



# Identity and Regional Culture: The Case of the Pomor People in Arkhangel'sk Region, Russia



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**Thesis submitted for the degree:**

**Master in Philosophy in Indigenous Studies**

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**Norway**

**Autumn 2011**

***Identity and Regional Culture: The Case of the Pomor People  
in Arkhangel'sk Region, Russia***

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I am grateful for many people who have worked with me and gave the comments on the material. First of all, my classmates in Indigenous Studies Program at the University of Tromsø during 2009-2011. I have really enjoyed our time together.

I am thankful to the academic staff of the faculty of Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education for assistance in program courses and to the Sami Center which hosted me during these two years and agreed to fund my fieldwork research. I especially want to thank David Anderson for effective dialogue, incredible patience and wise advice. He helped me to find my path through the mass of ideas and thoughts.

I also want to thank Hege Kristin Widnes from International Office for giving me inspiration in time when I really needed it.

Particular thanks go to wonderful people Torbjørn and Kari Johnsen for their kindness and hospitality. Thanks to all my amazing friends in Tromsø and in Russia for their support. I also want to thank my boyfriend for being beside me in hard times.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. It has become possible to finish this project because of their belief in me. I am incredibly thankful to my dearest mother for everything good that I have in my life.

Tromsø, August 2011

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## **Abstract**

The thesis focuses on the identity of an unrecognized, small-numbered people in the northwestern part of Russia– the Pomor people (or *Pomor*). The thesis will examine the history of this group and how they came to be ‘fragmented’ from the main identity-forming process of the central Russian nation from the ninth to the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Using fieldwork materials, the thesis will present which identity markers are presented by Pomor activists today to support their claim for recognition. It will also analyze the main aspects of Russian national policies towards minority and indigenous groups. The thesis will examine why people in post-Soviet Russia are searching for a different type of identity structure that goes beyond citizenship. And how and why a fragmentation of identity occurs. The thesis further reflects on the difficulties and advantages of analyzing one’s own culture.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

“From the first glance any landscape can be seen  
as an incredible mass,  
but we are able to endow it with sense .”

Claude Lévi-Strauss

#### 1.1. The Research Problem

People are becoming more and more concerned about the preservation of their territories, the protection of their native languages, and the development of their unique cultures. The processes of self-identification and self-determination are rising in spite of the globalization process. We can observe the intensification of two different and, I believe, opposite trends: on one hand, globalization integrates and blurs the boundaries between different units; on the other hand, people search for new identities.

By the turn of 1990s the salience of ethnicity world-wide became more evident. This is true both in western industrialized countries, in many countries in the Third World, and increasingly in the former communist countries and the Russian Federation (Bulmer 1998).

Moreover, during the last two decades the Russia Federation (the RF) also faced the issue of ethno-national and ethno-cultural revitalization. For example, Iurii Shabaev identifies the turn of the 1990s as an “ethnic revolution” when the phenomenon of ethnic actualization became stronger than ever before, (Shabaev 2006:95).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union a new national policy was declared. As written in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, Russia is a multicultural and multiethnic nation. Minority peoples felt a freedom to claim their rights to identify themselves as indigenous and/or different from other nations. This claim, however, conflicted with the policy of federalism and strong centralization which are being built in Russia, these create new barriers to self-determination and recognition. In spite of the constitutional guarantees, federal and local laws very often clash with

each other, and sometimes even exclude each other. This made it difficult to find a path to guarantee the rights of minority groups and indigenous peoples.

This project will mainly focus on the political and cultural issues of the ethnic identity of unrecognized, small-numbered people of the northern-west part of Russia– Pomor people (or *Pomor*). In my work I will try to figure out how new identities are being formed and how multiple identities are created? I will also discuss the question of dual identity and the problem with its official registration and legal implementation by the Russian state – can anyone be registered as a Russian Pomor or must a person be either Russian or to be Pomor? Another issue that is important when discussing Pomor identity is ethnic group mobilization to struggle for status and rights. I will try to answer the question: ‘what kind of intentions could lay on the ground of such activities’, by using the case of Arkhangel’sk region. Some attention will be also paid to the international law and national policy regarding minority groups and indigenous peoples in the Russian Federation.

## **1.2. The Study Case**

The issues of ethnonational and ethnocultural identity have become serious in Russia over the last several decades. One of the challenging examples of this tendency is the increase in ethnic self-identity of Pomors.

The ‘ethnonym’ of this group was chosen as the official title of Arkhangel’sk region several decade ago with intention to demonstrate the cultural uniqueness and distinction of this area and to strengthen local identity by relying on the cultural heritage of the region. But at the same time, the question of the Pomor peoples’ status is still unsettled despite all efforts of Pomor leaders. Who are they? Indigenous peoples? An ethnic subgroup of Russians? Or just descendants of settlers from the central Russia? Do they have enough ‘uniqueness’ to define themselves as a separate ethnic group?

There are many debates among researchers, politicians and members of the Pomor movement around Pomor historical, cultural and ethnic identity, on one hand, and Pomor self-identity on the other hand. There are three main points of view: researchers regard Pomor people as a



‘subethnos’<sup>1</sup> of the Russian people, and Pomor culture as subculture; members of Pomor movement assert the Pomors right to be a separate ethnic group (indigenous) with all legal consequences of this political status and politicians tend to change their view according to political situation in local and national scale, (Anufriev 2006:408). This work has special importance, especially for ordinary people who inhabit the remote sea areas and, are highly dependent on their traditions and sustainable resource management, and are in need of special guarantees to survive.

According to an official list 45 groups are marked as indigenous small-numbered peoples in Russia. It goes without saying that such status gives these groups a range of advantages in comparison with the majority population, for example, in land and resource management. But in reality all these ‘co-called’ advantages give them an opportunity to survive and to save their own culture and dignity, (Tulaeva 2009:4). But Pomors are not included in this list. They are recognized as neither indigenous peoples nor a separate ethnic group, and their official status is a subgroup of Russian ethnos now. In fact their unique culture is endangered now and is in need of special treatment from the state.

During the 2002 census, Pomors were put in the list of nationalities for the first time. This can be regarded as a proof of great change in national policy and in folks’ perception of ethnic issues. It also gives some hope to the goal of saving Pomor culture.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

The research questions specify the main direction of planned work. Correctly developed research questions are a firm basis of any investigation.

1. How do scholars structure Pomor history and culture, and how does this structure relate to the question of the recognition of their rights and identities?
2. What traits are used to define Pomors as a diverse ethnic group among other Russians?

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<sup>1</sup> According to the dictionary of the Russian Ethnographic Museum: subethnic group or subethnos is defined as a community of people living compactly and presented as a part of certain ethnos but with specific cultural features, and defines themselves from the rest of population. Subethnos has an ethnonym and double self-identity – belonging to the ethnos and subethnic group. Moreover there is a tight hierarchy between these two notions, subethnic level is subordinated to ethnos level.

### 3. Why and in what form has Pomor identity come to the agenda nowadays?

#### 1.4. Historical Background

Pomors are Russian-speaking settlers and their descendants live on the White Sea coast. It is also a term of self-identification for the descendants of Russian, primarily Novgorodian, settlers of the Russian North, living on the White Sea coasts and adjoining territories.

As early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century, explorers from Novgorod entered the White Sea through the Northern Dvina and Onega rivers until Arkhangel'sk was established in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. From their base at Kola, they explored the Barents Region and the Kola Peninsula, Spitsbergen, and Novaia Zemlia and the vast territories and sea routes between Arkhangel'sk and Siberia.

The term Pomor which originally, in the 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, meant “a person who lived near a sea” gradually extended into one that referred to the population living relatively far away from the sea. However, a territory of practically the whole European Russian North, including Murmansk region, Arkhangel'sk and Vologda regions, Karelia and Komi republics, started to be called Pomor'e.

The traditional livelihoods of Pomors based on the sea included hunting, whaling and fishing. Pomor'e was free of landlords and most of inhabitants were free peasants and traders.

Like most other Russians, Pomors are traditionally Orthodox Christians; however prior to 1917, a large percentage of Russians from Pomor'e were practicing Old Believers.

During the 2002 census, it was possible for respondents to identify themselves as Pomors for the first time. This group was tabulated as a subgroup of the Russian ethnicity. The numbers demonstrate that 6,571 persons did so, almost all of them in Arkhangel'sk Oblast' (6,295) and Murmansk Oblast' (127), (Shabaev 2009:20).

Pomor culture is rather diverse and we can find a lot of distinctive features which are not common for the rest of the Russians living in the middle and southern part of the country. To a great extent it can be explained by the long lasting contact with the Sami and Nenets peoples and constant close relations with Scandinavia through the Pomor trade. On the other hand, there is a difficulty in distinguishing of Pomor culture from Northern Russian culture. I will discuss this argument later.

## **1.5. Pomor People in Academic Discourse**

Up to the present time, it is difficult to find any systematic and complex research on Pomors ethnic identity. I have to mention that Pomor peoples, similarly to other indigenous people, in Russia have never been researched as a distinctive group before the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There were a lot of ethnographic descriptions made by famous travelers, writers and painters, but most of them might be considered as non-scientific literature. Only in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century several investigations were held to research Pomors as bearers of specific cultural features, but also within the frame of ethnography and the history of Russian ethnos.

The early 1990s is marked by a high attention to ethnic revitalization all over Russia, and this was the time when some attempts were made to study Pomor history, culture and identity as an independent subject with the hopes of reviving and proving the uniqueness of the Arkhangel'sk region and its' people. This turn might be explained by shifts in political discourse rather than in scientific.

Today we can observe a lot of published works discussing the political and ethnic issues of Pomors, but most of them are comparing the Pomor identity with the indigenous one. In my opinion, Pomor identity as an independent part of academic discourse is not researched enough. Even the present day situation of the politicization of ethnicity issues is not the object of complex academic research. A lot of works cover just the cultural component of indigenaity. Other articles discussing political issues of Pomor ethnicity are too politically overloaded and should be carefully regarded as a source of data.

## **1.6. Significance of the Research**

This study is important in many ways. First, it brings to our attention the changes in the attitude of local minority groups towards the right to self-determination and self-identification in modern Russia. It shows how the 'mobilization of ethnicity' can create new conditions for minority groups to be recognized by the state. I consider it as reflection on significant changes in Russian national policy in comparison with the Soviet period– proclamations of a multicultural and multiethnic nation. Second, it provides us with knowledge about the ethnopolitical situation on both national and local levels in Russia by using the Pomor people as an example.

My research is interesting because it brings together an analysis of national discourse about indigenous groups with a study of Pomors' identity which is on the agenda. Third, my research

sheds light on the current traits of Pomor peoples. I also discuss the difficulties in studying Pomor culture in the context of the Northern Russian cultural tradition and how this problem could influence research processes and their results.

Moreover this study fills the gap in the scientific literature on Pomor people identity at a local scale. There are different articles and single publications describing ethnography and traditional culture of local populations, but not systematic research on current identity and ethnic traits of Pomors. Moreover, most of literature is based on a primordial approach which is still dominate in academia circles. There are not enough works discussing Pomor identity from the point of ethnic boundaries as constructed and maintained by the group itself.

In addition, I want to believe that my research might be useful for everyone who is interested in indigenous and ethnic issues. Moreover, I consider that this particular research will help to make it clear what is Pomor identity?". I hope that the results of my work bring attention to issues which Pomor people face on their way to self-determination and self-recognition. Moreover, I am ensure to share my results with local ethnolnational Pomor organizations and movements, with the hope that my work can inspire somebody to rethink their own identity and to discover 'their roots'.

## **1.7. Chapter Outline**

Chapter one gives an introduction to the research topic, presents a background of the problem and research questions. Significance of research and a brief overview of Pomors are also presented.

Chapter two presents the international and national legislation with regard to indigenous peoples. I present a brief history of Russian policy concerning indigenous populations in different periods of history to make connection between past and present day in this field to find out where the roots of current national policy might be.

Chapter three discusses theories of ethnicity and identity. It also outlines important definitions for research and frames the historical periods of Pomor history. It gives an overview of the main methodological difficulties in studying Pomors culture and history.

Chapter four deals with methodology and fieldwork findings, describes my own role as researcher in this project, and describes the challenges I had to face during data collection work.

Chapter five presents a history of colonization of the research area, an overview of conditions that led the Pomors to have their distinctiveness recognized, and then to lose part of this during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The chapter also presents the changes in traditional Pomor livelihoods with laps of times (9-20 century).

Chapter six is based on fieldwork findings and interview data. It deals with identity traits that distinguish modern Pomors from the rest of Russians during present day. There is also an overview of the main differences between ethnographic traits of the past and up-to-date identity markers among Pomors.

Chapter seven presents the local level of Pomor movement in Arkhangel'sk region beginning with a brief history and ending with current results. I also discuss different levels of such ethnic mobilizations to find out its' goals and actors.

Chapter eight is a summary of the thesis, building a model of current Pomor identity.

## Chapter 2

### Legal Background

#### 2.1. The General Legal Context

In this chapter I will summarize the relations between the state and indigenous peoples dividing this long period into three parts – the Russian Empire, the Soviet Era and contemporary Russia. I will also analyse the notion ‘indigenous’ in a historical context to find out how and in what forms it has been implemented in legislation. This is important as I believe that the difficulties with the modern term are rooted in the past. Moreover, the brief coverage of the current Russian legal terminology concerning indigenous peoples will be discussed. Presented legislation shows what kind of laws and other guarantees are important for indigenous peoples and groups who are struggling for recognition.

This chapter comes first because an understanding of the legal basis for the Pomor struggle for official status is important to understand the contest for the revival of the Pomor identity.

I must emphasize that the term ‘indigenous’ is rather complicated in itself. If we compare Russian and international legal standards in this field, we will find several important differences which must be taken into account when researching issues of indigenous rights in the Russian Federation. Generally in Russia indigenous peoples are called indigenous small-numbered peoples<sup>2</sup> (*korennye malochislennye narody*). Here lies the most important difference—demographic factor, which in fact creates a peculiar type of identity politics based on ethnic-group size and place of residence in Russia, (Donahoe 2008:993). International legal standards are based on the approach that respects the choice of a people’s lifestyle. This means that international society discourages the forced integration of indigenous people. International standards include the following characteristics: 1. special connection with land; 2. self-identification; 3. historical continuity with ancestors.

In comparison, Russian policy regarding indigenous issues is still in contrast with international law, because ideas of paternalism and integration are fundamental and dominate in national policy, (Sokolovskii 2008:60). Russian legislation inherited Soviet paternalistic tradition and when it comes to categorizing indigenous peoples, it takes the limit of 50,000. According to

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<sup>2</sup> In this project talking about Russian context I will use the term ‘indigenous peoples’ implying ‘indigenous small-numbered peoples’

Valerii Tishkov, the 50,000 number was arrived at through discussions among ethnologists and other experts in the early 1990s, in the process of drafting a new law on the legal status of Russia's indigenous peoples:

*“Using figures from the 1989 census, they [experts] noted that the largest of the recognized small groups, the Nenets, numbered just under 35,000. Ultimately, it was determined that 50,000 threshold was high enough to allow the largest small group possibility for growth yet still far enough below the first non-small indigenous group (Altaians with population of ca. 62,000) that their exclusion from the category would not be questioned” (Donahoe 2008:998).*

## **2.2. The Evolution of Indigenous Legislation and of the Term ‘Indigenous’**

In this section I concentrate on the category- indigenous small-numbered peoples - and built all my discussions around this term and issues connected with it. So it seems important to make it clear what is meant by the term ‘indigenous people’ in different periods of Russian history. The term was introduced into Russian legislation rather recently- in the beginning of 1990s. There were plenty of variations of this definition before, each of them reflecting the attitude towards indigenous groups that inhabited Russia in different historical periods.

### **2.2.1. The Russian Empire**

Northern peoples have a very long history of relations with the Russian state. In fact they had to deal with three different states: the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union and the Russian Federation, which means that they were dependent on three different political systems. It should be taken into account that it is not possible to talk about concept of ‘indigenouness’ as we understand it until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Russian Imperial policy towards aboriginal minorities was rather contradictory. On one hand, exploring new lands (North, Siberia and Far East) Russian pioneers were trying not only to enlarge the territory of the state but also enrich the treasury by implementing new taxes. Terms used in regards aboriginal groups - ‘*tuzemets*’ (native of another’s, alien tribe) and ‘*inorodets*’(pagan) - were widespread in the Russian legislation system. These terms are connected with the colonization processes of Siberia, Far East and the North of Russia. The newly discovered areas were greatly remote from the center. The peoples who inhabited these areas were apprehended as aliens, carriers of different cultural traditions and, most importantly - different beliefs. Religion (orthodoxy) and language (Russian) were of great importance to build

the national policy in the state. In general giving definitions implied ethnocentric tendencies within Russian society at a time when only the Russian cultural type was respected.

Scholars argue over the extent to which treatment towards new groups of people were cruel and methods of governing remote places were strict. Russian historian N.Karamzin, for instance, defines the conquest of these territories as a violent and forced process; and relations between indigenous nobility and assigned governors as abusive. On the other side, some declare that influx of Russians carried a peaceful character, and new settlers strived just to co-exist with aboriginal population, not assimilating them, (Sokolovskii 1999). I believe the second position to be just partly true. In respect to the Russian North, for instance, there are many facts in historical literature about the religious pressure on aboriginal people to turn them to Orthodoxy. This approach hardly can be regarded as peaceful at all.

One of the main documents of that time was ‘The Regulations on Administration of Aliens (*inorodtsy*) 1822’. This document was rather forward-looking even in comparison with the present day situation. For example, people could keep their religious beliefs, they were guaranteed land ownership and basic forms of self-government. However there are at least two areas which deserve comments. First of all, even if the legislation was progressive, it did not refer to the original roots of aboriginals. Secondly, fulfillment of legislation was not always satisfied. Local authorities often abandoned rules of official documents. This happened mostly because of remoteness and little supervision after their activities, (Kriazhkov 2010).

In the Imperial period some attempts were made to create respectable life conditions for the further development of Northern/Siberian minorities. The state accepted the uniqueness of aboriginal peoples and reckoned with them in decision-making, (Kriazhkov 2010:43). Also as Donahoe points out, presented “categorization process was primarily for administrative purposes and had little if anything to do with recognizing or creating ethnic “identities”, (Donahoe 2008:995). So in general policy of the Russian Empire with regard to indigenous peoples is considered by scholars as rather positive. For example, aboriginal peoples were claimed as a subject of the state, but at the same time they did not follow the general regulations, and were under the special control that protected them from the governors’ lawlessness.



### 2.2.2. The Soviet Period

But after the Russian Revolution, the Soviet state established different policies with the main features of general control, repressive methods and strict central regulation affecting all spheres of peoples' life.

