Mobilization and Isolation as Outcomes of a Dysfunctional Soviet Landscape. [a working title]

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This paper is about the resilience of soviet landscapes in post-communist Siberia. It is my thesis that the Soviet landscape endures into the early years of the 21st Century as a dysfunctional artifact of the Soviet era. Many indigenous Siberian peoples living in remote villages and settlements have little or no access to means of travel and subsequently are suffering from a variety of problems associated with impoverishment and isolation. The soviet era placement of settlements and their requisite infrastructures are material reminders of a built environment that has failed to adapt to the conditions of market capitalism that now characterize the economies of central Siberia and are poorly suited to provide for the needs of remotely located rural peoples in the post-Soviet era. The settlements were designed to function with the redistributive inputs of fuel and subsidies associated with Soviet socialism and fail to work in their absence. In other words, Soviet settlements in rural Siberia are de-localized (Pelto 1973) technological systems. All of the artifacts of socialism are now precariously situated because of their dependence upon transfer payments, subsidies, and centralized bureaucracies. The post-Soviet landscape is littered with crippled devices of industrial manufacture, confounding the possibility for rural peoples to develop healthy communities.

This paper presents a history organized around mobility where travel and the inability to travel is taken as a key experience for both indigenous northerners and newcomers. In my argument the current predicament of de-mobilization and isolation in remote villages of central Siberia is shown to be in part a result of enduring dysfunctional landscapes and the difficulty of negotiating mobility within these landscapes. While my research is specific to the Evenki Autonomous District (hereafter referred to as Evenkiia) in central Siberia I will draw on examples from other areas of the Russian north and the circumpolar arctic, all of which have extensive rural areas and which suffer not only from being geographically marginal but also tend to be theoretically marginalized in mainstream discourses on globalization.

The bulk of my discussion occurs around the production of travel and mobility from the point of view of indigenous Evenkis of the Evenkiia'. In writing this history I make primary reference to the District administrative
centre of Tura and one of the small settlements of the district, called Ekonda [see map insert]. While these two places make easy points of reference, I also consider the places in-between as equally important. In fact, it is the places in-between that normally elude totalizing academic discourses, and it is against the facility and convenience of such discourses that I attempt to frame this work. Rather than offering a radical stylistic alteration though, I’ve attempted to provide an ethnohistorical study that privileges travel and mobility over stability and immutable structures. So it is that not only the settlements but also the taiga (or forest, les) of Evenkiia comprise the geographic, social, and historical landscape that is the focus of this study. This work uses specific examples from the Ilimpii county which is the northern most of three counties in Evenkiia. After establishing this history I will briefly discuss my ideas about the on-going relevance of de-mobilization and dysfunction in the circumpolar North. Finally, drawing on a more general theoretical discourse on globalization I will situate my own research and propose a space that may be useful for others trying to represent remote arctic and sub-arctic places.

a general introduction to the material

Prior to the arrival of the Tsar’s tribute collectors to the central Siberian plateau at the end of the seventeenth century most Evenkis travelled nomadically throughout the taiga recognizing more or less fluid boundaries negotiated between one-another as well as other Siberian peoples. Through the Tsarist imperial era, their movement came to be more and more associated with trapping areas, sites of tribute payment, as well as the locations of Russian Orthodox missions. In the early 20th Century administrative boundaries rose in importance, leading to the territorial markers that have prevailed for the last fifty years or so, which have come, to a certain extent, to determine spheres of Evenki social relations and experience in the first ten years of the post-Soviet period. Prior to the establishment of these territorial markers the scope of mobility in the taiga was much broader. However, before exploring the broad and sudden imposition of a Soviet landscape, it is important to consider the more gradual changes that occurred through the Russian Imperial era and the time of revolution and civil war.

The imperial expansion of European nations in the post-enlightenment era was not restricted to Western Europe. Russia, too, was in a position to expand its empire and had the will to do so. Expeditions and military forces, centralized in Moscow under the Tsar’s direct control, were sent east to annex adjacent frontier lands. There
were, however, significant distinctions between early Russian imperialism and that of other European nations. The nature of colonization was characterized by the Tsar’s interest in extracting wealth in the form of animal hides from the vast taiga regions that lay to the east of the Ural mountains. This practice was contrary to the pattern of colonialism in British North America, where colonization after 1867 was as much about settlement and nation building as it was about the establishment of a resource colony. With his tributary imperative, the Tsar laid explicit policy dictating the terms on which ‘natives’ were to be treated. Particular emphasis was placed on facilitating their ability to pay tribute. Another difference in the character of Siberian colonization was that the northern Siberian taiga offered little potential for agriculture and was a poor draw for settlers who might otherwise have competed for territory with the various indigenous groups.

Resistance to the collection of tribute and to the state’s intermittent attempts to reorganize Evenki political relations occasionally resulted in bloodshed. Such violent resistance is well reported in other areas of Siberia (Tugolukov 1985; Forsyth 1992; Slezkine 1994). A more common scenario of resistance towards the state was one of avoidance, whereby Evenkis travelled deeper into the taiga in an attempt to escape the tribute collectors. The mobility of Evenkis was a constant irritation to the colonial administration’s fledgling bureaucracy. S. Patkanov wrote in 1906, that “[i]n their travels the Tungus pay no attention…to District boundaries…[and, in the South] they’re not even shy of the borders of the state” (Vasilevich 1969: 6). Patkanov’s dissatisfaction was clear, especially as he goes on to describe the way in which nomadism was so confounding to tribute collectors (ibid.). One ethnographer’s frustrations at the end of the nineteenth century were marked by his inability to make sense of Evenki movements in the taiga: “they wander almost all year across unknowable forest thickets” wrote Ivan Mainov (Ssorin-Chaikov 1998: 29).

The European demand for fine pelts spurred an active local economy independent of Moscow’s tribute system which had, in fact, preceded the arrival of tribute collectors. Both established trading posts and mobile traders became an integral part of the taiga landscape. Tugolukov notes that many Sakha (Yakut) traders moved through the taiga as well, offering an alternative to the Russian traders and trading posts—though not necessarily better terms (1963: 18). In this era, Evenkis’ seasonal rounds were expanded to include trapping for tribute and trade, travelling to summer trade fairs, and, occasionally, pilgrimages to Orthodox Christian churches. The
political, economic, and spiritual landscape of east-central Siberia, if not always in a state of perpetual change, was entering a period of radical transformation.

