REGIMES OF CLASSIFICATION AND THE PARADOX OF KAMCHADAL HERITAGE

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Abstract: This paper examines the historical formation of the "creole" ethnic group known as Kamchadals through an examination of the changing criteria for ethnic, social, and class taxonomies. Over the course of 300 years of Russian settlement in Kamchatka, the population has been subject to three distinctly different regimes of classification, with each prioritizing different qualities. Thus, at various times, the ethnically mixed population in central Kamchatka has been measured, and officially recorded, on the basis of religion, profession, social standing, wealth, and ethnicity. Today, as Kamchadals seek to establish themselves as an officially recognized indigenous population, the historical record presents particularly difficult questions that tend to undermine their claim. For example, according to current procedures, to become officially recognized as Kamchadal, a person must demonstrate direct descent from a person classified in the 19th century as Kamchadal. The 19th century records however, are not records of "ethnicity" as it is understood today, and thus official classification is as dependent on luck as it is on any commonly accepted measure of "ethnicity" or "race." Thus, this paper charts the shifting measures by which a local, frontier population was measured, and contemporary efforts to translate those modes of classification into contemporary understandings of "ethnicity." Its broader relevance concerns a tension inherent to the concept of indigenousness itself, that is, the tendency of outsiders as well as native peoples themselves to apply a measure of authenticity and thus to discriminate between varying shades of "more" and "less" indigenous individuals.

— The post-colonial desire is the desire of de-colonized communities for an identity. (During, 1995, p. 125)

INTRODUCTION

In 1947 a paper was published in the Soviet journal *Dal'niy Vostok (Far East*) reviewing recent Soviet research on indigenous minorities. The author reported that in the field of paleoasiatic studies, scientists had "eliminated the persistent confusion between Kamchadals and Itel'men" (Sergeyev, 1947, p. 84). Both groups, Kamchadals and Itel'mens, live in Russia's easternmost frontier, on the Kamchatka Peninsula, which juts down from Chukotka into the North Pacific. In the earliest ethnography of the region, based on research from the 1730s, the two groups are actually described as a single ethnic group, called Kamchadals (Krasheninnikov, 1972 [1755]). The confusion arose as Russians settled the peninsula and congregated in certain areas, namely in the south and also along the Kamcahtka River. As they began taking native wives, the resulting families and eventually the villages of these regions came to be seen as culturally distinct from those where fewer Russians had settled. One report from 1790 described "three sorts of inhabitants" in Kamchatka: natives, Russians and "the

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descendants from intermarriages" (de Lesseps, 1790, p. 94). Thus, the novelty of the 1947 paper cited here is not the simple achievement of identifying types within an ethnically mixed population, but instead the remarkable need to state and re-state the types, to inscribe, once again, a distinct ethnic division through an ethnically heterogenous population. In this case, Sergeyev cleared up the "persistent confusion" by establishing Kamchadals as a "metis" group distinct from aboriginal Itel'mens.

In this, Sergeyev was not merely restating an observation made in 1790, he was also providing scientific support for a 1927 declaration in which the new Soviet administration of the Kamchatka region officially cleaved the Itel'men/Kamchadal population into "true aborigines" and "Russified natives." The political context for this move centered on the goal of establishing ethnic homelands, or autonomous regions, for certain officially recognized groups. In the case of Kamchatka, the northern half of the peninsula was set aside as the Koryak Autonomous Okrug, named after the most populous indigenous group in the territory. The Even people, living in a small area of central Kamchatka, were bounded within the Bystrinskiy Rayon, a small region officially recognized as a "national" region. Beyond that, those Kamchadals living south of the Koryak Autonomous Okrug border were, in 1927, officially classified as Russian. The official declaration stated:

> It is established that the population of the Kamchatka Peninsula which calls itself Kamchadal, speaks Russian, and lives settled, does not belong to the number of small aboriginal peoples of the far north, to whom should be applied the privileges of the small peoples of the north. On the contraty, the history of interrelations between actual natives and those who call themselves Kamchadals requires that special attention be devoted to the struggle with remaining forms of enslavement to actual natives by Kamchadals. (in Gropionov, 1986, pp. 51-52)

The implications of this decision were considerable and the two resulting populations, Itel'mens in the north and Kamchadals in the south, provide an interesting indicator of the outcomes of Soviet nationalities policies. Ol'ga Murashko has summed up this history as follows:

> Without adequate substantiation, the Kamchadals in Kamchatka were divided into two groups. . . . As a result of differences between nationality and economic policies in the Soviet state, in relation to education and in other areas, these two ethnic groups developed under different conditions, and it has been their fate that one became Itel'mens, the other Kamchadals (Murashko, 1995, p. 4).

