

Ethnographic Field Of Kamchatka: Characteristic Features And Research Problems

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Abstract

The article analyzes modern Kamchatka ethnographic studies. The author reveals peculiar features of Kamchatka's ethnographic field and describes difficulties of local exploration. Modern historical exploration methods used in Russia and foreign countries are described. The author uses monographs and papers by modern Russian and foreign scientists and her own field materials. The article is based on materials of two significant (in terms of population and prospects of ethno-tourism development) districts of Kamchatka, Bystrinskiy and Milkovski. Special attention is paid to the practice of Russian field ethnological schools.

Keywords: ethnographic methodology, Russian ethnology, local ethnographic research, case study, Kamchatka, ethnic groups of Kamchatka.

Campo Etnográfico De Kamchatka: Características Características Y Problemas De Investigación

Resumen

El artículo analiza los estudios etnográficos modernos de Kamchatka. El autor revela características peculiares del campo etnográfico de Kamchatka y describe las dificultades de la exploración local. Se describen métodos modernos de exploración histórica utilizados en Rusia y países extranjeros. La autora utiliza monografías y documentos de científicos rusos y extranjeros modernos y sus propios materiales de campo. El artículo se basa en materiales de dos distritos importantes (en términos de población y perspectivas de desarrollo del etno-turismo) de Kamchatka, Bystrinskiy y Milkovski. Se presta especial atención a la práctica de las escuelas etnológicas de campo rusas.

Palabras clave: metodología etnográfica, etnología rusa, investigación etnográfica local, estudio de caso, Kamchatka, grupos étnicos de Kamchatka.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, modern ethnography actively develops. Case studies have become a popular trend that is successfully performed by different scientists in the world (Amenta, 2009; Johansson, 2003; Lee, 2013; Tai, 2011). In Russia, ethnographic case studies are still in the process of coming into being. Russian scientific school faces certain limitations in using this method. Moreover, it has a rich experience of classical ethnology that should not be neglected or forgotten.

Local ethnographic schools and researches in Russia face some difficulties, such as a lack of financial support or professional explorers and young investigators. Kamchatskiy Krai is a region of many ethnic groups' compact living, for example, Koryak, Itelmen, Aleut and some sub-ethnic groups, such as Kamchadals, Bystrinski Evens, etc. That is why the peninsula is a very opportune region for ethnographic case study researches. A lot of them are implemented by foreign explorers such as K. Gernet, S. Hitztaller, E. Kasten, D. Koester and others (Gernet, 2007; Hitztaller, 2009; Kasten, 2007; Koester, 2008). Results of their explorations are published in Russia, but many of their works still have not been translated into Russian. A similar situation is observed for local Kamchatka ethnographic research papers – they are only available in Russian.

Local researchers, performing investigations, are often representatives of the so-called ethnic intelligentsia, i.e. not professional scientists. They have difficulties when it comes to correct scientific representation of their research results. Russian science calls them “kraeveds” (the term invented in the Soviet period to describe people interested in the regional and ethnic history of the region they live in, but having no professional education and exploration experience).

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES And METHODS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF KAMCHATKA

Modern Russian ethnology has certain traditions and basic methods. One of them is the use of the modernization and transformation theory in 20th-century studies, including ethnographic studies. According to this theory, the transformation process has several directions: convergence and divergence (Poberezhnikov, 2006, p. 231). Transformation methodological approach and its basic methods (historical-genetic, comparative, observation, interview, etc.) provide complex studies of processes occurred in the 20th century in ethnic societies, the transformation of traditional ways of Russian Far Eastern national minorities. Its wide usage in modern ethnolo-

gy, anthropology to study the characteristic features of national minorities' socio-cultural development is well founded. The case study method and UX-method are rather new in modern Russian ethnoscience.

Another methodological problem in Russia is what is considered ethnology and ethnography. Classical Soviet school supposes the main task of the science is to study the past and reconstruct elements of traditional culture. As to modern Russian school, one of its founders V. Tishkov suggests uniting ethnology and social anthropology due to their exploration fields' and methods' likeness (Tishkov, 2003). He also notes that the concept of ethnographic field has changed: today, it can be not only ethnic villages and refugiums, but also large cities where ethnic diasporas live and exist. Moreover, an interesting subject for studies could be the adaptation process of local ethnic groups in the modern economy and law space, ways of cooperation of Russian local and Federal authorities, special bonuses and privileges usage (i.e. a system of bonuses and privileges granted to Northern Local National Minorities since the Soviet period).