After the Russian revolution of 1917 the new government tried to implement new terminology to break all lineage with the past; which is why definitions that were used in respect to native people under the Empire were abandoned and excluded from the legislation lexicon.

I have to emphasize that during the first decade of the Soviet state there was no agreement on how to label the northern peoples. We can find some features that were developed in these categories. First the requirement for a small number of population; the second is their remoteness from the center. In fact, the definition of 'small-numbered peoples of the North' was created in the 1920s by the Committee for Assistance to the Northern Borderlands under the presidium of General Executive Committee,<sup>3</sup> (Gray 2005:58). So the old terms were replaced by the concepts of 'smallness' and 'endangeredness' which lasted through the whole Soviet period and were expressed through different terms in different decades. Such terms as 'national minorities', 'small peoples' etc. were also used.

According to Sokolovskii, in 1925 the very first Common List of Small-numbered Peoples was created, and 26 groups scattered all across the Russian North were included in this list. These groups were consolidated according to specified features such as small number, traditional livelihood, and co-called 'low standard of life', (Sokolovskii 2001). It reflected the idea of paternalism and integration of 'backward peoples' into Soviet society during the first decades of the Soviet state, (Sokolovskii 2008).

Up until the 1980s the so-called 'national question' (natsional'nyi vopros) was regarded as solved. This period was characterized by the stagnation in the development of indigenous issues. By the end of 1980s the term 'small nationalities of the North' was in use. All connotation of this term with reference to '*nativeness*' or '*primordality*' (iznochal'nost') was unofficially abandoned because it refers to origins of peoples, to their roots,<sup>4</sup> and this could be a ground for land and resources claims (Sokolovskii 1999). This is why authorities tried to avoid this notion

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<sup>3</sup> Komitet Sode'stviia Severnym Okrainam pri Pesidiume Tsentral'nogo Iсполnitel'nogo Kommiteta

<sup>4</sup> It was the official position of the USSR, which was expressed during session of the Working Group on Indigenous Peoples under the UN in 1985. The representative of the USSR claimed that term 'indigenous' can be used only under colonial context, (Sokolovskii 2008).

in legislation. Moreover scholars argued to allow more small indigenous groups to be officially recognized as ‘small-numbered’, while others challenged altogether the necessity of having a special category for these groups.

In general the Soviet period dealing with indigenous peoples and minorities of the North can be divided into three time parts. Kriazhkov suggests beginning with policy of relative non-interference, then describe the implementation of administrative-command system, and end with paternalistic model, (Kriazhkov 2010).

1. During the first period, in spite the urge of bolishiviki to neglect all connections to ‘Empire Russia’, treatment of indigenous populations was based on old tradition of legislation: native groups were acknowledged as specific and demanding special regulations. Of course, development of any minority groups were held within frames of the main ideology- state ownership of land and natural resources, non-market economy, power provided through the centralized system of governmental institutions, and all decisions made in line with the one state communists party. Some kind of self-government was established, and indigenous peoples proposed their own self-government based on kinship structure.
2. Beginning in the 1930s a new era of ‘Sovetization’ of indigenous peoples started- substituting ethnic self-governance by a centralized one; accelerated integration of the peoples of the Soviet system of social relations. Indigenous peoples were reorganized into national districts (okrug), they lost their lands and self-governance, and their own ways of development. The main purpose of new administrative division was equalization between indigenous populations and the majority population.
3. From the mid 1930s until the 1990s– marked a period of stagnation for indigenous development. Active industrialization of the Northern territories put the traditional way of life at risk of extinction. Economic priorities were moved to the forefront. Indigenous peoples were not regarded as equal partners in any state decisions. In fact, only cultural features of indigenous groups were paid attention and financial support.

Summing up, in Soviet Russia indigenous peoples were not neglected, and a lot of legislation was connected with indigenous issues. The Communist Party began with the respectful treatment of indigenous minorities based on their uniqueness, and in time became the policy of guardianship based on negation of indigenous values, striving to unify them with the rest of the

population. Moreover, the Soviet society was a society that viewed itself not as a multi-ethnic “mixed salad” of many minorities, but a family of many intact “peoples” joining together. Two words were consistently used to express the goals of this broad policy: “drawing together” (*sblizhenie*) of many nationalities, and “blending” (*sliyanie*) of them. Rather than imagining a melting pot in which many different nationalities and cultures each added their favor, the concept here, as Gray points out, was rather a smokehouse in which Russianness would infuse and improve each of the Soviet Union’s many nationalities, (Gray 2005:60).

### **2.2.3. The Russian Federation**

The present day situation in the Russian Federation regarding indigenous issues is also rather unstable and changeable. Insufficient attention to indigenous peoples in the past has led to considerable deformation of socio-economic and cultural development of these groups. In the beginning of the 1990s the new Russian state started with a new indigenous policy. It went together with a new national policy, which was forced by a rash of national sovereignty movements all over the country. The Russian Republic President Boris Yeltsin declared that all administrative units all over the country should “take as much sovereignty as they can swallow”. In response to these words, republics, districts and provinces all over Russia began to declare their essential sovereignty and equal status with all other Russian division in relation to the central federal power in Moscow (Gray 2005:161).

Some attempts were made to implement international standards into national legislation system: indigenous rights were proclaimed in new Russian Constitution of 1993, the lower house of the Federal Assembly of Russia had intention to ratify ILO Convention 169 in 1994; also central authorities supported any attempts to establish and develop indigenous movements, and indigenous leaders and scholars were involved in processes on decision-making at a national level. But in a short time most of these initiatives were denied. Instead priority was given to economic development of the state in a way that ignored peoples’ needs.

Several waves of economic and political crises, the establishing of a new economic market system, and the very unstable social situation shifted public attention to the economic development of the country. Indigenous issues were moved to the background. Natural resource development and short-terms goals ejected social projects from the agenda. In general, in cases when indigenous interests clash with government resource goals, indigenous peoples are in a disadvantaged position.

In fact, the term ‘indigenous’ penetrated into Russian legislation under the influence of international law during the *perestroika* period. In Soviet legislation the term ‘indigenous’ was not in use with international meaning of this word. It was officially implied in the Constitution of 1993, (Sokolovskii 2008:60). I should underline that according to Russian legal standards the designation ‘indigenous’ is not determined, but it is replaced with another one – ‘indigenous small-numbered peoples’<sup>5</sup>.

According to the law “*On Guarantees of the Rights of Small-numbered Peoples of the Russian Federation*”, indigenous peoples are given the following features:

*“Peoples living on the lands of their ancestors, living the traditional way of life, keeping traditional crafts and economic system, numbering no more than 50 thousand members living on the territory of the Russian Federation and recognized themselves as certain ethnic communities.”*

The definition given in this law raises many questions among indigenous activists. In general the term ‘indigenous small-numbered peoples’ reflects exactly the Russian context. However, in international law the term ‘indigenous’ is used without stress to their number. If we look at the international legal framework towards indigenous people to determine their status and outlined the main features, then we can see the following: indigenous peoples have two main elements: identity and territory of residence. Additional attributes are history, language, culture, religion, traditional craft, etc. Andrinchenko considers the insertion of such measure of 50,000 members by the state as an attempt to shirk from some obligations in regard to certain groups which are provided for by the international standards, (Andrichenko 2005).

As we see above the most important criterion to allocate indigenusness in Russia is a numerical characteristic. However, according to international legal standards, the most important criterions are origin and traditionalism.

Another characteristic such as the limited number of 50,000 is rather contradictory. According to Adrinchenko, this limit is rather relative. Thus the lawmakers adjust the frames to separate ‘small in number indigenous’ from the rest of indigenous, and thus the number of more than 50,000 allows them to develop without any help from government assistance. So if the population of a ‘small numbered’ group exceeds this level, the indigenous group has to be excluded from the List of Small-numbered Peoples and stops receiving any government support, (Adrinchenko 2005:52).

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<sup>5</sup> Before mid 1980s the definition ‘small peoples of the North’ was used, but under the influence of the indigenous movement this term was recognized as discriminatory and was replaced by the term ‘small-numbered peoples’.

### 2.3. Russian Legislation Concerning Indigenous Peoples

I will not do a deep analysis of Russian legislation concerning indigenous peoples because it is not the goal of this project. I will, however, give a brief overview with stress to legislation that can be interesting and important discussing claims of Pomors for their legal status.

In general, the national legal system has two levels to share the responsibility for law execution – the federal level and the level of subjects which is regulated by local laws.

In talking about the national level, there is a set of official documents that guarantees the respect to rights of indigenous peoples of the RF. Moreover, according to the Constitution, Russian law should take into consideration international demands. As Pavlov points out:

*“Under the Article 69 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation the state guarantees the rights of indigenous peoples in accordance with generally recognized principles and norms of international law and international treaties which are ratified by the Russian Federation.”* (Pavlov 2003).

What is more, the Constitution of the RF lays down the basis for national policy of the state and guarantees security and protection for indigenous peoples by creating equal conditions for development of all national minorities and ethnic groups. It guarantees complete equality of rights and self-determination (p.3 art.5); equality of personal and civil rights and liberties in spite of race, nationality and language (p.2 art.19); the freedom of identity, usage of mother tongue for communication, education, upbringing and creative work (art.26); and also the right of minorities for preservation, studying and development of their native language (p.3 art.68) (Kriazhkov 2010:75).

In the set of federal laws there are several that guarantee special rights for all ethnic communities and national groups (failing to mention them as indigenous or national minorities) including the following:

1. The right for national-cultural autonomy;
2. The right to get education in their mother tongue;
3. The right for preservation and development of national culture;
4. The right for development and usage of national languages.

Another article (72) in the Constitution of the RF refers to the right to protect the traditional territory and livelihood of small-numbered ethnic communities (*malochislennye etnicheskie obshchnosti*). At the same time there is no reference to the term ‘ethnic communities’, on other words rights are guaranteed to these ‘*small-numbered ethnic communities*’, but there is no

explanation as to how this should be regarded. As Pavlov emphasises, disarrangement within indigenous legislation prevents its efficient implementation. He explains that due to huge political, economic and social transformations in Russia during last several decades, lawmaking practices do not have enough time to provide for the legal needs of the country, (Pavlov 2005).

There are three main laws which regulate indigenous issues in the territory of Russia:

*1. On guarantees of the rights of small-numbered indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation (1999).* According to Art.69 of the Constitution, this law assigned regulations to a set of vital indigenous problems. For the first time this law defines a group which can be assigned as indigenous and adjusts the indigenous rights in regards to the protection of their traditional environment, way of life, economy and crafts and also the right to establish different indigenous communities and indigenous self-government. Moreover, the law says that indigenous peoples and their communities could take control over industrial development of their traditional territories. However, this law contains many imperfections, for example, traditional indigenous crafts and types of traditional indigenous livelihoods are not defined, and the procedures for environmental control are not defined completely<sup>6</sup> in this law. In general, it shows that the state takes responsibility to preserve and to protect indigenous peoples' rights. On the other hand, this law does not oblige the state to involve representatives of indigenous peoples to take part in decision-making processes. In fact, it is exclude them from the process.

This law specifies the procedure of registration of groups of people as indigenous - the Common List of Indigenous Peoples of Russia. It was approved by the government of the Russian Federation in 2000 and includes 45 ethnic groups. Assigning of this status entitles the community to a set of government assistance benefits regarding primary rights for land usage, immunity from taxation for land usage, granting free advantages for fishing and hunting, granting "indigenous children" preference in university education and the army, etc. However, this situation could lead to national tension between indigenous groups according to their status as this status gives one group the set of guarantees and benefits, while others have to survive by their own means. It also can result in splitting the nation into smaller groups. Another important document concerning indigenous rights in Russia is The Common List of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples of Russia.

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<sup>6</sup> For example, if industrial development or other economic activity resulted in damage to territories of traditional livelihood, indigenous peoples have a right to compensation. However, the law does not describe how these payments are to be made or specify the individuals who should be responsible for these operations.

2. *On the general principals of the organization of the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (2000)*. In Russia, as in many other countries, self-government is often connected with activities of indigenous communities. This law regulates the legal status of indigenous communities, and procedures of establishment as a special form of non-governmental institutions. The law contains the regulations on protection of the traditional livelihoods, preservation and protection of traditional ways of life, crafts and culture. Although this law is criticized Article 4 is rather important. It says that “decisions concerning issues of internal structure and relationship of indigenous community could be made under tradition and customary law of small-numbered indigenous groups, if they are not in the contrary with federal and local legislation...” Within the frames of self-government important questions connected with traditional livelihoods and culture could be solved.

3. *On the territories of traditional nature usage<sup>7</sup> of the small-numbered indigenous peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (2001)*. This law allocates territories which are important for the preservation of traditional livelihoods for indigenous groups. This law is considered by experts as the most important for indigenous peoples because the development of such territories according to federal laws caused resistance of regional elites, apparently, because regional elites could lose control over the natural resources of these territories, (Pavlov 2005). This law gives the general conditions on lands usage by indigenous peoples and fixes the special norms of land use and the use of other resources restricted by certain territories. In general, the main purpose of this law is to withdraw territories of traditional usage from the civil circulation (excluding them from the buying and selling, rent, inheritance, etc.) (Andrichenko 2005:351). Another important point is that the law guarantees the rights for just those indigenous groups, who are still dependent on traditional economy, not city-dwellers who have other occupations. At the same time, this law does not explain types of traditional management such as reindeer breeding, hunting and fishing.

However, these three laws solve just some of the existing problems of indigenous peoples and do not touch issues connecting with education, public health, culture, and social support. Another problem connected with the realization of these laws, is that unfortunately, executive authorities often do not abide by the rights of indigenous groups. These three basic laws on indigenous rights are unfortunately more declarative and do not contain the mechanisms of implementation or come into contradiction with other legislation. Moreover, special governmental subdivisions which were in charge of issues connected with the development of the northern territories were

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<sup>7</sup> TTP – territoria traditsionnogo prirodopol'zovania.

dismantled<sup>8</sup> and now the Ministry of Regional Development is in charge of indigenous issues. As Suliandziga points out, this is not enough to establish proper policy for indigenous peoples or to create adequate life conditions, (Suliandziga 2005) because one department is responsible for a rather wide set of problems. That is why it is suggested that the establishment of a special subdivision which would be in charge of just indigenous problems would work more efficiently. On the whole, the Russian legislation needs to be improved.

## 2.4. Summary

Summing up, the legal definition of the term ‘indigenous’ has been developed for centuries in Russia and has been influenced by the ideology of the particular period. The current definition is rather unclear, and it reflects the other laws concerning indigenous peoples. However, while the RF’s intent is to be a part of international law, it does not often follow its international obligations.

Also, it is possible to mark out several contradictions in Russian legislation regarding indigenous peoples.

- The federal laws about legal status of indigenous peoples implemented in 2000’s do not work properly and are in contradiction with later legislation.
- The federal government has developed and adopted several special programs for indigenous peoples, but very often indigenous leaders criticize these programs
- There is not a special department for policy towards indigenous peoples. In different periods there were different departments, but the rotation was rather high, causing problems concerning responsibility. Indigenous issues are moved from one agency to another.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The department which is responsible for national and indigenous policy has been reorganized several times and, in fact, there has never been a department which was responsible for only indigenous issues. The first of such subdivisions was established in 1992: Ministry of Nationalities of the Russian Federation (Ministerstvo po delam natsional’nostey Rossiyskoy Federatsii), later it was reorganized into two departments: the Ministry of Regional Policy (Ministerstvo Regional’noi Politiki) and Ministry of National Policy (Ministersvo Natsional’noi Politiki) in 1998; these two departments were reorganized again in 1999 into the Ministry of Nationalities and Federation (Ministerstvo po delam natsional’nostey i federatsii) and in one year it was reorganized into Ministry of Federation, Migration and National Policy (Ministerstvo po Delam Federatsii, Migratsionnoy I Natsional’noy Politiki), and in 2001 indigenous issues came under the control of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Andrey Areshev considers such intensive reorganization a point of highest importance in the ‘national question’. (Areshev <http://www.narodru.ru/article8292.html>)

<sup>9</sup> Now it is Ministry of Regional Development



- Unclear distribution of power between federal and local authorities creates many obstacles standing in the way of implementation of legislation regarding indigenous peoples.
- National legislation regarding indigenous peoples was developed chaotically, and as a result, laws and other regulations which define indigenous rights are poorly coordinated with each other.

After being acquainted with the legislation and legal definitions of the RF we can go further in studying the different sides of Pomor identity and history and come back to this chapter when discussing the goals and intentions of the Pomor movement in Arkhangelsk region.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Theoretical Framework**

This chapter gives an overview of the most important theoretical points to analyze collected data and build some hypotheses on Pomor ethnic identity. I also will present some frames and notions which seems important to understand history and modern reality of Pomor peoples.

#### **3.1. What is Identity?**

Identity demonstrates a personal belonging to a particular social group, institution or territory. Identification is a process characterized by the establishment of the relation between a person and one of these objects. One of the most important forms of identification for people is ethnic identification– the feeling of personal belonging to certain group. This belonging could be ‘real’, when people share the value orientations and traditions of an ethnic group, know its language and culture, and genuinely enjoy the successes and empathize with failures of a certain ethnic group, and ‘formal’, when a person loses some of the feature characteristic of their ethnic group (for example, does not know or does not speak the language of an ethnic community) but still identifies himself/herself with it and worries about group’s fate, (Barth 1969; Tishkov 2003).

Ethnic identity plays a vital role in the political life of society. Between ethnic identity, on one hand, and the homogeneity and unity of the ethnic community, on the other hand, there is a direct correlation: the stronger the ethnic identity, the stronger the ethnic group.

#### **3.2. What is Ethnicity?**

The use of the term ‘ethnicity’ varies widely in scientific and popular literature, so it is rather difficult or even impossible to say what would be the best use of the term.

The concept of ethnicity has a short history. In 1960s this term was invented in Western scientific circles to replace the term ‘race’. Since that time the concept of ethnicity gained importance in anthropological theory, partly as a response to the changes in geopolitical situation of the post-colonial world and the political revitalization of ethnic minorities in developed countries, (Banks 1996). There were various approaches to the study of ethnicity, designed to explain the complex nature of social and political changes, the role of group formation, and ethnic and cultural relations.

Most of the modern experts agree on an opinion that 'ethnicity is a form of social organization of cultural differences', a theoretical point developed by Frederick Barth in the late 1960s. He noticed that the central point in the scientific analysis of this phenomenon is the ethnic boundary, which defines the group, but not the cultural material itself, which is contained within these boundaries.

*"Ethnic categories are organizational vessels that may be given varying amounts and forms of content in different socio-cultural systems," (Barth 1969:14).*

The most important aspect in determining an ethnic group, in Barth's opinion, is self-identification or identification by others. He has also emphasized a 'situational' view of ethnicity. This is developed in contrast to the primordial view.