This paper will explore the history of such classification in Kamchatka through three examples of ethnic taxonomy, focusing on the different modes according to which markers and signs of ethnic affiliation have been recorded and interpreted. It will conclude by exploring the implications that such regimes of classification have for indigenous and mixed populations throughout the Russian North. The contemporary implications of this tripartite ethnic classification stem from a 1991 decision "to

recognize the presence in the Kamchatka Oblast of the ethnic group Kamchadals and to disseminate to them all of the benefits afforded to small numbered peoples of the north" (Murashko, 1996, p. 358). Thus, having spent virtually the entire Soviet period classified as "Russians" and outside of the state structures that managed nationalities policies and that distributed the benefits afforded to indigenous minority populations, Kamchadals were suddenly "indigenous." This change ushered in a new political problem for Kamchadals, namely: how to project an indigenous heritage based on the idea of a frontier creole community? How can Kamchadals possibly appear legible, according to the norms of national identity, as a "mixed" group?

WHAT THE VISITOR SAW

The murky boundaries mentioned at the outset of the paper, supposedly "solved" in 1947, are a hallmark of travelogues from Kamchatka. Nearly everyone who wrote about their trip to Kamchatka came around to the subject of confounding ethnic distinctions. Again, as much as this preoccupation reflects the reality of a mixed-race frontier population, it also underscores the manner in which a researcher's own concerns can be imported wholesale—mapped onto others. Consider, for example, the comments of Vladimir Komarov, a botanist who perhaps displays a special concern for classification and an eye for hybridity. Reflecting on a scientific expedition in Kamchatka in 1908, he observed that

> One frequently wonders who you are seeing in front of yourself—a Russian or a Kamchadal—they have mixed so much and live an identical life, with identical clothes and appearance. Even where the residents themselves consider themselves to be pure-blooded descendants of aborigines, it is hard to discern what their distinctive characteristics are since they resemble each other so little. Therefore, generally for them, as for Russians, everyday traits are now more common than any lingering specificities or anthropological particularities (Komarov, 1912, p. 105).

Komarov's comments come at the outset of an unusually detailed account of the annual cycles of the Kamchadal economy, and deserve special scrutiny because he appears to be especially interested in gauging the difference between Kamchadals and Russians. At this point, it is important to ask: On what basis was Komarov (and other outside observers from that era) making his assessments of ethnicity? It appears that Komarov, the botanist, worked with the widely held assumption that it should be possible to ascribe a single cultural identity to any individual, based on "specificities" and "particularities." He also seemed perplexed by the variation that he found within what he apparently expected to be a more homogenous group ("they resemble each other so little"). It is instructive to consider closely Komarov's appraisal, and to keep in mind that it is the work of a botanist. His work clearly exemplifies a widespread classificatory logic running roughshod over the "data" as he clings to the notion that "types" are not organizational constructs, but instead correspond to lived realities.

For example, in his survey of the architecture in Kamchatkan villages, Komarov mentioned a range of structures including typical Russian-style homes and

distinctively Kamchatkan storage sheds (*ambarchiki* and *shaiby*). He also described homes constructed out of abandoned shipping crates still bearing their American labels, some roofed with corrugated galvanized tin, also from the United States, and others on which pounded-out kerosene containers had been used as tin siding. He ended his list with "the most characteristic part of a Kamchatka village, that is, *balagany*" (Komarov, 1912, p. 108). *Balagany* are dual-purpose structures that consist of a single-room dwelling perched about 20 feet above the ground, resting on a set of tall support poles. The space below the elevated platform is used for hanging fish to dry since they are protected there from rain above and from dogs below.

