



“A trifold cooperation: An indigenous clan community and research in Yamal, Western Siberia”

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General interest of cooperation

- Mikhail: International publicity and experience, conviction that through scientific facts "talking for themselves" we can better preserve and protect the nomadic way of live . Information on the worldwide problems of indigenous peoples and the international standards in the legislation of rights of indig. Peoples. Need expert opinion on the situation on the ground, what herders tell not him the boss, but me the independent outsider
- Florian: important for being „embedded“ in the community, designing research that matters, getting assistance in logistics and data gathering
- Aleksandr: important for developing models of better reindeer management. Interdisciplinary cooperation and experience, publicity, widening of horizon, information, which he builds into his work, which helps him to advance intellectually, theoretically

Documentation of a long term economic and political development of a group of reindeer herders

Topic: Interest in property relations as overarching driver

∇• Why property: Fits well to post-Soviet transformation processes from state planned to supposedly private initiative

∇• Anthropological debates in the late 1990s about property relations

∇• For Misha practical interest, because land rights, animal subsidies, property lies at the basis of market economy

∇• For Aleksandr because in the reform period in Yamal private property in reindeer turned out to be the most efficient. Thinks that this preserves best the cultural traits of reindeer herding

NOTE DIFFERENCES OF WHY PROPERTY MATTERS!

The Yamal Nenets Autonomous Okrug

- 750,300 km² (being 1.4 times the size of France)
- 540,000 reindeer
- More than 90% of all gas extracted in Russia
- West Siberian North
- 507,000 people, mainly Russian-speaking industrial workers
- indigenous people, mostly Nentsy, in YNAO
33,100 (6,7%)
- **INCREASING** number of nomads in Yamal tundra (becomes a big problem with pastures)



Official cooperation

- Mikhail & Aleksandr: 5 years cooperation, in frame of contract with A.'s "Non-commercial fund for the study, protection and monitoring of the traditional migratory households in the YNAO"
- Aleksandr & Florian: 4 years contract about exchange of information and data- and research assistance

The study of the obshchina

In 2000 Misha and his father were thinking about establishing an obshchina. Both A. & F. study the establishment and development of it. Today: biggest and most successful reindeer herding obshchina in the YNAO. 20,000 reindeer. Has big economic turnover (slaughters 3,000 reindeer per year), collects 20 tons of velvet antlers per year.

Subfields to study with establishment of obshchina

- Legal issues
- Attitudes among herders before obshchina started
- Village – tundra dynamics of decision making and political agency
- Economic performance and agricultural policy
- Reindeer herding technology (as in private compared to sovkhos reindeer herding)

How we cooperate in studying these fields

- **Legal:** Worked together on the Ustav, gathered comparative ustavy, went together to the dept. IPN of the administration, commented on draft laws, giving expert recommendations
- **Attitudes:** F. looking at survey form of A. with Novosibirsk people. Was extremely helpful to shape up own questions. F. telling M. about herders answers to questions in summer and autumn 2000. M. sent out people in winter to convince herders of obshchina. Argument: Before the gas people come and take away the land, we better get rights on it!
- **Econ. & policy:** A did monitoring with his team, made results accessible for M. A set up database on statistics (pop. of humans and reindeer)
- M. visited F. in Halle, Germany, Feb 2002 to discuss obshchina development, possible directions of research, big plans, with F. Held lecture on this and got in discussion with other colleagues there
- A. & M. did film on survey and monitoring in 2003 (when F. was abroad writing up)

State of the art today (results)

- Ustav finished, obshchina established.
- Research found scepticism towards obshchina. M. addressed the problem and convinced herders
- Florian's Diss. ready
- Aleksandr's book ready
- Mikhail's film ready

Problems

- We only share data. Results have a not compatible format, because of different target groups
- Cooperation not institutionalised (yet) as a project. Topics and common ground all informal
- F. doesn't have enough budget yet to really let the others participate in his funds. More the other way round: Financial situation in Salekhard is better because of gas money. F's part of a common project might end up being financed from there.
- Fieldwork is more expensive than many funding people realise

Future interests

- **Visual cooperation,**
- **translation of films,**
- **future study of gas-herder interface**
- **Giving advice for further development of obshchina, plan to publish films and books**



Ethical considerations

- Credibility of researcher if emotionally attached to community?
- What happens if community doesn't like results?
- Where is the middle between "unreflected activism" to help and the deep scepticism that this kills "objectivity" of research??