Regionalization process in historical science is also an obvious and logical trend caused by local scientific schools' development. Various ways of regions' development in Russia in the 1990-2000s proved the necessity of a special scientific concept. It could be used when studying regions and local societies (Treivish, 2001). At the same time, regional scientific schools in sparsely populated territories of Russian Far East and the Far North have some difficulties in development and sometimes even in surviving. That is why a modern methodological approach should combine basic methods and case studies, i.e. the case experience should be interesting for the scientific society of the state and methods used could be extrapolated on other ethnic groups or territories.

According to the state project of special economic zones in Russia (official abbreviation TOSER), Kamchatka should become one of them. Tourism and ethno-tourism were chosen as one of the prospect economic directions. The Bystrinskiy and Milkovski districts are the most appropriate ones to develop ethno-tourism due to many factors: 1) year-round transport communication with the regional center; 2) automobile and bus communication (some other districts have only avia communication); 3) reach ethnic history and traditions (these areas are populated by the Itelmen, Kamchadals and Evens); 4) warm summer and various natural resources; 5) combination of ethno-tourism with the other kinds (hunting, fishing, ecological, sport and extreme tourism). That is why studies of these districts in ethnographic aspect can have practical meaning for the state and

their results could be used in the creation of new state national policy concept and correction of the existing one.

Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University has reach exploration experience in the fields of ethnopsychology (field school “Nasledie” that has worked for more than 10 years), archeology (field school “Kamchatskaya Vershina” that has worked for more than 12 years) and now acquires experience in ethnology and anthropology (field school “Zemleprokhotets” has worked since 2016). Each of these scientific field schools organizes student practical investigations, using modern and classical scientific methods. Students participating in field schools receive the practical experience of field research, writing field notes and cameral processing of field materials (interviews, questionnaires, conversations, etc.).

This article covers the experience and results of ethnological and anthropological field school “Zemloprokhotets” headed by A.I. Kirillova and V.O. Elizarova, professor staff of Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University. In the authors’ field research, they use classical modernization and transformation paradigm in complex with case studies and such methods as an interview, formal and informal conversation, and survey. Due to the young age of the field school, the authors admit the lack of experience and limitation of their scientific results’ validity and value. At the same time, the founders of the school have rich experience in independent scientific research of Kamchatka’s history. This paper represents the first results of the field school’s investigations that will be continued.

3. CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF KAMCHATKA’S DISTRICTS AS ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELD

Kamchatka is a part of Russian Far East and nowadays it’s one of the most scarcely populated territories of this macro region – 316,116 people, according to census 2015. Less populated are Magadanskaya Oblast, Evreyskaya Avtonomnaya Oblast and Chukotka. At the same time, ethnic differentiation of the region is very high. Several ethnic groups live there, some of them live compactly only in Kamchatka region (e.g. Itelmens, Aleuts). Here, they mostly live in so-called national (ethnic villages) in different districts. The districts where Koryaks live are Karaginskiy, Olyutorskiy, Penzhinskiy and Tigilskiy; Itelmens – Tigilskiy and Milkovski (accounting Kamchadals who are often related to Itelmen people); Evens – Bystrinskiy; Aleuts – Aleutskiy. As mentioned above, special attention will be paid to two of them, the most prospective for tourism development. After four ethnographic and anthropological field schools (2007-2016)

based in the Bystrinskiy and Milkovski districts (Kirillova, 2007-2010; Kirillova, 2016) the following characteristic features of Kamchatka's ethnographic field have been revealed:

1) scattering, i.e. population of the districts live on large territories and often in traditional settlements (not official villages, but traditional family settlements called "rybalkis" or "dachas", where the Even and Itelmen people fish, gather plants or grow vegetables to live);

2) new occupations fixing (for example, Evens and Itelmens today even in the traditional family settlements grow potatoes, carrots, etc., breed animals and birds, e.g. horses, cows, hens, etc.). Such occupations are not traditional for Northern peoples, but now modern Russian ethnography considers them to become habitual and gradually becoming traditional;

3) reservation of family settlements for researchers (Evens and Itelmens don't take researchers along to their family settlements right away, a researcher should communicate with them for some period of time to receive such an invitation);

