak Autonomous Okrug and the Republic of Sakha. In the Republic of Sakha, there were more than 360,000 of the Yakuts and they are one third of the total population. In the Republic there were also 24,817 of the northern peoples and the almost half of them were the Tungus that were the Evankis 14,428 and the Evens 8,668 (Tab. 2). In Khabarovsk Krai, there were more than 20,000 of the northern peoples and half of them were the Nanai. The Koryak Autonomous Okrug belongs to Kamchatka Oblast and in this *oblast* there were 10,029 of the northern peoples. They were one fourth of the total population of the *oblast*, consisting of the Koryak 6,572, the Chukchi 1,460, the Itel'mens 1,179, and the Ewenkis 713.

In the most regions, more than 70 percent of the northern peoples live not in cities but in the countryside. However, in Sakhalin Oblast many northern peoples live in the cities. In this *oblast*, 5 percent of the population consists of Koreans and descendants of those who were taken from the Korean Peninsula under the Japanese rule. The Jewish Autonomous Oblast was established in 1934 by the Soviet Union in order to solve the issues of the Jews. At first the Soviet Union expected mass immigration of the Jew from the western regions, but the actual immigration was quite small scale. Consequently the title of the autonomous region of the Jew is utterly inappropriate. The population of Jew was 8,887 in 1989, only 4 percent of the total population. In the Far East the population of the Russians are more than 70 percent in the most regions except the Republic of Sakha, the Koryak Autonomous Okrug and Chukotka Autonomous Okrug. The second most populous people are the Ukrainian, accounting for 6 - 7 percent. Slavic people, including the Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, account for about 90 percent of the total population in the Far East.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Russian population dropped sharply in the Far East. The human population of the Far East was some 8,160,000 in the 1989 census and 7,510,000 in 1996 census. The decrease was around 650,000. In particular, the population in Khabarovsk Krai and Magadan Oblast dwindled noticeably with decreases of about 250,000 and 130,000 respectively.

## 5. Cities in the Far East

People are living in the cities rather than the countryside. In the Republic of Sakha, Amur Oblast and Jewish Autonomous Oblast 65 percent of the population lives in the cities and in the other regions 80 - 90 percent. In short, people in the Far East have concentrated in the cities. But in Koryak Autonomous Okrug the ratio of the urban population does not reach 25 percent of the total because of lack of industrial cities which have usually attracted newcomers. The population density is more than 1 - 5 person per square kilometer along the Trans Siberian Railroad on the southern part of the Far East, especially around the southern part of the Primorskiy Krai. However, in the most of the other areas, except the Sakhalin Island, the population density is very sparse at no more than 1 person per square kilometer. As more than 70 percent of the northern peoples have been living in the countryside and the most of the Slavic new comers in the cities, each of them are basically inhabiting in different areas.

In the Republic of Sakha, located far from the Siberian Main Road or Trans Siberia Railroad, the population is sparse. The densely populated cities in the Republic can be classified into two categories: the old cities which were established in the 17th century and the relatively new cities which were established in 20th century and have been closely connected with mining of diamonds, gold, coal and other minerals. The latter were constructed as a result of rapid population increase due to the mineral exploitation in the twentieth century. The regions on the Amur were occupied by the Russians in the latter half of 19th century and the towns in these regions were established along the Trans Siberia Railroad. There are few cities along the northern part of the Trans Siberia Railroad and they are comparatively small. Magadan, capital of Magadan Oblast, is a typical

mining city. The city was established in the 1930s to exploit mineral resources such as gold and other valuable metals and the mining was carried out by the forced labor of concentrated camp (lager'). In Sakhalin there are many small cities, most constructed after 1855 when Russia and Japan agreed that both countries controlled the island cooperatively. Some of them were established in 1905 when Japan occupied the southern part of the island. At present although there are several cities involved in the exploitation of coal, oil and natural gas as well as the fisheries and forestry, but a big oil-based industrial area such as in Western Siberia has not yet emerged.

## THE RUSSIANS' ACTIVITIES AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Originally the Russians lived nowhere in Siberia and a small number indigenous people inhabited the vast area. Present-day Siberia is a historical result of the invention and development by the Russians. In this section I will indicate the effects on the livelihoods of the indigenous peoples caused by the interventions of the Russians in Siberia (Tab. 3).

### 1. Before the 19th Century: the Conquest by the Russians

The Russians began to expand toward Eastern Siberia from the fortress of Mangazeya, located in the north of Western Siberia, and reached the Lena valley in the 1620s. At first they went to up along the Lower Tunguska and crossed a narrow watershed at a point upstream and at last reached the bank of the Lena, the other great river of Russia. Then Cossacks on boats moved downstream and arrived at a broad valley in the middle from a rocky highland in the upper stream. They went into the land of the Yakuts through the territory of the Tungus. Another route towards Eastern Siberia was also developed. That was through a land route from the middle valley of the Lower Tunguska to the Chona which is a tributary of the Vilui. The Vilui is a big tributary on the western side of the Lena. The Yakuts, who lived near the confluence of the Lena and Vilyui, were forced into a system of paying tribute, *yasak*, by the Russians from Mangazeya in 1630. Moreover, by the 1630s a new route was discovered from Yeniseysk in the south of Eastern Siberia to the Lena upper valley through a tributary of the upper valley of the Angara, the Ilim.

