

## “Indigenous Peoples” As a Concept of Scientific and Educational Discourses: Terminology and Interpretation Problems

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### Abstract

The paper considers a notion “*minority indigenous peoples*”, analyses the interpretation of terms “minority” and “indigenous” people, sets a question about using them in the scientific discourses and social-political practices.

The research is aimed at analyzing a heuristic status and a practice-oriented function of these terms as scientific categories. Methods of historiographic, terminological, conceptographic and comparative analyses, which are used in the paper, problematisation and thematisation of the terms analyzed, historical-legal and historical-topological methods on a specific historical material show the permanency of the peoples' migration to various world regions with their subsequent rooting on a new territory and interaction with the peoples who came there earlier. A critical analysis of using the term “indigenous peoples” in the modern sciences and legal documents made it possible to conclude that the term does not meet the criteria of a scientific notion or a category. It is often related to *myth construction* of national histories. In the context of interethnic interrelation, the term “indigenous peoples” is fraught with a conflict-generating potential and can serve as a dangerous weapon in the arsenal of radical forces and those for which their actions are politically advantageous.

**Key words:** Indigenous research, ethnocultural identity, minority peoples, myth construction, scientific category, concept

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### Introduction

The term “indigenous peoples” is one of the most ambiguous notions in the modern scientific, everyday, regulatory and social-political vocabulary. Many experts repeatedly expressed various doubts on its sense adequacy, historical fairness and political-legal relevance<sup>1</sup>. For all that, the term

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“indigenous peoples” and the related word combinations are widely used in the international legal vocabulary, the UN documents, the mass media. They are used even in the scientific terminology, though serious scientists have always accompanied this term, which was likely to be imposed on them, with a lot of reservations and specifications. Its interpretation depends in large part on historical architectonics of the ethnic group existence in various continents, on their presence in different social systems, and on their social-cultural typology and other determinations.

This research covers the study of a phenomenon of minority indigenous peoples in the world, the analysis of various interpretations of the terms “minority” and “indigenous” people, and goals and a nature of using these terms in the modern social practices. The problem is important today because a real existence of the minority peoples, their mental orientations, a degree and ways of protection of the ethnocultural identity, visible and

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hidden possibilities of using these ethnic groups as actors in some political and economic purposes depends in large part on adequate or inadequate interpretation and the legal usage of this term. This paper is aimed at analyzing a heuristic status and a practice-oriented function of the terms “minority” and “indigenous” peoples as scientific categories and concepts constructing a social and political reality. In order to achieve the set goal, let’s try to answer the following questions: if the peoples, who are named “minority and indigenous”, can be considered to be really indigenous (who took root on the territory that they occupy); if the terms “minority” and “indigenous” are scientific categories reflecting the relevant complicated ethnocultural reality adequately; how correctly these terms are used in the modern research of interethnic relations, legal documents, social and political space. In order to study these questions, the paper uses the methods of historiographic, terminological, conceptographic and comparative analyses of the existing regulatory sources and the specialized literature, logical and analytical procedures of problematisation and thematisation of the terms “minority” and “indigenous” peoples. The paper also uses the historical-legal and historical-typological methods of studying the ethno-cultural reality that is behind this problem terminology.

The international treaties, the resolutions of the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council, the analytical documents of the Working Group and Expert Mechanism on the indigenous peoples’ rights of the UN and other international organizations, which are related to the problems researched, and the national laws of the states, above all, the Russian Federation, are forming the sourced basis for the research.

### Materials and methods

**“Indigenous peoples”: terminological discussions.** The problems of “indigenous peoples” have been discussed in various countries since the end of the XIXth century, in the main, in European languages – English, Spanish, French and German. Names of the “indigenous peoples” in French, *autochtone*, *peuples autochtones*, *groupes ethniques autochtones*, have the Greek root. The same German-language terms are *Ursprung*, *Gebürtig*, *Eingeborene*, *Einheimische*, *Ureinwohner*, *Urbewohner Völker*. In both languages, at a level of etymology, it is supposed that a group, who is named by these terms, was the first to come to this territory and made it habitable. The English and Spanish languages have the common Latin root “*indigenae*” for this term. This word was used in Ancient Rome to distinguish between those born in this place and those coming from other places (“*advenae*”, or immigrants). Thus, roots of all

these terms, which are used in the modern international law, have a common conceptual element in terms of semantics – *temporal priority*, or a priority of populating a territory in time<sup>2</sup>. In Russian, the term ‘*korennoi narod*’ is used to denote the “indigenous people” concept. Its etymology goes back to the Russian lexemes (“*koren*”, “*korennoi*”) which means in English ‘root’.

At present, to describe the “indigenous peoples”, various terms are used, which originated from the Ancient Greek and Latin languages: “*autochthony*”, “*aboriginality*” and “*indigenusness*” (in Russian, all of these terms are used, mainly, only in the highly specialized scientific literature). But what is *autochthony*, *aboriginality*, or *indigenusness*? These words are synonyms in everyday speech, but certainly not in all cases and senses. In the modern international law, these terms, for instance, in the English language, or in the Spanish or French languages, are used in different ways, with a range of meanings and nuances of connotations (for instance: “indigenous”, “aboriginal”, “native” people, “First peoples”, “First Nations”, “Aboriginal peoples”, “autochthonous peoples”). When these words

become legal terms, the various legal standards appear, which entail certain rights and obligations, advantages and possibilities of these peoples.

In order to understand, how this happens, there is a need for a comparative terminological analysis as well as conceptual interpretation and conceptual problematisation of this notion, explanation of essence of various interpretations of its concept. This will help to realize why an ordinary word becomes a phenomenon of transformations, which requires a special attention and reflection in a certain historical situation. In some cases, problematisation of history of forming and using the notions is considered in a broad sense as a process of change of the world pictures and scientific paradigms accompanying the change of a culture type including its everyday, habitual sphere. In addition, the problematisation of a phenomenon implies, above all, that such a procedure as thematisation is necessary. Since Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s days, the *thematization* implies a search for a sense, certain meanings of a term.

