The Dynamics of Identity Management

ERICH KASTEN

Introduction

Identities are viewed here as cognitive maps for optional social networks that are applied in everyday life, or mobilized in certain situations, in order to respond or adapt to one's particular social and political environments. It goes without saying that such ways of belonging are neither given nor static; they are continuously re-shaped, re-structured, or "re-built" according to the changing situations that individuals experience, or have to cope with. In this chapter, I will direct attention toward the conditions and dynamics under which identities of the inhabitants of the North are developing and becoming increasingly complex over the course of their entire lives. I will show how these identities (or particular aspects of them) may become emphasized on certain occasions and downplayed at other times. And I will show to what extent they can be regarded as "self-created" or, to the contrary, as "institutionalized" from the outside. Particular attention will be given to the highly dynamic interrelationships between these latter two kinds of identity, since "lived" and "declared" identities should not be understood as opposites that exist in isolation from each other.

Social networks and their symbolic representations

The dimensions of identity should not be treated merely as social categories or abstract mental constructs. Rather, what warrants our greatest attention here is the motivations that underlie their creation, how they continue to be manipulated, and the particular (often symbolic) ways in which these dimensions of identity are publicly displayed and reinforced in practice. In this regard, I am harking back to the results of field research that I have conducted since the 1980s among the Saami, the First Nations people of Canada's Pacific Northwest and, since 1993, in Kamchatka.[1]

The transmission of identities in oral tradition

Through story-telling, legends and narratives, the "right" behavioral patterns are transmitted within the group and differentiated from the "wrong" behaviors of others. Thus, already from early childhood on, young people perceive their world and the universe around them as structured in a layered way, which helps them to identify their proper place within it. As a means of linking such distinctly defined worlds, *boundary transgression* is a

frequent motif in the oral tradition of the peoples of the North, in particular those of Kamchatka, as well as in initiation rites among native peoples in the Canadian Northwest.[2] After experiences and encounters with the foreign or the supernatural, the protagonist then usually returns to his or her community with a strengthened personal identity. We will return later to the important theme of *boundary transgression* as a means of shaping extended and more complex identities. Our initial focus, though, will be on the particular genre of creation myths that link particular groups to specific territories.

From stories that were collected by G.W. Steller from the Itel'mens in Kamchatka some 250 years ago, we know how *Kutkh* (an ambiguous mythical being with many human-like, as well as raven-like, features) once upon a time created both the world and human beings. According to one story, Kutkh settled down for certain periods of time at one river after the other. While staying at each river, he fathered children. At each place, after instructing the children in the techniques needed to procure food and other goods, he would move on to the next river. This led him eventually to the southern tip of Kamchatka, where he stopped and suddenly became invisible. Only his canoe, now turned into stone and leaning against a rock there, continues to bear silent witness to what once occurred there in the distant past. (Steller 1774, 211)

This story is informative is several ways. First, it provides the various river groups with a cognitive map that leads to a sense of belonging. This underscores that they are related to each other through common, albeit ancient, ancestral bonds, even while the myth also allows them to emphasize, when need be, their particular local river group identity and solidarity. Second, it is apparent (and one may wonder why) that the boundary to the south (separating them from the neighboring Ainu people) is clearly defined, whereas toward the north (where Koryak groups live) it remains more vaguely delineated. In that direction, especially around the main

contact zone in the present Tigil' area, ethnic boundary, even today, appears in many ways (for example in language and other identity markers) to be a bit fuzzy and almost "fluid."[3]

Another, already more pronounced hierarchical, pattern is noticeable from the creation or transformation myths of the Dzawaḏa'enuxw, a Native Indian group from Gwa'yi (Kingcome Inlet) and belonging to the Kwakwaḵa'wakw First Nation in the Canadian Northwest (Boas and Hunt 1906, 28 ff.). The story is about four wolves who, after surviving the great flood on the top of a mountain, transformed themselves into human beings, who then became the ancestors of various neighboring local groups. These later established the *Musgamagw* ("four tribes") alliance, whose purpose was to make joint use, during the seasonal round of hunting and gathering, of important resources available within their respective territories. This

Heritage'88 festivities at Gwa'yi (Kingcome Inlet), 1988.[4]   photo: E. Kasten

alliance or confederation still exists today and is reinforced through regular ceremonial and other social events. (In addition to potlatches, for example, there are also sports days each June at Alert Bay.)