By 1620 the Muscovites absorbed Western Siberia and began to colonize it. The main aim of colonization was to extort furs from the indigenous peoples. The Russians forced the northern peoples to accept the tribute system, *yasak*, to offer furs and to submit a hostage and oath in order to guarantee the supply of furs. From the first half of the 1630s the Russians began to demand *yasak* from the Yakuts who resisted sporadically for 50 years. The tribes of Yakuts were not unified; rather they were fighting each other. Besides, there existed hostile feelings between the Yakuts and the neighboring Tungus and it seemed unlikely for them to unite to resist the Russians. In 1632, Cossacks from Yeniseysk established a fortress in Lensk, later renamed Yakutsk in land of the Kangalas clan. A census of population and their cattle in 1641 aiming at increased extortion caused one of the biggest rebellions by the Yakuts against the Russians. The Russians moved downward along the Lena to pursue sables and in 1633 went to the north beyond the delta of the Lena. Several fortresses were constructed along the Olenyok, Vilui and Aldan and the northern peoples were forced to submit *yasak* to the Russians.

From the middle of the 1630s the Russian started to invade the North-east from the lower valley of the Lena toward the east. Many fortresses were established in the Yana, Indigirka, Kolyma and Anadyr and the Russians encountered the Yukagir and Chukchi. As the Russian attacked suddenly their small villages and took hostages, demands for *yasak* was usually involved violence. Thus the Yukagirs frequently rose in rebellion, but many groups of them were devastated due to the strong exploitation. The Lamuts who then inhabited the same region also resisted fiercely to the Russian invasions. However their resistance to the Russians ended by 1700. The Russians expanded beyond the Kolyma where the Yukagir lived and spent much effort to fight against the Koryak and Chukchi. On the other side, the Russians discovered the other eastward route straight from Yakutsk. They went up the Aldan, a tributary of the right side of the Lena, and entered the Maya. Then from the upper valley of the Maya they went across a watershed toward the Ulya from which they flowed into the Sea of Okhotsk. In the 1630s the Russian fortresses were established on the Aldan and in 1638 a band of Cossack reached the coast of Pacific Ocean from the Maya. In the end the Okhotsk fortress were established at the mouth of the Ulya. The indigenous peoples around there rebelled against the Russians continuously.

In the 1640s a new approach to the Far East was developed. The route passed through Stanovoy Mountains by way of the Aldan from Yakutsk and moved down along the Zeya to enter the Amur. The Russians robbed not only furs but also grains from the inhabitants on the fertile Amur valley. The Russians attacked so many times that the Quing dynasty which had then the sovereignty over the Amur valley forced the

indigenous peoples to the move to the Nun Chiang valley. After the Qing dynasty achieved a firm domination in the Chinese mainland, it expelled the Russians from the Amur in the 1680s. Then the Nerchinsk Treaty was signed by Russia and China. According to the Treaty the border was demarcated along the northern side of a watershed of the Amur, so that the Russians were shut out from the Amur valley completely.

By the latter half of the 17th century, sable in Eastern Siberia were hunted almost to extinction. The Peter the Great ordered the local governments in Siberia to find new sources of fur. The Russians invaded southwards from the Anadyrsk fortress at the edge of the North-east and entered the Kamchatka peninsula. At that time, there was a land of the Itel'men (Kamchadal) and the Russians conquered their tribe one by one and obliged them to pay *yasak*. However, in order to transport the extorted furs to the Anadyrsk fortress the Russians had to pass through the country of the Koryak, whom they had not yet conquered, so the transportation of fur was hazardous. A large uprising occurred among the Itel'men in 1706. The Cossaks, who were dispatched to suppress the uprising, caused another revolt. After the large uprising by the Itel'men was calmed, a new approach route by ship was designed to transport sables from Kamchatka without passing the territory of the Koryak. Bering, a Danish sea-captain, was sent to investigate the geographical relations between the most eastern edge of the North-east and North America. He returned to Kamchatka in 1728 after he advanced along the northeast coast of Siberia and entered the Arctic Ocean through the Chukchi land (Chukotka). On the other hand, a revolt by the indigenous peoples was occurred throughout Kamchatka in 1731 when the Russian colonial rule was beginning to be established firmly in Kamchatka. Bering carried out a second exploration over to the coast of Alaska in 1741. The Itel'mens and their dogs were forced into service to transport materials across the Kamchatka peninsula for navigation. At the time of the first navigation the Itel'men revolted in 1731. Money, meaningless to them, had been paid to the Itel'men as a reward for their hard work and their dogs died from exhaustion, a devastating problem for the Itel'men who depend on dogs for hunting in the field. Therefore they revolted in 1731 and during the second Bering exploration in 1741 they revolted again, against the Russians who forcefully rounded up them and their dogs.