Komarov's description continued when he differentiated three types of *balagany*, a classification that was meant to demonstrate that under Russian influence these structures were less often used as dwellings and were at the time increasingly used only to dry fish. Introducing *balagany*, Komarov remarked that "Obviously, we have here a local variant of one of the most ancient types of human dwelling" (Komarov, 1912, p. 112), and what is clear from his analysis is that moves away from such signature differences are crucial measures of cultural loss and assimilation. According to his measures, ethnicity was marked as much by physical appearance as it was by such "anthropological particularities" as the odd architecture of *balagany*.

What is particularly noteworthy, however, is that the scene Komarov described seeing in 1908 would be considered, by the measures used today, undeniably "indigenous." He described fish being dried under *balagany*, dog teams hauling sleds for winter transport, and other crucial markers of indigenous Kamchatkan heritage. In fact, during contemporary heritage festivals and celebrations of native holidays and traditions, ceremonial *balagany* are constructed and dog teams and sleds race in competitions. This gradual and inexorable movement away from a preceived "golden age" or pristine aboriginality poses a challenge to indigenous populations throughout the world because in comparison with some pre-historic moment of authenticity all indigenous populations will fall short. Scrutiny such as Komarov's, which remains commonplace among local Russians today, classifies indigenous populations not so much in a state of decline, but a state of being defined as permanently inhabiting the condition of decline. To be indigenous in the modern era, according to this logic, is to be inauthentic. Remarking on similar dynamics in Australia, Povinelli has remarked that

> At its simplest, no indigenous subject can inhabit the temporal or spatial location to which indigenous identity refers—the geographical and social space and time of authentic Ab-originality . . . [this is] because the category of indigenousness came into being in relation to the imperial state and the social identities residing in [that state], and continues to draw its discursive value in relation to the state. (Povinelli, 1999, p. 29)

As Povinelli argues, because the concept of aboriginality is a product of the "settler state," the very definition of aboriginality implies a population embodying a social space and historical moment *outside* of any fixed relationship with the state. Within the context of state administration, that space of authentic aboriginality will always be impossibly distant. For Kamchadals, the difficulty of such a conceptual dilemma is compounded by the idea that they are not purely native but instead a

mixture. Locating even a fictive moment of authenticity, irredeemably distant or otherwise, is all the more difficult since at the supposed moment of emergence, the 18th and 19th centuries, they were being described not as a distinct ethnicity but, as here with Komarov and above with de Lesseps, Kamchadals were forever remarked upon as a population notable mostly for its lack of culture. They lack indigenous specificities and characteristics and at the same time they fall short if measured up as Russians. It is this "in between" space that Kamchadals attempt to stake out for themselves today.

METRIC BOOKS

At the same time that Komarov was conducting his research in Kamchatka, another body of data was being compiled in villages throughout the peninsula. This was not research data, but church records, known as "metric books" (*metricheskiy knigi*), maintained in each parish with a record of births, marriages, and deaths. Rather improbably, these church records have become, in official negotiations, the single source of acceptable proof of Kamchadal ethnicity. With each birth, marriage, and death, the names of relevant individuals were recorded along with their "nationality." Because of the inherent ambiguity of the Kamchadal (metis) category, state officials today have declared that to be formally recognized as Kamchadal, one must establish direct links, through subsequent state documents such as birth certificates and marriage licenses, to someone recorded as Kamchadal in the metric books. The trouble with this approach is that the meaning of Kamchadal has changed over the last century. Just as the impulse to collect such information in the first place has shifted with subsequent changes in administration, so too the meaning of the labels has shifted. The priests who filled in the records a century ago approached the box for "nationality" with an understanding and motive that bear little relevance to the legal disputes that today send bureaucrats and Kamchadals searching through the records.

In terms of today's politics, the problem with the metric books is that the box for "nationality" was then understood to be relevant to an entirely different regime of classification than today's interest in "ethnicity." The current policy involves a direct translation, as if there had been no change in social classificatory vocabulary from the late tsarist era through to the post-Soviet one. In fact, the metric books exemplify the failure of traditional Russian tsarist ideology in the face of complex demographic and cultural shifts brought on as modernity and imperial expansion produced an increasingly diverse and unstable population.