Over the roughly three hundred years of Tsarist rule in Siberia there were many shifts in power relations and in the intensification of the state’s involvement in the lives of Evenkis. The pressure of colonization disrupted an already heterogeneous ethnic landscape. In the later years of the Russian imperial era new systems of political organization among the central Siberian Evenkis emerged, creatively reflecting imposed legal and economic structures. Thus, older clan systems were altered and became more amenable entities for Tsarist bureaucratic practice.

The Evenki system of paths prior to the soviet era

In my attempt to create an ethnography of travel I have appropriated an idea from the work of a Russian ethnographer working in the Baikal area of central Siberia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. S.M. Shirokogoroff wrote two classic monographs on Tungus peoples of Siberia. I am particularly interested in his characterization of the patterns of mobility of the Tungus from the Baikal. In his book *Psychomental Complex of the Tungus* (1935), he writes that,

In accordance with the acquired knowledge of the primary milieu the Tungus have worked out their system of migrations, also imposed by their chief industry of hunting and reindeer breeding. . . We have seen that the Tungus have created a system of communications, the paths. Indeed, in the eyes of the people accustomed to the railways and artificially erected high-roads with bridges [and] dams, the system of Tungus paths would not seem to be a technical achievement, a cultural adaptation. However, it is not so when one looks more closely at the phenomenon. [87]

Shirokogoroff’s goal was to expel eurocentric notions of superiority by showing the logic and art of the Tungus economy. In my own work I have used this idea of a system of paths to describe the subject of an ethnography of travel. My adaptation of Shirokogoroff’s ‘Tungus system of paths’ makes a useful metaphor which recognizes the existence of very different understandings of territory, place, and practice. The established systems of paths used by Evenkis existed in contrast to that of the Russian invaders, traders, and missionaries as well as other
indigenous Siberians. Evenki people’s activities, however, cannot be de-historicized and typified as unchanging cultural practices over time. I do not propose this idea as an immutable and rigid system. That said, it is the thesis of this work that Evenki peoples’ autonomy over such a system was seriously eroded in the latter half of the twentieth century. This, however, cannot be understood as a simplistic relationship between oppressor and oppressed as many Evenkis worked very hard to create a system of paths that worked within the logic of the soviet state. It is the artifacts of this very system which, years after the collapse of the socialist state, no longer function and pose serious impediments to Evenkis. As such one might characterize the Evenki system of paths in the 21st century as being heterogeneous but marked by a comparative lack of mobility. The idea of mobility as a core idiom for describing a process of globalization has recently been used to great effect by Zigmunt Bauman (1998). “What appears as globalizations for some,” writes Bauman, “means localization for others” (ibid.:2). Localization aptly describes the situation for many Evenkis. What is confounding, though, is just how they came to be localized and what it is that prevents them from doing very much about it.

It is clear from the records and reports at our disposal that the central Siberian plateau region was a well-traversed and culturally mixed landscape prior to the arrival of the Europeans. The difficulty in locating Evenki people among other nations in this region is evidenced in the typically confused and conflicting reports of early explorers, traders, bureaucrats, clergymen, and ethnographers. The task of figuring out who was who and who was living where is confounded by a fluidity of identities and mobile households. The attempt to fix and enforce boundaries and organizational structures was an advent of the new colonial government. Referring to Shirokogoroff’s early work in the study of Tungus social organization, Dmitrii Shimkin writes that “Tungus (Evenki) clans had strong leadership, including shamans, and clan ceremonials, but were loosely associated with territories and lacked clan sanctuaries” (Shimkin 1990: 319). In the context of Tsarist bureaucracy, Evenki clans and tents came to be more associated with administrative units spatially bound in territories. It would be a mistake, however, to explain this away as an inevitable result of state hegemony. In many instances Evenkis manipulated Russian law and discipline in their own local political struggles (Slezkine 1994; Ssorin-Chaikov 1998).

All of this translates into a somewhat shifting set of traditional Evenki practices and identities during the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The most common assessment of the changing cultural
landscape through this period suggests that “the Evenki mobile economy was one of reindeer-facilitated hunting, trapping, fishing, and trading” (Anderson 2000a: 226). Gail Fondahl aptly generalized the situation when she wrote that “[i]n the tayga no single activity (hunting, fishing, or reindeer herding) traditionally sustained a family, obshchina or clan; rather, a combination of these activities provided for both subsistence and commercial/trade needs” (Fondahl 1998: 113). As the needs changed over time, Evenkis adapted and altered their approaches to work. It is much more reasonable to speak of a shifting, mixed repertoire of Evenki practices than to essentialize any single practice out of time. Unfortunately, the way that Evenkis actually thought about work and identity in this period is elusive.

Mobility choices for the Ilimpii Evenkis were partially governed by the range of economic possibilities held in the seasonal round. As is common throughout the sub-Arctic, great seasonal variations limit the sorts of activity that can occur at any given time. Prior to the arrival of the Russians, who travelled principally by river, the primary mode of travel in east-central Siberia was either on foot or with the aid of reindeer. The Russian ethnographer Glafira Vasilevich (1969) makes reference to a range of travel practices among the Evenkis which coincided with the number of reindeer owned. The Evenkis’ mixed, forest-based economies generally necessitated a degree of flexible mobility. For those breeding reindeer there was a constant need to travel to new pastures. Within the realm of reindeer breeding there existed different needs as well, which were especially dependant on the size of the herd. It seems that the majority of Evenkis raised reindeer herds to enhance their mobility and to provide an emergency food source. Despite this being the most common form of reindeer husbandry, some Evenkis raised larger herds of deer for meat production. The accumulation of wealth in the form of reindeer engendered differential social relations. Smaller herds of reindeer were composed of enough animals to meet the transport needs of the family. Larger herds, however, provided for user networks that extended beyond the families’ needs. This means that ‘surplus’ deer could be ‘rented’ out, given as gifts, lent, and (though rarely) sold. Anderson writes of this as “lucrative mobility” (2000b: 143).

Those Evenkis who had no deer [literally, deerless: bezolen’ye] were considered impoverished by the Russian colonizers as well as in Russian and Soviet ethnographies. Vasilevich writes that

Evenk reindeer impoverishment [maloolennost’] in the former Turukhansk region . . . was isolated in a particular group of Evenkis on lake Chirinda. A. Chekanov and F. Miller in the 19thC. with
difficulty found reindeer among the Evenki of the upper Viliui. This last group, occupied with fishing, were singled out from their group who were nomadizing with their reindeer. [1969: 52, footnote]

If reindeerlessness was necessarily a condition of poverty in pre-colonial times, it is clear that the accumulation of wealth came to be associated with the size of reindeer herds, especially in the Soviet era when census-takers took note not only of people and their clan/tribe affiliations but also the number of deer that they owned. Soviet ethnographers and ideologues, in an effort to apply social class analysis to the indigenous peoples, read this situation as one of exploitation. The wealthy herd owner was thought to control the labour potential of impoverished Evenkis through debt slavery. Based on questionable estimations of herd size and ownership it was later calculated who were the wealthy oppressors, or *kulaks*, and who were the oppressed poor.  