Let’s turn to “clusters” of the primary meanings, senses of the words “root”, “indigenous”, since they are the firm foundation, on which the subsequent historical metamorphoses of these senses and informative definitions are based, if a word becomes a scientific concept and holds a special position in a system of knowledge and

<sup>2</sup>Daes, Erica-Irene A. On the concept of indigenous people // Working Paper by the Chairperson-Rapporteur, 10 June 1996, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1996/21 / United Nations. Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Working Group on Indigenous Populations. 1996, p. 4. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/236429>

socio-cultural practices. Now the adjective “indigenous” in relation to the ethnic groups is used in a figurative, metaphorical sense – *primordial, primary, stable and permanent*. These were peoples, whose existence on a certain territory “is rooted” in the antiquity or the Middle Ages, who “took root” on a territory of this planet before other peoples.

As previously stated, the European languages have equivalents to the term “indigenous peoples”. Firstly, this is a word “aborigines” (from Latin *aborigine* – “from the beginning”), which means “original”, the “first” inhabitants (people, animals, plants) on a territory, a continent or a country, who were located there “from the ground zero”. This term is used in relation to the indigenous inhabitants of Africa, America, Australia, in other words, the territories that were discovered and populated by the Europeans only in the Modern Age.

Secondly, this is a term “autochthonal peoples” (from Ancient Greek *αὐτόχθων*: *αὐτός* – “himself” + *χθών* – “land”), which means the origin from this territory and is used in relation to the population formed in this land. The Ancient Greeks gave this name to the first settlers of a country or its ancient population. In this sense, a complete analog to this Greek term is the Russian word “the native” “tuzemets” (“that (there)” «tu(t)» + “inhabitant” “zemets”, in other words, “originating from this land», “local”). On the wave of polemics with the

migrationism and the invasionism in the 1920-s and the 1930-s, this term was widely used within the autochthony theories (for instance, in the papers made by academician N.Ya. Marr). Now this term is rarely used outside of the biological vocabulary (for instance, the duckbill is Australia’s autochthon, while the wild potatoes are South America’s autochthon).

Thirdly, this is a term “indigenous peoples” (from Latin “*indigena*”: prefix “*indu-*”, “*\*endo-*” — “in” and root “*:-genus*”, “*\*gene-*” — “born from”..., “innate”, “inherited”), this term means “*natives*” of a locality or a territory, natural inhabitants of their country who inherited their mode of life and dwelling place from their ancestors.

Thus, aboriginality, autochthony and indigenousness are not synonyms in the strict sense, though their meanings coincide with each other partially. Etymology of the term “indigenousness” directly indicates a fact of “*being born*” in one’s tribe, “*innateness*” of some distinctions, “inheritance” of one’s distinctive qualities. Origin of the term “autochthony” places the emphasis on a fact of *connection with the land*, the soil, on which a people appeared and was formed, while the “aboriginality” is etymologically connected with “*primordiality*”, “*vernacularity*” of habitation on a territory<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>Compare.: Sokolovsky S.V. Aboriginality and rights to a territory:



What is the “indigenous people” and the “indigenouness” and how to determine them? In his substantive “Research of discrimination problem in relation to indigenous population” (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7 и Add.1-4), Jose R. Martinez Cobo, Special rapporteur of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the UN offered a very cautious preliminary wording of the “indigenous population” definition: “Indigenous population is indigenous communities, peoples and nations having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system” (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1986/7/Add.4, the UN edition). This definition combines a *difference*

*element*, which characterizes the “indigenous” as well as “tribal” peoples in accordance with Article 1 of Convention No. 107 of International Labor Organization, with a *colonialism element*, which Convention No. 107 uses to differentiate the “indigenous” and “tribal” peoples. It should be particularly emphasized that Jose R. Martinez Cobo attached great importance to ensuring the **voluntary identity** of the indigenous groups. This point was partially taken into account during the revision by the International Labor Organization of its Convention No. 107.

In order to determine the basic characteristics of a number of peoples (ethnic groups) of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation, the modern Russian sciences – ethnology, ethnogeography, history, demography, ethnosociology, ethnic political science, folkloristics, ethnic and cultural studies and anthropology – now use (in most cases, in combination) two notions – “minority” and “indigenous”. The Russian laws have a special term – “indigenous minority peoples” – and they include a number of laws determining the rights of these people. The notion “indigenous minority peoples” reflects just the Russian specific character: this status is used in Russia only in relation to the most socially vulnerable group of peoples. Article 69 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation reads: “The Russian

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anthropological and biogeographical parallels // AbImperio. 2010 (3). P. 320-321. [Sr.: Sokolovsky S.V. Aborigennost i prava na territoriiu: antropologicheskie i biogeograficheskie paralleli // AbImperio. 2010 (3). S. 320-321.] Ср.: Соколовский С.В. Аборигенность и права на территорию: антропологические и биogeографические параллели // AbImperio. 2010 (3). С. 320-321.

Federation guarantees the rights of the indigenous minority peoples in accordance with the generally accepted principles and standards of international law and the international treaties of the Russian Federation". But, are these both words scientific notions that accurately and concisely express the common features of such a diverse and, at the same time, specific ethnic group to which these names are given to?

In terms of philosophy, *the notion* is a way or a form of thinking, which reflects the material ties and relations of objects and phenomena. The notion fulfils a function of singling out and revealing the general, which is achieved by distracting from all the peculiarities of separate objects of this class. In terms of logic, the notion is an idea that generalizes and singles out the objects of a class according to certain general and, in the aggregate, specific signs. Essentially, the notion has the conventional basis. This is a thing about which the people come to an agreement, while defining a sense of expressions and terms. In the academic environment, it is especially important to come to an agreement about how to comprehend the technical, social and other terms or how to make the new ones. Let's emphasize that in the case of a term (from Latin "terminus" – boundary, limit), the meaning is defined finally and the meaning does not raise doubts. The people construct the terms and notions in order to have a common language for discussing the problems of

existence and cognition. The scientific practice (philosophical, philological, culturological and others) showed several times that it is not always possible to come to an agreement about the notions.