Historically, Russian society was organized according to social estates (*sosloviye*), and in the Russian countryside it was possible to divide the population into peasants, nobles, clergy, and urban estates and there was little confusion about anyone's place in that order. However, this order was threatened as the tsar's domain expanded to incorporate native, non-Orthodox populations to the east, and as social reforms such as the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the gradual growth of modern cities increasingly challenged the simple divisions of the social estates. Thus, early 20th century Russia was marked by widespread contradiction and confusion regarding the constitution and interrelations between various segments of the population. Even in the 19th century, Freeze has cautioned that "the flux—and confusion—in the state's terminology should evoke more caution toward assumptions about its central role in

'legislating' social development; important as the state's influence may have been, other factors—cultural, economic, social—were of equal if not greater import" (Freeze, 1986, p. 35). Thus, while the state persisted in ascribing a label or social category to everyone, official state ascriptions of estate (*sosloviye*) became increasingly irrelevant to individuals' actual occupations (*sostoyaniya*). Around the turn of the century, for example, there was a "growing number of industrial workers born in cities who were still legally ascribed to the peasantry, even after they lost (especially in the wake of the Stolypin land reforms) any tangible ties to the countryside and to the land" (Haimson, 1988, p. 2).

In Kamchatka and throughout Siberia and the Far North, the situation was further complicated by the mix of non-Russian, non-Christian populations of nomadic and semi-nomadic hunters, fishers, and reindeer herders. If liberating serfs from their traditional ties to the land and allowing them to move to cities produced the confusion and terminological muddle mentioned above, then obviously additional categories were required to provide state administrators with a useful survey of the indigenous populations of Siberia. The most common blanket label for the Siberian natives encountered by Russians was *inorodtsy*, which can be translated either as "native" or "alien."

> An *inorodets* is literally, a person "of other origin" (*ino* = other; *rod* = birth, origin). To refer to the inhabitants of Siberia as *inorodtsy* as the Russians commonly did, was to emphasize these peoples' radical civilizational difference from the Russians themselves. (Slocum, 1998, p. 177; see also Khodarkovsky, 1997)

Beyond this term though, there were others that made more specific distinctions. For example, as "alien" subjects of the tsar, Siberian natives were required to pay a "tribute" or fur tax, known as *yasak*. Some tsarist-era census reports from Siberia record not the population of natives but the number of "*yasachnyye lyudi*," or *yasak*-paying native men (Dolgikh, 1960; Murashko, 1994; Sokolovskiy, 1998). This clearly reflects the motive for gathering such census data in the first place. Another central concern for Russians in their expansion westward was the propagation of Orthodoxy, thus there was also frequent reference to *inovertsy* ("other believers," i.e., non-Orthodox). One way to avoid the fur tax was to convert to Orthodoxy, thus shedding both the "*yasachnyye*" and "*inovertsy*" labels. Converted natives, however, still remained "*inorodtsy*," since the sense of difference that this term carried with it connoted more than just religious belief.

Beyond the obvious fact that there will always be dubious "conversions" when such financial rewards as tax exemptions await the convert, there were other differences between Russians and Siberians that were not easily overcome by religious conversion. Slezkine has suggested that the lingering difference "seemed to begin with food [because] dietary taboos defined ones' own community as distinct from 'savages,' 'foreigners' or other 'nonhumans'." In the case of Kamchatka, such a formulation is confused by the widespread tendency of Russian settlers to adopt the local diet. Russian farming proved to be a struggle in the subarctic conditions, and the extreme abundance of fish and game in Kamchatka made subsistence practices far more productive in comparison. Slezkine also mentioned that related to food are the

activities surrounding the production of food, and thus Russianness and alienness were both constituted in part by a "certain relationship to the land" (Slezkine, 1994, pp. 174-175). As with food, when Russians moved to Siberia they tended to adopt the local relationship to the land instead of implementing their own. In this regard, the colonization of Kamchatka differs from more conventional operations in which outsiders imposed novel systems of labor and land use such as plantations or factories. Dobell, for example, writing in 1830, bemoaned the tendency of Russians to abandon "civilization" upon arriving in Kamchatka:

> Instead of drawing the native to their mode of living and industry, [the Russian settlers] neglect everything like civilization, and are themselves now quite as wild and uncouth as the Kamchadals, besides being infinitely more vicious. (Dobell, 1970, p. 51)