There are three main theoretical approaches studying the interpretation of the term ethnicity in current anthropology:

*Essentialism (primordialism)* - argues that cultural traits have deep, primordial roots. There are two approaches: socio-biological and evolution theory. Proponents of the first approach understand ethnicity as the kinship of people or, as a form of human interaction with nature, or a particular landscape. The evolutionists' direction considers ethnicity as the product of culture and history, and an ethnic group is defined as a historically emerged human community, which has the whole range of objective attributes- the territory, language, religion, life, culture, etc. Iurii Bromlei (one of the most well-known Soviet anthropologists) gives such definition:

*"...the expression of ethnicity is so strongly resilient that it persists through generations and through a variety of social forms." (Banks 1996:18)*

This approach is strongly primordial. The methodologies of essentialism are objectivism and positivism. Ethnic identity is regarded as an innate characteristic of a person that cannot be changed due to the carrier's choice. It remains unclear how many factors are needed to characterize the ethnic group. Is just one enough: for example, language or religion, or is the entire set of characters required? How many markers of identification should an individual or group carry to be recognized as a member of a particular ethnic culture? In this approach the researcher ultimately assigns respondents to particular identity. This methodology does not acknowledge the situational and relativistic nature of certain ethnic identities. It leads to the conclusion of the limited capacity of primordialism in the study of multiple ethnic identities.

Another theory which deals with ethnic issues - constructivism – gives the main role to the subjective, not objective, side of ethnicity (territory, culture). It is shared by most Western sociologists and anthropologists, as well as by some modern Russian scholars. The essence of

constructivism is that ethnic groups are defined as 'imagined' that exist only in the minds of people and emerge as a result of dedicated efforts of individuals and institutions created by them. Physical contact between members are not of importance in this process, only shared ideas and views, so this kind of community can be regarded as imagined. If the majority begins to believe in this 'imagined community', it becomes a real one, (Tulaeva 2009:3).

There are two main ways to recreate a new community:

- 'from above' – under the initiative of ethnic elites
- 'from below' - by attempts of individuals

According to Benedict Anderson's theory, the establishment of an 'imagined community' begins from above by ethnic elites by the means of reconstruction of ethnic history, traditions and customs, which become the 'glue' that fastens together separate elements of the ethnic environment and organizes them into a certain structure, (Anderson 2006). Proponents of the constructivist approach believe that the main factor that unites people in an ethnic group is their belief in its existence and a sense of belonging to it. Individuals themselves, consciously or unconsciously determine their ethnic identity, and therefore can change it in line with the social context (Grammond 2009:11-12). Conversely, when the ethnicity is built 'from below', the main actors are individuals who strive to create a desired level of living conditions. Whereas, initially a man is a carrier of multiply identities, he chooses the most beneficial one according to the particular situation. This approach is typical in situations with poor or weak identity. This methodology is relativistic and suits best the investigation of multiple identities.

Another important aspect of constructivism is known as instrumentalism. Membership in ethnic communities is regarded as a means of achieving a more comfortable position and status for members of this group, a way to overcome alienation, and also as one of the most powerful resources in political mobilization of ethnicity, helping the ethnic elite to realize their own interests.

As it was previously mentioned, the mobilization of ethnicity can take a form of ethnic construction, which is often made on the some historical basis. As a rule, under ethnic construction some political intentions can be hidden. One of them is the struggle for power and resources access.

Ethnic groups struggle for values that develop political and economic statuses of group: on one hand, access to traditional territories and resources, participation in decision-making in national or local levels, or, on the other hand, the urge towards independence.

The state also takes a role in constructing ethnic categories in the form of national censuses. By census the state categorizes of the population on the basis of personal identification according to different markers (ethnicity, religion, language), Tishkov 2003:179). Anderson describes the key point of the censuses: this procedure makes it possible to point out the differences, mark the boundaries, and allow the state to gain the capacity to distinguish peoples, regions, religions, languages. Valerii Tishkov points out that the main actor in legitimization of ethnic statuses and roles is the state, (Tishkov 2003:186).

Methodological limitations of instrumentalism are excessive pragmatism and rationalism, attributed to the respondents. This approach makes a significant contribution to the study of mechanisms of ethnic mobilization. However it only partially describes the nature of multiple identities.

It is essential to emphasize that these approaches have limitations and do not explain all issues of ethnic identity properly. That is why there is a tendency in academia to integrate primordial, instrumentalist and constructivist methodologies.

### **3.3. Ethnos and Subethnos**

There is considerable difference between the Russian (Soviet) and western anthropological tradition. If we look at works of Russian anthropologists and ethnographers, the basic concept here is 'ethnos'. At the same time in the western tradition the term 'ethnos' is not in use, replaced by the term 'ethnicity'.

Iurii Bromlei defines the ethnos as being a historically formed community of people characterized by common, relatively stable cultural features, certain distinctive psychological traits, and the consciousness of their unity as distinguished from other similar communities, having common territory and ethnonym which reflects group self-consciousness, (Banks 1996:18-19). However, ethnic self-consciousness is regarded as a 'secondary phenomenon', derived from the objective factors.

Later with development of Soviet ethnography on the ground of strong premordialistic views, Iurii Bromley was the first who defined the term 'subethnic group' (subethnos) and 'ethnographic group' as a an expansion of 'ethnos theory'. As Tishkov points out it was a reaction to modern processes of cultural diversity and ethnic mobility in the Soviet Union which

could not be explain anymore by definition of ethnos “as a group with primary membership” (Tishkov 2003).

According to this theory subethnos is which is small unit of ethnos, and it exists because subethnic group is a part of ethnos. So as we can see there is a strong hierarchy of these two units. Moreover, the methodology of ‘ethnos - subethnos’ does not allow dual identities exist, (Tishkov 2003:184).

Ethnos was regarded uppermost as a community with specific social characteristics and strong affection among members of the group. It might be explained by premordialistic paradigm which dominated in Soviet science on studying ethnic groups.

Ethnographic group also has unique cultural features, but it is not aware of its’ belongings. People do not claim themselves as divers from the rest of the population. On the other hand, the subethnos realizes their distinctive ethnic background and personal belonging. Later Tat’iana Bernshtam writing about Pomors built her research according to Bromley’s theory of ethnos and subethnos. Thus, up to the present day there is an official view that Pomors are subethnos of Russians.

### **3.4. Some Thought on Pomor Ethnicity**

In Soviet ethnography the status of Pomors was a controversial issue. However most agreed that Pomors are a part of Russian ethnos. There were scientific debates during the first years of the Soviet era on the assimilation of Finno-Ugric elements into the formation of the Russian ethnos in the European North. But this discussion was rather subjective under the influence of ideology of that time which strived to create gaps between Tsarist Russia and new Soviet state, (Anufriev 2008:19).

Constructing hypotheses according to the modern conception of ethnicity, such as constructivism and instrumentalism, Pomors could be defined as a certain ethnic group. Barth points out:

*“Only those cultural characteristics have a primary significance, which are intended to mark differences and group boundaries, but not experts’ views on what is more typical or “traditional” to a particular cultural community. So cultural standards constructed in this context are used to evaluate the subject of ethnicity,”(Troshina 2009:66).*

Therefore, blood ties and kinship are not of primary importance when it comes to inclusion of individuals in a certain group. The most important aspect is group self-awareness of its’

uniqueness and a feeling of belonging to a certain group and also those boundaries that the group accepts.

One of the main complexities in studying ethnicity is its' mobility and situational 'nature'. A person could feel belonging to several groups at the same time. Ethnic self-identity is changeable and varies according to different circumstances; often a person chooses identity according to his/her 'momentary' needs. Multiply identities might be not necessarily ethnic– they could include citizenship, belonging to the certain area or territory, etc.

### **3.4.1. Problems Facing Researching Pomor Ethnicity**

One of the main methodological difficulties in studying Pomor culture is distinguishing it from the Northern Russian group, or Northern Russian cultural tradition. Tatiana Bernshtam points out that Pomors have a rather complicated and controversial history. Different groups in different periods of time were carriers of the ethnonym 'Pomor', (Bernshtam 1983:215) According to Anufriev, the typical mistake of many researchers is the confusion of diverse elements which are taken from both Pomor and Northern Russian culture, while Pomor culture maintains specific features/elements, (Anufriev 2008:8). For example, there is a common delusion that Pomors had their own singing tradition and music instruments, when in fact this is a part of Northern Russian culture, (Pomorskaya storona:12). The same could be said about architecture, house-building traditions, handicrafts and tools– it is rather challenging to allocate the Pomor component. Overall mistakes are made in taking some elements of Northern Russian tradition as an ancient Pomors'. For example, wide-spread symbol of luck and happiness in the North is "Bird of Luck", and there is a general mistake to call in as Pomor souvenir. In fact, Pomors have never done such kind of things. It is an element of Northern Russian hand-made tradition. There is a sort of confusion both among locals and visitors.

However, it is incorrect to simplify Pomor historic and cultural evolution of identity in frames of colonization; it is essential to take into consideration regional factors which make an influence on the local ethnocultural processes in the context of an all-Russian development.

Decisive influence on the socio-territorial system of the Russian North is a factor of environment. This feature was noted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by local researcher F.M. Istomin, who believed that "the geographic conditions of Arkhangel'sk region are as diverse as its ethnographic structure." "It can be said with a great certainty- that nowhere in Russia, interdependence of man from nature appears so clearly as it does here. It seems that nowhere else

but here a man has to be directly influenced by such diverse conditions. Physical, economic, and historical conditions are formed in the highest degrees the life, character and worldview of the people," (Beloborodova 2008).

Moreover, touching on the question of identity traits, it is essential to take into account the Soviet period, as it contained interesting tendencies. The Soviet Union was proclaimed multi-national and a lot of efforts were put into creating identities. According to the policy of paternalism, indigenous peoples were integrated into the society of majority. The Soviet Union did have its own ideology of bringing together many groups into the society, with the goal of creating Soviet citizens. As Gray notices:

*“Soviet ethnography was pervasive in its efforts to study, define, and categorize all ethnic groups within the Soviet Union...it did not matter who the indigenous people felt they were– they were who the Soviet government said they were,”*  
(Gray 2005:57).

Thus, it was extremely difficult to maintain self-identity in such conditions. That is why Pomors tend to claim themselves as what was said by Soviet ideology even when still preserving the traditions of their ancestors. Pomors can actually be considered as taking the 'third way'- since they did not have strong visible ethnic features and almost gave up their traditional way of life, so Pomors just got lost in the mass of Northern Russian culture and were not taken into account by policy-makers.

At the same time, it was always clearly kept in mind that the Soviet citizenry was made up of many distinct nationalities, and this national (rather than ethnic) diversity was an official source of pride, (Gray 2005:60).

### **3.5. Historical Periodization of Pomor’e**

To present my research I see essential to give an overview of the issues connected with the official periodization of Pomor history. The carving up of time into specific periods has had an important effect on Pomor identity and in the definition of the territorial unit of Pomor’e. I will first present the way that Pomor history has been divided. I will then show that arguments about territory, or what is defined as Pomor’e – play an important role in determining if Pomors are a separate people or not. Scholars who see Pomors as part of a general Russian history are inclined not to separate them as a special group.



### **3.5.1. Historical Epochs**

As my research is limited by certain time frames, it seems essential to specify them. I divide the whole Pomor history into three large parts which include several smaller periods: the 9<sup>th</sup> century to 1917: ‘The Great Russian State’; 1917 to 1991: ‘The Soviet Period’; and 1991-2011 ‘The Modern Period’.

All three epochs are characterized by a certain state system. Cultural processes were regulated by the governmental centers of these states. Pomors’ lands have never been independent and always have been under the power of central authorities. That is why I can say that the history of Pomor’e is regarded as a part of common Russian history.

The presented division of time is traditional within Russian history and all existing histories of Pomors use this division. I argue that keeping this division helps us to create an overview of the evolution of Pomor cultural traditions until the present day and to point out differences in attitude from the side of the government to minorities and small populations.

The overview of the first period demonstrates how the ethnic Pomor background has been formed. It also describes colonization movements from the center of Russia towards the European North, and represents the uniqueness (distinction) of Pomors’ culture.

The Soviet period presents changes in political discourse of the Soviet government towards small minorities. In the beginning it was tolerant and even liberal and then became strict and paternalistic.

The modern period will show us the changes in interrelations within central government and small minorities under the pressure of modernization, economic development and democratization of the state. The third period seems very important from my point of view because it shows different aspects of ethnicity in modern Russia.

### **3.5.2. Some Thoughts on Periodization**

Moreover, the chronological periodization of Pomor colonization and development of the area is a controversial issue in academia. There are several approaches, but I tend to agree with Iurii Lukin (2003) who tries to classify this periodization through types of civilization. For example, considering the history of Pomor’e from the perspective of social-economic formation (political economy approach) is not rational, because it is difficult to allocate classes in Pomors’ society

to follow its development. I use culture as a main measure tool to employ the civilization approach to study this issue. As culture is understood there is a very broad view of this concept.

In my hypothesis I consider Pomor culture as a part of Russian culture. Despite of remoteness from the center of Russia and the specific cultural development of the region, on the whole Pomor'e and Russia have the common history. It goes without saying that regional peculiarities as well as international and indigenous influences, affected this remote area on a great scale, but historical epochs were the same for the whole Russian lands. That is why I consider to overview Pomor history and historic epochs from the point of common Russian historical divisions (Table 1).

**Table 1. Division of Russian History**

<b>Historical Epoch</b>	<b>Historical period</b>
The Period of the Great Russian State	The epoch of Great Novgorod (9 - the second part of the 15th century)
	The epoch of Moscow state (the second part of the 15 <sup>th</sup> - 17 <sup>th</sup> centuries)
	The epoch of the Russian Empire (the 18 <sup>th</sup> century through beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century)
The Soviet period (the beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> through the end of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century)	1917-early 1930s
	Early 1930s – mid 1930s
	Mid 1930s – 1991s
Modern period (the end of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century through present day)	1991 – present day

As Pomor lands are an integral part of Russia, so is the historical periodization of Pomor culture and should not be in conflict with history of Russian culture. Pomor periodization gains more specific features in comparison with the rest of Russia, due to colonization processes. That is

why it seems possible to divide the history of Pomor'e into several periods which are not in variance with my division of Pomor history presented in the beginning of the chapter, and why I expand (specify) presented divisions. I will come up with descriptions of mentioned processes in following chapter.

### **3.5.3. The Definition of Pomor'e**

There are several different discussions about the issue- what is Pomor area (Pomor'e) nowadays. What are the borders of this zone? Analyzing contemporary research on this issue I have come to the conclusion that a certain academic consensus has developed during the past several decades in academia, (Lukin 2010), Anufriev(2008;2002), Shabaev (2009; 2010), Bernshtam (1978) etc.). However, different issues such as the colonization of the northern territories, self-identification of the local people, and delimitation of Pomor'e are still controversial. These contradictions are evidently based on the way that each scholar periodizes Pomor history.

I hypothesize that it is important for this research to define two basic approaches when it comes to the definition Pomor'e– through historical perspectives and present day findings. The first justifies borders of the Pomor'e region through historical epochs. The second is important because it helps to identify the present day borders of Pomor'e as they have changed due to many reasons such as political crises, intermixture combinations of regional cultures, and immigration etc.

What does come into account when we talk about Pomor'e in historical perspectives? Iurii Lukin remarks that there are several different but related concepts which appear in discussing the term 'Pomor'e, (Lukin 2003). According to historical sources in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Novgorod inhabitants considered Pomor'e as lands located on the western coast of the White Sea. Thus, the word Pomor'e originally meant the area near the coast of the sea, not including the coast of sea-side rivers.

The Moscow elite had a quite different perception of the North after the collapse of Novgorod Republic. The definition of Pomor'e became broader then under the Novgorod domination. Taking control of vast northern territories of the former Novgorod republic, Moscow authorities defined the whole European North of Russian as Pomor lands: regions with outlets to the sea, (Anufriev 2009:34-35)

Vladimir Bulatov (1999) emphasizes that from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the whole European North of Russia was called Pomor'e, most likely because these territories bordered the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean. Although local people tended to call inhabitants of the western coast of the White Sea Pomors, on the national level Pomors were defined as the whole population of the coast of the White Sea by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Tatyana Bernshtam (Lukin 2003:71) writes, that the term Pomor'e can be found in different historical documents and with different connotations:

1. The territory the White Sea from the Onega's coastline to Kem' Island;
2. The territory of the whole coast of the White Sea;
3. The territory of the whole European North of Russia including Arkhangel'sk, Vologda and Olonetskaia guberniia (province).

The first two meanings of term Pomor'e refer mainly to the territory of resettlement of the Pomor people, the third one is not related to territorial boundaries– it was used mostly in scientific literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Currently, it has been replaced by the term 'Russian North'.

According to Iurii Lukin, the current location of Pomor'e is a rather controversial question also. The problems lies with the categories that we use when defining this term (cultural areal, administration division, etc).Some authors argue that we can define Pomor'e just according to the location of Pomor traditional fishing zones– or just coastal areas. But the most agree that Pomor'e is not just a coast of the White Sea, it is also a vast territory where Pomor culture spread historically. There is some divergence among scholars as to what exactly administrative units should be accepted when describing Pomor'e, but the most official and common in academic discourse is the following definition of Pomor'e. This area includes Arkhangel'sk and Murmansk regions (oblast'), Nenets Autonomous Region (Okrug) (but only on the lower part of the Pechera river) and on the west of The Republic of Karelia, which borders The White Sea, The Barents Sea, and The Kara Sea (Karskoe) (Lukin 2010) and also includes several islands in the White Sea (Kandalaksha, Kem', Belomorsk, Umba, Onega, Sokovetskie islands etc.) (Lukin 2003:71).

## Chapter 4

### Fieldwork and Methodology

#### 4.1. The Fieldwork

The fieldwork for this project took place in city of Arkhangel'sk, which is the administrative, political, and cultural center for the region. The entire research period was seven weeks. The research area is the Arkhangel'sk region, which is situated in the north of the European part of Russia. The current boundaries of the region were established in 1965, when it was composed of Nenets Autonomous District and the islands of the Arctic Ocean. In the west the region borders with the Republic of Karelia, on the south, Vologda and Kirov regions, and to the east the Republic of Komi and the Tiumen' region. Arkhangel'sk Region is one of the largest administrative units of Russia, which occupies 40% of the European North. The total area is about 587,000 sq. km. and the population of the region is around 1.3 million people. Arkhangel'sk is a rather urbanized area: 74.7% of the population live in cities, and 25.3% in countryside, (Administration of Arkhangel'sk region [www.dvinaland.ru](http://www.dvinaland.ru)).