The Russian ruled most Itel'men of Kamchatka by 1742. However, the Koryak on the northern side of the peninsula still harbored tough enemies. The Chukchi north of the Koryak were also tough enemies. The Russians fought against them repeatedly during the first half of the 18th century. In the end, the Russians forced the Koryak to surrender in the latter half of 1750s but failed to conquer the Chukchi. Maintenance of the Anadyrsk fortress at the edge of the North-east was so expensive that it was abandoned in the end and the armed attack of the Chukchi was halted. During almost the same period, the Russians intruded into the Aleutian Islands and Alaska. In the Aleutian Islands, the Russians put the inhabitants, the Aleuts, under their control and extorted sea otters from them, rather than sables. In 1867 Russia sold off Alaska to the United States after 100 years of colonization because of difficulties in communications and food procurement.

## **2. 19th Century: Expansion of Colonization**

In the 19th century, M. M. Speranskiy, as governor-general pushed forward the reform of Siberian reign, formulated new 'Regulations for the administration of natives' to moderate and impose a basic taxation on the Siberian natives according to their real livelihoods. By the new tax system the natives were categorized into three groups and each group was taxed differently. However the system imposed a larger burden on the natives than before. Moreover, many indigenous peoples began to be victims of merciless merchants and fell deep into debt. Generally speaking, the natives of Siberia were in harsh destitution by the 19th century. Their old systems of self-sufficiency had already collapsed and no sources of relief remained.

As colonial exploitation expanded and the old family system collapsed among the Yakut during 19th century, many Yakuts became poor. The Yakut had an inherent hierarchy which varied from rich and powerful chiefs to poor peasants or slaves who had no land and no personal rights. One third of the Yakuts owed permanent debt to their chiefs or the Russian and Tatar merchants by the end of the 19th century. Because Yakutia was located outside the information route connect western and eastern Siberia, it seemed the best place for the exile of political prisoners. A concentration of political prisoners had developed and radical and political thought spread among the Russian and indigenous peoples in Yakutsk, making it a center of radical activities. The Yakuts caused the first national movement of the revolution of 1905 and established a union to organize their movement. The union made demands for land tenure, self-determination, and self-representation in the national assembly.

By the middle of 19th century, the Qing dynasty had weakened and the Western powers with competed each other for their interests in China. Russia schemed for the expansion of the border in Central Asia and the

Far East. In the first half of the 1850s Russians constructed military posts at the mouth of the Amur and in Sakhalin, and expanded Russian occupation in the Amur valley step by step. Russia concluded the Aihun Treaty in 1858 and the Beijing Treaty in 1860 with China and plundered the Chinese territories of the northern part of the Amur and the eastern part of the Ussuri River. They established Khabarovsk in 1858 at the juncture where the Ussuri flows into the Amur and quickly set up Vladivostok as a strategic military port near the Korean peninsula in 1860. The Chinese merchants already treated the natives in the Far East as pawns of trade and the Russians accelerated such exploitation.

As Russia aimed to invade the northeast of China and Korea, the colonization in the Far East was promoted for military objectives. A part of the Trans-Baikal Cossack Host was cut off and was forced to migrate into the Far East and then the Amur Cossack Host and the Ussuri Cossack Host were established. In addition, it is thought that more than 50,000 soldiers were stationed in the two Far Eastern regions by 1914. Non-military colonization was also encouraged and immigrants were exempted from poll tax, the military service, and other impositions. About 100,000 immigrants moved into the Amur and Ussury valleys from European Russia and other regions of Siberia during the last 40 years of the 19th century. After 1892 the immigrants were transported also by the new sea route from Odessa to Vladivostok. As many as 275,000 persons came from Ukraine and Belorussia from 1883 to 1914, accounting for 62 percent of total immigrants (436,395). Generally speaking, the northern part of the Amur did not attract the immigrants. The Trans-Siberia Railroads, constructed since 1891 and reaching Irkutsk by 1900, was once interrupted at Lake Baikal and from the east coast of the Lake extended through Chita to Sretensk in the vicinity of Nerchinsk where the railroads ended. From the end of the 19th century Russia and Japan stood in hostility over interests in Korea and the Russians regarded the Far East more important from the military viewpoint, so that the Russian government stepped-up efforts to increase the population there. By the beginning of the Second World War, the Trans-Siberia Railroads rounded Lake Baikal and extended to Khabarovsk and Vladivostok through Sretensk, promoting further colonization in the Far East.

### 3. The Soviet Era

The Russian Revolution brought great influences over the indigenous peoples. At the beginning the Soviet government declared the equality of peoples and right of national self-determination and gave humanitarian assistance to the natives in various districts of Siberia who suffered from poverty. The Northern Committee was established in the governments in order to improve their life and they installed the cultural base of clinics and schools and organized cooperatives among the territories of the indigenous people. The Committee which regarded the native languages as important factors for preservation of their culture planned to educate and print text in their own languages. Moreover, they attempted to create written languages because almost of all native peoples had none. In the Far East, autonomous regions were also installed according to the national territory principle which Lenin insisted. At first Yakut Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics were established for the territory of the Yakuts and then Chukot National Okrug, the Koryak National Okrug and the Okhotsk-Even National Okrug were set up in the Far East. The national districts of Even, Evenki, and Yukagir were also installed in the Yakut Republic and the small districts of Nanai, Udehe, and Nivkh were established in the Amur valley, the Ussuri valley and Sakhalin islands.