In this sense, the expression "minority peoples" or "minority ethnic groups" (from Latin minor- the least) can be considered as a quite certain notion. The notion very accurately describes the people, who, among the billion, multi-million, multi-thousand-strong peoples and other various peoples (who are from one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand in number) should be considered to be "minority". The legislative enactments and other legal documents of the Russian Federation have definitions of the notion – a number of less than 50 thousand people. At present, in Russia, their number is 45 (in the aggregate, 280 thousand people) living in all Russia's macroregions (the Far East, Siberia, Altai, North Caucasus, Cisurals, the Volga Region, Central Russia and the Northwest).

**Consideration of the "indigenous peoples" problem in focus of the "history-scope".** Let's turn to some historical materials for receiving the explanations and examples.

We do not know which ethnical ancestors of the modern peoples initially lived in the most ancient period of history in various continents of this planet. The fossil ancient people of the Stone Age are known to us by their skeletal remainders and

archaeological cultures (complexes of tools, weapons, dwellings, clothes and others). It is considered that the first European peoples from Homo kind were the paleoanthropuses – the Neanderthal men, whose existence dates, approximately, from the period of from 200 to 35 thousand years ago. Thus, nobody can say anything about their ethnic origin and how they are ethnically related to the modern people. The scientists traced an availability of significant resettlements of peoples, their migrations in various directions in the ensuing time – in the Mesolithic Age, the Neolithic Age, in the Bronze Age. However, we do not know the names of these communities.

In the periods of formation, revival and in the waning years of ancient civilizations (the Vth millennium BC – the Vth century AD) the peoples were also migrating actively, the cities and states were formed, and the scientists in different countries have studied these processes carefully for a long time. However, the questions related to priority of their appearance and vernacularity of the territories, on which they settled and became to develop efficiently, remain unclarified.

For instance, the well-studied Shumerians – the thickset, big-eyed, big-nosed, very keen-witted people, who established the great city-states Shumers in the Tigris and the Euphrates Mesopotamia, – came, as it is mentioned unclearly in the ancient texts, “from the side of the sea

shining”. But where is their “root”? For which territory were they an “indigenous people”? And who can pretend to a role of ethnic descendants of this “native people”?

The ancient Indo-Aryans, who created the Vedas, came down through the mountain passes from the Northwest to the “smiling”, as Javaharlal Nehru put it, valleys of the Indus and the Ganges in the II millennium BC. Their ancestral home was a space from the Volga to the Urals, while their ancestors were the steppe fair-skinned tribes of the “Andronian community”, who spoke one of melodious Indo-European languages, built monumental elite necropoleis – the barrows, and who invented the combatant chariots with coaching horses and wonderful bronze weapons (See, for instance, the papers made by E.E. Kuzmina).

In Mongolia, in the deepest Tarim Basin of Taklamakan Desert, as far back as since the beginning of the XXth century, dozens of cities, settlements, graveyards, traces of the agricultural civilization were found out deep under the sand. The origin of this population living in the period of from the VIth millennium BC to the I st millennium BC was a mystery. Dozens of the female and male mummies, which were well-preserved in dry sands, were tall (1.8m – 2m), had fair and red hairs, white skin and blue eyes. It is not known where they came from as well as where and why they disappeared. It is unclear which people, the Indo-Europeans or the



Mongoloids, was indigenous here. There are various versions set out by the modern researches about their ethnic origin – from the steppe Andronian community, from the later Uigurs, Huns, Tocharians and others (See, for instance, the papers by A.G. Kakharov, R.S. Mirzaev and others)

The Arctic peoples also migrated at different times. According to the famous reconstructions made by the Arctic and Northern scientist Yu. B. Simchenko, let's note that the sittings (ethnic legends) of the Nganasans tell us about a conflict that arose during the meeting of two population flows – the Mongoloids of the forest-tundra – “the Short-nosed Sons of dugouts”, “holding short arrows” and “the Long-nosed”, which included the “peaceful people with ears reaching their shoulders”. Yu. B. Simchenko believes that these were the Mongoloid ethnic groups going along the Arctic Ocean coast and the Caucasians going behind a thawing glacier from the South along the Russian plain to the Northeast (See, for instance, the papers made by Yu. B. Simchenko, L.M. Alekseeva and others).

Some peoples, who live in Altai today (the Tuvinsians, the Shorians, the Teleutians, the Tubalars, the Kumandins and other Altaians), are called “indigenous”. However, long before them, the ethnic groups of a huge Scythian-Saxon mountain-steppe area from the “Danube to the sun rising” lived there. The mass resettlement of the Huns from

Northern China in the time of the Great Transmigration of Peoples is known. Together with them, the Avars came, who “took root” in the Northern Caucasus, the Bulgars and the Chuvashes – on the Volga, the Hungarians – on the Danube, etc.

The ethnonym “the Tatars” appeared in the VIth century for the first time among the Mongolian tribes living southeast of the Baikal. In the XIIIth-XIVth centuries, after the Mongol-Tatar invasions, this name was spread to some peoples belonging to the Golden Horde. The Kazan Tatars, who were formed into a nation by the end of the XIXth century, consider themselves to be indigenous in the places where the Volga Bulgars lived in the old days.

The Mongolian-language Kalmyks, who trace their origin from the Oirats of Dzungaria, some of whom moved to the Lower Volga area at the end of the XVIth century, are also considered to be the indigenous people. In this connection, is it rightful to attribute the Russians, who live, for instance, in Siberia, to the non-indigenous population, if they “took root” there about 400 years ago, approximately at the same time that the Kalmyks “took root” in the Volga area?

The modern research showed how actively the “indigenous” peoples, who “went behind the deer” and “waited for the fishing season”, moved in Siberia and the Far East at different stages of history, and how

deeply they interacted with other ethnic groups of this region from the tundra to the Amur, while mixing with them, changing the adaptation to the nature and the society, and enriching their arsenal of the cultural stability (See, for instance, the papers made by Ya.S. Ivashchenko). Where are their roots?