From such myths, in this case those that reflect the Dzawaḏa'enuxw point of view, one can see how the world is structured around that group in a typical ego- or ethnocentric way that is quite common among most (ethnic) groups. After the four wolves, three brothers and a sister, had transformed themselves into humans, Ḵawadelekala, the oldest of them, killed his youngest brother, cut him into pieces, formed a ball from these pieces, and threw that up into the air. Then, the meatball transformed itself into eagle dawns that were driven by the wind around the world, where they, again, transformed themselves into humans. According to this story, the Dzawaḏa'enuxw can view themselves as the true ancestors of "all the tribes in the world."

And there is another interesting feature in one of the K̲awadelek̲ala
stories that concerns how relations with neighboring groups became
structured from the Dzawad̲a'enux̲w point of view. K̲awadelek̲ala stayed at
the most prestigious location (near the present village Gwa'yi), where the
very first transformation and the creation of humankind had taken place.
From there he sent his brother and his sister off to other locations, where
they later established their own settlements, whose people then became
the ancestors of the other *Musgamagw* village groups. And there is an
additional informative element: K̲awadelek̲ala had first to send his brother
away to experiment and learn a new technique of rendering oil from the
eulachon fish himself. This specific knowledge represented an important
cultural innovation for these groups, one that could henceforth be ascribed
to the Dzawad̲a'enux̲w of Gwa'yi, as eulachon grease became in future
years a prestigious trade item for these peoples.

Gwa'yi. Screen-print by Frances Dick, 1987

In sum, the myths (which vary according to the point of view of the
given group) provide local people a structural framework within which
they can define and organize their identities in a hierarchical way. This
serves their needs in the political dialogue with neighboring groups, because
these myths can then be used as a blueprint or legitimization for privileged
access to certain resources. Consequently, these patterns are contested by

others and are subject to ongoing manipulation during ceremonial perfor-
mances, such as during the potlatch-feasts that have continued into the
present (see below), or in artistic presentations. With regard to the latter, a
series of paintings by Frances Dick (Kasten 1990, 19; see also 2004a, 11)
provides a good example: she defines and stresses her identity as belong-
ing to the (highest-ranking) ancestral being, Ḵawadeleḵala, by placing the
image of her grandmother into the curved tail of that particular wolf (see
illustration).

Living identities through ritual practice

Local identities that are expressed in worldview and myth are not only
transmitted through oral tradition, especially to younger generations, but
are also communicated and continuously reinforced through ritual prac-
tice. For many indigenous peoples, and especially the hunting and fishing
societies of the North, shamans and the complex ritualism connected to
them have played an important role in reinforcing the identity of the
given group. Shamans have often been described as "mediators" between
humans and representatives of the different worlds beyond. The actual
function and meaning of the shaman, however, is seen here rather as the
"embodiment of the group" (Kortt 1984). This is expressed through cer-
tain features in the shaman's dress, in particular its skeleton representations
and strings, which symbolize the members of the group, i.e. in the latter
case, their souls. These material representations on the shaman's dress show
that the journey to the world beyond (during the shaman's ceremony) is
not undertaken by the shaman alone, but is done in the presence (of the
souls) of the members of the entire group. Certainly, there are variations in
how this symbolism is expressed, and it differs greatly over the vast area of
the circumpolar North. The Saami shaman, for example, had a different
dress from his Siberian counterparts. To conduct the shaman ceremony
successfully, for example, the former had to have a complete set of teeth,
because according to certain *rites de passage* among the Saami, these appar-
ently symbolized how a person became a full member of the group (Kasten
1989, 119).

It appears that when (in the eyes of a group's members) the ritual dia-
logue with the supernatural failed to maintain the vulnerable relationship
between humans and the "keepers of the game," this led to the transfor-
mation of such group identities with regard to shamanistic concepts. In
some places, this went together with a shift to reindeer-herding to provide
a more reliable food resource. A similar change occurred when the shaman
proved to be incapable of combating serious diseases, or plagues such as

the Black Death, which impacted the Saami around the mid-14th century. This was determined through the archaeological interpretation of the so-called Metal Deposit Tradition in northern Sweden (Kasten 1989; cf. also Vakhtin, *this volume*, p. 31).