Another interesting point of comparison that Dobell provides is that while so many others observed the Kamchadals adopting Russian customs such as clothing, architecture, and language, and remarked on the absences of "original" or "ancient" Kamchadal traditions, Dobell concentrates on exactly the opposite. Dobell's vantage is not that of a researcher seeking cultural difference, but that of a reformer or developer, seeking signs of civilization in the wilderness. Central Kamchatka seems perennially to have disappointed both sides in this dichotomy. In any event, both perspectives present problems for a nuanced classification of the local population and call into question the guidelines used in the formulation of the various categories used in the metric books. Considering the flux of the estate system, the high rates of intermarriage, and the tendency of Russians to adopt the Kamchadal lifestyle (and vice versa), what can be gleaned today from the identity terms ascribed by village priests in the nineteenth century?

The most important point is that they were emphatically not racial or ethnic categorizations. This is the strangest element of the current policy—which appears to translate characterizations that were made on the basis of a range of characteristics such as religion, occupation, literacy, and prosperity and to use them in a project of racial classification today. For example, even a quick scan down the column calling for "nationality" in the metric books reveals the central problem, as it contains at least one individual classified as each of the following: "hunter," "teacher," "Russian," "Kamchadal," "peasant," "Ukrainian." According to the current policies, the only people who can today be officially considered Kamchadal are those who can trace a direct link, via documents such as marriage licenses and birth certificates, to an individual classified as a "Kamchadal."

LANGUAGE

The third example here comes not from visiting researchers or from government archives, but from stories told by Kamchadals themselves, and it shows something of the ways in which the boundaries that I have been discussing are experienced locally. With the exception of a small group of politically informed Kamchadal activists, very few people in the villages where I worked knew much about the metric books. Among those familiar with the official process of attaining Kamchadal status, most

expressed understandable indignation and distain that once again, outsiders were classifying them without any input from Kamchadals themselves. While I spent considerable time working in the archives and speaking with archivists and bureaucrats involved in the registration effort, when I returned to the villages where most of my research took place very few people were interested in discussing the details of the process and I was often greeted with baffled silence when I persisted with questions on the subject. Instead, the stories I was told about the meaning of Kamchadal difference, especially those shared by older people, tended not to emphasize political sentiments as much as social and familial ones. Thus, while the official rhetoric involving land claims and metric books is saturated in politics, and my own research agenda was based in part on the premise that Kamchadal heritage and culture would be highly politicized topics, what I found instead was that asserting an indigenous heritage locally often hinged not on "political" sentiments, but on seemingly innocuous forms of nostalgia and the resurrection of a "structure of feeling" (Williams, 1977). For example, while I often asked people what they thought the positive outcomes of the end of the Soviet Union would be, I was surprised by one woman who told me that the best thing she could think of was that an old childhood friend had, purely by the chance and dislocation typical of the 1990s, once again become her neighbor.

The two women now spent long hours chatting in each other's kitchens, speaking what Lyudmila described as "Kamchadal" language.

> We [Kamchadals] have an entirely different accent. A Russian shows up and you have to start speaking correctly. For us it was really difficult, especially when we were young girls, because our parents talked that way. It really tormented us because we were speaking *Kamchadalskiy*, and when the Russians showed up, in school especially, we started trying to change.[1]

It is true that both spoke Russian with a characteristic "Kamchadal" accent, which has been noted and described in detail by various observers including Lyudmila's folklorist daughter. In fact, as late as 1960, education department records from central Kamchatka refer to problems with the "local dialect," and in that year's annual report the Kamchadal accent actually enters the official record, a minor triumph for Kamchadals considering they had been declared, many decades earlier, to be assimilated and Russian:

> The quality of knowledge and the strength of skills in the area of Russian language calls for improvement . . . many of the students do suffer from the local dialect and the young teachers . . . have little knowledge of the methods required to correct this shortcoming. (Gosudarstvennyy, n.d.)

It is also likely that out of shame and practice they concealed the Kamchadal elements of their speech while I was with them. When she discussed her Kamchadal accent and I asked her to demonstrate, she offered a few sentences but then burst out

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[1]Personal conversation with the author, Mil'kovo, Russia, February 4, 1998.

with self-conscious laughter, as if there were something hopelessly rustic and unrefined about it. I took this partly as a sign of distrust and unfamiliarity, but felt that it also pointed to a recognition of insurmountable differences, both temporal and experiential. Her habitual tendency to conceal markers of Kamchadal-ness in the presence of others, as well as the decades that separated her struggles with the language and our conversations, outweighed any common ground that the two of us may have found.