In the American continent, in Australia, New Zealand, the island of Tasmania, the systematic large-scale resettlements of the Europeans took place, with a specific history of conquest in the XVIth – the beginning of the XXth centuries, as a result of which a lot of local peoples, who took root there as far back as the Stone Age (approximately 26-20 thousand years BC) were destroyed or partially ousted to other territories. Now the Caucasians, who moved to Australia and lived there for more than two centuries, consider themselves to be indigenous too.

In Africa and in Asia, the “indigenous peoples” expression is not applied to all the native ethnic groups, it is applied only to those groups, who are in danger and who are not prevailing. This is, for instance, the San peoples (bushmen) in Kalahari Desert and the Mbuti people (pygmies) in the moist tropical forests of Central Africa, whose traditional mode of life is more and more adversely affected by the settlers. The majority African states, in particular, tropical equatorial Africa, do not recognize the existing conception of the indigenous peoples,

while believing that all the African peoples are indigenous.

According to the UN data, in the world there are about 300-350 million representatives of the so-called “indigenous” peoples living in 72 countries. The Asian states, in particular India, Iran and Iraq, account for approximately 70% of them. At the same time, many Asian and African scientists do not accept the definition of the notion “indigenous people”, which is formed in the Western doctrine, and they propose restricting its usage in relation to Australia and America’s native peoples<sup>4</sup>. In particular, Bangladesh and India said that they cannot determine which people, who lives in these countries, is the most indigenous<sup>5</sup>.

### Results

Explanations and examples of the doubtfulness and unfoundedness of using the expression “indigenous people” as a scientific notion, which would determine a specific character of the minority peoples, can be supplemented considerably. However, the authors believe that the cited examples are quite enough to realize the whole *relativity* of the term “indigenous people”. The authors believe that this expression is not a notion and certainly it is not a scientific category (from

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<sup>4</sup>Bowen, John R. Should we have a universal concept of ‘Indigenous peoples rights’?: Ethnicity and Essentialism in the twenty-first century // Anthropology Today. Vol. 16. № 4, 2000, p.13.

<sup>5</sup>Swepton, Lee. A New Step in the International Law on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples: ILO Convention No. 169 of 1989 // Oklahoma City University Law Review, Vol. 15, No. 3, Fall 1990. pp. 696-710.

Greekkategoria – statement, sign) – the most general and fundamental notion concerning the material qualities of the peoples in question, their attitude to the nature, the society, the human beings, the other societies, the God and to themselves.

As far back as 1996 E.I. Daes stressed that for all the years of analytical work in the capacity of the Chairperson-rapporteur of the Working party on indigenous peoples of the UN, she had never found out any convincing arguments to differentiate the “indigenous” and “tribal” peoples in practice or precedents of the United Nations Organization. She expressed doubt several times that there is a special difference between the “indigenous” peoples and the peoples on the whole, apart from the fact that the groups, which are usually determined as the “indigenous peoples”, had no possibility to exercise the right to self-determination by means of taking part in building a modern nation-state. As a result, E.I. Daes came to the following conclusion: “Nobody could work out a definition of the “indigenous people”, which would be clear and internally valid in terms of philosophy, and which would meet the requirements of limiting its regional coverage or legal consequences. As a matter of fact, all the previous efforts of achieving both clearness and limitation in the same definition made the definition still vaguer” [Daes, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1996/2, p. 22]. More than that, representatives of the “indigenous

peoples” repeatedly submitted to the UN the joint addresses and resolutions on the conception and definition of the notion “indigenous peoples”, in which they flatly rejected any efforts to give a universal definition to the notion “indigenous peoples” [Daes, E/CN.4/Sub.2/AC.4/1997/2, p. 2].

The deeper analysis is carried out, the more we are convinced that the notion in question is not heuristically important in terms of science, and the notion is often used in the large-scale socio-cultural myth construction, for political and geopolitical purposes, for heating up the inter-ethnic conflicts, for stirring up the national hatred and in other similar situations. This doubtful notion is anti-historical and dangerous for a process of preserving the peaceful and stable existence of the peoples within the states and between them. The notion contradicts a humanistic ideology of the mankind self-preservation. It is no wonder that the multi-decade purposeful attempts made by the UN intellectual elite and the best world scientists to work out a universal and comprehensive definition of visions of the “indigenous people” were abortive. Numerous discussions of this issue ended in a reasonable refusal to give a definition to this term even in the UN Declaration on the rights of the indigenous peoples. This is quite an extraordinary case in the whole world legal practice - to pass a fundamental international document concerning the fates of hundreds of millions

of people without a definition of its subject! For all that, it was a wise and constructive decision, which was based on the whole experience of the Working party on indigenous peoples of the UN, without spending time on vain search for a definition of a mythic “indigenusness” of the peoples, to carry out legal groundwork for an efficient and effective system of supporting the distinctive ethnic groups who undergo various difficulties and need the international protection of their rights.

Now let's ask ourselves: why is such a doubtful and tricky term as “indigenous people” used so actively and persistently in descriptions of any status history of a people in the fiction and in the scientific literature, in the official documents and the practices of influence upon inter-ethnic processes? There is a good reason to suppose that, in a great measure, this is connected with a global scale of the socio-cultural myth construction of the XXth and the beginning of the XXIst centuries. Absence of reliable grounds in historical identity and undergoing the economic, political and worldview crises give rise to a demand for explicating the various modes of mythologization of history of the people's race, ethnos, special personalities, including in the modes of its long-time indigenusness on this land, vernacularity of its right to possess the land.