The variety of economic pursuits within the taiga environment resulted in an equal variety of travel practices.

Permanent tracks in the taiga were only to be found at the approaches to the trading points. Migrations were always in the direction of new places. Summer tracks usually passed over watersheds and winter tracks along rivers, through the tundra, only deviating in the case of mountain passes. [Vasilevich & Smolyak 1964: 630]

The mobility of Ilimpii Evenkis was not simply a function of their economy; there were numerous factors that shaped the ways in which they travelled through east-central Siberia. Using archival documents associated with expeditions, trading posts, and churches, ethnographers describe the Ilimpii taiga as a tremendously active and changing landscape. Shirokogoroff suggests that for the Tungus of TransBaikalia, human-animal relations “in taiga life compel the Tungus, first of all, to know every valley thoroughly, and also to know which animals inhabit it. He must know where he may travel without annoying other animals, just as he does in reference to other ethnical groups” (1929: 43). One type of movement in the colonial period, described by Vladilen A. Tugolukov (1985), is based on both reindeer and pedestrian mobility. Though many of the reasons for migrations and diasporas remain obscure, at least some of the most common ones are known. Vasilevich writes that at the end of the nineteenth century, Evenkis living in remote regions of the Lower and Podkamenaia Tunguskas remained relatively unknown to the Russians, whose expeditions at the beginning of the twentieth century had not yet penetrated deeply into Evenki territory: “There had been no meeting with Evenkis in the upper parts of the Podkamenaia and Nizhnaia Tunguskas and the region between them” (1969: 32). This anonymity, however, is not
equivalent with ignorance. Indeed, such remotely located Evenkis, because of pre-established indigenous trade routes, would have been well aware of the Europeans who had been in the area for over two hundred years.

While the Russians generally stuck to the navigable river systems, Evenkis had the knowledge and technological skills to efficiently travel across the taiga. The forest was, without a doubt, the realm of Evenkis. The seeming isolation of remotely located Evenkis was, in part, a strategy of avoidance. Although the Tsar’s tribute collectors had methods of ensuring that yearly dues of pelts were paid, their spheres of influence must have been highly limited.’ The winter forts along the rivers were not, after all, the only points to acquire essential foods like flour and tea and equipment like rifle shells and canvas. Warfare and violent conflict were also reasons for migrations of Evenkis in east-central Siberia. Such conflict is noted in Gurvich’s (1977) *Culture of the Northern Yakut Reindeer Herders* as well as Tugolukov’s (1985) *Tunguses (Evenki and Eveni) of Middle and Western Siberia*. Nonetheless, internecine wars that occurred in east-central Siberia remain unclear markers of territoriality due to frequent migrations of people. Rather than imagining stable geographies of territorial conflict, the landscape is better understood in the context of shifting regimes of migration and travel. Tugolukov writes, for example, of an insurrection by local Evenkis in Essei in the winter of 1682-83. After the people in the fort were killed, the majority of the Essei Tungus moved (nomadized away [otkochevali]) to the North and the East (1985: 177). This reflects conditions whereby territorial allegiances were less than stable and Evenkis were able to move with relative freedom to other places.

Despite resistance and avoidance strategies, the necessity of tribute payment and the growing demand for trade goods overshadowed the autonomy of most Evenkis. Vasilevich and Smolyak write that “[a]ccording to legends of the Yenisey Evenks, their ancestors lived in clans. . .[which] possessed a ‘river,’ that is to say territory” (1964: 643). Given the movements spurred on by disease, however, occupation and control of territory may not have been especially stable. Perhaps in response to the increasing power of the state, it seems likely that territorial boundaries began to develop around trap lines and areas that were rich in fur-bearing animals.

*Patterns of Russian mobility*
In central-eastern Siberia the lands that lay beyond the Enisei river were not broached by Europeans until the beginning of the sixteenth century.

In 1614 the Mangazeya Cossacks imposed the fur-tax upon the Evenks living on the Upper Tunguska [Angara]. In 1623, practically all the Evenks living near the Yenisey, on the Lower and Podkamennaya Tunguska, Vilyuy and Chona were paying the tax. [Vasilevich & Smolyak 1964: 623]

The Cossacks—the Siberian colonial forces of the Russian empire—enacted a more or less systematic Russian invasion of Siberia that ended with Russian America in the late eighteenth century. The geographer Robert North notes that due to the value of the fur trade “and also because the Kazakhs of the Middle Horde continued strong to the south . . . Russian activities were virtually confined to the tayga” (1978: 15). While the Muscovite state was the prime mover in the colonization of Siberia, there existed significant ties with private interests and initiative (Collins 1991: 38). Exacting control over such a vast landscape was essentially impossible and resulted in an inability to monitor state representatives, leaving their allegiance to Tsarist policy and law largely open to individual preference. Anderson also notes that the Russian tribute economy did not impinge greatly upon Evenkis’ autonomy (1995: 142), nonetheless the growing presence of Russians in the taiga had an undeniable effect on Evenki economy and social life. Indeed, “the historical evidence indicates that, at least for many households, the coerced exchange of furs expanded the use of space” (ibid.). Tribute, trade, missionization, the imposition of state sanctioned political and legal structures, and general cultural contact all contributed to a rapidly changing cultural landscape.

At the end of the sixteenth century, the first Cossaks crossed the Enisei in the North and established winter forts or blockhouses as sites for trade, the collection of tribute, and the enduring confirmation of Tsarist rule. Gurvich writes that in 1640 Russians arrived at the lower Viliui winter fort and recorded ninety-five tribute-paying Yakuts out of a total 380 people (Gurvich 1977: 4). Over the following years other forts in the region were established and the Tsarist presence in central-eastern Siberia solidified. A strong military presence was vital in the subjugation and settlement of Siberia; the Cossak police force hired by Moscow was governed by the voevoda (military governor) who held considerable power in the early development of Siberia.