In the worldview of Saami as well as Koryak and Even reindeer herders, supernatural beings or spirits, residing at particular places in the territories where the herd migrates, are held as being responsible for the well-being of the animals. Especially when entering into a new territory, one is expected to make a small offering to the spirits of that area in the form of some vodka or tobacco, which is given into the fire at a first rest stop. This practice is still seen when traveling with Evens in Kamchatka today. And among older Koryak reindeer herders, one can witness a number of similar ritual behaviors. One, which occurs when reindeer have wandered off and become lost, involves listening to the sound of particular stones in the tundra. Another, used at times when a difficult decision must be made as to the right direction to drive the herd, takes the form of reading the patterns on a ritually treated left-side reindeer shoulder bone (K. Penelkut 1996, A. T. Urkachan 2000 in Kasten *et al.*, forthcoming). In this way, spirits of the particular locality are consulted for guidance and advice.

Similar views on the precarious relations between humans and the supernatural powers of a place can be traced, for example, in Khanty hunting society as well. According to Jordan (2003, 281), "every animal or fish and every space is rather part of a landscape that is in, or under, spiritual ownership [...] and individuals thus need to maintain, through active engagement, overlapping reciprocal relationships with these deities to negotiate a successful passage through life, both for themselves and for the community."

For our understanding of these local identities, the important thing about these accounts is how they establish a linkage between humans and the natural environment. The key point is the *combination* of material representations of human spirits (see above) with those representing animals (reindeer antlers or, in many cases, small animal-shaped figures) that are attached to the shaman's dress, or that are manifested in certain sacred sites. This very combination is the symbolic expression of an extended identity that transcends the local *human* group and that includes, as well, supernatural beings who are connected to the given territory. Such a specific sense of local identity must have contrasted, and often come into conflict, with certain changes in the political environment, as, for example, when foreign ownership concepts were imposed (or an attempt to impose them was made) from the outside. In this regard, new perceptions of traditional territories (as places that are "owned" exclusively by humans)

mean a profoundly different understanding of belonging to a place, one that would then be disconnected from its inherent supernatural powers. Among other things, this shift has caused great confusion (especially among the older generation in many places in Kamchatka) during recent debates about proposed new forms of socio-economic organization of local groups, such as *obshchiny* (see Fondahl, Sirina, Stammler, *this volume,* for other regions).

The proper treatment of land, in this broader sense, also has implications for the sharing of one's territories with others. This has been a common practice, especially in times of need, or when territories were no longer used after son(s) moved away and took up other occupations elsewhere. In those cases, the traditional owners of such territories have been concerned to ensure that new hunters be thoroughly instructed in the knowledge required for the sustainable use of the local resources, which also includes showing appropriate respect for the supernatural powers of the place (V. S. Yaganov 2002, in Kasten *et al.*, forthcoming). This has meant that there are usually fewer reservations about letting people who share the same worldview to use one's territory, whereas there has been much greater hesitation about offering an invitation to incomers to the region, or opening up one's traditional territories to them.

O-lo-lo-feast in Lesnaya, 2000.[5]
photo: E. Kasten

The reinforcement of a common identity and the concern for maintaining the ritual dialogue with the supernatural owners of a place, and with the animals hunted within that territory, is expressed among the Nymylans through special feasts at the end of each year. During their *O-lo-lo*-feast, the inhabitants of Lesnaya dance and sing the whole night in the presence of the souls of the seals and the mountain sheep that were slaughtered during the previous hunting season. In this way, they express respect for the animals and try to ensure that the animals will report in the world beyond on the proper treatment they have received from humans. Toward this end, the soul of each slaughtered animal is rendered into,

and represented by, a piece of wood or a twined figure made from sacred grass (*lauten*). This is either hung in a sacred tree (as with the mountain sheep figures) or placed in a bowl with some water (as with the twined representations of the "thirsty" souls of the seals). Once the souls have been given a ritual *tolkusha* food offering, which is also shared with the members of the community, they are eventually (before dawn) sent off to the world beyond by burning. That feast also includes the performance of other rituals, in some of which the sounds of the animals are imitated (for example, through the use of the ritual "propeller" (*telytl*). In dances and songs, particular body movements and sounds of the animals are imitated in order to enter into a ritual dialogue with them. The members of the community seek, in this way, to express a personal intimacy and traditional connection with the animals of their particular locality that links them in reciprocal relationships and that demonstrably creates a shared common identity with the place (Kasten 2005a).