An idea of functional-instrumental interpretation of the myth and its use in the

modern culture is represented in the papers by Mircea Eliade in the most consistent way. On the material of studying a culture of traditional societies, he showed that a fundamental action in demonstrating by a clan or a tribe of legitimacy of its presence on the developed area and possessing the area was the telling of myths, which is a kind of return to its roots, sources, archetypes of consciousness, to the perfection. The similar versions and mechanisms of social mythmaking existed also in history of states of the XXth century. They were inspired by totalitarian ideologies and they fed the national-political myth construction. Suffice it to mention a myth-mystic ideology of the Nazism with its idea of the Nordic race superiority and its right to rule over the peoples, and the bloody implementation of this idea that cost the dozens of millions of people their lives.

Today we more and more frequently face the historical revisionism, efforts to revise the assessments of the key past events, to adjust them to the present-day state of affairs, conceited ambitions and tasks of the policy-makers. The history mythologization is created by modern technologies, whose essence boils down to the purposeful influence upon the person in order to orientate his/her conscience by a certain, preplanned way. In many respects due to high informatization of the modern society, these technologies make it possible to simulate the

value-conceptual and behavioral sphere of the person as quickly and efficiently as possible. Conceptual interpretation of the key events actualizes and forms the emotional reference points for the mass consciousness, rationalizes and legitimizes the necessary political and ideological attitudes. The historical myths, including a myth about the “indigenous” and “non-indigenous” peoples, are information support, which is optimally adapted to a certain policy...

In Russia, the notion “indigenous” started to be used especially actively in relation to the minority ethnic groups only during the perestroika in the liberal press. Although, even the foreign specialists acknowledged that “in a legally strict sense of this term, no indigenous peoples exist in the USSR”<sup>6</sup>. And this was quite right, on the basis of the fact that usage of the expression “indigenous peoples” is appropriate only in the context of colonial or post-colonial relations, relevant discourses and specialized research on this sad subject.

The Soviet post-war laws used the word-combinations “small- numbered peoples of the North”, or “small-numbered tribes of the North” up to the middle of the 1980-s, and only then they were replaced by a phrase “numerically small peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East”. All of these terms were translated into English

as “minority peoples”, “small- numbered peoples of the North”, “small-numbered tribes of the North”, “numerically small peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East”.

After the break-up of the Soviet Union, Russia and other post-Soviet national republics were visited by foreign expert on national and cultural issues, various organizations and missionaries, who started to actively “enlighten” the “indigenous peoples”, as it turned out, for the economic benefit and political decentralization, while stimulating the spreading of archaic forms of world outlook and instigating them to the autonomization and the inter-ethnic conflicts<sup>7</sup>. The word combination “indigenous

<sup>7</sup>Golobokova Ya.A.

Non-governmental foreign organizations as a tool of influencing the indigenous minority peoples of the Russian North // Vlast. 2009. No. 3. P. 43-47. [Golobokova Ya.A.

Nepravitel'stvennye inostrannye organizatsii kak instrument vliyaniya na korennyye malochislennyye narody Severa Rossii // Vlast. 2009. № 3. S. 43-47.] Голобокова Я.А. Неправительственные иностранные организации как инструмент воздействия на коренные малочисленные народы Севера России // Власть. 2009. № 3. С. 43-47.

Kuropyatnik

M.S.

Indigenous peoples in the process of social-cultural changes: thesis for a Doctor in Sociological Sciences. – St. Petersburg, 2006. – 360 p. [Kuropyatnik M.S. Korennyye narody v protsessakh sotsialno-kulturnykh izmeneniy: dis. ... d-rasotsiol. nauk. – SPb., 2006. – 360 s.] Куропятник М.С. Коренные народы в процессе социокультурных изменений: дис. ... д-ра социол. наук. – СПб., 2006. – 360 с

Pimenova N.N.

Mechanisms of socio-cultural changes of indigenous ethnic groups of the North and Siberia: social-philosophical analysis / thesis for a Candidate in Philosophical Sciences: 09.00.11. – Krasnoyarsk: Siberian Federal University, 2015. – 183 p. [Pimenova N.N.

Mekhanizmy sotsialno-kulturnykh izmeneniy korennykh etnokontsektov Severa i Sibiri: sotsialno-filosofskiy analiz / Diss. ... kand. filos. nauk: 09.00.11. – Krasnoyarsk: SFU, 2015.

<sup>6</sup>Cited by Barsh, R. Indigenous Peoples: An Emerging Object of International Law // American Journal of International Law. 1986. Vol. 80. P. 375.



peoples" started to be used in the Russian official documentation only in 1992 and became legalized in the presidential decrees signed by Boris Eltsin<sup>8</sup>. In 1993, when the new

Constitution of the Russian Federation was adopted, the term-combination "*indigenous minority people*" entered into the legal practice. This term-combination is repeated together with a relevant formula about division of powers in the texts of many republican constitutions—Adygea (Article 54, Paragraph 1), Buryatia (Article 62), Komi (Article 64, Paragraph "m"), Mordovia (Article 62, Paragraph "m"), Yakutia (Article 42) and others. Apart from that, references to the title peoples as to indigenous peoples are, for instance, in the Constitutions of Dagestan (Article 5) and Komi (Article 3)<sup>9</sup>. Thus, through the decrees by Boris Eltsin,

— 183 s.] Пименова Н.Н. Механизмы социокультурных изменений коренных этносов Севера и Сибири: социально-философский анализ / Дисс. ... канд. филос. наук: 09.00.11. — Красноярск: СФУ, 2015. — 183 с.

Sokolova F.Kh. Indigenous peoples: concept, essence, content // Vestnik of Northern (Arctic) Federal University. Series: The Humanities and social sciences. 2012. No. 6. — P. 23-27. [Sokolova F.Kh. Korennyye narody: kontsept, suschnost, sodержanie // Vestnik Severnogo (Arkticheskogo) federal'nogo universiteta. Seriya: Gumanitarnye i sotsialnyye nauki. 2012. № 6. — S. 23-27.]

Соколова Ф.Х. Коренные народы: концепт, сущность, содержание // Вестник Северного (Арктического) федерального университета. Серия: Гуманитарные и социальные науки. 2012. № 6. — С. 23-27.