> Even after I got married to my first husband, all the same the words [Kamchadal words] would fly out of my mouth and I would personally turn red, I was ashamed. Because they demanded that we speak properly, but I just couldn't do it. By the 1950s I had gotten married, and the girls would gather on the street say, to talk . . . I was a young girl too, pretty and all, and I would go up to them to talk, but I just couldn't say anything. I would listen to them, but myself, I would stand there quietly. I was afraid that I would start to say something and a Kamchadal word would suddenly fly out of my mouth, I'd mix up my consonants.

The image of Kamchadal elements uncontrollably and embarrassingly flying about, and Lyudmila's relative comfort with that possibility today, presents a compelling metaphor for the shift in state power, and also for the process of aging. The changes that have taken place in Lyudmila's own sense of her "Kamchadalness" offer a clear example of the transience and ambiguity of the category "Kamchadal." Though she made every effort in her youth to eradicate signs of Kamchadal heritage, she is now regarded as a Kamchadal "speaker," as a person who is Kamchadal by any measure. Vakhtin (1997) has referred to a process of "regressive restoration" that perpetuates the impression that only a small population of elderly people speak a language that is on the verge of extinction. Regressive restoration refers to the process whereby the oldest living generation, against a background of a dominant other (Russians) returns to modes of communication "that they seemingly had forgotten long ago" (ibid., p. 84). Although Lyudmila clearly did everything that she could when she was young to encourage the idea that Russian was the only language spoken in the area, her renewed use of "Kamchadalskiy" in the 1990s suggests how language use, and cultural "accents" more broadly, can linger quietly in the background during a person's life, remaining available for restoration. The fact that the language she has restored consists principally of Russian words and hinges largely on accent is not directly relevant to the significance she and her friend attribute to it. In addition, her emphasis on conversation as a new source of pleasure marked a perspective not found in more politicized, not to mention official bureaucratic discussions of revitalization or tradition.

Whereas Lyudmila now seeks comfort in conversation with her friend, and enjoys letting the Kamchadal words fly, there are plenty of young people that I met, including one of Lyudmila's granddaughters, who were involved in the same struggle of effacement that she had confronted in the 1950s. Just as she did when she was younger, Kamchadal children and teenagers today routinely practice the same gestures of self-effacement and denial. On more than one occasion, older Kamchadals told me that their children or grandchildren did not "want to be" Kamchadal, and

during interviews, they would often leave the room claiming that only *babushka* knew about such things.

This example is meant to demonstrate how even in a single household one could find clear examples of the tensions and ambiguities surrounding the embodiment of the category "Kamchadal." The archive's metric books play no role here, where the older women's pleasure in a rekindled friendship and the opportunity it offered them to relish an accent they had worked so hard to exorcise contrasts sharply with the granddaughter's disavowal of any knowledge about things Kamchadal. The importance of the everyday in Kamchadal revitalization lies in its centrality to Kamchadal narratives about themselves and their histories. Just as Lyudmila named speech and an old friend as advantages of the post-Soviet era, many other Kamchadals emphasized family relations, foods, and modes of social decorum or propriety in their accounts of historical change. Thus, while I was expecting more overt political discourse about land reform or minority rights among Kamchadals, what I found instead was a preoccupation with shifts in social relations and emotional landscapes. Consequently, there was less discussion of laws and more explication (for my benefit) of deeply felt losses (of community, of optimism, of a productive landscape). In many cases, discourse about Kamchadal history or identity worked through naming such losses without marking the changes ethnically. In such discussions it became clear to me that disavowal, effacement, and private expression were hallmarks of Kamchadal heritage. While initially these habits, or elements of style, appeared to me as obstacles to successful political movement, I later saw them as means to constitute a politicized sphere outside of any officially political arena.