According to the ideology of the Soviet Union, the indigenous people were seen to have a duty to join construction of the socialist state, following the non-capitalist evolution road. By the Stalin's policy, peasants were forced to gather on collective farms (*kolkhozy*) from the end of the 1920s and the indigenous peoples were also involved in this campaign. In the 1930s the collectivization and de-nomadisation (settling) policy were implemented forcefully among the natives and a 'kulaks' extermination movement and an anti-religion campaign were also effective in the Far East. At the same time vast industrial developments were begun. Gold had been discovered in the upper valley of the Kolyma in 1927. 'Dalstroy', a Soviet industrial development trust, was founded in 1931 under the supervision of Moscow to exploit this gold and other mineral resources in the North-east. Because of administrative division for this new trust Okhotsk-Evanki National Okrug was removed and the territory of the Yakut Republic was reduced partly. Later Koryak National Okrug and Chukchi National Okrug were also controlled by Moscow. Magadan was created in 1933 as administrative capital of the region. As work conditions were so harsh and it is very difficult to recruit the workers by ordinary means, prisoners were the only labor source in the district from the very first period. Several hundred thousand political prisoners were sent to the concentration camps (*lager*) of Magadan. The tin mining started around Pevek of the Chaun bay in the North-east in 1937. The tin exploitation was increased during the Second World War for strategic reasons and Russian workers immigrated there. To maintain the sudden emergence of big industrial cities, the

urgent need for food and transportation arose and the Evens were forced to offer food and transportation. The Soviet authorities decided to use reindeers as means of transport and requisitioned the domestic animal of the Even for meat supply. However, the Evens moved to the upper reaches of the tundra to avoid such unreasonable requests. Because the starving people had indiscriminately killed wild animals and the reindeer herds in the forests around Magadan, the Evens, who engaged in reindeer farming on the coast of Ola, moved deep into the recesses of the forest.

As the interest of the socialist state had been regarded as most important during Stalin's period, the humanitarian attitudes for the indigenous people, which had appeared in the beginning of the Soviet Era, gradually decreased. The destiny of the indigenous people was darkened by the state interests in the face of large-scale developments in various districts of Siberia. From the Soviet policy, industrial development was a necessary step to construct the socialist state and collectivization of the indigenous people was also included in the policy. It was assumed that collective farms should provide steady food supply to the industrial zone. Thus people engaging in reindeer farming around the industrial town were strongly forced into collectivization. Many people strongly rejected the policy and some killed their reindeer by themselves to express their anger. As a result, the number of reindeers decreased greatly in the region of Dalstroy in the 1930s. Dalstroy, which operated mainly by forced labor, was dissolved in 1957 after the Stalinist period.

After the Second World War, the Soviet government proceeded with the second period of collectivization in the Far East. It gathered some collective farms (*kolkhozy*) which were established in the 1930s into larger state farms (*sovkhozy*). By this process many villages of the natives disappeared. The Eskimo have been one of tribes who suffered the worst by the policy. The Eskimos were compulsorily moved to villages of the Chukchis or the Russians for whom they felt little affinity. Under the Soviet regime sea animals were exploited as raw material more and more exclusively in the east of the Arctic and indiscriminate killing often brought serious depletion of resources. The walrus came no longer to the traditional breeding site, and whale fishing was completely separated from the hands of the Eskimo and Chukchi, and was carried out by the fleets of large whalers. As a result of such changes there were no places for the Eskimos in their village, and they had no option but to remain in poverty or accept resettlement. Thus a lot of fishing people had to move one or more times to such large villages as Lavrentiya. However in the new villages they had no chance to use their traditional skills and had to be contented with trivial works. From 1953 to 1967 collectivization remarkably changed the life patterns of the whole people in the Chukchi National Okrug, especially in the northeast cape where the main subsistence of the people was sea animal hunting. More than 50 settlements, functioning as a center of small collective enterprises, were reduced to 12, grouped into six 'farms'. These collective farms were managed by the state, with one exception.

Industrial developments also occurred in Yakutia as like Magadan. By the 1930s fur was a still major commodity of Yakutia. On the other hand, gold from the Aldan gold-field was an important product at the first Five-Years Plan of the Soviet. In 1933 there were 35,000 gold miners at Aldan, making up 11 percent of the total population in the Republic. The majority of the gold miners were Koreans and Chinese. From the beginning of the 1950s diamond mining had started in the upper valley of the Vilui, then a hydro-electric dam and a new city, Mimyy, was built. Three large hydro-electric dams for power stations were constructed in order to provide electricity to the diamond industry and have destroyed the ecosystem of the valley. About 3.5 million cubic meters of wood and other wastes were left in the dam, which have been decayed and caused a long term water pollution. In addition, non-regulated industrial runoff from the diamond factory has deteriorated the water quality. Although the industrial activities along the Vilui accounted for 94.3 percent of the Republic and the industrial production 95.5 of total production of the Republic, there was no environmental inspection on the Vilui until 1989. The regular inspections began at last in 1990.