The strategy for colonization, given the immensity of Siberia was to travel “along river routes, fortifying strategic points such as confluences and portages from one river system to another” (Collins 1991: 39). Siberia’s river systems provided the most significant routes of travel for the Tsar’s Cossaks and civil servants, as well as
independent traders and missionaries. Turukhansk was strategically positioned at the confluence of the Enisei and Nizhnaia Tunguska rivers. The Nizhnaia Tunguska and the Podkamennaia Tunguska provided deep penetration into the central Siberian plateau areas while the Enisei was a major thoroughfare for riverine transport connecting Siberia to Europe via the Kara sea. The Nizhnaia Tunguska and Viliui rivers were a major east-west route for traffic between Yakutsk and Mangazeia-Turukhansk; this journey could take four to four and a half months (ibid.).

Travel on the lesser rivers (like the Nizhnaia Tunguska, Kochuchum, Viliui, and Podkamennaia Tunguska) necessitated flat-bottomed barges [doschaniks] that were motivated by sail, oar, and hauled by humans or horses from trails on the forested banks. Raymond Fisher writes that on journeys on larger rivers, like the Enisei, “kochas, decked boats quite similar to doshchaniks, were used” (Fisher 1943: 174). The rivers, of course, were not accessible by boat during the long winters. Even when there is no ice and snow there are only a few weeks when barges can successfully navigate the rivers. These windows of opportunity open between the spring’s high waters and the autumn’s low waters.

It was in the mid-1800s that paddle wheel steamers arrived on the Siberian scene. For over thirty years after their introduction “four firms connected with European Russia trading houses controlled virtually all the Siberian river steamers.” (North 1978: 47). The steamers became indisputably useful vehicles in the maintenance of Tsarist control over the new colonies and presented new opportunities for missionization and resource extraction. While valuable animal pelts continued to dominate northern Siberian trade, there occurred a steady rise of mineral exploration and exploitation. When the importance of the fur trade declined in the second half of the nineteenth century alternative ventures were in a position to maintain the state’s interest in Siberia, including several gold mining sites.

Travel journals of the orthodox priest Father Mikhail Suslov from the late 1800s report that much of the land south of Essei remained unexplored by Russians, confirming Vasilevich’s statement that the Lower and Podkamennaia Tunguskas were relatively peaceful until the end of the nineteenth century (1969). Vasilevich discusses a variety of paths, highways, and routes cut through the taiga in Siberia and the Russian Far East, noting that social and economic relations differed in places where there were no major trade routes (1969: 180). The trade routes appear to have functioned as east-west corridors for the traffic of goods and people. As North (1978) has
indicated, the majority of the rivers navigable by barge in central Siberia run from the south to the north which led to the development of overland trails to move goods between forts, towns, construction sites, and the major riverine routes. Although to the south the Moscow-Siberian highway reached Krasnoiarsk by 1735, there could be no parallel road building in the northern regions (ibid.). With regard to overland travel, Fisher notes that it was “in many instances faster and more direct, especially in winter on the snow, but such travel was feasible only for short journeys, since no extensive post system existed and the cost to an individual, or even to a group, of long journeys by horse and cart or sledge was prohibitive” (1943: 174). Options for overland travel north of the Nizhnaia Tunguska were limited to reindeer conveyance, as horses were ill-suited to the densely wooded and marshy taiga.

Missionaries, traders, and state servants were obliged to seek the aid of guides and chauffeurs to ply the immense Ilimpii taiga. Guides [kaery] working in the tundra that borders the north of the Ilimpii area are described by Anderson in the following passage:

At the turn of the century, kaery hauled supplies and people at the behest of less regimented institutions such as trading firms with government monopolies, tax-gathering Cossacks, or missionaries distributing the sacrament, surnames, and ritual calendars. [Anderson 2000b: 136]

This was the beginning of a local freight industry that persisted through to the 1970s. With the modernization of the North in the period of high socialism, Evenkis narrowed their service from guiding and hauling to guiding alone. What is important to consider here is that the two hundred years or so of colonial encounter prior to the communist revolution was a time of great changes for the Evenkis due to imperial violence, epidemics, epizootics, internecine wars, and the pressure of displaced indigenous peoples from other regions. The primary means of travel, however, remained localized in the Evenkis’ monopolization of taiga mobility through reindeer conveyance.

Following the Imperial Russian era, rapid technological and social change swept through the former Russian Empire. Evenki peoples’ extensive travels were recast in terms of Soviet modernity and in the context of industrial mechanization. Consequently travels were made not only according to traditional routes and trails on reindeer saddle and sleigh, but were also undertaken as journeys in the modern Soviet state, on motorboats and barges and in helicopters, trains, and airplanes.
The Soviet system of mechanized travel

[T]he appearance of modern equipment in the taiga—aircraft, automotive vehicles, motorboats, portable movie projectors, radiotelegraphic communications and the like—have resulted in deep changes in the personalities of the natives in the taiga. [Tugolukov 1963: 35]

The face of the old settlements, the nomadic encampments, and even the very occupations of the people underwent a profound change. [Rytkheu 1980: 23]

Just as Shirokogoroff (1935) described Tungus mobility in the early-twentieth-century as a system of paths or communications,viii it follows that a Soviet system of mechanized travel can be examined in the same fashion. This system is tightly bound to European modernities; cultural logics that have particular commonalities and histories of dissemination, interpretation, and co-optation. It was not, however, until the period of ‘high socialism’ that the celebrated triumphs of modernity were really extended through the Soviet system of mechanized travel. Until this time the Soviet project was very much in the process of constructing foundations.

This section lays out the development of a distinctly modern system of mechanized conveyance in Soviet east-central Siberia. In the latter part of the Soviet era, as industrialization and northern development expanded to include the Enisei basin, a system of state-approved corridors of travel emerged in conjunction with the mechanization of the means of conveyance, notably aircraft, tracked vehicles, trucks, snowmachines, and motorboats. These travels included regular flights between the taiga and remote settlements, remote settlements and regional centres, and regional centres and major cities. According to Uvachan, an aerial route was established between Krasnoiarsk and Dudinka, a 1,600-kilometre journey, in 1932 (1971: 235). By 1935, Tura and Baikit were connected to the growing network of aerial navigation (ibid.). The revolution in transport brought Siberia and the Far East into much greater contact with European Russia. This sustained contact, in turn, facilitated the Soviet state’s policies towards the modernization and administration of indigenous peoples (Grant 1995). Caroline Humphrey and David Sneath report a similar experience for the Mongols and Buriats of Inner Asia:

Far from being a time of stability, the socialist period emerges here as a period of almost ceaseless change. A common theme is collectivization, which started in all areas of Inner Asia with small co-operatives, subsequently amalgamated into large and more rigidly organised collectives or communes. The years of ‘high socialism’ in the late 1950s to early 1980s were succeeded by a variety of forms of ‘privatisation’ throughout the region. [Humphrey & Sneath 1999: 35]
A typical characterization of the Soviet economic and social reorganization marks collectivization and sedentarization as the most acute points of Soviet violence towards Evenks, their cultures, their economies, and, in my own configuration, their system of paths.