4) hospitality (it combines with the previous feature, Evens and Itelmens can invite an explorer to their house in the official settlement, villages Esso, Anavgay, Milkovo, Atlasovo, etc. If a person was invited to the house or a family settlement he/she will be fed, treated very well and told a lot of stories);

5) nature dependence (summer is the most appropriate for tourism and investigations season, as well as the best period for fishing and fish processing, gathering plants in the forest (berries, herbs, birch bark), growing vegetables and other economic activities);

6) ethnic mixture (besides the fact of compact living of the ethnoses in the districts, the Soviet national policy in the 1930-1980s greatly changed the ethnic composition of every administrative unit and territory. Active migrations of the 20th century, being voluntary or forced, led to the ethnic mixture and assimilation. Now many other ethnoses live in the Bystrinskiy and Milkovski districts. Cases of cross-ethnic marriages are frequent (Memoirs of P.M. Banakanova, 2005) and their frequency is still growing nowadays);

7) cross-ethnic borrowing (ethnic mixture leads to the union of some traditions and borrowing of them, later extrapolation from ethnos to ethnos. As the former keeper of the Bystrinskiy Ethnographic museum, A. Koerkova notes the traditional Even tambourine (in Russian "buben") usage, not in sacral singing, but in common singing and so-called home magic, now has extrapolated on other ethnic collectives, performing traditional folk songs

and dance (Interview with A. Koerkova, 2010);

8) Soviet legacy re-evaluation (representatives of ethnic societies often give a negative evaluation of the Soviet period and Soviet heritage. It occurred because of too fast transformation processes and strict national and social policy of the Soviet state powers. At the same time, due to psychological factors many older informants give a positive evaluation of this period of history because their younger years were in the Soviet period);

9) restraint of territories (compact and constant living on the definite territories leads to the fact that every newcomer will be noted at once. Every mistake or incorrect gesture of an explorer will also be noted and discussed, that is why investigators really have no right for a single mistake in the field).

A modern investigator should take into account all these characteristic features of modern Kamchatka's ethnographic field and use appropriate methods that will allow reaching the set goals. Knowing about these features also helps a scientist to understand the mentality of the locals and to draw correct conclusions.

4. LOCAL ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCHES' PECULIAR FEATURES

Due to regionalization of ethnographic science and active development of local history studies, many universities undertake independent or collective ethnographic explorations, they organize expeditions, field schools, using grant or their own money. Of course, such investigations being based on traditional methods and concepts have their peculiar features. Regional explorations of Kamchatka are not an exclusion. In the authors' local explorations, they use such classical methods as a survey, interview, formal and informal communication, observation (mostly passive rather than active due to time limitations of living in ethnic villages), analysis, synthesis and generalization. Active observation in the ethnic villages, of course, provides an explorer with more valuable information than passive observation does (Boehm, 2010), but in the conditions of field schools, it can hardly ever be performed. To record the collected data one can use traditional forms of field noting and technical devices (dictaphones, cameras, PC) (Emerson, 2011). The specific features of Kamchatka's ethnographic field described above and peculiarity of local academic institutions' functioning lead to the formation of the following characteristic features of local ethnographic explorations:

1) short field period (cold and severe winters with heavy snowstorms (in Russian "purga") often cut ethnic villages from region's center; winter

there lasts from October to the middle of April, that's why summer is a more favorable period for investigations. One more factor that shortens the period of investigations is the specificity of the Russian educational process – students could not be taken away for a long period of time, except for their vacation time);

2) short-time expeditions and field schools (because of very high transportation, accommodation and nutrition costs it's very expensive for a local educational establishment to organize a long-term expedition. Therefore, the most frequent term is 10-14 days. For 10 students plus 1-2 scientific workers, standard expenses on a single expedition start from 300,000 rubles if a territory has bus communication and 500,000 rubles if only avia communication is available);

3) specificity of Russian local educational establishments' functioning (educational establishments can't afford to support scientists-explorers who live in the ethnographic field and perform investigations but don't work as professors. It means that professor staff perform explorations during vacation time only);

4) forced methods limitation (the above-mentioned characteristic features produce strict limitation in the methods used in ethnographic explorations, i.e. active observation or long-term passive observation are nearly unavailable especially for students-participants of field schools);