I want to avoid placing such evasions under the rubric of "resistance" in the sense that Scott (1985) describes because the material efficacy of such effacement, not to mention the counter-hegemonic motivations that may lie behind them (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1997), were obscure and would appear to be more the result of ethnographic hyperbole than resistance per se (Abu Lughod, 1990; Ortner, 1995). At the very least, finding solace in Kamchadal conversations represented the type of gesture that de Certeau wrote of in describing the ways that Indians under Spanish rule "escaped [the dominant order] without leaving it" (de Certeau, 1984, p. xiii). To the extent that there was a politics to Lyudmila's Kamchadalskiy speech, it was a politics of evasion and disengagement. It did not appear to be political by any recognized measure. "Kamchadalskiy" language itself did not exist in any language primers, was not taught in school and thus was not legible as a "native language."[2] It therefore went unrecognized despite being relatively pervasive.

Despite these reservations, and to continue with this single example, I suggest that the pleasure surrounding Kamchadal speech, as well as the past and present self-effacement that render such speech as a pleasurable indulgence, represent a significant experiential element of Kamchadal revitalization. In her work on women's divinatory practice in rural Greece, Nadia Seremetakis remarked that "the poetics of the cultural periphery is the poetics of the fragment" (Seremetakis, 1991, p. 1). In Lyudmila's narrative about speech and silence, and in her ongoing reunion with an old friend, I see the creation of a temporary and marginal space of both solace and

[2]By "legible" I refer to a situation in which Kamchandalskiy would qualify as a language according to the prevailing understanding of that term by Russians (both inside and outside of government offices).

power. Considering the limits of the context, and the resilience of old habits, small, fleeting moments of community and solidarity represent significant interruptions. Seremetakis continues:

> There can be no holistic experience in the margins, only the creation of refuge areas that provisionally assemble the holistic from fragments in order to intervene in the public structure of domination. The experience of discontinuity and break prevails in the margins. The myth of holism and continuity is the ideological creation of "centers" and of dominating groups. (ibid., p. 2)

Indeed the myth of holism and continuity, exemplified in Kamchatka by the literal tracing of heritage through metric books, was a topic that few Kamchadals were willing to discuss. It seemed as if there was some realization that the formal recognation of Kamchadal as an official indigenous identity, but one without a coherent or recognizable body of cultural traits, meant that such an identity was best characterized as fragmentary, discontinuous, and marginal. Kamchadal history and identity seemed to me most visible precisely in oddly paradoxical situations such as Lyudmila's, where two women found solace speaking to each other in a dialect that existed in no language primer, that may have been just an accent of a long-lost language. It was just such nuances that highlighted the constant gestures of effacement and the subsurface quality that I found to be so characteristic of Kamchadal history and of contemporary expressions of Kamchadal identity.

ALLEGORIES OF IDENTITY

Together, these three examples are meant to illustrate that the very existence of the "group" known as Kamchadals has depended largely on the means of measurement, and that the novelty of this case lies largely in the fact that Kamchadals have repeatedly turned out to be not entirely legible as an ethnic minority, yet never entirely invisible either. According to various meaures, Kamchadals have often registered as sufficiently different to be noted, but somehow not sufficiently different to be recognized as such. This ambiguity promises to be an enduring feature of Kamchadal politics at least into the near future. Kamchadal-ness continues to be as meaningful a marker of identity as it has ever been. Aside from legislating "it" into existence, relatively little has been done to establish Kamchadals as a group. Not only is there no assigned "national" territory for Kamchadals, and no experienced core of trained elites, but many Kamchadals remain ambivalent about whether, how, and even *why* to proceed with asserting, or making visible, "the" Kamchadals.

This case underscores how imported epistemologies can conjure the objects they seek to investigate. In the first two examples examined here, the regimes of classification that were brought to bear on the Kamchadal population involved little inquiry into the population itself. Instead, Komarov the researcher and various village priests simply applied existing taxonomies onto the complex case of Kamchadal heritage to produce familiar, though inaccurate, findings. If there is a lesson to be drawn from these misapplied taxonomies it is that all such efforts to categorize are perhaps best seen as allegorical and that regimes of classification are at best allegories of identity.

The advantage in this is that, at the very least, it respectfully acknowledges what a cavalier feat it is at ascribe an identity to an individual or a group. It continually calls attention to the ultimate superficiality of efforts, whether by ethnographers or census takers, to inscribe boundaries through heterogeneous populations.