[The] tragedy of the Evenks began with the period of collectivization. At this point the Kolkhozy [collective farms] became the owners of the Tayga lands, later it was the sovkhzoys and gosprokhozy. Forest inhabitants lost the basis of life—their clan and family lands. [Grigorevna 1992 quoted in Fondahl 1998: 57]

While most scholars start their analysis of the incursion of State forms of social and economic organization with the civil war which followed the communist revolution (Fondahl 1998; Pika 1999), Anderson (2000b: 37) notes that the most radical changes to everyday life occurred in the 1960s—the era of industrialization. As for the establishment of a distinctly Soviet system of mechanized travel, the removal of women and children from the taiga was certainly an important beginning and eventually set the foundations for more intensive changes. While organizational changes made significant contributions to the alteration in the mobility of many Evenks, I would agree with Anderson that it was not until the state’s economists, scientists, and bureaucrats sought to modernize the forest economies that the Evenks’ system of paths, maintained by hunters and herders, was truly challenged.

Soviet modernization and development of northern regions occurred on both the levels of industrial expansion and exploitation of natural resources and of the reorganization of local industries (Kuoljok 1985: 51-2). Kuoljok, however, makes the rather naive point that industrialization hadn’t threatened ‘reindeer-breeding’ in the Soviet North because of a nationality policy that preserved “the specific character of each people” (Kuoljok 1985: 52). The other reason for this, she states, is that polluting industrial complexes were not extensively cast upon the Siberian landscape. Their concentration in industrial centres, along with the “shortage of roads and railways in the North” (Kuoljok 1985: 52) supposedly protected reindeer industries. However, David G. Anderson’s ethnography of the Khantaiskoe Ozero Evenkis in the Taimyr provides evidence of the broad effects of heavy metal pollution on reindeer herds (2000b: 62-63). Development in Yamal, and nuclear testing on the border of Yakutia and Evenkiia in the Viliui basin would also suggest that in Soviet times ecological preservation was certainly not the case (Golovnev & Osherenko 1999; Yegorova 1994).

For Siberia in general, the momentum of industrialization picked up after 1956 (Kuoljok 1985: 52). Koviazin and Kuzakov write that in Evenkiia between 1955 and 1956 “the ‘land tenure regulation’
[zemleustroitel'naia] expedition of the ministry of rural economy of the RSFSR gave each kolkhoz concrete recommendations in the use of reindeer pastures” (96). The actual implementation of these recommendations was yet to follow. In the Taimyr “[b]eginning in the late 1960s, a . . . division of labour was enforced by the state. The entire stock of reindeer was divided into separate herds to be managed by professional brigades” (Anderson 1995a: 57). The socialist reorganization of Evenki economies was an important part of what Aleksandr Pika pointedly refers to as the “marked experiments of social engineering aimed at destroying nomadic ways of life” (1999: 96). Breaking Evenki autonomies was meant to produce good Soviet citizens. As the Evenki historian V.N. Uvachan wrote, “The peoples of the North, as equals, have entered into a new historic community—the Soviet people” (1971: 292).

Through the period of high socialism, Ekonda’s economy was dominated by compartmentalized land-based activities such as hunting, trapping, and reindeer herding. A fur farm had been established, and cows, pigs, and chickens were brought in to replicate southern diets. One major sovkhoz was established and appears to have been closely tied to the village administration. There was no hospital but the local nurse-practitioner and midwifery clinic [feld 'sherskii-akusherstvennyi punkt] was always staffed and was stocked with medicines. Visits were made to Ekonda by general practitioners, dentists, eye doctors, as well as photographers, and, occasionally, entertainment troupes. The were also permanent positions for the librarian and recreational staff for the culture club which had facilities for musical instruction as well as a gymnasium for volleyball and badminton which also operated as a theatre for movies and drama, a dance hall, and a community hall for large meetings. One reindeer herder that I met in 1995 won a socialist competition for over-fulfilling his production quotas by nearly 200 per cent. His prize was to travel to the 1967 World’s Fair in Montreal. While the Soviet state allotted significant rewards of travel and vacation through socialist competitions, most people had access only to the Soviet corridors of travel within the USSR. The travel experiences of many people in Siberia during the Soviet era were truly extensive in an increasingly well-travelled world. Petra Rethmann, an ethnographer who works in Kamchatka, also notes the importance of travelling in the life stories of Koriak women.

Concerted industrial exploitation of the northern regions began in central Siberia in the 1970s and 1980s (Pika 1999: 90). According to Alexia Bloch, the Evenki Autonomous District was “not flooded with a wave of
incomers, or *priezhi*, until the 1970s. . .[nonetheless] radical shifts in Evenk social organization and traditional culture from the 1920s to 1990s” (1996: 43) resulted from the intensification of state control. Industrial modernization was understood as a prerequisite for the success of socialism. For the paradigm of modern socialism to “make sense, however, a concept of traditional culture was emphasized to set the modernization process off in relief” (1996: 66). This is graphically portrayed in the juxtaposition of modern and traditional technologies, or, in the Marxist-Leninist language of the day, ‘progressive’ and ‘backward’ technologies. All aspects of the Soviet economy were expected to conform to the new standards of scientific management, including the most ‘traditional’ occupations like reindeer herding, hunting, trapping, and fishing.

Tugolukov notes that “collective farms began to organize their reindeer herds by sex and age, to develop rational grazing circuits and to improve the breed” as early as the mid-1950s (1963: 28). Tugolukov is clearly supportive of the science-based management that was developed to replace what were perceived to be ‘primitive’ and ‘non-rational’ forms. Until the 1970s, reindeer breeding was an extension of the transport economy, supporting countless other enterprises like hunting, fishing, trapping, state surveys, military forays, geological explorations, delivery of medicine and food, and the conveyance of people.