As coal and natural gas exploitation began, a large number of immigrants, mainly Russians, flowed into the Republic and the Yakut became the minority in their own land. The nuclear waste pollution has been one of the infamous effects by Russian industry in Yakutia. Plutonium 239 and 240 were scattered in Yakutia by the hydrogen bomb test of 58 megatons at the Novaya Zemlya Island in 1961. These were not radioactive materials, but their toxicity was extremely high. It was guessed the amount of fallout material was almost the same volume at the nuclear accident of Chernobyl, but the pollution was kept secret. Moreover, underground nuclear experiments were conducted 12 times from 1974 to 1987 and 11 of them were executed on the Vilui. Several craters emerged as a result of the experiments and a high density of radioactive materials of plutonium 239 and 240 was detected at several points of 6 ~ 3,550, 20, and 300 times of normal value. These numerical values showed the same level as the nuclear accident of Chernobyl. By medical examination of the inhabitants, the infant death rate has been significantly high and diseases such as the cancer, birth defect of the heart, brain blood

vessel disorders, and the chronic gastrointestinal disorders. Arthritis is a main cause of death.

#### **4. After the Collapse of the Soviet Union**

The Far East has been also involved in economic and political turmoil after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet era the military importance of the Far East was emphasized due to the cold war and its financial structure strongly depended on the central federal budget. Although after the collapse of the Soviet the central government tried to devolve the financial resource structure from the central government to the region, the local governments in the Far East still highly depend on the central sources because of a lack of sufficient revenues. As the munitions industry was one of the main industries in the Far East, a large reduction of the national defense budget and financial aid for the munitions industry have brought negative effects on the regional economy. In addition, the situation has deteriorated still more because of confusion from conversion of industrial manufacturing structure from military supplies to civilian goods, and from privatization. Under such economic conditions, recovery and rapid development of the Far East has been expected to take advantage of its geographical position facing the Pacific Ocean.

Investment in resource exploitation from foreign countries has been eagerly desired. Timber logging is an easy means to earn profit once supply routes to consumers are established. A project to log the pristine forests of the Shihote-Alin Mountains in Primorkiy Krai and export timber to Japan was planned by the local government, which would have devastated the forests which were the hunting field of the Udege. The governor of Primorskiy Krai granted the logging concession of deforestation to the Korean conglomerate 'Hyundai' in 1992 and the Udege, being traditionally engaged in hunting in the forests, strongly opposed the decision. They surged to the local government building in Vladivostok and picketed the planned logging site in order to stop the operation. Local residents and the local assembly supported the opposition too, but the governor tried to advance the logging forcibly. Consequently the dispute intensified and at last the solution was entrusted to the Russian Supreme Court. The Supreme Court did not permit the logging, so the Udege's forest was conserved against development.

Around the Sakhalin Island the largest scale of oil and natural gas exploitations in the Far East have been progressing by foreign investments. At present there are three main projects; Sakhalin I, Sakhalin II and Sakhalin III. Sakhalin I has been undertaken by Japanese SODECO, American Exxon and Russian Rosneft-Sakhalin and the available deposits of oil, natural gas and light quality crude oil are 181 million tons, 421 billion cubic meters and 33 million tons, respectively. The oil production is scheduled to begin in 2000 and the natural gas in 2005-6. Sakhalin II project has been undertaken by Japanese corporations Mitsui and Mitsubishi, American corporations McDermott and Marathon, and English and Dutch corporations Royal/Dutch Shell. The available deposits of oil, natural gas and light quality crude oil are 9.6 million tons, 460 billion cubic meters and 37 million tons, respectively. The oil exploitation is scheduled to begin in 1999 and the natural gas in 2003. The tax payment (the exploitation concession and interest tax) from the project are expected to bring in 55 billion US dollars, and more than 20 billion US dollars into the budget of Sakhalin Oblast. 25 millions dollars of bonuses were already paid in 1996. It is estimated that in 2005 the income from the oil and natural gas industry will be twice the GDP of Sakhalin Oblast in 1995 (1.75 billion US dollars). At Sakhalin III, Exxon Neftegas Ltd. and Texaco Exploration Sakhalin Inc. got the concession. Although intensive assessments of resources have not yet been carried out, the deposits volume of oil are estimated at 140 million and natural gas 900 billion cubic meters.