This paper's epilogue, During's assertion that "The post-colonial desire is the desire of de-colonized communities for an identity," is relevent here precisely because applying it to the case of Kamchadals problematizes both During's assertion, and the idea of a Kamchadal "community." At one level, this assertion rings true as so much of global politics, post-colonial and otherwise, is structured by the logic of identity politics. The idioms of nationalism, including emphases on borders, boundaries, and "ethnic" groups, organize political processes worldwide, both within and between nations. Thus there is a global congruence in aspirations for the expression of national identity and a global understanding that recognition is achieved by emulating conventional, naturalized national forms because it is through such forms that the most politically viable forms of "identity" are generated. At the same time, however, it is unclear that these aspirations, and the desires that inspire them, are widely shared by any given "community," and it is here that During's claim falls short. It seems more appropriate to locate the desire During refers to in specific arenas and among specific actors, namely post-colonial elites such as nationalist intellectuals and those that Brubaker has called "nation-invoking . . . political entrepreneurs" (Brubaker, 1996, p. 16). Outside of such official realms, anxiety about "identity" takes on a distinctly different character. Based on my research, I would suggest that many Kamchadals, to the extent that they can be said to constitute a post-colonial community, longed not for an identity, but for a community.

Anxieties about Kamchadal "identity" have historically been brought in from outside the community. It is not as accurate to say that Kamchadals desire an identity, as it is to ascribe the desire for Kamchadal identity to ethnographers, census workers, and legislative committees charged with zoning, mapping, and allocating resource use rights. Many Kamchadals had little to say about Kamchadal identity, and responded almost quizically to my questions on the subject. When I asked about historical change, I was more frequently told about the demise of community, broadly conceived, than about ethnic politics or an absence of identity. The point here is that the metric books, census reports, and other official modes of measurement examined here are not testaments to Kamchadal anxieties about their own identity. It is worth emphasizing here that to speak of "national minorities" and "emergent national groups" is to speak the language of states and not necessarily to refer to broadly felt experiences. Such terms "designate a political stance, not an ethnodemographic fact," which is to say that they are categories of political practice. They structure perception, organize discourse and political action, and only rarely describe stable, clearly bounded groups (Brubaker, 1996, pp. 5-7). Thus, "legibility" for an ethnic minority hinges on being seen as such, and thus on actively appearing to be an ethnic minority. It is a dialogic process of seeing and appearing, with appearing here understood to be an active process, at least partly volitional.

The case of Kamchadals is especially interesting precisely because they have had such difficulty appearing as a legible minority group. As a result, this case offers a clear perspective on the different modes of measurement simultaneously at play, and throughout I have sought to emphasize the incongruities between state measures of

ethnicity and those modes of understanding and experiencing Kamchadal identity that were most pervasive among Kamchadals themselves. Such differences between the various registers and measures of identity are often overlooked, with the official expression granted a privileged status. Outside of such priviledged spheres, however, Kamchadal will continue to be a meaningful category, even if its significance is principally local, and is mostly registered in ways that are invisible to state measurement. It will continue to organize local experiences, to structure alliances as well as to generate pernicious stereotyping. This will continue to happen irregardless of how identity is recorded in passports. Just as decades of official "invisibility" during the Soviet era did little to erase Kamchadal identity, it is not clear what impact official recognition will have.

I have argued here that Kamchadal identity resides largely in fragmentary experiences, gestures, and signs. Lacking official history books, holidays, a column in the census, and many of the other institutionalized elements that constitute the bureaucratic armature of national identity, Kamchadal identity has been most vibrant in vernacular forms. I have come to think of the various instances of "Kamchadalness," moments of effacement, communities of revitalization, and also the measures employed by the state, as allegories of identity. They are each brief fragments that symbolize broader narratives. The idea of allegories of identity can be taken further, however, and even the state measures can be seen as symbols, although instead of opening themselves up for interpretation, the allegories of the census and the passport tend to foreclose further inquiry. Throughout this project, there has been a tension between examining Kamchadals as an actual group, and examining the discourses through which Kamchadals have been labeled, measured, and identified, essentially the means through which the "group" has been constituted. By suggesting that these discourses are allegorical, I aim to underscore the symbolic logic by which they work, each settling on a different set of criteria, seeking a different constellation of signs by which to create its object.

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