A similar extended identity of local human groups that includes the ancestors and supernatural powers of the given place also continues to be reinforced and demonstrated in the annual rituals of Koryak reindeer herders in the North, as, for example, through the *Koianaitatyk* ritual, and through similar rituals of the Chukchi (see Vaté, *this volume*).

Farther south along the west coast of Kamchatka, festivals among the Itel'mens that used to be similar are set up today in a quite different way. Their *Alkhalalalai*-festival, which is held each year in the village of Kovran, now aims to reinforce Itel'men *ethnic* identity, rather than emphasizing the traditional ways of belonging of a particular local group to a specific place, and their relationship to the supernatural powers connected to it. In contrast to the other feasts described above, the Itel'men *Alkhalalalai*-festival is characterized by a syncretized blending of various revitalized or re-invented traditional features, together with newly created and borrowed foreign elements. This festival stands more for a "declared" Itel'men ethnic identity, which helps the organizers to promote their concrete political goals. The staged performance of rituals described by G. W. Steller more than 250 years ago are now combined with cultural features or ethnic stereotypes from other peoples of the North Pacific Rim, such as memorial or crest poles and a feather in the hair of the performing shaman (see cover photo). This connects or extends Itel'men ethnic identity toward a certain kind of a pan-native identity as well, and thus reflects globalized indigenous lobbying of Itel'men political leaders at the international level. At the same time, it still incorporates elements, such as awards and prizes, that were introduced into traditional feasts during Soviet times by agents of government departments of culture. There are musical compositions using Itel'men-Russian lyrics and accompanied by the accordion and the

drum. Professional dance ensembles perform staged dances that amalgamate, in creative artistic ways, a variety of ethnic and local traditional styles and Russian-Ukrainian ballet choreography. All these innovations express an increasingly complex identity, and one that is, in fact, shared by most of the local people attending and participating in the festival.

This example also illustrates, however, how such declared identities can easily be manipulated by their main agents. When the event is announced all over Kamchatka, and even beyond, as the traditional "Itel'men" feast, this disregards or downplays the actual multi-ethnic composition and identity of the community involved. This is because many of the participants, and even most of the artists performing in the "national (i.e. ethnic) Itel'men" ensemble *El'vel',* are not, in fact, Itel'men, but also Koryak, and some belong to other incoming ethnic groups as well.

It is interesting to note how people in Lesnaya have, in contrast, consistently rejected attempts by the former Soviet (and even by the present) local departments of culture and other political activists and sponsors to instrumentalize their *O-lo-lo*-feast and to take over its organization. In the view of the community, this must remain in the hands of the individual organizing families, since only this can guarantee that it will be properly conducted in the future, that is, the way it always has been in the past. So it is not surprising that tension and controversy arose during the similar *Kho-lo-lo* feast of another coastal Koryak group in Ossora in December 2002. The point of contention was the involvement of the local government's cultural organization in a particular stage of that feast, which was from the outset hosted by two community elders in one of their private homes. After they had performed the proper rituals according to tradition, the later part of the feast was then taken over by the representative of the *House of Culture*, who introduced elements of entertainment ("to make it appealing for the youth"), such as dance contests and the (Soviet-style) distribution of prizes.

It is fascinating to compare the above-mentioned variations in how different layers of identity are symbolically expressed, and to note how, at times, these are combined and syncretized and create new and more complex ones. What is striking is how these new identities are readily manipulated by outside officials or native leaders, and are given specific, often ethnic, labels that accord with and foster particular (often political) interests. This is why the approach adopted here provides such valuable insights into the creative and dynamic processes of identity management among the peoples of Kamchatka. And it is remarkable how similar these are to comparable processes on the other side of the North Pacific Rim, as will be shown below.

Even today, the First Nations people of the Canadian Northwest continue to hold their unique potlatch-feasts, which have been reinterpreted by them in light of the new (and changing) social and political contexts. The complex symbolism involved, the way the various sequences of the event unfold, and some of the concrete motivations that underlie the institution itself have been discussed elsewhere (Kasten 1990). Here, I will only summarize some of the conclusions of these studies from the 1980s, namely those that relate specifically to the question we are concerned with here and that have been reflected in more recent elaborations of the concepts of multiple and layered identities.