The exploitation projects of Sakhalin I and Sakhalin II include construction of the following general infrastructures; platforms for the winter freezing season, submarine equipment, submarine pipeline (more than 500 km in length), treatment plant on the shore, main pipelines of oil and gas (more than 680 km in length), transportation bases for tankers, and so on. However, one concern is that the big projects with large-scale equipment investment may risk causing contamination in the Sea of Okhotsk. As serious environmental destruction has occurred in various districts in Siberia, probably a similar ecological crisis seems likely as a result of the Sakhalin developments. Once the Sea of Okhotsk is polluted, serious impacts will occur not only for the ecosystem but also for the thriving fisheries. Many fishing ports exist and the fishery is a key industry of the region. The Kamchatka Fishery Company alone has supplied 20 percent of the entire Russian fish harvest. In addition, indigenous peoples such as Koryak and Itel'men traditionally depend on fishing. 4,000 people of the Nivkh, who inhabit Sakhalin, have opposed to the exploitation by oil companies because their fishing ground will be destroyed and they will lose their conventional food resource and income. The economic profit obtained from the resource exploitation will go to the Russian local authority and the huge oil companies, and there is very little allocation for the citizens. Although the bonus was paid to the local administration, there are no rules

and measures to guarantee that the citizen's interests are taken care of. An enormous amount of the money has been paid by the oil companies so far, but this money has scarcely contributed to the improvement of livelihoods in the island.

The oilspill and pollution accident of the Russian ship Nakhodka, an old tanker of 13,157 tons, which carried 19,000 kiloliters of heavy oil, occurred at offshore of Shimane Prefecture in January 1997. After the tanker sunk, about 6,240 kiloliters of heavy oil flowed out to the surface of the sea and 12,500 kiloliters left in the sunken ship have been still leaking from the bottom of the sea little by little. In the short term, damage excluding that of the fisheries and tourism, was about 17.8 billion yen according to documents submitted to the meeting of the related Cabinet members on February 25, 1997. It was said that the real damage to industry by rumor was more serious and could not be estimated concretely, so the total amount of damage may far exceed the 22.5 billion yen that the insurance companies could guarantee to pay. Around 200,000 people in Ishikawa Prefecture and 160,000 in Fukui Prefecture gathered to sweep away the heavy oil. Moreover, more than 40,000 volunteers came from across the country to clean the seashore. The investigation committee of the Japanese Ministry of Transport concluded that the main cause of the accident was decrepit tanker. It seems that a similar accident could easily occur in the Sea of Okhotsk and the northern part of the Sea of Japan because of the current difficult situation of Russia, as well as severe weather during winter in the sea. In this connection, 100 million tons of oil was leaked from the pipelines in Chyumen Oblast of Western Siberia in 1989. About 40,000 tons of crude oil were spilled from the Valdez of Exxon at Prince William Sound in Alaska in March 1989.

As mentioned above, the Russians also invaded into the Far East and the Northeast in order to extort furs. They expanded their territories with the exception of Yakutia, in comparison with their absorption of Western and Eastern Siberia. The Chukchi and Koryak strongly resisted against Russian invasions in the North-east and the Qing dynasty excluded the Russians from the Amur. The Russians later penetrated the seaside of the North-east and Alaska across the Bering Strait. After all, in the middle of the 19th century Russia abandoned the colony in Alaska and instead deprived China of the northern district of the Amur and eastern district of the Ussuri. The basic territory of the modern Far East was established at that time. Afterwards a large immigration of the Russians was followed by the completion of the Trans-Siberia Railroad and developments of mining. As a result, ratio of the indigenous peoples in the population decreased remarkably. However, industrial developments have not caused such a scale of hardship on the natives in the Far East as in Eastern and Western Siberia.

## **CURRENT SITUATION OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

### **1. The Rise of Self-Awareness**

The indigenous peoples began to express their own opinions assertively to the central/local government at the end of the 1980s when Gorbachev promoted 'glasnost' and 'perestroika'. It was the indigenous people, living in the abundant oil deposit district in Western Siberia, who protested firstly against the resource exploitation in the arctic and sub-arctic regions. A Nivkh writer, Vladimir Sangi, proposed to create an association of indigenous people of the Soviet north at a meeting of the Writers Association of Russia on 1988. The Central Committee of the Communist Party approved his proposal in late 1989 and his proposal became in reality in March 1990. The conference of the Association of Indigenous Peoples of the Soviet North was held in the Kremlin in Moscow on May 30-31, 1990, and President Gorbachev and Prime Minister Ryshkov participated in the opening session. The participants insisted that the constitution should be changed to preserve the culture of the indigenous peoples, that their opinions should be reflected at all the levels of political decision-making and the resource exploitation which dominated the north over several decades should be changed. A Chukchi reindeer breeder spoke using his own language that it was pointless to get a tricky promise if reindeers died by the loss of the pasture and by pollution. Although there were very few who understood his spoken words, his gestures and expressions appealing to Gorbachev found deep sympathy in the hall.