According to the All-Russia Census of 2002 there are more than 100 nationalities in Arkhangel'sk region. The majority of the region's population are Russian. Other nationalities are Ukrainians and Belarusians, Nenets, Tatars, Azeris. In total, there are about 77,500 members belonging to ethnic groups other than Russians. The table below demonstrates the population by nationality in the Arkhangel'sk region.

**Table 2. Population by Nationality in Arkhangel'sk Region**

	<b>1979</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Russians</b>	92,37 %	92,13 %	94,19 %
<b>Ukrainians</b>	3,28 %	3,40 %	2,08 %
<b>Belarusians</b>	1,28 %	1,27 %	0,78 %
<b>Nenets</b>	0,46 %	0,46 %	0,62 %
<b>Komi</b>	0,48 %	0,46 %	0,43 %
<b>Pomors</b>	–	–	0,49 % (6571 people)

Pomors appeared in the Censuses for the first time in 1989, as an ethnonym of Russians.

Up until the 2002 census, the largest number of coast-dwellers are registered in Arkhangel'sk and Severodvinsk (around 4 million people) followed by the Primorskii and Mezenskii districts of the Arkhangel'sk region. According to Goskomstat, the total number of Pomors is 6,571: 4,779 of them are urban residents, and 1,792 are rural.

Thus, the results of the 2002 census let us assume that Pomor identity exists. The question is what kind of forms does this identity take, and how stable is it?

My fieldwork combined different methods to analyze both written and oral sources. The written sources included the analysis of newspapers and other media outlets. The oral sources included semi-structured interviews, case studies and interviews with key informants.

Interviewing is a powerful scientific tool in itself, however, a researcher must be well prepared to use it effectively.

Generally Russel (2002) divides the continuum of interviews into three large types:

1. Informal interviewing, characterized by a total lack of structure or control. The researcher just tries to remember conversations heard during the course of a day.
2. Unstructured interviewing. You sit down with another person and hold an interview. Both of you know what are you doing, and there is no shared feeling that you are just engaged in pleasant chitchat. Unstructured interviews are based on a clear plan that you keep constantly in mind, but are also characterized by a minimum of control over people's responses.
3. Semi-structured interviewing. In situations when you will not get more than one chance to interview someone, semi-structured interviewing is best. It is based on the use of an interview guide— this is a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order.
4. Formal interviewing. This technique is used in situations when you do not move aside from the planned set of questions.

In carrying out my fieldwork I found the third type of interviews useful because of circumstances that developed in a way so that very often I did not have the opportunity to make an appointment with the person the second time and had to get the required information from the first meeting.

Therefore during the conversation I used the interview guide with questions prepared beforehand.

During my fieldwork I interviewed around 20 people (See Appendix 2). All of my informants were divided into three groups:

1. Citizens of the Arkhangel'sk region of different age categories (between 21 and 75 years of age) and different ethnic backgrounds
2. Representatives with an academic background (local university)
3. Representatives of Pomor ethno-political movements and associations in Arkhangel'sk

Each interview was conducted individually and in different settings. Several took a rather official tone, took place in public offices, and lasted a strictly limited period of time. Others, on the contrary, were non-official and took place in cafes or in homes and lasted for an hour or even more.

I made a lot of preparations before interviewing by trying to get as much information about this particular person and about his/her work and occupation as I could. I did it to be aware of how I should approach the person. Also, I was preparing myself emotionally, because each interview was stressful for me. Every time I started an interview I was not sure how the person felt about my topic and the steps that I had to take to convince my informant that my research was important. Moreover, sometimes I felt unsure of myself when talking to people much older than me, because I felt they were skeptical about my research.

There were important steps to take when I started interviewing someone for the first time. The interview began with me introducing myself, telling the interviewee who I am, where I come from, what I am studying, what is my interest in this particular field and why. In the introduction phase I encouraged participants to interrupt me during the interview with anything they thought was important. Moreover, I always asked for permission to record personal interviews and to take notes.

I assured people of anonymity and confidentiality. I was trying to explain that I simply want to know what they think and what their observations are. In some cases when I was interviewing someone whom I have come to know over a period of time, I explained why I think their opinion and observations on a particular topic are important. When I was interviewing someone whom I was unlikely to see again, I tried to explain how they were chosen and why it is important to

have their cooperation to maintain representativeness. I tried to be open, honest and ‘unthreatening’ about my intentions.

I started our conversations with general observations of my topic, asking common questions, and then moved to my prepared list, keeping the conversation focused on a topic, while giving the respondent room to define the content of the discussion. As Russel (2002:137) points out: “Get people onto a topic of interest and get out of the way. Let the informant provide information that he or she thinks is important.”

Sometimes I just let my curiosity lead me during an interview. I tried to follow prepared questions, but after a while, if the conversation was going smoothly and the interviewed person was relaxed, I tried to make the conversation more personal and less formal, and sometimes that tactic led me to unexpected but important results. In such conditions my interviewees shared rather important information with me, but asked me not to write it down. From their point of view, this information was too private and they were afraid that I could make it public by indentifying them by name.

Moreover, I learned two different, but at the same time, equally effective techniques of interviewing.

In the first case, during an interview if I was given a piece of the puzzle from one informant, I used it with the next informant to get more information, and so on. The more you seem to know, the more comfortable people feel about talking to you and the less people feel they are actually divulging anything. They are not the ones who are giving away the ‘secrets’ of the group. In some cases, I have purposely made wrong assertions to provoke a correcting response.

In the second technique, I asked many questions that my informant considered obvious. He wanted to abbreviate a lot and to provide a more general summary; I wanted details. I backed off and asked informants for the details. Usually I started with “This may seem obvious, but...” (Russell 2002; Munck 2009).

I feel certain that little things are important in interviewing, so I paid attention to them. For example, how I dressed and where I planned to hold an interview. If it was a very official interview I followed an appropriate dress code to create a certain impression. It is very important in Russia to follow the ‘unwritten rules’ of dress code. Talking with people in relaxing environments such as cafés I dressed in a more casual style, but holding interviews in informants’ offices I made an effort to dress more formally. I also had to think about such details such as make-up, and the length and color of my dress. It goes without saying that I had



to be very selective in preparing myself for each conversation. I forced myself to follow the "middle ground", for example, concerning make-up and coloring- it was mostly a business style and not flashy, because I want people to take me seriously. The same can be said about the length of my dress- not short and not very long.

#### **4.2. Analysis of Mass Media and Other Sources**

The second main method I used was the analysis of written texts in many local and national magazines and newspapers. In Russia national and local printed mass media are a powerful source of information. There are official and private publications. Official editions contain up-to-date information of changes in legislation. I also used printed mass media to read on interviews of leaders of local Pomor movement, and to follow their positions on researched questions for a certain period of time. The most useful source to do this was through the local mass media. From these I tried to identify the scale the problem of self-recognition and self-determination and how important it is for different regions. Moreover, in local mass media it is not difficult to find data which included opinions and statements about researched problem that representatives of different social groups are expressing.

As Russel mentions, people (experts) are one of the main source of information. I began. Begin by asking anyone and everyone whom you think has a remote chance of knowing something about the topic you are interested in if they can recommend some key articles or books that will get you into the literature on your topic (Russell 2002: 92). In fact, I came in the conclusion that not everyone had an intention to share with me the names of people that could be important for my research. Even if I asked the person twice if he/she could help me with names of other informants, my respondent tried to skip answering this question.

I used some monographs as a source such as, "*Pomors: Their Formation as an [Ethnic] Group and their Economic System*" by Tat'iana Bernshtam (1978) and "*Russian Pomors*" by Vitalii Anufriev (2008). My data collection also includes many documents such as federal and local laws, statements of Pomor organizations, the analysis of results of the All-Russia Population Census (2002), and different articles and books on Pomor history and present day issues (Table 3).

**Table 3. Documentation sources**

International level	The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007  ILO Convention 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Regulations on Administration of Aliens (1822)</li><li>• The Constitution of the Russian Federation 1993</li><li>• Federal Law On Guarantees of the Rights of Small-numbered Peoples of The Russian Federation(1999)<sup>10</sup></li><li>• Federal Law On the General Principals of the Organization of the Small-numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation(2000) <sup>11</sup></li><li>• Federal Law On the Territories of Traditional Natural Usage of Small-numbered Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (2001)<sup>12</sup></li><li>• All-Russia Census 2002</li></ul>

### **4.3. Problems Encountered During Interviewing**

Almost all of my informants stated that they felt my project was an important and significant one. They were interested in sharing information with me and tried to get my opinion on this topic. On the other hand, some of informants were rather skeptical that this topic would be of interest to a wide circle of people.

<sup>10</sup> Federal'nyi Zakon (FZ) "O Garantiiakh Prav Korennykh Malochislennykh Narodov Rossiiskoi Federatsii"

<sup>11</sup> FZ "Ob Osnovnykh Printsipah Organizatsii Korennykh Malochislennykh Narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossiiskoi Federatsii "

<sup>12</sup> FZ "O Territoriakh traditsionnogo Prirodopol'zovania Korennykh Malochislennykh Narodov Severa, Sibiri i Dal'nego Vostoka Rossiiskoi Federatsii"

Sometimes people told me that they really did not know enough to be part of my study. I assured them that their participation was crucial and that I was truly interested in what they had to say. I gave them confidence that I was trying to learn from them.

I can also mention ‘the problem of age’, as some people asked me about my age and afterwards were incredulous about my topic and that results that I could reach researching this field. Some informants recommended that I give up this topic because of the lack of reliable data in this field.

Sometimes it was difficult to encourage a person to follow my questions, as the interviewees preferred to talk about general situation in economy and policy of the local and central government authorities while avoiding ‘uncomfortable’ questions. People tried to skip answering some of the questions, and they tried to change the subject if they did not want to talk about it (if I asked a rather direct question). It seemed that they were afraid to spread information. Because I wanted to build trust between the informants and I during every interview, I started with long, ‘rambling run-up’ and trying to be supportive and ‘nonjudgmental’ with answers in regards to sensitive information, (Russell 2002: 215).

Sometimes it was difficult to stimulate a responder to produce more information. Russel emphasizes that some informants are more glib than others and require very little prodding to keep up the flow of information. Others are more reflective and take their time. By interrupting these types of interviewees you break the link of thoughts of your informant probably loses some important data, (Russell 2002). Keeping silent and having self-control is not an easy business, and I was afraid of missing the thread of conversation in such situations. I have learned that the informant maybe just be reflecting, gathering thoughts, and preparing to say something important.

Language is a very important tool through which an individual’s experiences are often shaped and expressed. There is a very determinative relationship between language and culture, so it is not surprising that language awareness is widely considered to be an essential aspect of culturally competent research. In order to “maximize the quality of data”, it is important to interview participants in their language, (Irvine 2008:42). It goes without saying that the main language of communication with my informants was Russian. As Murchison argues about importance of language skills:

*“Language is one of the fundamental tools for conducting ethnographic research. Conversations and interviews depend on a shared language, it is important to understand what is being said, and most importantly, what is being meant by informant,” (Murchison 2010:31).*

According to this statement I did not feel any difficulties in understanding and interpreting the information. The most challenging task for me was the translation my interviews into English, and when doing this I did my best not to lose the meaning of the data.

In spite of my Pomor identity, I am not able to understand the Pomor dialect. It was rather exiting for me to meet a person who is still bearer of a traditional Pomor dialect, as this can be regarded as a phenomenon nowadays. That informant once spoke in Pomor , but it was rather demonstration of language skills of my informant then conversation on the topic.

I have to mention, as Pomor indigenusness is a controversial issue in academia, so my personal Pomor background was not a great help when talking with most people. However, most of informants were curious about my research and tried to help me by providing me with additional information than, for example, the other informants whom I had to talk with.

#### **4.4. Anthropology at Home**

There is much literature the topic of anthropology at home, and many meanings given to the expression. According to Mariza Peirano, the most generally accepted refers to “the kind of inquiry developed in the study of one’s own society, where ‘others’ are both ourselves and those relatively different from us, whom we see as a part of the same collectivity,” (Peirano 1998:123).

I was born and grew up in Arkhangel’sk and studied there for five years, and therefore I can consider myself an insider from this point of view. Collecting data for my thesis in this place was not so complicated from the organizational standpoint of the study process. Moreover, Arkhangel’sk region is my homeland, and that is why I felt personal concern and preoccupation with the issues that exist on the territory of my origin. In addition, I had previous experience in the field of indigenous studies. Hence, my position as ‘inside-researcher’ is rather controversial. As Paul Atkinson points out it is impossible to do research that is ‘uncontaminated by personal and political sympathies’ and it is obvious that all researchers will take sides, (Atkinson 2003:72). This is especially true if the project is connected with painful political issues which touch the researcher’s personal background.

Thus, in this situation it can be difficult to differentiate between the role of researcher and the position of insider. An intimacy with a culture may lead to complacency, whereby an over-familiarity with the setting results in a loss of objectivity and the consequent disregard to particular nuances. One way of overcoming this difficulty is to adopt a reflexive stance, which

involves being sensitive to the ways in which the researcher as an individual, with a particular social identity and background, has shaped the data collected, (Irvine 2008:38).

On the other hand, researchers who shared membership in the same social categories as their responders can be better suited to uncover ideas, arguments, and opinions about issues and concerns related to those people or those social categories. Being the insider means that the researcher can maintain a shared sense of comfort and ease in interacting in the field, and that the researcher is sensitive and responsive to the cultural and social distinctiveness of the people under study, (Young 2004:198).

I have never had the opportunity to identify myself as anyone but a Russian, in spite the fact that many of my ancestors have been living in northern lands for hundred years. I have heard a lot about cultural traditions in our family which my great grandparents have been keeping for years, and I have heard many times this mysterious word ‘Pomor’, but I have never thought that I could identify myself as a bearer of a unique regional Pomor culture. I consider this a result of the ‘heritage’ of the Soviet period when every person had to be a citizen of Soviet Union first, and any another identity was of less importance. From this point of view I consider myself an insider in the Pomor community, but, at the same time, I am becoming an outsider for group of informants who are skeptical about the Pomor idea. Different investigations have led to the contemporary assertion that there is no singular insider or outsider position that researchers occupy during the course of fieldwork, but rather a myriad of positions and statuses that can be viewed by responders as either insider or outsider depending on the social circumstances or conditions affecting the research endeavor, (Young 2004:192).

All of these facts and my personal background inspired me to go deeper into this problem and to attempt to better understand who I am. I have had a unique opportunity to compare different positions on this question from a first hand perspective. Analyzing Russian and Pomor history and culture, comparing different opinions of experts, I came to conclusion that when we begin to discuss identity and national belongings we have to be very cautious in making any statements. Outlets of my work made me rethink some features of my personal belonging. Moreover, my reason to participate in this project was the confidence that such research might bring some practical advantages to the local ethnic groups. The other reason was a desire to make a contribution to the regional scientific area.

## Chapter 5

### Historical Background

In this chapter I will give a brief overview of Pomor history starting with the early period and finishing with the late 20<sup>th</sup> century trying to build connections between the historical background of Pomors and the special features of their identity that developed during this period. I will focus on the question, how the geographical environment formed Pomors? I argue what Pomor traits have been built during centuries and how they are defined in scientific literature.<sup>13</sup>

#### 5.1. Early History and the Colonization of the North

The European North was integrated into the Russian orbit by the Novgorod state due to severe climate conditions and remoteness of the area. Pomors as a local group, developed in the context of Russian culture, though preserving and maintaining their own traditional features, (Troshina 2009:65). Thus, Pomor history follows Russian history which greatly influenced the formulation of particular features or identity markers of this group.

Researching the ethnic history of the northern population of Russia, Tat'iana Bernshtam argues that the process of population of this vast territory by eastern-Slavonic Russian tribes covered a long period. Certain groups appeared nearby the southern borders of the European North of Russia no later than the 8<sup>th</sup> century. There were diverse obstacles standing in their way of movement to the north. She points out that besides severe climate conditions, there were different groups of indigenous people who inhabited this area beforehand. Bernshtam describes them as rather economically and socially advanced unions of tribes who were at the same level of development as Slavonic tribes were by this time, (Bernshtam 1978).

The first Russian settlers began to move to the North in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Already in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries a large stream of Russian immigrants came to this area. From the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century settlers from the Moscow region took an active part in moving North, (Bernshtam 1978). Anufriev points out that the Russian settlers colonizing new areas did not disturb indigenous peoples. They did not try to assimilate them with language, religion or culture, (Anufriev 2002:48-49). Most likely this happened because colonizers did not have an intention to conquer new areas, unlike the colonization of Siberia for example, which was more violent

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<sup>13</sup> I have to underline that the most fundamental and complete work on the Pomors was written by Tat'iana Bernshtam in 70-80s and most of the recent publications reference her books. Despite much criticism, this work is still recognized as the only ethnographic research on Pomors to the present day. That is why most ethnographic descriptions in this project are written with reference to her works.

towards native groups, (Kriazhkov 2010, Anufriev 2008, Lesnichenko 2007). In that time the European North of Russian was a wild and rich zone with large natural resources. It was no-man's land, and people escaped to the North from the central authorities searching for freedom, independence and wealth.

Moreover, it can be hypothesized that there was a lack of Slavonic females among settlers, which is why the Pomor population was formed under the process of interethnic marriages with indigenous peoples of the region, (Lesnichenko 2007:48-49). Nowadays this is grounds for an argument by Pomor leaders to claim Pomors as indigenous.

Since there is a dominance of premordialistic view in academia circles, many researchers point out that the environment (climate conditions, landscape, distance from the center etc.) is the key point to the formation of an ethnic group, (Bershtam 1978; Anufriev2008; Troshina 2009; Lesnichenko 2007). In the Pomor case, the surrounding nature has formed the ethnic group, influenced it in a great scale.

### **5.1.1. Building Identities**

So how did the environment influence the character of the typical Pomor? What conditions were most important in forming it?<sup>14</sup>

The traditional livelihoods of Pomors were based on the sea and included hunting, whaling and fishing. Fishing and hunting have traditionally been the main life-sustaining activity of the local inhabitants living nearby the coasts of the White Sea. Fish and marine animals not only provided the main source of food, but skin has traditionally been used to make waterproof clothes, necessary for successful results when working on the sea. Caviar and fish have always been sold or exchanged. The soils in this region were not suitable for agriculture, (Anufriev 2003, 2008). It is important to point out that poor soils made it impossible to use the methods of agriculture common for immigrants from the central part of Russia. That is why people had no choice but to adapt to the new climate conditions and create new means of survival. After a while these means became an integral part of Pomor culture. There were just small domestic farms for family needs. Adherents of the sub-ethnos theory point to this fact arguing that the adoption of Russian agricultural model into new environmental conditions illustrates a sub-ethnos at work.