During the series of potlatches that I attended, in particular among the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, I noticed especially how these ceremonies provide an ideal arena for the symbolic communication of multiple networks and their respective identities. Through the enormous and costly preparations for the potlatch, as well as through specific dances that display the *długwe* ("treasures") of the hosting family, the solidarity of the *'na̱'mim* (extended family) of the host is publicly demonstrated. Other dances, such as the *a̱mala,* or the particular version of the Dzawada̱'enux̱w, the *leswa̱'na,* are performed by members of the entire village group. Furthermore, networks that extend across the boundaries of the *'na̱'mim* and the village can be expressed through membership in certain secret societies and participation in their respective *t'seka̱* dances. This is seen today, among other ways, at the end of the *hamat'sa* series, when older *hamat'sa* dancers from different village groups come forward to perform jointly their particular *hamat'sa* dance to honor the new initiate. During the *tła'sa̱la* cycle, the peace dances demonstrate to the audience not only the relationship of the host to the family whose representatives have been asked to dance together and show their solidarity, but also special relationships to non-Indian friends, as for example, to adopted family members or to non-Indian liaison or resource people. The use of the traditional language and distinctive Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw or Northwest Coast Indian art styles and designs (in the form of masks, button blankets, and other regalia worn during potlatches) help to define further networks, such as their identity as Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw or Northwest Coast Indian people. When native groups from other parts of North America are among the guests, pan-Indian identity is demonstrated, as, for example, in a special dance, the *sudi*, that was given by the Sioux to the Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw during the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904. This dance was performed during a play potlatch in connection with the closing ceremonies of the National Association of Friendship Centers conference in Victoria in 1986.

From those observations one can conclude that "from this pool of latent or potential relations, symbolically defined and communicated during potlatches, that actual network is mobilized which appears most convenient as an adaptive strategy for a particular situation, depending on whether the respective action set or coalition is pursuing family, village, Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw, or pan-Indian interests. [...] This offers the pattern for multi-level strategies to deal with current issues on the basis of multiple identities" (Kasten 1995, 365).

Displaying identities in material culture and the arts

When working with native artists or craftsmen and craftswomen, most ethnographers almost automatically or unconsciously tend to classify the given object that people work with according to a certain, often "ethnic" style, that fits into the pre-existing rubrics and categories used by museums or collections. In the early stages of my work, I, myself, was certainly not free of the temptation to fall into this kind of routine and standardized inquiry. This elicited a typical reply from craftspeople, in this case a Koryak women working on a coat made of reindeer fur *(kukhlianka)*, to the effect that "I sew the way I saw my mother do it." Then, after working for another week with the same woman in her cabin on the Icha river, three days on horseback west of Esso, I was able to match the complexity of her artistic style to her particular biography. Having traveled through almost all of Kamchatka when she was involved in driving a herd down from the north in 1961, she proudly told me how eager and curious she was about working with other craftswomen along the way. Here and there, she could pick up a special technique or a different design that she particularly liked. Being married to an Even, she eventually settled down in an area where most of her neighbors were also of Even background. As a result, her work reflects various layers of different "ethnic" and local styles. And, being fluent in both the Koryak and Even languages, she would be reluctant to classify herself under one ethnic category or the other, although for her passport she had to opt for one of those ethnic identities.

With regard to dance styles, I have shown elsewhere (Kasten 2004b) that performers and artists are inclined to think differently about the precisely defined, "pure" ethnic categories into which ethnographers and outsiders often like to place them. The exception is when the artists themselves choose to play upon and exploit such clichés as a business tool for marketing themselves.[6] However, most of these craftspeople and artists have frequent and very welcome encounters with the foreign during the course of their lives and professional careers. This usually leads them

to develop new variations of traditional styles, which reflect their eagerness to demonstrate trans-local and multi-ethnic experiences as well as their own expanding and increasingly complex identities. As is the case elsewhere, the peoples of Kamchatka, have obviously always been open to foreign contacts; these have brought them useful materials and knowledge that could then be transformed into important and necessary innovations of their own. Among the more interesting examples is the way materials have been incorporated into the manufacture of garments. We know that imported beads entered into the native economy and soon became sought-after trade items, just as dyed woollen threads quickly became popular among the Nymylans for embroidering floral ornaments on their *kukhlianki*. And more recently the same Nymylans have replaced the natural materials they used for making their characteristic *lepkhe* baskets with synthetic fibers from fishing nets that Japanese vessels have lost at sea and that have washed up on shore (Kasten 2005b).