The representatives of the indigenous peoples to this conference exposed one after another the terrible truths of environmental crisis in the northern Russia. A Mansi writer reported that the rivers had broken earlier than usually that year. There was a rapid deforestation in Yakutia and a Yakut feared a timber logging project by a joint venture of the Soviet Union and Southeast Asian company. It was reported that the huge dam project at Turukhansk would cause the large-scale change of ecosystems. A Nenets participant from the Arctic Ocean complained that the rate of disease rose as a result of the nuclear tests from the 1950s to 1960s at the Novaya Zemlya Island. The number of reindeers had declined on a wide range from the Kol'skii Peninsula to the Bering Strait and the fish also decreased in number in rivers of Siberia. It was pointed out that national construction

companies involved in oil, natural gas, and the mining had given no attention to the delicate ecosystems. The Khanty, indigenous people in Western Siberia, have experienced cultural genocide due to the oil and natural gas resource exploitation on the largest scale in the world. They have not been able to use their own land and have suffered from the various problems such as unemployment, poverty, alienation and alcoholism.

A main goal of the conference was neither to expose the current environmental destruction nor to proclaim the distress of the natives. The participants discussed essential policy and strategy for the future and survival of the indigenous people. Each delegate insisted that the right of land use should be returned to the natives again. They also concluded that land ownership was a main issue of their request and that a restoration of land to the natives was a key to the solution. They suggested to redefine the status of the indigenous people in the autonomous district. They demanded that the profits which were earned in their district should be returned to the natives and the abolition of state fixed prices on fur, fish and meat (that is, to remove state monopolization) and the payments for concessions to timber logging and exploitation of oil, natural gas and other minerals. They also raised the issue of compensation for environmental destruction by industrial activities. However, as the representative of the Yakutia spoke, what they really wanted was not a physical compensation but a new law which made them real masters of their own land.

On October 17 1990, it was reported in a newspaper that a session of the peoples' deputies of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug decided the reorganization to the Yamal-Nenets Republic, however six days later the same newspaper reported the decision was rejected by the authorities of Tyumen Oblast. Similarly, the Koryak autonomous Okrug declared itself an Autonomous Republic within Russia on October 1990. The establishment of Chukotka Soviet Autonomous Republic, which departed from the Magadan Oblast, was reported in February 1991. Other autonomous districts declared similar demands: Altay Republic(1992), the Tyva Republic(1991), the Khakassia Republic(1992), and the Republic of Sakha (1991) were founded in the beginning of the 1990s. Although the Autonomous Okrug and Republics have still belonged to the Russian Federation, they are enjoying higher autonomy than before.

## **2. Catastrophes on the Indigenous Peoples after the Collapse of the Soviet**

Many examples of the serious hard conditions for indigenous people caused by the recent turmoil in the Russian society have been reported.

There were many large reindeer herds in the Chukchi Autonomous Okrug ten years ago, however only twenty-five percent of the original herds remain in the *okrug* at present. Field fires caused by careless miners and geological engineers destroyed moss that reindeers have been eating in a wide area. The reindeer breeders have had no income for a long time and the inhabitants of local society have been facing incredible difficulties. Some sold even their reindeer to obtain a bottle of vodka. The youth moved to town and big villages from tundra or hamlets, but in new lands they could not become established, and turned to alcohol and lost hope and motivation to work. The transition to market economy has been destroying not only the lives of the natives but also those of the common residents; mental and moral devastation has grown like a cancer. There are 450 people in the Aion Island at the Chaun Bay in the northern part of the Chukchi Autonomy *okrug* in 1997 and 250 of them are the Chukchi. 85 were reindeer breeders and 33 had no job. A communal heating boiler in the island was old and broken; the islanders did not have enough money to buy medicine. The cost of transportation has become extraordinarily expensive because most commodities were brought to the island by helicopter from freighters. The local government has no means to solve the problems. The indigenous people have desperately awaited direct assistance from the federal government.

In 1992 the Aleutian Islands and the Komandorskie Islands were declared Nature Reserve against the wishes of the Aleuts. As a result, many areas which were important food resource for the inhabitants are now controlled by conservation laws and the inhabitants are forced to use the resources under severe restriction. The fishing quotas decided by the fishery authorities of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy also limited the fishing of the indigenous people. Their allocated quota was 100 kg fish per adult in a year and 50 kg fish per a child in a year. The indigenous people must fish only during a few days in a year and if one tries to fish outside the fishing season, he must buy a license at an unreasonable price. It is impossible to hunt reindeer and sea animals without an expensive license. On the other hand, meats are exported to the foreign countries commercially.

Small fishing quotas were allocated to the inhabitants, the Kamchadals (Itel'men) on the Kamchatka Peninsula in 1995. Although they were allocated around 36 kg fish per person, this volume was too small for the fishermen. Expensive penalties were imposed if the rules are violated. This has prompted poaching and the people quietly are producing dried/smoked fish outside in winter in order to avoid suspicion of poaching. As the

result, people are troubled by the shortage of food stuffs, especially of vitamin in winter. Although the local fishery authority freely give fishing rights to many fishery companies, they do not permit the fishing by the indigenous people because of existence of endangered species. Many *kolkhozes* in the peninsula were closed and the unemployment rate is high. The inhabitants have lost the base where they had discussed and insisted on their mutual interests. A resident at a meeting of village on October 1996 told "the people suffered from serious poverty and they lose their hope. When an inhabitant received his pension all village got drunken immediately. In school children came back to the dining room to look for waste bread one hour after the lunchtime... The reindeer breeders are also under miserable situation". Industrial alcohol is sold on the street, and even on the tundra bottles of vodka are sold in exchange for reindeer meat.