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<sup>14</sup> In this research I will avoid descriptions of everyday households (*povsednevnoe khozia'stvo*), but concentrate on peculiarities which connect nature and livelihoods.

The Pomor traditional way of life was based on a seasonal cycle. Pomors created a specific fishery calendar which was based on longstanding traditions of living in permanent contact with nature. The Pomor calendar differs from the common Slavonic agricultural calendar.

*“In spring, when ice drift cleans northern rivers and the White Sea, Pomor leave their homes to go hunting and fishing to the open sea and ocean. They have their traditional territories attached to certain families which are located on the islands of the White and Barents Seas, Novaia Zemlia and Spitsbergen. Usually this period took 3-5 months of hard and intensive work, and they then come back with huge catch. Besides fishing Pomors hunt for sea animals and reindeer. After a little break Pomors begin to prepare ships and other crafts for the next season. When the first colds come the other period of hard work starts (easy work as they call it) ice fishing or fur trade,”(Lesnichenko 2007:23-24).*

It is important to emphasize that Pomors could live in harmony with nature, and that they had a very sustainable way of resource management. Traditional hunting and fishing zones fed Pomors for centuries, not losing biodiversity. Obviously, Pomors could maintain a balance in the system “a man – a nature,” (Lesnichenko 2007:23-24). By these characteristics Pomors were very close to indigenous peoples in their perception of the environment, who are extremely dependent on nature and lands they inhabit.

Another important trait that influenced the formation of Pomor cultural identity is a strong sailing tradition. It is essential to clarify that the sailing tradition in addition with dependence on the sea can be regarded as a basis to build up Pomor livelihood and identity.

According to Starkov, the earliest relevant data about northern Russian navigation dates to the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Pomor’ became the most important and the only ‘window to Europe’ in this period through the White Sea. That is why the Muscovite state began to take interest in the region. Increasing levels of international trade with Europe made the foundation of Arkhangel’sk in 1587 essential as a fort-point that led a region to active development in navigation and shipbuilding. What is more, local inhabitants were the first to explore trade routes to Northern Siberia and beyond. This special treatment from the central authorities and certain freedom in activities gave Pomors the feeling of independence and self-awareness.

Permanent fishing grounds and trade contacts between Russians and Norwegians appeared in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Many Pomor families owned their own ships and boats. Those who were wealthier used their own sea vessels, engaged a crew of fishermen, and sailed to Norwegian waters. The main type of fishing was cod. The peak of this trade in corn, fish and accompanying goods as hemp, salt and fur, came at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is known that the Pomors were the first who supplied North Norway with corn, (Shrader 2005:109-110).



Contact between Pomors and Norwegian fishermen were so intensive that a special pidgin language was developed to simplify communication and make it more efficient. It was called Moja-pa-tvoja (or Russenorsk) and it consisted of around 400 lexical units, three fourths of which were borrowed from the Norwegian language, (Pomorskaia Storona 2004: 27).

Pomor trade required up-to-date shipbuilding. Central authorities granted special privileges to the Pomor population, supporting trade with Norwegians and upgrading Pomor vessels to the required standard, (Shrader 2005). These preferences from the government gave Pomors a source of survival and provided a decent level of livelihood in severe climate conditions.

Scholars agreed that the Norwegian element has influenced Pomor culture and social structure through intermarriages with Norwegian women, which explains a higher level of independence of Pomor women in family structures when compared with central Russia.

However, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the situation with Pomor trade slumped dramatically. With the invention of steam shipping, Pomors' sailing ships became non-competitive. Moreover, since Norway regained independence, the central authorities made trade regulations much stricter. The phenomenon of Pomor trade was destroyed completely with the beginning of the Russian Revolution and with the implementation of a new state monopoly for international trade, (Repnevskii 1998:21).

Over several centuries a certain way of life had emerged. Immigrants from the center of Russia formed new traditions on the basis of their cultural background consisting of combined pieces of ancient Russians and indigenous populations. As a result, the main traits were extremely high dependence on the sea, fishing and hunting, livelihood based on seasonal cycles, strong selling traditions, and a high level of literacy not only among Pomor traders and sailors, but also among peasants, (Shrader 2005).

As was mentioned above, sailing was one of the most important aspects of the Pomor livelihood. Moreover, according to adherents of the socio-biological approach the sailing tradition was a source of 'energy' that gave the development to Pomors. With the collapse of the Norwegian-Pomor trade, the sailing tradition also declined resulting in the conservation of Pomor culture. The further historical development just increased the level of destruction of Pomor culture and identity, (Anufriev 2008; Lesnichenko 2007). That is why in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we can connect Pomors traditions mostly with fishing tradition and everything that was close to it.

## 5.2. The Soviet Period and Denigration of Pomors' Traditional Economy

According to several researchers, the start of the decline of the traditional Pomor trade goes back to the first decade of the 20th century. The decline seems to have been due to technological and geopolitical reasons and not due to early Soviet policies. For example, the adoption of new technologies in shipbuilding such as steamboats. Traditional Pomor vessels became no competitive. Evidently, a long-termed line of catastrophic coincidences such as The First World War, The Russian Revolution, The Civil War and Intervention to Arkhangel'sk region afterwards accelerated these processes. The Pomor way of life was being ruined from these grounds, so many Pomor people set hopes on a new Soviet government in expectation of assistance and support.

After the Russian Revolution a brand new economic system was implemented. The main features of this system were strict control, regulations and equalization.

During the first years of the new Soviet era, the central authorities made several attempts to study the traditional Pomor livelihood and to restore the local economic system. During the Soviet period, individual Pomor households were consolidated into huge collective fishing farms (*kolkhoz*) based on cooperation. Features of Pomor's economic activity related to shared fisheries, to some extent, simplified the transition to the farm.

Soviet fishing collective farms (*rybolovetskie kolkhozy*) primarily focused on fishing, but apart from that they also administrated small agricultural plots, kept cattle, and were engaged in small scale timber harvesting. The economic potential of Pomor' farms were in demand, but the main problem were poor conditions of material and technical basis of the traditional Pomor crafts. On the other hand, the Pomors could still choose the methods and forms of their cooperation in fishing and hunting, (Tulaeva 2010).

Then a new period came— collectivization (agricultural production cooperatively based on common ownership, in which members engaged jointly in farming activities) and dekulakization (the Soviet campaign of political repressions, when the richest peasants and house holders were labeled as kulaks and class enemies). There were many people of high-income in Pomor villages in those times. That fact is supported by memories of one old man who lived in this period:

*“There were a lot of kulaks (as ‘red’ people called them) in our village. They had huge houses and profitable households. But we all knew that they were rich because they work hard. It was impossible to get rich without hard work. So these people were of great respect among locals. But as you know there are always some people who are jealous of other's prosperity. So during dekulakization many locals were sent to prison and their households were divided and shared with collective farms*

*and state. My grandfather was one of these co-called kulaks...sad memories... ”.*  
(Participant #5)

This statement illustrates the thread of traditional Pomor ways of life which were based on collective management.

A new Soviet identity was being intensively formed. Powerful tools of propaganda were used to create a brand new image of the Soviet man in order to erase any other identities and differences in society, (Gray 2005).

After the social revolution came the Cultural Revolution, which was aimed at the ‘Sovetization’ of mass consciousness with a goal of breaking with the traditions of cultural heritage of the past. According to Anufriev, this period can be considered as a crucial point in self-identification and self-perception of Pomors as an ethnic group, (Anufriev 2008). From time immortal Pomors followed their ancestors’ rules respectively and kept all traditions with care. The Pomor worldview was based on cultural transmission from generation to generation. Totalitarianism as a main official ideology was destroying the mechanism of group identification. The 20<sup>th</sup> century is declared to be a period of unification of local cultures within the context of the Soviet cultural construction of a new Soviet identity. As Pomors have never been treated as indigenous peoples or even an ethnographic group by the Soviet state, implanting of new ideology of general unification did not help Pomors in maintaining their identity, thus, people just kept traditional crafts and methods of fishing. However, the state continued with economic reforms.

The consolidation of heterogeneous commercial farms was carried out in the 1950s. By this time, modernization of Pomor fisheries had also begun. In the 1960s, the state began the establishment of huge fishery enterprises which brought together the entire process of production: from harvest to processing, and this effected the residual practices of the Pomors’ household.

As Tulaeva points out, the process of reduction of Pomor traditional households was rapid in 1960s. One of the main reasons was the migration from the countryside to cities, especially among young people, (Tulaeva 2010). They were searching for decent living conditions and constant income. Pavel Filin also criticizes the policy which was concentrated on the industrial development of the Northern territories, ignoring fragile traditional livelihoods, (Filin 2002:188). Still the 1970-1980’s are considered prosperous times for Pomor fishery farms. These farms were very profitable in economic terms.

According to Korotaev, the Soviet modernization of Pomor fisheries has distorted the traditional fishing which has been perceived as a dialogue with nature since times immortal. He points out

that Soviet plans and the five-year period led to fish being taken as just a resource, and the sea as an area to be exploited, losing its sacred significance, (Korotaev 1998).

As we can see from above, in spite of huge historical changes and numerous economic policies and reforms in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Pomors managed to keep some fishing traditions. However, traditional fishing was not displaced by modern technologies completely. In spite the fact that fishing farms used modern trawlers, local inhabitants kept using traditional fishing systems for their own needs. People used modern materials (plastics, stainless steel, etc.) in making fish crafts, but still keeping the designs of their ancestors, (Tulaeva 2010). This shows a deeply rooted connection with historical tradition and proves that Pomors are a unique group indeed.

Scholars see several reasons for the decline of the Pomor Era. Most of them find these reasons objective, for instance, Lesnichenko and Anufriev, (Anufriev 2008, 2002; Lesnichenko 2007) point out that degradation of Pomor traditional economy and culture was provoked by technological progress. However, in spite of different obstacles and the objective conditions of reality, Pomors still maintain traits that help them to diversify themselves from the rest of population.

### **5.3. Has A New Ethnic Group Been Formed?**

The Pomor group was defined according their environmental conditions and their place of livelihood, not according to their ethnic belonging. Researchers agree that basics of Pomor culture was held during the Novgorod period. In talking about the origins of Pomor culture, it goes without saying that it was based on the ancient (original) old Russian culture, (Anufriev 2008; Bernshtam 1978; Lesnichenko 2007; Lukin 2010). But features connected with the traditional sea economic system made Pomor culture different from the Russian one, (Anufriev 2008:80). The remoteness of the area also assisted preservation and conservation of Pomor cultural and economic traditions.

Anufriev singles out two levels of Pomor identity in the period colonization and adaptation. First of all, they identified themselves as Russians and also went together with orthodoxy stripe (ethnos level). The second level (sub-ethnical, group), identification was based on lifestyle: Pomor identification, (Anufriev 2002:53).

Pomors' identity has never been built on the strong opposition of 'we-others'; they have never separated themselves from the Russians, identifying themselves in frames of Russian culture but

emphasizing unique features that were inherent only to Pomors. This argument might be proved by many ethnographic notes and works which were made by travelers before the declination of Pomor culture. This is why using the term ‘the Russian Pomors’ reflects the appropriate essence of this phenomenon, (Anufriev 2008:95).

#### **5.4. Summary**

To sum up, the idea that the common origin of Novgorod, and the influence of different indigenous and non-indigenous groups which inhabited the area lays the foundation of Pomors’ identity and cultural tradition.

Relatively peaceful coexistence of the dominated Slavonic population with indigenous tribes (Sami, Nenets, Karely, Finns and Norwegians) created the conditions for a wide development of mutual economic cooperation and cultural exchange. As a result of migration and co-existence with local populations a new local group of Russians has been formed with its own culture, self-identification paradigm, and economic bonds. Having adopted to new severe climate conditions, Pomors have become the largest non-agricultural group of Russians

This chapter shows that the origins of Pomor culture are rooted back in the first waves of immigrants’ flows and have been developed during several centuries until the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in fact. Even under the degradation process during the Soviet Era, sea-dwellers managed to keep the fishing and hunting traditions of their ancestors.

I will now discuss identity markers which Pomors maintain nowadays.

## Chapter 6

### The Renaissance of Pomor Identity

In this chapter I will examine the main traits of ethnic and cultural identity for members of the Pomor community nowadays and to what extent people use them in their everyday life. It is extremely difficult to allocate certain features of Pomor culture from the mass of the Northern Russian culture as throughout centuries these two strata of cultural traditions have almost grown together and become interwoven.

Another interesting issue that I touch on in this chapter is that of the Pomor language. It is widely accepted by scholars that language is one the most important markers when it comes to ethnic and cultural identity. But what if the language of some local community is almost lost, but members of the group feel still different from the rest of the population? Would they resort to other identity markers? In this chapter I will look for the existence of any identity markers among Pomors but language. I base my research on data collected during my fieldwork in Arkhangel'sk region. The primary data for this analysis comes from interview conversations with 20 participants of different ages, genders, and social and ethnic backgrounds, to compare results and come up with a conclusion.

#### 6.1. Numbers of the Census

The numbers of the 2002 census were demonstrated earlier to provide some food for thought. The total population of the Arkhangel'sk region is one million three hundred people, and 6,571 of them are Pomors. But my fieldwork findings demonstrate that the results of the census are rather controversial and perhaps do not take into consideration some factors. It must be emphasized that there was not any general education campaign among the population of the region before the census. For example, many locals from the countryside even did not know that they could sign themselves as Pomors during the All-Russia Census in 2002.

*“Our local administration did not even share this information with us. How were we supposed to know that now we have the option to choose between Russians and Pomors. That's why we register as Russians. And I suppose that our village is not the only one which is out of the information loop. I believe if people would know about this, they would have widely signed as Pomors. As for me, I feel that I am a native Pomor! And...so...who knows, maybe central authorities would change their attitude towards us if we were more than 6,000. Because, you know...it becomes so difficult to survive, we really need some support from the government. But we are on our own ...and all these Pomor activists...I do not know...they are in*

*Arkhangel'sk, and they do not really care about us, they have never been in Pomor villages, so what they know about our households?"*

What is more in the course of the census some mistakes were made, such as that people said they are Russian Pomors but their they were sign down as just Russians according to the first definition. In addition, as noted by leaders of the Pomor movement, many people realized that they could register themselves as Pomors just after the census. In this regard the results of All-Russia Census of 2010 are rather interesting; they will be able to shed light on the ethnic situation in the region according to the latest tendencies.

## **6.2. Pomor Identity Markers**

A group's actions and worldviews can be expressed through different symbolic signs. These symbols can be customs, culture, traditional clothes, traditional celebrations, lifestyle, folklore, literature, dietary habits, religions, and/or membership in different ethnocultural organizations.

Ethnicity as a social group exists because there is an objective possibility to 'recognize' this group among others. 'Recognition' is only possible if it is able to compare one community with the other, or to distinguish it. Thus, the existence of ethnic boundaries, built on ethnic markers, defines the formation of ethnic identity: because, according constructivism, the ethnic group is nothing else but a social group. Therefore, ethnicity is a range of members of a certain social group who are conscious of their belonging to it, and ethnic identity is the "recognizing of group members". This is possible only by certain distinctive traits of this ethnic group. The distinguishing features of ethnicity are ethnic markers that define the ethnic boundaries.

The role and function of the markers vary depending on the specific historical conditions. Thus, the structure of ethnic identity and markers tend to change over time. In this case the Pomor' identity can be characterized by a certain stability and designated by several markers.

As mentioned above, Tat'iana Bernshtam's works give the most integral overview of Pomor history and cultural traditions. That is why in my research of identity markers I will base arguments on her findings and will then compare these with my fieldwork findings concerning contemporary traits which Pomors maintain nowadays. However, there is one methodological difficulty, when Bernshtam carried out her research using a primordial approach. She saw Pomors as a subethnic group of Russians and Pomor culture as a part of Northern Russian cultural tradition. Many ethnographic characteristics were indicated in frames of Northern Russian culture, which is why it seems rather difficult to allocate a set of original Pomor

features. For me it seems essential to mention the most important traits that Bernshtam points out. I have to emphasize that in the frames of such categories all ethnographic research was held in Soviet ethnographic science.

- Marine culture (sailing traditions, fishing and hunting crafts)
- Religious views– the Old Belief
- Clothing– special types which are suitable for Pomor craft
- Celebrations/folklore
- Architecture– connected with the seasonal character of fishing and hunting, beginning from domestic building to special fishing constructions for crafts
- Food– predominant diet of sea fish in a daily menu of Pomors, and in general food was rough.
- Family tradition/structure- family circles were rather wide with a high independence of women in Pomor families
- Physical characteristics

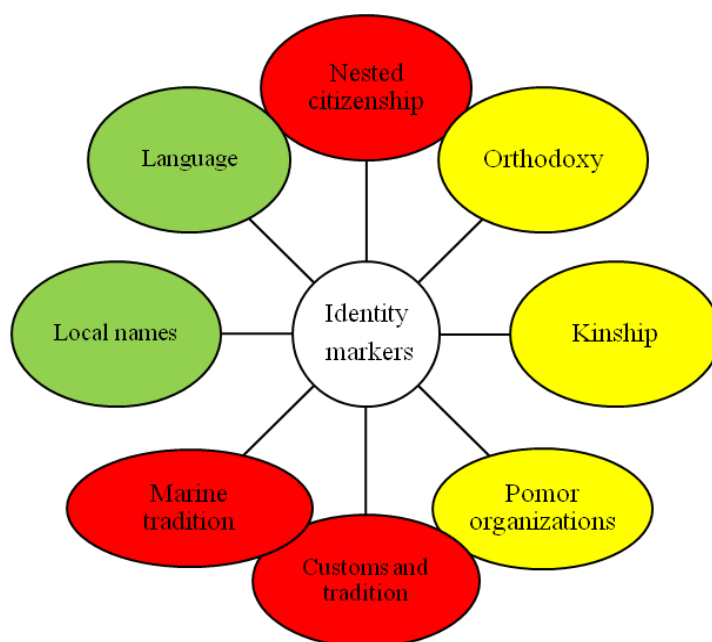
However according to my research, the most important categories in identifying Pomors have shifted.

### **6.3. Back to the Field: Traits of Current Pomor Identity**

According to data collected during my fieldwork and the following analysis I allocate the following current markers which have been mentioned by my informants. I divide them into several categories (Diagram 1).



**Diagram 1. Current Identity Traits of Pomors**



<span style="color: red;">■</span>	Very important
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	Important
<span style="color: green;">■</span>	Of little importance

Thus, the main difference between my results and Bernshtam's set of Pomor traits is the lesser part of ethnographic descriptions in my outputs with stress to urban Pomor identity rather than countryside identities. In my research I concentrate on the idea that ethnicity is not primordial but intellectually constructed, subjective and situational. According to Barth, the content of ethnicity is not cultural differences, but cultural boundaries or markers, which are constructed and maintained by the members of the group. Moreover, in this research I talk about the process of revival of Pomor identity, so construction of trait categories becomes more symbolic and suitable for daily city life.