Kharyuchi S.N. Indigenous minority peoples: problems of the laws. Monograph / Scientific consultant Krylov B.S. — Tomsk: Publishing House of Tomsk University, 2004. — 360 p. [Kharyuchi S.N. Korennyye malochislennyye narody: problemy zakonodatelstva. Monografiya / Nauch. kons.: Krylov B.S. — Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo un-ta, 2004. — 360 s.] Харючи С.Н. Коренные малочисленные народы: проблемы законодательства. Монография / Науч. конс.: Крылов Б.С. — Томск: Изд-во Томского ун-та, 2004. — 360 с.

<sup>8</sup>Decree No. 118 dated February 05, 1992 with a proposal to ratify the Convention of International Labor Organization No. 169 "On indigenous peoples and peoples leading a tribal mode of life in independent countries" and Decree No. 397 dated April 22, 1992 containing the order on preparation till the end of 1992 and introduction to the RF Supreme Soviet the bills "On legal status of indigenous peoples of the North" and "On legal status of the national district, national rural and settlement Councils, clan and community Councils of indigenous peoples of the North". [Ukaz № 118 ot 5 fevralya 1992 g. spredlozheniye o ratifikatsii Konventsii Mezhdunarodnoi organizatsii truda № 169 «Okorennykh narodakh i narodakh, vedushchikh plennym obrazom zhizni v nezavisimykh stranekh» i Ukaz № 397 ot 22 aprelya 1992 g., sodержaschiye rasporяzheniye o podgotovke do kontsa 1992 g. i vnesheni v Verkhovnyy Sovet RF projektov zakonov «O pravovom statuse korennykh narodov Severa» i «O pravovom statuse natsional'nogo rayona, natsional'nogo selskogo i poselkovogo Sovetov, rodovyykh i obshinnyykh Sovetov korennykh narodov Severa».

pravovom statuse natsional'nogo rayona, natsional'nogo selskogo i poselkovogo Sovetov, rodovyykh i obshinnyykh Sovetov korennykh narodov Severa».] Ukaz № 118 ot 5 fevralya 1992 g. s predlozheniye o ratifikatsii Konventsii Mezhdunarodnoi organizatsii truda № 169 «O korennykh narodakh i narodakh, vedushchikh plennym obrazom zhizni v nezavisimykh stranekh» i Ukaz № 397 ot 22 aprelya 1992 g., sodержaschiye rasporяzheniye o podgotovke do kontsa 1992 g. i vnesheni v Verkhovnyy Sovet RF projektov zakonov «O pravovom statuse korennykh narodov Severa» i «O pravovom statuse natsional'nogo rayona, natsional'nogo selskogo i poselkovogo Sovetov, rodovyykh i obshinnyykh Sovetov korennykh narodov Severa».

<sup>9</sup>Sokolovsky S.V. Indigenous peoples: from the policy of strategic essentialism to the principle of social justice // Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie. 2008. No. 4. — P. 59-76. [Sokolovsky S.V. Korennyye narody: ot politiki strategicheskogo essentsializma k printsipu sotsial'noy spravedlivosti // Etnograficheskoe obozrenie. 2008. № 4. — S. 59-76.] Соколовский С.В. Коренные народы: от политики стратегического эссенциализма к принципу социальной справедливости // Этнографическое обозрение. 2008. № 4. — С. 59-76.

Kryazhkov V.A. Indigenous minority peoples of the North in the Russian law. — M.: Publishing House "Norma", 2010. — 559 p. [Kryazhkov V.A. Korennyye malochislennyye narody Severa

“from above”, without any scientific, expert and social discussion, quite an alien and artificially constructed term “indigenous peoples”, which carries a post-colonial discourse, which does not correspond to the Russian historical reality, and conflict-generating potential of interpretations, was legislatively brought into the Russian-language vocabulary.

It is symptomatic that the former Soviet republics, as a result of sovereignization and the necessity to build their national state, became greatly interested in knowing their own “root” sources, writing the fiction books on the mythological subjects in the context of *nostalgia for sources*<sup>10</sup>. Turning of the peoples to their mythology and legendizing the notable events and heroes are natural and are of great importance for understanding the past as well as for acquiring the modern national self-consciousness and identity (S.A. Yarovenko).

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rossiiskomprave. – M.: Izd-vo «Norma», 2010. – 559 s.] Кряжков В.А. Коренные малочисленные народы Севера в российском праве. – М.: Изд-во «Норма», 2010. – 559 с.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance: Mosolova L.M., Prytkova L.A. History of Arts of Kyrgyzstan: in 2 volumes, Volume 2; the XXth – the beginning of the XXIst centuries.: monograph. – St. Petersburg, Bishkek: Publishing House of Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, 2019. P.245-248, 253-260. [Mosolova L.M., Prytkova L.A. Istoriia iskusstva Kirgizstana: v 2 t., T.2; XX – nachalo XXI vv.: monografiia. – SPb, Bishkek: Izd-vo RGPU im. A.I. Gertsena, 2019. S.245-248, 253-260. ] Мосолова Л.М., Прыткова Л.А. История искусства Киргизстана: в 2 т., Т.2; XX – начало XXI вв.: монография. – СПб, Бишкек: Изд-во РГПУ им. А.И. Герцена, 2019. С.245-248, 253-260.

It is another matter when history of ethnic groups and their modern reality are falsified by means of pseudo-mythology and when the interested forces are aiming this falsification at solving their own geopolitical tasks. In this respect, these political forces use the peoples' division into “indigenous” and “non-indigenous” in most cases as “apple of discord” within the country as well as between the states. In this respect, the events in the South of Kyrgyzstan in the city of Osh in 2010 are significant. Here the inhabitants of the Kyrgyz and Uzbek nationalities clashed with each other, who, at first, argued heatedly who of them – the Uzbeks or the Kyrgyz – were the autochthonal population of the Osh region, whom the territory belongs and what rights different groups hold. The well-known facts that the farmers of the valley as well as the nomads of the Fergana Range and the Pamir foothills had lived there since the IIIrd – the IInd millenniums BC produced no effect. The clashes acquired the extreme forms due to instigation by the radicals and their advisers from foreign countries. The confrontation grew into a real slaughter. Houses, shops, cars were burnt, 155 people were killed and 845 people were injured.