5) legal limitations and restrictions (for example, since 2013 the law on private information security has been toughened. So, to make references to interviews or questionnaires with personal information (first name, last name, date of birth, gender, etc.), it is strongly recommended to have written permission of the informant. Sometimes in the ethnographic field, it is hard to access paper. This factor forces the investigators to work with more impersonal questionnaires or interviews. In the scientific society, such information becomes less verified and of course, its validity also becomes lower);

6) lack of professional ethnographic investigators (professor staff of local educational institutions are rather limited: to perform special-purpose explorations and use special methods it's necessary to draw scientists from the other regions, which increases the cost of investigations and field schools);

7) closeness of local scientific society (there are several ethnologists in Kamchatka, they know each other personally and don't need special institutions or places to exchange the results of their work. That is why there are no special ethnological scientific institutions in Kamchatka).

Despite all these factors, local ethnographic explorations are actively performed in Kamchatka, Northern peoples' problems are actively discussed at scientific conferences and forums. One should also mention the state grant support for independent and field school scientific investigation performance. There are two levels of grant support: regional (from Kamchatskiy Krai Government) and federal (from the state authorities). Young scientists can receive financial support from a state organization that conducts Russian state youth policy, Rosmolodezh. Using the support local professor staff organize and perform scientific explorations. Their results are published in regional and federal scientific magazines. Despite all the difficulties and limitations local ethnographic studies of Kamchatka are perspective and useful. Their results can be used in the practice of special economic zone program implementation in the sphere of ethno-tourism.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Kamchatka is a region with rich ethnographic heritage, preserved ethnic traditions and Northern peoples' unique culture. It's actively explored by foreign and Russian scientists, but the most valuable explorations are the complex ones. Such investigations could be performed by local scientists who know the characteristic features of the ethnographic field and mentality of Kamchatka's natives. Specific features of the region's historical development (remoteness from Russia's mainland, restraint of territory – in the 18th – first quarter of the 20th century it was cut off from Russia for more than 6 months a year, it had limited population, less than 50,000 people at the time; the population in the mentioned time was constituted mostly by indigenous people, 7/8 of Kamchatka's population) made it rather unexplored and interesting for scientists. Such historical development helped to preserve many elements of traditional ethnic culture that still attracts tourists and scientists with its primevality.

The Soviet period influenced the territory greatly, changed ethnic composition even of the remote territories, such as the Olyutorskiy, Karaginskiy and Tigilskiy districts. Soviet influence was significant in every part of the state due to the arranged national policy and efficient methods of its implementation. In the 1970-1980s, the so-called ethnic renaissance began and indigenous people started to revitalize their traditional culture. In the zones of their compact living, so-called national districts and ethnic villages, the process was more active and fruitful. Today, these districts attract tourists with ethnic souvenirs, folk dance and songs, special cultural establishments (reconstructed traditional dwellings, settlements). Also, many

traditional crafts have been reborn and restarted.

Many people resettled in the Soviet period left national districts and ethnic villages because of the life standard collapse that happened there due to the state donation reduction. Moreover, certain state privileges and bonuses lost their attractiveness because of the severe climate and difficult life there, thus, many settlers preferred to leave. This made the ethnographic field “cleaner”. That is why many villages formed in the Soviet time received the status of “national” (“ethnic”). Of course, the Soviet heritage and so-called “cross-ethnic trace” could not be neglected and should be taken into account by modern researchers. The case study and UX methods could be helpful in revealing this influence and trace. Moreover, they would help to understand the reasons for positive and negative assessments of the Soviet times. One more obvious advantage of these methods is the restraint of every national district – villages are located far from the districts’ borders. Therefore, every remote district is “a little world”. A visit to the region’s center, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatski, is a great travel even for the inhabitants of the Bystrinskiy district and people, who live in small villages of the Milkovski district. Fieldwork and explorations under such conditions require a strong set of ethics and morality from researchers.

The characteristic features of local ethnographic investigations determine the formats of fieldwork and methods used. Despite these limitations, the derivable results have practical importance and scientific value. Features of the ethnographic field and local researches and schools revealed based on materials and practical experience acquired in the Bystrinskiy and Milkovski districts should be extrapolated and expanded with data collected in other national districts. Such explorations are supposed to be the prospect of local researches development.

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