The reindeer is a draft animal indispensable in commercial hunting of fur animals. Reindeer transportation is used by geological surveyors, prospecting expeditions, in land management and for other purposes. Reindeer are used to transport freight to remote and otherwise inaccessible regions. [Zhigunov 1968: 1]

Anderson writes that “in order to support the hunting economy in the era before snow machines (pre-1970s) reindeer were bred, trained, and kept for transport (and not for meat)” (1995a: 57). The growing emphasis on economies that were based on modern science and machines sought to rationalize traditional economic practices which were denigrated as backwards, inefficient, and non-socialist.

To undertake this massive transition in the north the popularization and introduction of scientific achievements and the experience of leading breeders, and finally, training qualified reindeer breeding experts. . .[were needed]; these measures would improve the efficiency of reindeer breeders, increase the output of reindeer meat and other products, cut the cost of production, and raise the level of reindeer husbandry. [Zhigunov 1968: 4]

One assessment of the division of labour required for “an economy founded upon reindeer for transport, labour of people and animals maximized the mobility of individuals across a vast territory and thus minimized the capacity of the state to control the structure of work units, the number of deer, and the uses to which they are put” (Anderson 1995: 57). In the industrialization and mechanization of northern ‘agriculture’, the capacity of Evenkis to resist and
creatively interpret state forms of social organization diminished. The compartmentalization of ‘professions’ delivered greater control over mobility to the state. As ‘experts’ emerged from urban universities and colleges, self-determination in the traditional economies such as hunting and herding was often reduced due to conflicting strategies for herd management, hunting, and fishing. “The gospromkhozy”s were set up to concentrate specifically on hunting, and had little incentive to encourage reindeer herding, other than as an auxiliary activity which supported hunting (as a means of transport)” (Fondahl 1998: 74). S.P. Popov writes that

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[t]he basic unit of commercial hunting is a team of 8-10 hunters . . . In winter, this team needs 80-100 riding reindeer, while in summer 50-60 suffice. This arrangement has proved itself in a number of kholkhozes of Evenki National District and the southern part of Yakut ASSR. [Popov in Zhigunov 1989: 209]
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However, it was also in the 1970s that snow machines began to appear as an alternative to reindeer transport.

Land tenure regulation and ‘scientific management’ certainly marks a beginning in the new management strategies that came to dominate in the 1970s. Aside from the “ideological motivations, a driving incentive behind the collectivization movement was the need to generate and access a surplus of foodstuffs and other goods for the growing urban populations in the Russian North” (Fondahl 1998: 58). In addition, development policy in the Soviet Union aimed at “the creation of industrial employment in the midst of regions that [had] for centuries relied on ‘weakly developed productive forces’” (Anderson 1991: 13). The notion of cultural and economic ‘backwardness’ was clearly implicated in this effort, a lingering irritation from the earliest days of Soviet development policy. Herding and hunting brigades were pushed to produce ever greater quantities of meat to feed growing administrative centres like Tura and Olenek. A report entitled “Development of the Technology for Producing Reindeer in the USSR” outlines the thoroughly modern and scientific approach to reindeer herding in Siberia; the authors state:

The prospects for development in this field [of reindeer breeding] are determined by important economic goals such as strengthening northern economy, improving the prosperity of indigenous peoples, [and] establishing a local food supply . . . Thanks to Lenin’s national policy which is being carried out by the Soviet government, reindeer breeding is developing successfully . . . [Koshelev and Muchachev 341: 341]

Through the Soviet era, the Evenki system of paths was perpetuated where possible in the cycle of production herding, but most importantly in commercial hunting. In other cases, however, the reproduction of aspects of the system of paths was not supported due, for example, to the inaccessibility of the land for many women and children. Geographic shifts from forest to settlement to consolidated settlement “served to decrease the
range of a woman’s activities, her cultural and economic options and flexibility, and to channel younger women increasingly away from any level of involvement in such traditional activities” (Fondahl 1998: 69).

Ilimpii Evenkis refer commonly to one particular story that is taken to be a typical botched attempt by the state to manage hunting practices. Until the 1980s Evenki hunters were able to hunt the wild herds of sea caribou [morskie] without travelling great distances. Around the mid-1980s the gospromkhoz Turinskii, with the assistance of the Evenki District Department of Agriculture and the Scientific Institute for Rural Economy (based in Noril’sk), set up long fences made of drift net across the tundra. These nets were meant to funnel the migratory caribou to convenient stations where they could be shot en masse and ‘efficiently’ harvested. The project was eventually abandoned, leaving the nets strewn across the tundra and the caribou’s migration routes altered. This is considered one of the most disastrous events in the history of Ekonda. The relative wealth of the northern neighbouring village, Essei, is partially linked to its proximity to the caribou’s current migration route. This is a point aggravated by the fact that Ekonda Evenkis report that the sea deer used to migrate south of their own settlement, a claim supported in Glafira Vasilevich’s ethnography (1969: 55). Since this experiment, hunters have had to travel hundreds of kilometres north to encounter the sea caribou and it is generally agreed that they can now be found around lake Murukta. The logistical difficulty of making such a trip, given the failure of mechanical transport and limited access to domestic reindeer, keeps many Evenki within much more limited bounds and forces them to rely on scarce moose and forest caribou for meat.

New mechanized vehicles introduced under Soviet industrialization are fundamentally de-localized technologies. Whereas the mixed forest economy does not produce enough wealth to maintain the imported modern technologies, the professionalized or compartmentalized economy of late Soviet socialism came to rely on these modern technologies through state subsidy—a standard redistributive practice in the centralized economy of the Soviet Union. These subsidies had become an essential component in the means of production, confirming an encompassing contingency that can be read as an alienation of the means of production from the rural Evenkis. By the time communism collapsed in 1991, the Soviet system of mechanized conveyance had all but displaced traditional Evenki ways of moving on the taiga. While some Evenkis creatively manipulated the new system to their own ends, others were tyrannized by it. Ultimately, the system was entrenched in enormous networks of
centralized bureaucracy. Technologies of mobility had become just as contingent on this centralization as the remote settlements that were now home to the nomads of the taiga.

In the social engineering projects of the Soviet era, women and children were socially redefined as villagers and, to a certain extent, as consumers. Men ceased to be nomads as well and went through a transformation to become semi-nomadic sedentarized shift-workers. The mobility of women and children in the taiga was generally limited to seasonally based short resource-acquisition trips. They travelled by motorboat to collect berries and fish and sometimes by helicopter to visit relatives working in distant reindeer herding camps. Many men engaged in the land economies and only made occasional visits to town. These trips, where possible, were made with mechanized vehicles. The necessity of rapid conveyance is a concurrent development with the Soviet landscape reformations. Sedentarization and consolidation of villages was made possible through mechanized conveyance and, in turn, necessitated the mechanization of travel. Machine travel and settlements are interconnected elements in the Soviet landscape of east-central Siberia.