### Discussion

The research found out deep contradictions in interpreting a phenomenon of the minority indigenous peoples in the papers made by the foreign and Russian

authors, and the absence of clear and well-reasoned criteria of attributing some ethnic groups to indigenous ones. As a rule, the wide public representatives as well as a number of specialists, who research some ethnic groups, use these terms without proper reflective comprehension. In the international and Russian laws, visions about “indigenity” of some peoples in relation to other peoples and the related rights and obligations did not acquire a convincing and unambiguous legal interpretation even now.

The notion “indigenous people” is especially polysemantic, vague and unclear in terms of its content and contradictory in terms of its essential interpretation in various states. Its interpretation depends in large part on the historical architectonics of the ethnic groups existence in various continents, on their presence in various social systems, and on their social-cultural typology and other determinations. The question remains open who, in the modern globalized world, meets the criteria of “true indigenous”. This just strengthens our skepticism in relation to the notion “indigenous peoples” as a universal or relevant notion only in the certain ethno-political context<sup>11</sup>. In the meantime, the term

“indigenous peoples” was actualized in the modern world, and a real existence of specific peoples, development of their culture of life support and mental orientations, and a role and a status in the inter-ethnic interaction in the state as well as outside of it, depends on its understanding. In this connection, it is possible to conclude that it is necessary to carry out a terminological revision, “sanitization”, “disinfection” or even “disinfection” against misleading notions and harmful ideas in humanitarian sciences, social journalism, ethno-political practice and regulatory documentation. It is necessary to be extremely cautious in using such uncertain terms, since they conceal potential manipulation tools.

This paper implements the analytical procedures of problematisation and thematisation of the considered terms for detecting their content and senses and shows the absence of paper trying to carry out the meta-disciplinary generalization of general traits of the minority peoples as well as the generalizing individualization procedures (E.S. Markaryan). It is important to reach a higher level of generalizing the knowledge about the specificity and uniqueness of the Earth’s minority peoples – “*in order to see the wood for the trees*”. This opens an ethno-culturological prospect to continue the initial research stage that was offered here.

<sup>11</sup>Kuropyatnik M.S.

Indigenity in the context of globalization: epistemological and socio-cultural aspects // RUDN Bulletin. Series: “Sociology. 2019. Vol. 19. No. 3. – P. 393. [Kuropyatnik M.S. Indigenity in the context of globalization: epistemological and socio-cultural aspects // Vestnik RUDN. Seria: «Sotsiologia». 2019. Vol. 19. №. 3. – S. 393.] Куropyятник М.С. Индигенность в контексте

глобализации: эпистемологический и социокультурный аспекты // Вестник РУДН. Серия: «Социология». 2019. Vol. 19. №. 3. – С. 393.

Having considered a series of migrations of the big and small-numbered peoples at all the history stages from the antiquity to the XXth century to various regions of the world, we can clearly see that a change of territories of their habitation on a scale of the long temporal duration («longue durée») has a permanent nature. During the whole history of mankind, some ethnic groups and, sometimes, even the whole peoples, for some reasons, changed their places of residence, while moving, in many historical cases, to a territory, which was populated by other peoples, coming into contact with these peoples and working out various (constructive or destructive) forms of interaction in each case. On the historical materials, one can see that migration waves in succession are forming a kind of ethno-cultural layers, living at different times, on a territory. These layers can acquire various configurations and enter into various relations with each other. This was in the past, these processes continue in the present and there is every reason to suppose that this will be the case in the future too. The term “indigenous peoples” has a certain meaning only within a colonial and post-colonial discourse. Outside of the discourse, this term is either heuristically insipid or it acquires an instrumental-committed and even speculative nature. In this sense, a *relativistic* and even *opportunistic* subtext of an appeal to the “indigeneness” of a people on a territory and

related political or economic claims is readily apparent. For all that, strange as it may seem, vagueness and doubtfulness of the term “indigenous peoples” does not impede its usage in the scientific discourses, in solving the problems of identity, in the ethno-political, social-economic and international-legal spheres. The authors revealed that this is driven by processes of myth construction of national histories with small and big-numbered peoples and, in some degree, by the geopolitical interests.

Discussion of practices of the national histories mythologization showed that they become more active in connection with systemic crises that give rise to a demand for the use of mythological modes of history of their ethnic group and their prominent figures. It is significant that turning to mythologization of their ancestral homes and their native indigeneness on the occupied territory is a natural phenomenon for many ethnic groups, and especially for the minority peoples. In this sense, it is extremely important to favor the formation, in the case of minority distinctive peoples, of a positive image of their own history, which some researchers call “*cliotherapy*” (B.N. Mironov). There is a need for an operative diagnostics and prevention of throwing in of various “mental viruses”, slag of the “mass culture”, xenophobic “microbes”, removal of complexes in connection with “small number” or “backwardness”. In this respect, an

important form of self-organizing the true enthusiasts of distinctive ethnic communities is non-governmental organizations of the indigenous peoples: Association of indigenous, minority peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of RF, the Untuit Circumpolar Conference, the Union of Laplanders, the Information Center of indigenous peoples of Russia "L'auravetl'an", the Information-legal center of the indigenous minority peoples of the North, the Union of indigenous peoples of Russia, etc. These non-governmental organizations are quite different, but they serve as a constitutional-legal form of institutionalization of indigenous peoples, of revealing their real will, exercising the collective rights and legal interests. In a situation when these peoples, for various reasons, cannot have their own governmental or municipal units, a key regulatory way of exercising the collective rights of the indigenous peoples is recognition of a relevant status of their non-governmental organizations<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>12</sup>Gorbunov S.N., Zadorin M.Yu. Indigenous peoples and sustainable development: monograph. – Arkhangelsk: Publishing House "Northern (Arctic) Federal University named after M.V. Lomonosov", 2014. – 358 p. [Gorbunov S.N., Zadorin M.Yu. Korennyye narody i ustoychivoe razvitiye: monografiya. – Arkhangelsk: Izd-vo «Severnyy (Arkticheskiy) federalnyy universitet imeni M.V. Lomonosova», 2014. – 358 s.] Горбунов С.Н., Задорин М.Ю. Коренные народы и устойчивое развитие: монография. – Архангельск: Изд-во «Северный (Арктический) федеральный университет имени М.В. Ломоносова», 2014. – 358 с.