**Customs and traditions** is a rather broad category. According to my research it includes the most important traits such as folklore, architecture, festivals and celebrations, and food and drink habits;

- The land of famous people:

*“We have many famous writers from our lands: Abramov, Pisakhov, Maksimov, Istomin, Lomonosov. It means that our land gives birth to talented people. I think*

*it is also a part of Pomor mentality: to cope with difficulties and then find your way.” (Participant #13).*

- **Architecture:** special building traditions; peasant's log huts (*izba*) were made without nails, and have a special structure:

*“We still have our house on the countryside, the construction is so well-built, that it was not rebuilt since the beginning of the (20<sup>th</sup>) century.” (Participant #1).*

- **Food habits:** most of informants mentioned that fish is still an important part of their daily diet.

**Marineness:** clothing, tools and crafts. Traditional Pomor clothing is very similar to the clothing of indigenous peoples who lived in the neighborhood of Pomor lands (Komi and Nenets). Functional and aesthetic features clothing northern neighbors are mostly dictated by climatic preconditions, (Pomorskaia storona 2004 :12). The design of fishing and hunting crafts is also dictated by the lifestyle.

**Local names** – names of current local business, place names, street names;

*“There are a lot of uncommon names of local settlements we have in the Arkhangel’sk region. I have heard that travelers visiting our region are always surprised to hear them. So it could probably be a local Pomor trait.” (Participant #20).*

I can also mention that in the beginning of 1990s, there was a trend in Arkhangel’sk (on the wave of ethno-political mobilization nationwide) to give names to main city institutions, for example, Pomorskaia street in the center of the city, the Pomorskii State University in Arkhangel’sk, and a local broadcast company named “Pomor’e”.

**Pomor Organizations:** ethnic communities, historical and heritage societies. In modern conditions when Pomor culture is in the process of decline, such identity markers such as ethnic organizations and communities come to the stage and become rather important.

The function of associations of Pomors, are the consolidation of ethnic, cultural activities, political mobilization, etc. which emphasizes the importance of such organizations to transform ethnic identity in the social life and cultural capital.

**Orthodoxy:** As Anufriev points out, spiritual components in Pomor character have always been one of the leading factors in life. The first and the most ancient stratum of Pomors beliefs construct the paganism of ancient Slavonic tribes. After 988 when Russia adopted Christianity, some symbiosis of these two religions was generated. After a while elements of paganism became not so visible because of being pushed back to the periphery of consciousness. It resulted

in the creation of special types of Orthodoxy in the European North of Russian with special features such as independence. The Orthodox culture of monasteries was built in the North, (Anufriev 2008:62). In general, religion has always played an important role for Russians, and this feature was especially developed in the North, where severe conditions of life make peoples even more demanding in spiritual support. The trait of Russians is especially apparent in Russian Pomors that they did not separate their national belonging from their religious belonging. Nowadays the situation is different. Religion and identity are not so closely related in people's minds. The role of atheists is held rather high in society. In spite of the fact that the religious component still takes an important place in people's lives, modern Pomors do not identify ethnic belonging with religion as it was before.

**Kinship:** for many responders blood relations play a significantly important role. According to the constitution, "Anyone has a right for self-identification and national belonging," (art.26). Having kinsman with Pomor origins (or kinsman who identify himself/herself as Pomor) provides the ground for a person's identifications, in spite of the fact that anyone could become a member of this and any other ethnic group.

*"In spite of the fact that there is the freedom to define one's ethnic and national belonging in Russia, I suppose that the extent of kinship plays an important role in these definitions."(Participant #17).*

On the other hand, some tend to be rather cautious in definitions and kinship relations:

*"My great grandparents lived on the coast of the White Sea and my family agrees that they were Pomors. But despite this I cannot say that I feel myself as Pomorka<sup>15</sup>, I am Russian and I live in Arkhangel'sk, far from sea..."(Participant #16)*

Another important category that was mentioned by responders talking about the image of Pomors is mentality and character. Almost all responders mentioned that to allocate Pomors from the Russians we need to take into account certain features of character. Mentality of Pomors to a great extent differs from the national Russian character, for example, responders refer to such features as hospitality, openness, absence of greediness, and on the other hand, economy, prudence and stubbornness. At the same time when identifying these characteristics informants stressed that these features are inherent to the North, and here another controversy appeared: the opposition between Pomor mentality and Northern mentality.

I suppose that this distinction is not very clear. In interviews when talking about the mentality of Pomors, responders very often mentioned Northernness, for example: "It is our Northern feature,"

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<sup>15</sup> Female form of word Pomor

or “In the North it is a rule to do it like this...” So I suppose that it is very difficult to distinguish these categories in such a delicate sphere as mentality.

#### **6.4. Pomor Language – a Forgotten Tongue?**

There is an argument in academic discourse, that of the relationship between language and ethnicity. Some demonstrate that there is no external interdependence between these two issues. On the contrary, others accept that there is. The views of language and ethnicity connections appear to vary. While for some communities ethnic identity and language maintenance are closely connected, for others the ethnic language may not form an important part of their identity, (Ibtisam 2003:91).

There is a language identity pattern which is associated with the notion of ‘symbolic identity’. This notion implies that an ethnic group may retain its original language, which is no longer used, but which continues to be a part of their heritage, (Khilkhanova 2004:90).

Historically govoria has been the language of interethnic communication between the peoples of the Russian North. Pomorskaia govoria is the main identification category of historic ethnic Pomor consciousness. It reflected deep cultural traditions and the complex history of the indigenous population of Pomor’e. Govoria is a part of the Easten-Slavonic language group which emerged in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12th centuries in ancient Russian linguistic traditions,<sup>16</sup>(Pomorskaia storona 2004:27).

There is an abstract from the conversation with one of the ‘Pomor’ activists, Pomor language is one of his main interests..

-Do you speak the language of the group that you identify yourself with? How fluent are you? Where and when did you study it? Where and when do you speak this language?

- *“Today I am one of the few northerners who are relatively fluent in the language "pomorskaia govoria." This is my first language, the language of my childhood, the language of my parents, relatives, neighbors, and hence my native language. The opposite of it, the Russian literary language, which I also heard from childhood, but nonetheless, I understand that it is not native to me, although I spend most of my live outside the Pomor linguistic environment. I never learned my native language from textbooks, because such*

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<sup>16</sup> Nowadays, Ivan Moiseev is researching Pomorskaia govoria. In 2005 and 2006 he had two publications, including “Pomorskaia Govoria: short dictionary of Pomor language.” (Pomorskaia Govagia; kratkii slovar’ Pomorskogo iazyka), which contains around 2500 words and expressions.

*textbooks are not published. But in school we were taught the Russian language from textbooks, and it was called the "Mother Tongue", although native language for me is pomorskaia govoria. Today communication in Pomor language is only possible with the elderly who have lived all their life away from cities, and they can understand me without problems. The younger generation has grown up in a Russian language environment, and practically do not understand pomorskaia govoria. But as a specialist in this field I can stress that interest in this language is growing nowadays".*

- How and why do you think it is important to study Pomor language today?

*- "It is important because it increases the urgency of the Pomor issues in general. I concede that the Pomor language might not become a language of communication in the modern world, but it is important as a tool of self-identification for Pomors. Recognition of Pomors as an indigenous group might be regarded as an impetus for the revitalization of Pomor language. Then there will be some financial support to maintain Pomor culture as a whole, and after that, I believe, that some scholars would write textbooks on the Pomor language, and come up with programs to revitalize it." ( Participant #3)*

There are some questions which are raised about the objectivity of such a view. Other respondents were rather skeptical about the existence of Pomor language and its use in everyday life. They define Russian as their mother tongue.

*"My grandparents use some 'interesting' words in their speech. I find it very cute to listen to, but I don't think that it could be Pomor language, I think they speak that way because they have been living in the village all their life."(Participant #18)*

I presented my respondent with some examples of Pomor language and after this I received some interesting comments:

*"Yes, these are exactly some of the words that my grandparents always use. But I didn't know that it could be regarded as a certain language."(Participant #10)*

So I can hypothesize that most my respondents (also with Pomor backgrounds) said that they are not aware of Pomor language because of lack information on this issue. After my presentation of some examples of Pomor dialect, most of them recognized some words that they heard from childhood.

So I feel that language for Pomors perhaps has a more symbolic, unifying value, and its abandonment does not affect the ethnic identity itself, (Khilkhanova 2004).

When speaking about their identity, people with Pomor backgrounds do not mention language among their identity markers, relying on other symbols and actions that to them seem important in the preservation of their Pomor heritage.

## **6.5. Resuming Research: Pomor Identity at Present Day**

Who are ‘the real’ carriers of Pomor identity nowadays: urban residents who read the historical literature on Pomors and attend Pomor folk festivals, or residents of the countryside inhabiting river and sea coasts and preserving traditional ways of fishing and keeping households, but who may be unaware of ancient Pomor history?

When asking questions about Pomor culture, customs and traditions, I mentioned that I noticed a marked tendency of confusion from my responders. They mixed elements of Northern Russian cultural tradition with Pomors’. Some experts such as Anufriev make a clear division between Northern Russian and Russian Pomor culture, (Anufriev 2008; Lesnichenko 2005). But I found this difference is clearer among experts than ordinary people. I suppose that such confusion within definitions among people could be the result of mythologization of Pomors during last two decades in local scientific communities. As Anufriev points out, this could be a result of deprivations of historical and cultural memory during the Soviet period.

In general, countryside and city inhabitants are carriers of different sets of identities. The same can be said about Pomors who live in the cities but maintain traits to their Pomor ancestors and about people who inhabited remote areas near the coast of the White Sea, who still rely on tools and crafts in their daily livelihoods which they inherited from their fathers and grandfathers. It goes without saying that these two groups stress different types of traits. For example, for the second group’s maintenance of symbolic expressions of their identity plays an important role, because in cities they are not dependent on nature and the sea to such an extent as coastal dwellers. I feel that this tendency might be explained by the active role of Pomor activists who ‘construct’ the Pomor identity at present day and that the influence of this process is strong in cities, while sea dwellers maintain identity built on historical memory and traditions which are still remembered. So who are “more Pomor” in this situation?

If we turn away from the academic discourse and ask people what they think about special features of Pomors and their history we find interesting data. In general, the origins of Pomors are intertwined with numerous myths in the minds of people. It could be a result of the Soviet policy of creating a unified identity of the Soviet citizen. Most of my respondents could not give a clear answer to the question of the origins of Pomors. They built their ideas according to sayings and rumors heard in families and the surrounding environment.

Since time immemorial Pomors lived in harmony with nature and led sustainable ways of life.

*“I take care of the sea and fish and never take more than I need. If I do not respect fish, they will not respect me back and will leave the area.” (Participant #20)*

*“I was born in the Arkhangel’sk region, in a little village, but I have been living in Arkhangel’sk for all my life. I feel very comfortable surrounded by modern conveniences. But it fits for me, not for my parents. They cannot live in the city for a long time. They visit me sometimes, but stay no longer than one week. They say that their soul needs more room to survive. They miss the fresh air and nature.”(Participant #15)*

Another respondent told me about her parents with almost the same story:

*“After the Second World War the situation in the countryside was dramatically horrible, there were no jobs in villages. We couldn’t provide for ourselves by just keeping our households, and my father decided to move to the regional center searching for luck and money. And he was rather successful. He found a highly-paid job and was quite satisfied. But after a while, he came back to his village. As he told me, he couldn’t bear the high rhythm of the big city life; he missed his lands, his sea. He choked without his natural environment. Later he left the city, and moved back to his place. Since that time he has not left it more than several days. He says that he feels very uncomfortable and unconfident far from his place of birth.” (Participant #6)*

During my interviews I very often heard such stories. Mostly these stories came from young adults telling me about their parents and even grandparents. The set of questions covers attitudes towards history and every day culture. During the conversations they tended to mention the phenomenon of ‘special’ Pomor mentality, which they regard as a heritage from their forefathers. I found out that most people treat their past and family history with great respect. In this case, the past is perceived not as a set of “dead” facts and dates, but as a deep personal experience. So it seems that historical memory is one of the key markers of identity.

*“It was common in our family, I do not even know why we were doing this, it is just a tradition that we have followed for many, many years.” (Participant #5) Or “Do not ask me why, I have no idea....it was like this...my father did it, and my grandfather did it, and I do not see any reason why I have to change this technique.”(Participant #7)*  
Told to me by one respondent when I asked him about fishing traditions.

People know that they have always been there, but they cannot give a clear-cut explanation of why, how and who. In this manner ‘tradition’ becomes visible, bridging the past, the present and the future: “In the past they did it like that”, “We will continue to act in this way in the future”. Such statements are made without any reference to concrete historical circumstances, (Bjerkli 1996:9) Thus, it supports the argument that identity can be expressed unconsciously when it comes to deep traditions, and also in conditions when historical connections with the past are breaking up. Even when people lose attachments with ancestors they still may maintain certain features of customs for some time, but these traditions tend to be modified under the influence of modern tendencies and dominant culture.

Speaking about Pomor culture as a specific phenomenon, we talk about the particular features which were accepted by Russian culture, and this singularity is related to Pomor sea side styles of management (and all traits which are connected with it, as were mentioned in previous chapter) which were not traditional for other groups of Russians. In fact, “the sea determines the fate of Pomors.” Historically Pomor livelihoods were connected with sea inseparably. The leading and dominant thread in Pomor traditional economy has been fishing, which shaped a unique type of Pomor culture and mentality. Over time Pomors in general have lost their relation to the nature and sea. Many of them left their native areas and moved to towns and cities. But many of them still preserve cultural traditions and call themselves Pomors. Virtually every citizen of Arkhangel’sk that I interviewed clearly identified as a member of Russian group with the some time additional identity of Pomors.

Besides positive identity markers there are also negative markers. During my research, I came across some paradoxes. While Pomor activists strive for the right of Pomors to be proclaimed as indigenous, and for some Pomors this definition is offensive. On the other hand, according different researchers (Anufriev 2008, 2002; Bershtam 1978; Lesnichenko 2007) people who still inhabit remote sea areas of the Arkhangel’sk region and whose daily livelihoods are closely connected with traditional fishing and hunting, call themselves Pomors, but they do not use this expression with the same meaning as scholars and Pomor leaders. Moreover, identity marker such as ‘indigenous’, which is of a great interest among Pomor leaders, is a rather controversial issue among Pomors who inhabit remote areas. In the Russian social-cultural reality the term indigenous is very close related with term ‘inorodtsy’ which was used in relation to numerically-small people of the North, the Nenet peoples in this case. This term holds a negative connotation, because indigenous people have always been perceived as marginalized and backward, moreover, they were not orthodox. So for locals who feel they are Pomor, identity markers such as ‘indigenous’ are interpreted as identification with native people of the North which has never been respectful.

## **6.6. Some Observations on the Main Tendencies**

Collected empirical data suggests that the older generation (50 years and older) preserve traditional ethnic identity more than the younger people. But on the other hand, the young generation has a desire to preserve their local (but not ethnic) identity in the face of globalization and unification of culture. The current ratio of civil and ethnic identities of Pomors is defined by the historical legacy and current socio-political situation.



Many informants who identify themselves as Russians told me that they have ancestors among Pomors. Now they cannot identify themselves in anyway but as Russians. However, they regard the Pomor idea as an absolutely positive one, and admit that the existing Pomor identity markers are acceptable.

Citizens of Arkhangel'sk gladly take part in different festivals, celebrations and other different cultural events connected with Pomors. In general people are open and interested in Pomor cultural history and traditions and voting for its development. But when it comes to special rights for resources and lands, there is an ambiguity in respondents answers. I could observe some alertness, respondents express the idea that it could result in the separation and escalation of the conflict.

It is possible to say that the reconstructions of Pomor culture take place by revival of Pomor ancient customs and traditions. This happens under the influence of the modern environment, so these traits vary according external conditions, because they were revived for certain purposes. As Tulaeva points out, Pomors' villages become in these conditions a source of 'traditionalism': traditional fishing by means of traditional crafts, traditional sustainable approaches to nature, language : a material demonstration of the reconstruction of identity, (Tulaeva 2010:9). With the extinction of Pomors' villages, there will remain just a symbolic expression of Pomor belongings, and there will be no reason for special rights and treatment.

## **6.7. Summary**

To sum up, as can be seen from above, categories of Pomor traits have been changing and there are some obvious reasons for this. First of all, as was mentioned, Bernshtam's research is built on the fact that Pomors are a part of the Northern Russians; I try to allocate Pomor identity traits according the hypothesis that Pomors can be considered a certain ethnic group. This can be regarded as a main methodological difference which defines the outlets of my research. Secondly, I built my research according to data collected from interviews, so my research reflects the present day situation in modern society more than the ethnographic description of studied groups. These two differences could be the basis of the total results.

## **Chapter 7**

### **The Mobilization of Ethnicity**

In this chapter I will focus on issues connected with indigenous and ethnic movements in the territory of Russia. I will overview briefly the reasons of its development in post-Soviet era and continue with local development of Pomor movement in Arkhangel'sk. What are the most important strategies and the main goals of this movement? I will also try to find out what is official attitude from authorities towards Pomor movement? And what mechanisms Pomor leaders tend to use in legitimization of their status?

#### **7.1. "The Ethnic Renaissance" in the 1990s**

The turn of the 1990s was a period of high social activism among many populations in Russia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, different social groups, including indigenous peoples, became politically active in ways they could not have in the past, (Gray 2005:29). The possibility of change and the new social and economic environment allowed peoples to be active and to take initiative.

Ethnicity begins to play an important role when an ideological vacuum appears. In this case ethnic ideology replaced the official party ideology and became an important part of political processes in the state; an example is the collapse of the Soviet Union, when communist ideology did not exist anymore and yet at the same time a new ideology was not yet formed. While seeking to fill this vacuum peoples rediscovered 'lost' identities and began constructing new identities, (Sadoin 2005).

Social activity influenced national policy in general and policy towards national minorities and indigenous peoples in particular. It was only in the late 1980s that indigenous peoples in Russia were able to participate in the new "global indigenous culture", (Gray 2005:31). For example, in 1989 the Soviet government signed the ILO Convention 169, which, in fact, is still not ratified. The representatives of indigenous organizations began to attend the annual sessions of the United Nation Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva. Moreover, small-numbered peoples of the North were supposed to take an active part in the process of decision-making concerning economic development of the country for the first time. The national policy of that period regarding indigenous peoples could be defined as rather progressive; it was flexible and

reflected international moods in this sphere. However, as Gray points out, these tendencies in Russian policy were rather perfunctory and declarative, (Gray 2005:35).