*De-mobilization and Evenkis in the post-Soviet era*

In the post-Soviet era, the outcome of state violence toward the Evenki system of paths is evident in the chaotic socio-economic landscape. The very machines that were used in the campaign against Evenkis’ ‘backwardness’, ‘irrationality’ and ‘primitivism’ in the Soviet era are now largely dysfunctional and constitute ongoing impediments to cultural renewal and local empowerment. The sedentarization of Evenki people into central villages, followed by the amalgamation of these settlements in the programs of consolidation, led to the abandonment of many taiga regions. With sedentarization and professionalization, the taiga was bureaucratically and practically sanitized of the indigenous peoples living there. The so-called ‘wandering’ [brodiachii] Evenkis were given fixed homes, names, and numbers. The professionalization of reindeer herding with the associated state support, however, maintained at least some of the extensive land use practiced by pre-Soviet Evenkis. In some ways, the subsidised transport offset the growing attachments to the settlement, enabling the continued practice of
travelling in a familiar landscape. With the reduction of these subsidies over the past ten years, Evenki people's ability to travel extensively on the land has equally diminished.

The broad program of industrialization that began in east-central Siberia in the 1960s and 1970s continued until 1991 when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics emerged from a series of political crises as the Russian Federation and the newly independent states. Since 1991, the situation for residents of remote rural settlements such as Ekonda, Chirinda, Olenek, and Essei had deteriorated to such a great degree that the International Red Cross has had occasion to deliver emergency supplies of food and medicine. The situation for many urban Evenkis in Tura was not much better. In some instances it was significantly worse due to a crumbling welfare system and eroded networks and corridors of transport that had once facilitated travel as well as cash and commodity remittances. In addition, the general condition of economic and social crisis in Ilimpii area has been worsened by conflict ridden district politics. The displacement of the Evenki system of paths for the Soviet system of mechanized travel has made social well-being contingent, or dependent, on access to mechanical vehicles, which in the current economy of the Russian federation are expensive and scarce.

The Evenki Autonomous District exists at an administrative level between territorial [krai] and federal governments. It is an awkward political structure because of conflicting obligations and overlapping administrative operations. A confusion of overlapping power structures is evident in the bitter political feuds that erupted in the autumn and winter of 1999-2000. In late summer it was reported in the local media that fuel for heating and electricity, on which Tura is entirely dependent, were not being shipped up the Yenissei and Nizhnaia Tunguska rivers. The fuel was being held back in what was popularly thought to be a contest of power between the governor of the Krai and the head of the administration of Evenkiia. The result of this contest was the declaration of civil emergency due to the failure of the administration to have shipments of fuel delivered from Krasnoiarsk. This crisis points again to the fragility of northern transport systems and the general insecurity of de-localization.

Transport in the taiga of east-central Siberia is undertaken within a natural environment that is often incompatible with the mechanized systems of conveyance which facilitated development and modernization in other rural areas of Russia. In particular, the shifting permafrost and bogs of the sub-Arctic have provided formidable resistance to the efforts of Soviet and post-Soviet road building engineers. While winter roads require
constant maintenance and have only limited seasonal availability, year-round road travel has been an impossible
goal. In east-central Siberia railways have never posed a viable option for travel. The difficulty of organizing
mechanized overland conveyance in the taiga has ensured the ongoing importance of reindeer for non-subsidized
travel in Evenkiia where a lone winter road connects Ilimpii settlements.

Like the rivers throughout the Tsarist and early Soviet eras, the view from the winter road allows only the most
limited understanding of the taiga landscape. Much of Ilimpii taiga, in the post-Soviet era, is rarely visited by non-
local travellers, villagers, or even hunters and herders. Local travel for some Evenkis, however, continues to
reproduce traditional routes and trails which are maintained by the movement of hunters and herders on reindeer,
motor boats, and snowmachines. Anderson writes that “[r]ather than interpreting an extensive land use system as
the result of a vulnerability to hunger and poverty, it is better to understand Evenki movements as determined by a
multiplicity of strategies” (1995a: 201). These strategies in the post-Soviet era, along with options for resistance to
hegemonic practices, organizational structures, and technological systems of the colonial state, have dwindled in
response to the breakdown of the redistributive corridors for capital and commodities which had formerly been
organized through the centrally planned economy. The lack of opportunities for the creative manipulation of non-
local resources from remote settlements in rural Siberia presents daunting and improbable grounds for local
empowerment.

The following narrative account from my field work serves to illustrate one instance of travelling for Evenkis
in east-central Siberia. It shows the difficulty of negotiating movement between the town and the taiga, two
radically different social landscapes.

On one trip to the taiga, some Evenki friends and I travelled by boat up the Kochuchum river. We left
from the co-operatively guarded docks of Tura to a site roughly fifty kilometres away. It was early
autumn and my host, Branat, was returning to his small reindeer herd in the taiga. When we arrived at our
destination near the mouth of a small stream, there was no one present to greet us, despite having arranged
a meeting in advance. Climbing up the bank and entering the forest, we came upon a path that led into the
a stand of Larch trees and fragrant bushes of Labrador Tea. We hiked several kilometers towards the
camp site and, upon entering the camp we saw a well-established site with many amenities, including a
conical summer tent, called a d’iu in Evenki. Those present were Branat’s wife, their daughter and her
husband and their child, as well as a junior herder working as a hired hand. Branat’s family was nearly
ready to leave after a short three-week visit. It was the end of summer and the family was heading back to
Tura to meet work and school obligations. Travelling from the camp to the bank of the Kochuchum,
Branat’s wife rode on a freight sleigh, while the daughter rode on reindeer saddle, as did the junior herder, carrying the baby in his arms. We gradually made our way back to the river. A second boat showed up soon thereafter to help carry the family back to Tura. A fire was going and tea made. One deer was slaughtered and divided up to all present, especially those who gave their boats for use.

The trip is important for this exploration of Evenki systems of mobility because Branat originally tried to negotiate the use of a helicopter for the journey. When he was unsuccessful in securing a helicopter, he tried to convince someone to take us in by overland tracked vehicle. These were both forms of transport common under the Soviet system of mechanized mobility. Ultimately, Branat succeeded only in negotiating the use of a couple of motorboats to return to his camp and have his extended family returned to the settlement. Such accommodations are becoming routine in the herder’s shrinking repertoire of transport options. The price for the use of boats was costly as it was paid in meat from one of Branat’s dwindling herd.