Fishing by the natives was restricted at the Nogrik in the Sakhalin Island. In 1995 the fishery authority set the fishing limit at 45 kg per person. Although even such a quota per capita was insufficient for the nutrition needs the quotas were cut by two-thirds in 1996. The quota of 13 kg per person is far below their normal food intake. The indigenous people have few opportunities to a work because Russians occupy 90 percent of the positions in the local fishery *kolkhozes*. As a result, many Nivkh hope to return to the fishing grounds where they were able to live a traditional life on their own land before the collectivization of the 1960s. However, as their former fishing grounds have been already been allocated to the *kolkhozes*, only the remaining fishing grounds with low productivity and inaccessible rivers are allotted to the Nivkh. Appeals through the judicial system have not yet borne success. The payment of the unemployment allowance and the pension has been delayed considerably and pensions are too low to maintain the minimum standard of living. As schools have began to charge for lunches, one-fourth of their children no longer go to school.

As the natural resources have not been exploited in the Ewenki Autonomous Okrug as much as in Western Siberia, the environment there has not been destroyed to a great extent. However, a big problem exists with the food supply. The Ewenki were forced to abandon a traditional life style because of the settlement policy in the former Soviet era and were provided relatively comfortable living conditions by the government. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the maintenance of the local infrastructure was interrupted and the lack of new investments caused the disintegration of the region. The Ewenki, who were now accustomed to live in villages had lost the ability to provide food for themselves. As the Russian government cut the subsidies to the public transportation service, it is not too expensive to get to town from small villages. Because villages are 200 km apart at times, in order to get to town the villagers must use aircraft, ships, or even sometimes a sled taking a few days for the voyage. As the people who are qualified to receive unemployment allowance or social security must travel far to apply for such social services, often they refrain from doing so. Even if the social security system is functioning, in some villages the food supply is not sufficient. The private enterprises and small stock companies have gained control of the local food markets. Large ships transport goods only in June and most commodities are transported by airplane. The subsidies for air transportation have been cut and the cost of living has become very expensive. The reindeer meat was useful for the food supply when the infrastructures were maintained well. However, the number of reindeers in 1985 had already decreased to 50 percent of the level of 1965. Under the transition to the market economy and tight finances, various specific assistance and subsidies of the former Soviet have been halted. The economic gaps between sectors of society have widened, not only the indigenous peoples but also for the average citizens who are suffering increasing poverty.

## CONCLUSION

Siberia has for centuries been a Russian colony, but was originally the land of indigenous people. The Russians began to invade Siberia at the end of the 16th century to obtain sable. After the colonization of Siberia was established, large-scale immigration, mainly of Russians, invaded along the Siberian main road and the Trans-Siberian Railway. After the Russians exploited sable nearly to the point of extinction, they began mineral exploitation. At present the huge resource developments have been promoted in the North where many Russians have concentrated. Siberian indigenous people began to be exploited by the Russians from the beginning of their invasion and suffered through the colonization. Even when their interest changed from furs to industrial development, they were totally indifferent to the rights and interests of indigenous peoples. In the early period of the Soviet era, the Communist government advocated national equity, national self-determination and the principle of national territory and during a short period of time they implemented many humanitarian policies for the natives in Siberia. However, these were sacrificed under the construction of socialist state after Stalin seized power. The rights and livelihood of indigenous peoples continued to be ignored under the huge national developments. In short, we can say that the Russian industrial development has been progressing at the expense

of the lives and rights of indigenous people as well as the environment in Siberia.

Under the transition to the market economy Russia has actively sought investment from foreign countries. Although at present many projects, mainly natural resource exploitation, have been planned, they do not give much consideration to the environment and the lives of natives. On the other hand the profits from the development are monopolized by the local governments and global corporations and appear not to reach the inhabitants in the least, as shown in the deforestation plan in the Shihote-Alin Mountains and the resource exploitation plans of Sakhalin Projects. Under the current economic and political crisis in Russia it is very important to stabilize the economy and employment in Siberia and to promote the development of industry. However, the immediate development at the expense of the environment and the weak will bring further disorder to the Far East.

**Note;**

- 1) Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia (established in 1993), Shimane Prefecture the Institute for North East Asian Research ( plan to open in 2000 ) North Pacific Trade Interchange Center ( established in 1993 ) Northeast Asia Economic Forum ( Stated in 1991 )
- 2) Northern inhabitants officially means the following 26 tribes;  
Nenetsy, Evenki, Khanty, Even, Chukuch, Nanaim Chukuchi, Nanai, Koryak, Mansi, Dolgans, Nivkhi, Nenetsy, Sell'kupy, Ulchi, Itel'men, Udehe, Sami, Eskimosy, Chuvash, Nunganasan, Yukagir, Ketty, Orochi, Traphar, Alute, Negidal'tsy, Ectty, Oroku

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