However, with the beginning of the social and economic crisis of the mid 1990s, priorities were shifted towards short-term economic goals and the problems of national minorities and indigenous peoples were moved to the background of national policy. But in spite of officials neglecting ethnic issues, ethnopolitical movements were developing and struggling for rights of minorities.

## **7.2. How Did the Pomor Movement Begin?**

The political mobilization of ethnicity began to develop at the beginning of the 1990s. This period was also characterized by the active establishment of new ethnopolitical movements, and as a rule, historic memory was used as grounds for the establishment of such organizations. The origins of ethnocultural Pomor organizations in Arkhangel'sk region were formed at the turn of the 1990s. In 1987 the non-governmental cultural center "Pomor Renaissance" (*Pomorskoe Vozrozhdenie*) was established, it was the first organization to maintain and recreate Pomor traditions.

Realization of political inspirations demanded consolidations among ethnopolitical actors. In 1992 several local political parties and organizations of the Arkhangel'sk region teamed up around the 'Pomor idea'. In 1994 this movement split into different groups of interests, as leaders could not come to a consensus about the goals of the movement. Later there were several attempts to reunite the political actors within the frame of another organization called "Pomor World". Unfortunately these attempts went nowhere.

However, it was a good start for further developments of the 'Pomor idea'. Results of the All-Russia Census of 2002 evidently stimulated the development of Pomor ethnopolitical movements. Numbers show that Pomor identity was not just a groundless idea of well-educated group of people who attempted to reach some illusory goals, but a reality for more than 6,000 people.

As a result, in 2003 the association National-Cultural Autonomy of Pomors was registered in Arkhangel'sk. It dealt with a wide range of activities— from the revival of traditional Pomor culture to the struggle for official recognition of Pomors as indigenous peoples. Soon after the

group Community of Pomors as Indigenous Peoples was established.<sup>17</sup> What is more, leaders of these organizations came up with idea that Pomors are indigenous people with Finno-Ugric roots.

However, instability in the activities of these organizations can be noted– they decline or increase according the political and social situation.

An important stage in the development of Pomor ethnopolitical movements became the Annual Congress of the Pomor people, which was held in Arkhangel'sk in 2007. The executive board consists of Pomor elders, chairmen of fisheries, and leaders of public associations. This Congress was financed, in comparison with other congresses of that kind around Russia, by sponsors, not by the government, and many of the delegates took part in this event at their own expense. Despite the lack of government funds, the Congress gathered hundreds of participants from all over the European North of Russia- Arkhangel'sk, Murmansk regions and Nenets Autonomus Okrug. This gathering shows that people are interested and anxious about the destiny Pomor peoples.

However, as Tulaeva points out, there is still a big gap between the ethnopolitical leaders on the one hand, and the Pomors on the other hand. For instance, most of my responders (citizens of Arkhangel'sk town) are not aware of the activities of Pomor associations and the main goals of these movements.

- Do you know something about Pomor ethnopolitical associations and organizations in Akhangelsk region?

*“Yes, I have heard something but not too much, I have been living in this territory for all my live with my wife, and we did not see any help from the government or other people from the mainland. We have to rely on ourselves, which is what our life taught us. And I suppose that big people don't really mind what is happening with us. Everything that we have now, we have because we work hard.” (Participant #11)*

Another respondent was much more positive when talking about her membership in Pomor community:

*“Here I meet people with whom I can share my opinion and my memories from childhood. We also organize some events to educate interested people in Pomor culture and tradition. I think it is important to maintain what we still have. I believe that by being aware of our past we can build our present and future.”(Participant #12)*

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<sup>17</sup> Presently this Community has been liquidated by the Regional Branch of the Ministry of Justice (April 2011). For this reason Pomors are not officially recognized as indigenous peoples of the RF, but the word 'indigenous' is presented in the title of the Community.

We can observe two opposite views on Pomor organizations, and I believe it likely depends on the social status and place of living (city/countryside) of the respondents, because city-dweller who identify themselves with Pomors but do not keep the traditional livelihoods are not so sensitive to issues connected with preservation of rights and qualification of statuses of Pomors. Urban Pomors are more concentrated on symbolic expressions of their identity, while Pomors who still have a connection with traditional ways of life and are dependent on fishing and hunting, obviously rely more on Pomor organizations to provide for their interests if, of course, they are aware of its existence.

This situation also presents problems with information streams in different regions. Instead of achieving claimed goals the activities of movements are still narrowly-oriented. So it goes without saying that Pomor dwellers living far from the regional center are more isolated from information streams than inhabitants of the Arkhangel'sk.

### **7.3. The Mobilization of Ethnicity in Arkhangel'sk: Constructing Ethnic Categories**

According to current tendencies, ethnicity becomes a political resource rather than a tool for self-identification, and ethnic movements become a means for the political enrichment for local ethnoleaders.

In my research I hypothesize that ethnicity is connected with policy. Moreover, ethnicity can be regarded as a special political source which is used widely by different political and non-political powers to obtain certain political, social and economic benefits, although often these goals are not compatible with cultural, economic or political goals of a particular ethnos or ethnic group. This is why the mobilization of ethnicity is a required tool to organize the eventual potential of ethnic groups to archive desired aims.

As Iurii Shabaev points out, mobilization usually begins with claims connected to the preservation of an ethnic culture of a group, (Sadohin 2005:70). According to this statement, I will give an overview of the process of political mobilization of Pomors in the Arkhangel'sk region.

Local realization of ethnicity is more possible than national recognition. The claims of minority groups are clearer for local citizens, and therefore they are more interested in participating in movements. Moreover, the possibility of the emergence of the so-called "ethnic businessmen" is

more evident on this level. According to Barth, these people become rapidly surrounded by other concerned groups of people, and begin to use the national policy as a business, (Barth 1969).

Sometimes there is a lack of cultural distinctiveness to delineate this boundary. In this case the ethnic elite mobilizing group may put much effort into searching for other sets of ethnic features to prove that members of a group are unique not only because of a single feature (dialect for example) but many features, (Tishkov 2003:117).

Political mobilization can also come in the form of constructing ethnic categories (communities) on the basis of some “historic legacy”. That heritage creates some identity markers of this “imagined community”. Generally, ethnic construction’s objectives are political aspirations, commonly political competition and struggle for access to natural resources, (Shabaev 2006).

It is possible to divide all Pomor ethnopolitical movements and associations into two large categories according to their purpose and inspirations. Most of them claim their main goal as being a reconstruction and popularization of Pomor values and traditions by means of different festivals and cultural events. On the other hand, most of these organizations claim the goal of an official recognition of Pomors as indigenous peoples as an additional purpose of their activities. Although leaders tend to state:

*“Leaders of Pomor movement do not define any political goals; we have just legal and cultural goals. Some politicians and government people tend to politicize these issues.”*  
(Participant #15)

The main strategies of the legitimating of Pomor identity appeal to two basic elements: assertion of Pomor historical and cultural features, and the struggle for official recognition of Pomors as an indigenous group with subsequent rights and status.

#### **7.4. In the Trap of Legislation: The Pomor Case**

According to Russian legislation Pomors are not recognized as a separate ethnic group. Meanwhile Pomors struggle for their ethnic status to be officially accepted. The main goal of Pomor leaders is to become accepted to The Common List of Indigenous Peoples. This would allow Pomors access to natural resources and other benefits. According to Tulaeva (Tulaeva 2009) this process is being developed in two directions. On one hand, this process was initiated ‘from above’ by local public associations as a demand to brand the local environment as being opposed to the globalization and unification that took place during the last several decades. On the other hand, this process of ethnic mobilization was supported ‘from below’ as a reaction to

shifting national legislation, which undermines the social-economic fundamentals of Pomor existence. Thus, the constructing of identity can be regarded as a mechanism to resist negative changes to federal legislation.

Since Pomors strive to be recognized officially, I see essential to find out why it is so important for them to obtain indigenous status, and as a result, to become a part of the international and federal indigenous legislation.

The first strategy is appealing to international legal standards regarding indigenous peoples. There are two main documents which are of attention to Pomors leaders.

The first of these is ILO Convention 169 which acknowledges the special relationship of indigenous peoples to their land. Since the international society tends to assist indigenous communities with questions of lands, territories and resources, Pomor leaders appeal to this Convention.

In 2007, the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples was adopted. This declaration aims to protect indigenous' rights all over the world. It proclaims rights for self-recognition, lands and natural resources:

*“Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.”* (UN Declaration, art.4)

In spite of the fact that the RF refrained from voting and, moreover, that the UN declarations do not have legislative power and are maintained more like recommendations, leaders of the Pomor movement regard it as a tool to put pressure on the government.

Nowadays leaders try to spread the information among the inhabitants of the coast that they are able to use international law to assert their rights for fishing. In cases of fines from the local authorities for fishing or hunting, activists advise Pomors to go to the European Court of Human Rights. This measure is rather controversial since the process demands a lot of effort and resources, including financial investment. However, activists consider that a precedent could create a mechanism to put pressure on the Russian legislation to accelerate the process of recognition of Pomors as an indigenous group.

Another strategy of the Pomor movement is to become a part of national legislation. To do this, they must be assigned to the Common List of Small-Numbered Indigenous Peoples of the RF, which is the main goal of the Pomor movement in the Arkhangel'sk region. To be accepted to

this list means access to national legislation concerning indigenous peoples and to be granted all benefits and advantages by the state.<sup>18</sup> Pomor leaders have struggled for this recognition for many years without results.

*“Pomors are indigenous peoples de facto, but it should be accepted de jure, that is why we struggle for inclusion into the Common List on Indigenous Peoples. There are some other ways to get certain rights for Pomors other than this List, but they are so much more difficult and probably not efficient, because it demands from the state an establishment of range of new ‘ambiguous’ laws which could not work at all.” (Participant #14)*

The leaders regard this way as the most efficient and easy to obtain the desired status in spite of many rejections from the subdivisions responsible for these questions. In spite of recent changes some disbelief in the possible shifting of official positions are noticed among Pomor activists.

And while the question is still not solved, ordinary Pomors suffer from legislation which severely limits their rights.

#### **7.4.1. “The Sea is the Pomor Field” – Not Anymore?**

Despite many political and economic transformations, residents of Pomor villages still have retained significant elements of everyday culture. Pomor villages are still determined by fishing to a great extent. It becomes more and more difficult to survive without support from the state, especially when different regulations become stricter.

For example, new fishing regulations of 2007 undermine the economic basis of the existence of the Pomor villages. They lead to a significant reduction of quotas on fishing for collective farms and, while at the same time increasing the fees. In accordance with the new rules, fishing collective farms are put at the same level with large industrial companies, so they have to compete for fishing quotas at auctions. Such changes in Russian legislation frame advantages for large-scale economic agents, and threaten Pomor farms. Pomor fishing farms are unable to be competitive in the new economic environment.

Changes in legislation also deal with fishing for personal needs. During the last several decades the catch of salmon and herring was strictly limited by federal and local laws. The amount of such quotas is so insignificant that it hardly allows Pomors to keep their traditional livelihoods. Now, only the indigenous peoples of Russia are entitled to traditional fishing. Pomors can

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<sup>18</sup> See chapter 1 for details.



practice only recreational fishing, and when doing so have to buy special licenses. Buying these licenses is almost impossible for the inhabitants of the Pomor villages, due to their poor economic situation, and by virtue of the great remoteness of villages from the regional center. Instead people have to search for other means of subsistence. That puts the idea of preserving ancestors' traditions under threat. As a result, nowadays the number of traditional fishery holds are decreasing.

In addition, in 2008, an information campaign was launched against traditional Pomor seal hunting. As a result, this kind of hunting was banned in the White Sea. Traditional fishing and hunting are the economic basis of the existence of the Pomor countryside. Traditional fishing for their own needs represents a significant share of the budget in Pomor households. One of the leaders of the Pomor movement, Pavel Esipov says about this situation:

*“Pomors become poachers on the land of their ancestors because of these new regulations. In our northern severe climate conditions there is no other way (agriculture for example) to survive without being engaged in traditional activities. Seal hunting is one of these activities”.*<sup>19</sup>

Thus, the reduction of quotas for Pomors' fishing farms, and the ban on fishing for personal needs threaten the physical existence of Pomor villages and could lead to their extinction.

*“The collective fishing farms on the bank of the White Sea are our main employers. Often, they cover only losses of other local enterprises in villages that do not generate profits. And if the farms are closed, then the rest of production in the villages will be reduced also”. (Sergey Samoilov)*<sup>20</sup>

As Pomors had unimpeded access to natural resources since times immortal, strict present day regulations regarding fishing and hunting are preserved by coast-dwellers as repressive measures from the state in relation to the community. Economic threats to traditional Pomor livelihoods and ignorance to the problems of local inhabitants contribute to the growth of the level of intra-group solidarity.

#### **7.4.2. Indigenous vs. Non-Indigenous**

Issues connected with status are also a rather painful topic for Pomor peoples because very often indigenous and 'pretending-to-be-indigenous' groups live in the same neighborhoods, share the same economic activities, and face the same problems in regards to their livelihood. Meanwhile,

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1138871.html>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.regnum.ru/news/1026058.html>

officially recognized ethnic groups receive preferences from the government but unrecognized groups do not.

For example, some indigenous pastoral peoples have a right to marine fishing quotas free of charge, however for these groups fishing is not of great importance. The quotas are usually not completely used and are sold by indigenous leaders. At the same time the Pomors feel that they should not be charged for quotas as they are so dependent on fishing tradition, (Shabaev 2010:56).

Forced by local Pomor activists, the administration of the Arkhangel'sk region sent two official applications to Ministry of Regional Development<sup>21</sup> asking to support Pomors' claims to be included in the Common List of Indigenous Peoples of Russia. The request was denied because scholars in Moscow and St.Petersburg gave a negative decision. However leaders of the Pomor national-cultural autonomy of Arkhangel'sk did not give up and in 2007 an open letter was sent to the Prime Minister. On behalf of all Pomors they asked "to help with contradictions in Russian and international legislation". It is underlined in the letter that "Pomors face the impossibility of self-identification, which is in fact guaranteed by the Constitution of Russian Federation and by other laws," (Shabaev 2009:56).

Nowadays the situation is that some benefits, which are officially given to indigenous peoples, are also of great demand among other local groups. Disregarding their interests can cause conflict between them and the state. According to Shabaev, almost all over the Russian North traditional fishery and hunting areas are being used, ignoring the laws by groups of populations which are not officially recognized as indigenous, but are also extremely dependant on traditional livelihoods. They do this because it is the only way for them to survive, (Shabaev 2010:148).

## **7.5. Ideology of the Pomor Movement**

Nowadays several efforts are made to revive Pomor identity. The leaders of these movements mostly support the 'one-side' position: proclaiming that Pomors are a separate ethnic group with Finno-Ugric origins, rejecting any connection to Russian ethnos and ethnicity. In fact, the history of colonization of the Russian North demonstrates the opposite, and therefore some important questions can be raised:

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<sup>21</sup> The Ministry of Regional Development is in charge of indigenous issues the moment.

1. Why do Pomor proclaim to be a separate ethnic group with reference to Finno-Ugric origins?
2. What are the purposes of constructing such a Pomor identity?

As is mentioned above, in establishing the movement, leaders claim that Pomors do not belong to a Russian ethnic group, according to leaders; Pomors are not an ethnographic or subethnic group. Pomor people are a separate ethnic group with their own language, traditions and self-consciousness. Pomors are not a part of the Slavic ethnic group, but to the contrary have Finno-Ugric origins, because Finno-Ugric tribes as Pomor leaders claim, have played the most significant role in forming Pomors' group.

There are some political and economic benefits in proclaiming Pomors as a part of Finno-Ugric community. First of all, the Finno-Ugric movement can be regarded as quite successful at the moment present time. Moreover, this movement received international attention, support and funding. Attempts to join Finno-Ugric groups can be considered another capacity to be listened to on a wider scale.

Why does the administration oppose recognition of Pomors as indigenous? Several possible reasons can be discussed.

First of all, endeavors of Pomor leaders to become a part of the Finno-Ugric community created some unrest in local and federal authorities. As was mentioned above, Russia is a multinational country and any national issues invoke a kind of phobia on the side of the state. This is why any efforts to proclaim Pomors as separate from Russians provoke fears of possible separation.

Secondly, in the beginning of the 1990s the idea of a Pomor Republic was quite popular among local authorities and intellectuals and was highly supported by local citizens. Some projects were even completed in an attempt to fulfill this idea. In addition, reorganization of federal structures in the recent past had threatened to lose the Nenets Autonomos District (Okrug - NAO) from the administrative structure of the Arkhangel'sk region. This area is rather rich in natural resources such as gas and oil, and it is also a homeland for the indigenous Nenets peoples. The secession of NAO from the Arkhangel'sk region could have deprived Arkhangel'sk of funds from oil and gas developments.

In talking about the Pomor case, the situation could be similar as Pomors also inhabit lands which are rich in resources, such as diamonds, fish and explored oil and gas reserves on the shelf of the Arctic seas. The status of indigenous peoples could give them rights to these lands and

could open the door for demands for different compensations for the right to develop and use it.<sup>22</sup> Of course this could go against the interests of regional and federal elites and large business who are concerned in perserving the present situation.

The evident question comes into mind: why have Pomor issues become so important for ethnic leaders during the several decades?

Some political purposes can be found in researching local movements of Pomor peoples in Arkhangel'sk. It is interesting that in the beginning of 1990s a number of different social and ethnopolitical movements increased rapidly, but there were no Pomor organizations or movements to be established. Pomors made themselves known only after the 2002 All-Russian Census, which counted about 6,500 Pomors in the Arkhangel'sk region, by establishing the National-Cultural Autonomy of Pomors (there are just 18 associations of this kind in national scale). The Census was not just a tool to count ethnic and social groups, but is regarded as a mechanism for redefining ethnic categories according to Benedict Anderson.. Censuses can help to overcome non-solidarity and promote rethinking of cultural uniqueness, (Shabaev 2010).

## **7.6. Pomors: Cultural Capital of the Region**

However nowadays regional authorities are more interested in the 'Pomor idea' than a few years ago, because it can bring some benefits to the region, for instance, the development of tourism using a paradigm of traditionalism of ancient Russian culture, attracting tourists not only from Russia.

Attention in Arkhangel'sk is selectively focused on the traditional side of Pomor culture, avoiding the socioeconomic issues. Regional administration tries to find ways to use the traditionalism of Pomor culture as a kind of capital. Pomors as representatives of the traditional culture of Arkhangel'sk in conjunction with the Nenets peoples can be used as a marketing tool to draw attention to Arkhangel'sk region and help attract investors to develop local enterprises and businesses, in such spheres as ecological tourism. Unfortunately, Pomor peoples are more visible when they are dressed in traditional costumes and participate in folklore festivals.