**Conclusion**

De-localization and the fragility of northern mechanization is a byproduct of Soviet modernization and development. As a byproduct of Soviet modernization and development it can also be characterized as a situation of delicate contingency on de-localized technological devices and systems. The idiom of localized and de-localized technologies is one developed by Pertti J. Pelto in *The Snowmobile Revolution* (1973). He writes that de-localization, as “a large number of interrelated processes . . . [is] best understood in terms of a very generalized loss of local autonomy through the growth of dependence on a worldwide system of resource allocation and political power” (ibid: 166). Elsewhere he defines de-localization “as the tendency for any territorially defined population to become increasingly dependent on resources, information flow and socioeconomic linkages with the systems of energy and resources outside their particular area” (1975: 31). Expanding on Pelto’s work I would tie de-localization to the general fragility of mechanized transport throughout the circumpolar North. The situation of crisis in rural Siberia is particularly critical because of the heightened fragility of inter-regional transport systems in the post-Soviet era. The degree of de-localization effected in Siberia under regimes of Soviet development have
left very few places untouched and has resulted in an expansive socialist landscape that fails to operate under market conditions.

De-localization is perhaps not a problem in places where networks of distribution and exchange are resilient. More southerly and central locales, for example, may suffer from even greater de-localization than remote northern settlements but the difference is that their transport systems are far more extensive and resilient to crisis. The road systems in east-central Siberia are exceedingly treacherous and are only traversable for less than six months out of the year. The cheapest forms of long-distance transport are provided by the river systems. Like the northern winter roads, these rivers cannot offer constant or even reliable routes for the movement of goods. It is by these standards that I claim that the transport corridors of east-central Siberia are essentially fragile. Fragility in this case is a result of the limited number of transport corridors as well as their relative susceptibility to uncontrollable factors such as late frosts, early thaws, hazardous rapids, and rising fuel costs. A fragility of distribution networks mixed with extensive de-localization has led to general technological dysfunction and the de-mobilization of rural Evenkis.

Geographical and social isolation and the failure of transport networks were central problems which resulted in the disintegration of the Soviet system. The modes of transport and travel that occur on the land, on the river, and in the air, in addition to the built environments and social landscapes that contextualize Evenki people’s mobility in the taiga. Each of these modes has been integral to the Soviet projects of northern industrialization and professionalization. They have also been integral to the collapse of the “spatial separation between village settlements and forest herding-hunting camps” (Kwon n.d.: 2). More generally, these projects of socialist re-construction were integral to the displacement of the traditional system of paths and have had the effect, in the post-Soviet era, of de-mobilizing Evenkis—isolating rural settlements in east-central Siberia. The kind of isolation experienced by rural Evenkis in Siberia can be understood as a process of ghettoization. The idea of rural ghettos—which has been effectively used in the United States (Davidson 1996)—makes for a useful analogy not only in this context but throughout the circumpolar North. As this paper shows, the settlements of rural Ilimpii are built environments that were produced through massive state expenditures and projects throughout much of the 20th century. The current predicament of ghettoized indigenous peoples in Evenkia must be understood as a by-product of these environments. It is only through an examination of travel practices that isolation and de-mobilization in
east-central Siberia can be properly understood as being the result of enduring technological systems rather than being a particular deficiency in local peoples’ ability to organize and alter their situation or even local governments’ ability to effect change in the short-term.
references cited.


———. N.D. To divine the history: A view to the past and the present in a Siberian village.


Early twentieth-century literature refers to the Evenki peoples as ‘Tungus’ and describes them as hunters and reindeer herders of the taiga. Tungus, however, is not an ethnonym and is regarded by most Evenkis as a pejorative name. I only use the word here to refer to its historical usage.

Traditional homelands of Evenki speaking peoples include much of Central and Eastern Siberia, as well as the Russian Far East. While clan names are rarely used to distinguish individual groups in the twenty-first century (in fact, most Evenkis I have met have no idea what clan their ancestors belonged to), Evenkis continue to make reference to geographic locales (such as Ilimpii) to differentiate themselves from others...

An approach to ethnography that focuses on travel is certainly not novel. Most recently Petra Rethmann has used this to great effect in her book *Tundra Passages* (2000).

As the intensity of Soviet industrialization in the north increased in the 1960s and 1970s the wealth of state farms was directly linked to the size of reindeer herds. Rather than democratizing herd ownership, state planners consolidated herds and re-located power to centralized bureaucracies.

It is widely known that the Cossaks took hostages to ransom payments of tribute (Fisher 1943).

To this day, despite modern road making technologies, there are few maintained roads.

I was told by one Evenki herder that he was hired by a group of ‘mammothologists’ to guide them through the taiga. I later learned that he had accepted their employ not only for the money they would pay him but also to watch over them. Guiding has the naive implication of taking the passengers where they want/need to go but it also has the covert implication of monitoring and limiting the passengers’ experience. The herder was concerned that the paleontologists would discover that a stream on his territory [uchastok] was littered with high-quality coal.

In context of pre-telegraph history, communication was synonymous with bodily transport with special emphasis on the union of the subject and the object through space. It also operates as a synonym in Russian: *sviaz*.

Gospromkhoz which translates roughly as “state-trade-economy” could be described as a governmental agency or corporation that is concerned with rural economy. Present through both the Soviet and Post-Soviet eras. John Ziker offers this definition: “Government Hunting/Fishing/Trapping Enterprise, generally larger than a sovkhoz or kolkhoz and administered by the Ministry of Hunting of the Russian Federation” (Ziker 2002: 169).

In Tura today, reindeer meat does not garner as high a price as imported meats. As early as the last decade of the Soviet era wild and domestic reindeer meat is reported to have been sent off to feed prison populations on the Enisei.

It is, however, not clear if Evenki hunters feel that management itself is faulty or if it is simply the ineptitude of the current managers. Looking to other subarctic examples (Fienup-Riordan 1990; Feit 1979, 1991) one is tempted to read the reaction as a point of intercultural contention.

Sea caribou is a local appellation for the migratory reindeer that spend part of the year in the tundra and the other in the taiga; they are also called *morskoe* by the Taimyr Evenkis in Khantaiskoe Ozero (Anderson 1995a).

Murukta is reportedly the territory of the ‘Turyzh’ clan of Evenkis (Uvachan 1971).