Ziganshin, I.R. Constitutional-legal status of non-governmental organizations of indigenous peoples of the Ar

ctic states: comparative-legal analysis: thesis for a Candidate in Juridical Sciences. – M.: National Research University "Higher School of Economics", 2016. – 192 p. [Ziganshin, I.R. Konstitutsionno-pravovoy status obshchestvennykh obyedineniy korennykh narodov arkticheskikh gosudarstv: sravnitel'no-pravovoy analiz: Dis. ... kand. urid. nauk. – M.: Nats. issled. un-t «Vyssh. shk. ekonomiki», 2016. – 192 s.] Зиганшин, И.Р. Конституционно-правовой статус общественных объединений коренных народов арктических государств: сравнительно-правовой анализ: Дис. ... канд. юрид. наук. – М.: Нац. исслед. ун-т «Высш. shk. ekonomiki», 2016. – 192 с.

Kuropyatnik M.S. Indigenous peoples in the process of socio-cultural changes: thesis for a Doctor in Sociological Sciences. – St. Petersburg, 2006. – 360 p. [Kuropyatnik M.S. Korennyye narody v protsessakh sotsiokul'turnykh izmeneniy: dis. ... d-rasotsiol. nauk. – SPb., 2006. – 360 s.] Куропятник М.С. Коренные народы в процессе социокультурных изменений: дис. ... д-ра социол. наук. – СПб., 2006. – 360 с.

Pimenova N.N. Mechanisms of socio-cultural changes of indigenous ethnic groups of the North and Siberia: social-philosophical analysis / thesis for a Candidate in Philosophical Sciences: 09.00.11. – Krasnoyarsk: Siberian Federal University, 2015. – 183 p. [Pimenova N.N. Mekhanizmy sotsiokul'turnykh izmeneniy korennykh etnosov Severa i Sibiri: sotsialno-filosofskiy analiz / Diss. ... kand. filos. nauk: 09.00.11. – Krasnoyarsk: SFU, 2015. – 183 s.] Пименова Н.Н. Механизмы социокультурных изменений коренных этносов Севера и Сибири: социально-философский анализ / Дисс. ... канд. филос. наук: 09.00.11. – Красноярск: СФУ, 2015. – 183 с.

Sokolova F.Kh. Indigenous peoples: concept, essence, content // Vestnik of North (Arctic) Federal University. Series: The Humanities and social sciences. 2012. No. 6. – P. 23-27. [Sokolova F.Kh. Korennyye narody: kontsept, suzhnost', sodержание // Vestnik Severnogo (Arkticheskogo) federal'nogo universiteta. Seriya: Gumanitarnyye i sotsialnyye nauki. 2012. №6. – S. 23-27.] Соколова Ф.Х. Коренные народы: концепт, сущность, содержание // Вестник Северного (Арктического) федерального университета. Серия: Гуманитарные и социальные науки. 2012. №6. – С. 23-27.

Kharuchi S.N. Indigenous minority peoples: problems of laws. Monograph / Scientific consultant is Krykov B.S. – Tomsk: Publishing House of Tomsk University, 2004. – 360 p. [Kharuchi S.N. Korennyye malochislennyye narody: problemy zakonodatel'stva. Monografiya / Nauch. kons.: Krykov B.S. – Tomsk: Izd-vo Tomskogo un-ta, 2004. – 360 s.] Харючи С.Н. Коренные малочисленные народы: проблемы



A critical analysis of using the term “indigenous peoples” in modern sciences and legal documents made it possible to conclude that the term does not meet the criteria of a scientific notion or a category, it is often connected with *myth construction* of the national histories. Its usage as a tool of scientific cognition and a navigator of the socio-political or national orientations is not heuristically promising. In the context of regulating the inter-ethnic relations, the term “indigenous peoples” is fraught with a conflict-generating potential and it can serve as a dangerous weapon in the arsenal of radical forces and those for which their actions are politically advantageous. Materials and conclusions of the paper are of practical importance for protecting the adequate value-conceptual guidelines of the minority peoples, for specifying the scientific and legal terminology in the sphere of the inter-ethnic relations, making the ethno-culturological, ethno-politological and ethno-sociological expert examination more efficient.

### Conclusion

Thus, a critical analysis of using the terms “minority peoples” and “indigenous peoples” in the modern sciences, legal documents and socio-cultural practices made it possible to draw the following conclusions.

The term “minority peoples” should be attributed to a scientific notion or a category, since it reflects the essential peculiarities of existence of these peoples, due to which they can be singled out among all the others. This notion, among the billion, million and various multi-thousand-strong peoples, abundantly clearly determines the minority ethnic groups. This notion, like all the scientific notions, has a conventional basis (the number is less than 50 thousand people).

The term “indigenous peoples” does not have a consistent conventional basis, it does not reflect a root-topochron of all the minority ethnic groups of the planet, so the term is heuristically doubtful. Thus, there is no sense in using the term as *terminological tools* in scientific cognition, and as a *cognitive navigator* in a system of ethno-cultural or ethno-political orientations.

In conclusion, let's emphasize that the main and sore trait of the peoples in question is their small number and, consequently, difficulties of their existence, preservation and development of their traditional cultures in the context of the modern civilization. Remembering the words by Chingiz Aitmatov, let's ask: “*Is there a people on the Earth, which does not want to be everlasting?*” The question is rhetorical... The minority ethnic groups, which are equal to all the peoples in terms of their uniqueness and invaluable in terms of diversity of the cultural and historical experience, must be researched adequately,

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