From the perspective of the administration, the traditional economies are nothing but a drain on resources, while the more colorful manifestations of Pomor culture at least have some usefulness in making the administration's investment in them pay off. Funding them is cheaper, but could

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<sup>22</sup> See chapter 1.

be still publicly accepted as assistance to the Pomor peoples. This could also work the opposite way, because in order to use this cultural capital and attract the capital more efficiently, administration demands more control over cultural space and ethnic movements.

Many cultural events and other occasions are organized by Pomor activists in cooperation with the local administration every year. For example, the annual event known as ‘Margaritenskaia fair’ (*iarmarka*) which was established as a revival of the first international trading grounds in Russia in 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It now gathers representatives of small and middle commercial producers not only from Arkhangel’sk region, and the event is highly supported by local administration.

The Governor of the Arkhangel’sk region claimed 2011 as The Pomor Year. It means that many events have to be connected with Pomor culture: ethnic festivals and exhibitions, festival of ethnic food. This can be regarded as another ‘good sign’ of the changing in moods towards Pomors. Of course, all of these events are more a manifestation than active measures.

## **7.7. Summary**

In summing up, I must point out that the main goal of ethnopolitical Pomor organizations is to construct a Pomor zone united by unique culture and traditions. In other words, together with political claims and struggling for official status, they try to make the brand ‘Pomor’e’ profitable and competitive. This brand can provide benefits not only for Pomors, but for the whole region.

Regarding the movement, it is possible to say that it consists of mostly regional intellectuals and concerned groups of peoples who are aware of Pomors’ problems. All organizations have open memberships, so anyone can become a member and join the movement. The main problem is that the Pomor movement in Arkhangel’sk is led by city intellectuals and quite remote from its potential subjects: Pomors who live in coastal villages may not even be aware that somebody in the regional center is struggling for their rights and special status.

So we see that there is still a big gap between politicians, Pomors leaders, and ordinary Pomors. The reason for this can be seen in how the movement was originally constructed, from above or under the initiative of regional intellectuals. The leaders have chosen a strategy referencing Finno-Ugric origins of Pomors, which is a rather arguable issue according to historical research.

However, the latest events give Pomors hope in gaining indigenous status. In the middle of April 2011 the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences finally

recognized the Pomors as a separate ethnic group and indicates their traditionally inhabited areas. An official note was sent to the Ministry of Regional Development with the suggestion to grant Pomors indigenous status.

There are several economically and politically substantial arguments for changing this status. First of all, the North is an attractive area to develop natural resources and to attract international investments, which would be essential in guaranteeing security for business. According to World Bank regulations, before starting a new project, the company must enter into cooperation and settle all arguable points with locals and especially with indigenous populations. Otherwise, there is a possibility not to be given essential credits and, moreover, it is better for business to build mutual relations on a clear legal basis.

Secondly, governmental support to Pomors could become a tool to create a good image of Russia.

Thirdly, the 'Pomor idea' could become a basis for international processes in the North of Russia and could help to create a reliable network between Northern regions in the European North of Russia.

Fourth, stable social development of these remote areas could reinforce the Northern border of Russia, especially in times of active development of Arctic.

And fifth, the 'Pomor idea' could be used as a powerful resource for regional cultural development with efforts to attract tourists to the Arkhangel'sk region. It could stimulate the economy because the Arkhangel'sk region is on the list of subsidized subjects of the RF. Thus, efficient management of this situation could solve social, political and economic problems.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

The European North of Russia has always been a rather stable region when it came to ethnic issues. However, in the 1990s, when the ethnic renaissance strode across Russia, the situation in the North of Russia also changed. Besides indigenous movements, small ethnic minorities have also become visible. Pomor self-consciousness, which had been rather latent and silent during many decades, awoke. There are many reasons for this: political, social, and cultural. Pomor peoples became visible again through political and scientific works after more than a century underground. Referring to the work of Tat'iana Bernshtam, Pomors lost almost all of their cultural features: economic specialization, linguistic dissimilarity, religious traditions, etc., (Bernshtam 1978). However, in spite of the ignorance from the state Pomors have kept their identity within some features of traditionality.

However, the visibility of Pomors is a result of the efficient work of Arkhangel'sk intellectuals in re-constructing Pomor identity. I consider the main complication with the revival of Pomor identity in Arkhangel'sk region to be the artificially built opposition to the other set of identities that are accepted by common people (citizenship, local, cultural, social identity). Historically, Pomors have never separated themselves from Russians, being aware of their unique distinctions all the while within the context of Russian culture.

Nowadays the activism of Pomor leaders in initiating and supporting the struggles for recognition and determination of Pomor peoples is rather ambiguous. Pomor leaders and activists try to reconstruct Pomor identity by putting the idea of their 'indigenoussness' in the foreground. Special status for the Pomor as an indigenous group and as a consequence lands could provide Pomors with the opportunity to maintain those traits which they still keep. In fact, Pomors really need some protection to maintain their traditional culture and ways of life. On the other hand, a narrowly-oriented model of Pomor identity based on Finno-Ugric origins causes resistance and misunderstanding in academic circles and from local and central authorities. Moreover, historical comparison with indigenous peoples was offensive for Pomors, and an image of Pomors as similar to Nenets or Sami peoples does not fit into Pomor worldview. This is probably the reason behind some of the indifference among Pomors. On the other hand, appealing to the indigenous origins of Pomors could be the only possibility to achieve privileges which could help Pomor distinctiveness to survive.

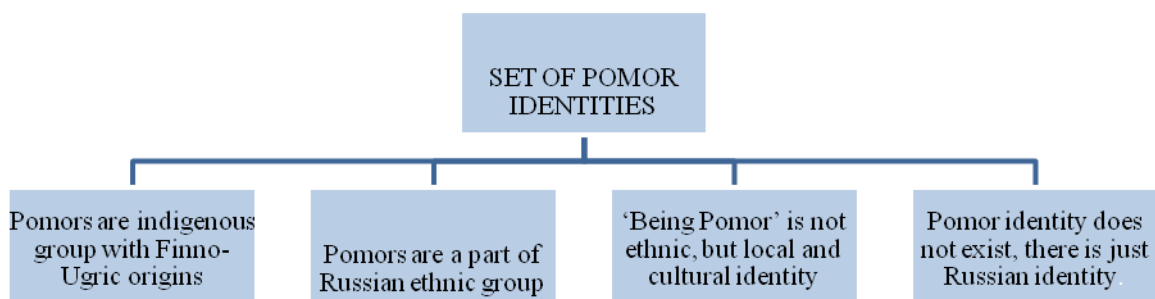
Some scholars (Anufriev 2008; Lukin 2010) suggest involving another term when we talk about the phenomenon of Pomor tradition. Different historical documents show that the Pomor group was defined according to their environmental conditions and their place of livelihood, not according their ethnic belonging. This is why using the term 'Russian Pomors' reflects the appropriate essence of this phenomenon.

This term also could fit to different actors in the current situation in the Arkhangel'sk region. There is no reference to separation using the expression 'Russian Pomor' (what is good for authorities) and at the same time there is stress on the exclusivity and distinctiveness of the Pomor group.

Unfortunately there is another obstacle with the term 'Russian Pomor' and multiple identities. Although in general it reflects the situation in the Arkhangel'sk region where many people call themselves Russian Pomors, this identity cannot be registered officially. The Russian legal system does not give the opportunity to register as a double or triple identity: it can be just one.

According to my research and analysis of collected data it seems possible to emphasise that the Pomor identity is understood by different groups of people differently. In fact there is not only one interpretation of Pomor identity, so we can speak about a 'set of identities'. I combine collected data (interviews with 20 informants) and come to the conclusion that a set of Pomor identities can be presented in the following way:

### Scheme 1. Set of Pomor Identities





The set of identities presented above represents the most widely spread points of view given by responders during my fieldwork. In fact this diagram represents the main tendencies in Arkhangelsk region:

1. The first group reflects the position of Pomor activists who are struggling for the official status of Pomor as indigenous peoples;
2. The second group reflects the widespread view in academia circles and is basically built on the primordial nature of Pomor identity;
3. The third group represents the position of those who agree on multiply identities;
4. The fourth group reflects the point of view that Pomors and their culture do not exist anymore, and that this identity has blended with Russian culture.

I consider Pomors as an independent and unique phenomenon which are entitled to stand in the same level with Russian culture, not to be subordination with it as, for example, ethnos theory declares.

According to my research, apparently Pomors are carriers of at least double identities. On the one hand they are Russians; on the other hand, they identify themselves as Pomors. For many informants it was not an easy job to limit in their own identity or to describe where their Russian identity ends and Pomor identity starts. Besides national and ethnic identity, people identify themselves as Arhangelogorodets (inhabitants of the region), so, in this case, we are dealing with local identity markers: identification according to place of birth and living. One of my informants gave me very interesting descriptions of his multiply identity:

*“My identity reminds me of matreshka– there are multiple levels and these levels are closely related with each other. The biggest doll is my ethnic belonging. I’m Russian, the main issue for me there are cultural values and common heritage of the past (literature, art, history, etc) then we come to a smaller doll - I’m Russian (Rossiianin),and I feel a belonging to the state, citizenship, and finally, the smallest doll is my local identity... I can say that I’m Pomor and this belonging is connected more with the territory than with ethnicity for me. Wherever I travel in Russia, I always say that I’m from the North, from Pomor’e.”(Participant #19)*

Or another discussion:

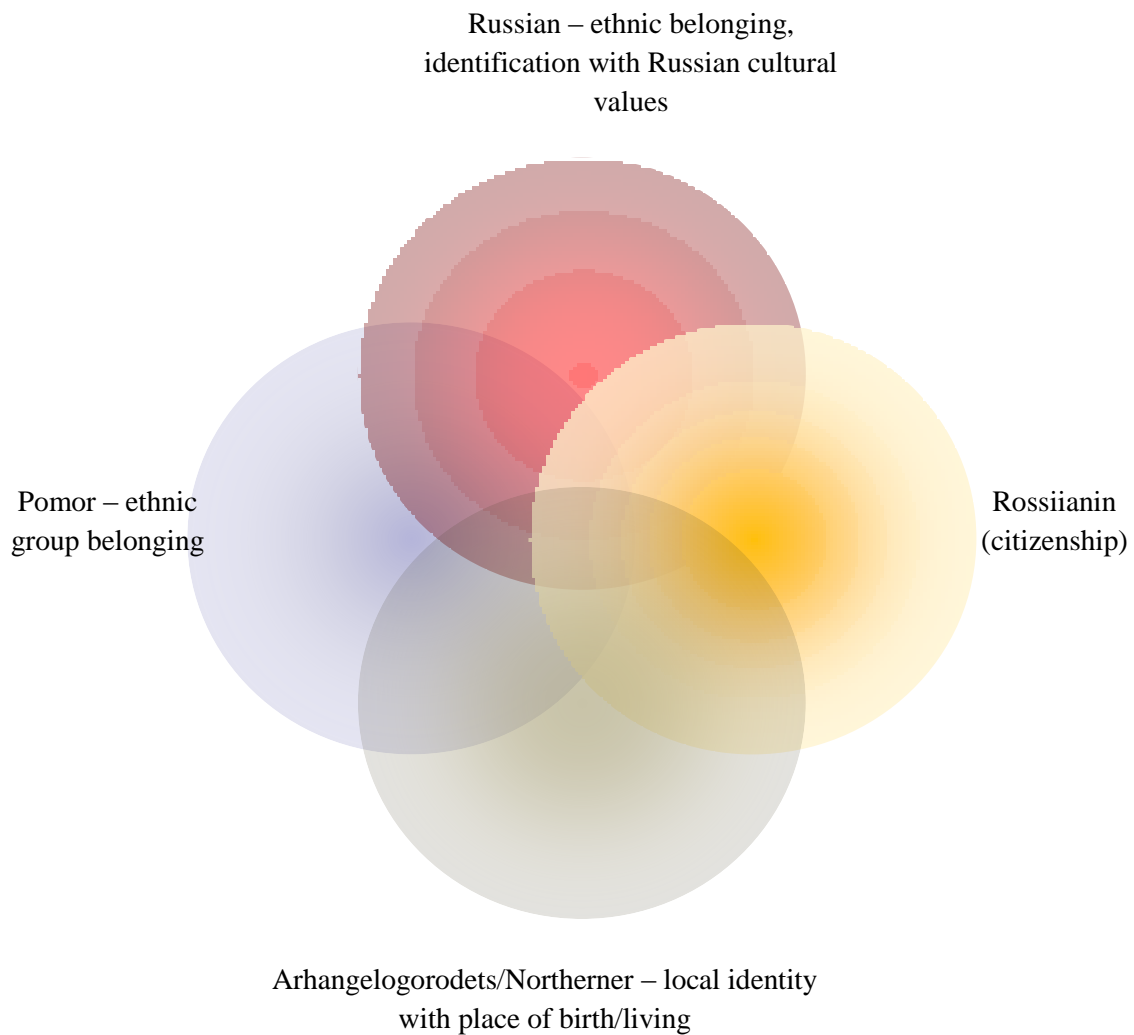
*“Of cause I am Russian (citizenship- marked by me) and also Arhangelogorodets (a citizen of Akkhangelsk), I have been living there all of my life, my parents and grandparents have always livied in this area. But I cannot tell you anything about Pomor identity. I do not feel myself as being Pomor”.* (Participant #6)

However, there is one tendency in modern society: that people very often regard themselves as carriers of more than just one identity. This could be a result of the controversial global

processes of globalization on one hand and the integration and fragmentation on the other. Under the influence of international mass media and pop culture a person becomes involved in global exchanges of information, knowledge and culture. At the same time, ethnic boundaries are preserved, despite the fact that the amount of ethnic contacts increase, and their intensity is also increasing. Moreover, ethnic differences are maintained even if a person has had the possibility during the life to change his or her membership in a social or ethnic group.

As can be observed above, most of my respondents expressed the idea of their multiply identities. So, when I combine the answers of people it is possible to create the following model of multiply identity:

**Diagram 2. Model of multiply identity among the citizens of the Arkhangelsk region according to fieldwork research:**



I have to explain the points in this model. The diagram displays the flexibility of personal identities in Arkhangel'sk. There are no precise boundaries between the four units of identities which I managed to discover during the fieldwork. I investigated that all segments can be combined and the order of identities in person's mind can be changed – sometimes the first place is given to citizenship, and the second – to ethnic belongings, or vice versa. Respondents also tend to combine two expressions – Arhangelogorodets and Northerner. The first one is referred to the city of birth and the second one associated with the whole Russian North. Each part of the spectrum can exist either independently or in combination with the others. It is not necessarily that one person is a carrier of all identities at the same time. One part or even several parts can be away from personal perception. People take a choice consciously – for example, to be Russian, to be Pomor, or to combine these identities together.

In modern society an individual is a carrier of many different social statuses and roles, and it results in multiple identities. As Barth points out, despite the fact that ethnic groups often exist in a single social system, the differences between them are not erased. Interaction among ethnic groups within the social system does not lead to the elimination of ethnic differences by change or acculturation; cultural differences can be preserved despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence, (Barth 1969). We can observe the same situation in Pomor cases. Long-lasting histories of development 'within' Russians did not destroy Pomor identity. In fact, Pomor identity has gone through three different historical epochs – the Russian Empire, the Soviet Era and Modern Russia – and did not disappear, even under the influence of three different ideological systems.

During my fieldwork data collection I observed a tendency: my responders were mostly people without scientific backgrounds, and when I came to the question of ethnicity it is possible to assume that their answers were not built on anthropological theories. It is interesting to notice that when talking about personal belonging respondents usually mention either primordial traits such as blood kinship or beliefs in common origins, or they construct their identity using social categories.

Paradoxically, some responders with common origins of Pomor's and Pomors ancestors, such as parents and grandparents, could hardly designate themselves as Pomors, because they do not live near the sea anymore. This fact distances them from the possibility of being a Pomor. So we can see, that traits which are not necessarily 'objective' are taken into account when we talk about

ethnic identity. According to constructivism the only features which are significant are those which people regard as important for themselves.

Thus, the content of ethnicity has shifted— from the field of cultural values to the field of symbolic values. This process is logical for modern industrial communities. People might not wear traditional clothes, speak native languages, or be engaged in traditional economy, but may still feel personal belonging to the particular ethnic group, because it becomes a very important social symbol. Therefore, symbolic ethnicity replaces cultural ethnicity today.

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## Appendix 1. Map of Arkhangelsk Region<sup>23</sup>



## Appendix 2. Table of Informants

	Age	Gender	Occupation
Participant #1	55	m	professor, academic background
Participant #2	50	f	professor, academic background
Participant #3	54	m	participant of Pomor movement
Participant #4	25	f	student
Participant #5	23	m	student
Participant #6	50	f	citizen
Participant #7	75	m	citizen
Participant #8	72	f	citizen, Pomor
Participant #9	23	f	student
Participant #10	24	f	student, researcher
Participant #11	80	m	Pomor, citizen

<sup>23</sup> Administration of Arkhangel'sk region [www.dvinaland.ru](http://www.dvinaland.ru)

Participant #12	35	f	participant of Pomor movement
Participant #13	77	m	Pomor, citizen
Participant #14	41	m	participant of Pomor movement
Participant #15	39	f	participant of Pomor movement
Participant #16	73	f	Pomor, citizen
Participant #17	29	f	participant of Pomor movement
Participant #18	21	m	student
Participant #19	49	m	citizen
Participant #20	60	m	Pomor, citizen

### **Appendix 3. Exemplary Questions Asking During Fieldwork**

How do you understand ethnicity? What is your ethnic belonging?

What does it mean for you to be Pomor? What categories and criteria have to be taken into account when talking about ethnicity?

Is there a general difference in being Pomor in the past and now?

What is the 'Pomor idea' and what does it mean for you?

How do you identify yourself: are you more Pomor than Russian? How is your identity presented in your daily life?

Do you speak the language of your group? Have you ever heard of Pomor language? Is it important to study Pomor language?

What is Russian culture for you? What is Pomor culture? What differences do you see between them?

Who tries to preserve Pomor culture, how and why?

Do you know any Pomor movements or organizations in the Arkhangelsk region? Do you know the main goals of these movements?

Do you think that Pomors are indigenous peoples? Why? Do you think that Pomors should get official status as indigenous peoples?

Do you know about the attitude of central and local authorities towards Pomors?

Do you know of any Pomor activities in Arkhangelsk? Do you take part in these activities?

**Appendix 4.** Pomory on the way to the sea,1914 (Okladnikov 2009)



**Appendix 6.** Pomory, dressed for fishing (Okladnikov 2009)



**Appendix 7.** Pomory dressed in winter clothes (Okladnikov 2009)