From the above examples, we can see how biases and classifications from the outside, even those imposed by ethnographers themselves, often fail to reflect the really felt or lived identities of the people concerned, who are usually eager to incorporate the foreign into their own local (and in many cases already multi-ethnic) traditions.

Expressing identities in forms of language

Contrary to some past assumptions and arguments, ethnos and language cannot be equated. This is shown by the mere fact that the increasing language shift of recent times has not necessarily affected ethnic identity. Therefore, the maintenance of one's own language is not essential in defining the identity of an ethnic group. As was stressed at a recent conference on "Language death,"[7] one should rather speak, in this regard, of language *endangerment*. Even when a language has become too fragmentary to serve as a common means of everyday communication, it (or parts of it) may survive in other functions, as has been shown for the Itel'men language (Kasten 1998, 5). In that case, the question arose as to why community members were so eager to maintain their language and so strongly encouraged us to assist them in doing so. It turned out that the few remaining speakers of the Itel'men language were most concerned about preserving a number of local variants of their language. These defined the identity of particular river groups that existed until they were resettled into their present main village of Kovran in the 1960s. This had been largely overlooked by Soviet state programs of the 1980s, which, in their concern to maintain native languages, produced school books in a standardized Itel'men language that many local speakers no longer could identify with.[8]

As early as the 18th century, G. W. Steller (1774, 211) was impressed by the numerous variants of the Itel'men language that already differed clearly from one river system to the next. Itel'men people of the older generation maintain and emphasize, even today, their identity with the particular river system where they grew up in their – now closed – former settlements. Accordingly, they are eager to preserve certain dialectical variants, for which some relevant learning tools have been produced in recent years (Dürr, Kasten, Khaloimova 2001). Closer analysis of people's attitudes about their language use leads us to conclude, therefore, that the local identity of belonging to a particular river system is, in many cases, as important to that area's residents (or even more so) as the kind of overarching Itel'men identity that is so vigorously promoted and declared nowadays. The above-mentioned former local identities, however, refer primarily to the older generation, whose language remains matched with their still-vivid emotional ties to their traditional territories. By contrast, young people, understandably, have in the meantime developed different local identities that tie them to the new places where they have grown up since the days of separate river settlements.

Especially for ethnic groups living in a multi-ethnic environment, it is apparent that they frequently emphasize, or at times even "invent," certain features or fragments of their original language in order to differentiate themselves from others. This has been demonstrated by Aleksander Krasovitsky for the Kamchadals around Mil'kovo and by Nikolai Vakhtin for the Chuvans in Markovo (at the above-mentioned conference, see note 5).

Vakhtin (*this volume*, p. 33) directs our attention to another way of dealing with one's language for expressing one's distinct identity. When discussing the frequent phenomenon of *code-switching* between two (or more) languages, he correctly points out that "a person can use two codes alternatively in order to stress one of her/his identities; or s/he can use both codes simultaneously in order to stress both identities." The case presented by Tsypylma Darieva (*this volume*, p. 162) further illustrates a similar phenomenon: how German-Russian immigrants in Germany (occasionally) use the Russian language not so much for emphasizing a Russian identity, but rather as a medium for expressing their new, distinct German-Russian identity.

The way language is used to maintain, or to rebuild, one's identity obviously corresponds with what has been noted above with regard to expressing one's identity in material culture and the performing arts. That is, craftspeople and artists seeking to demonstrate their actual new and more complex identities increasingly do so by creating new and often syncretic styles on the basis of traditional patterns.

Local and/or ethnic identities?

Local communities, such as the Itel'men river groups mentioned above, did not live in isolation from each other; they were tied together in networks of mutual exchange with neighboring groups. Of particular advantage have always been relations with those groups who had complementary economies, and these were often neighboring groups of different ethnic origin. Among many older native people, multilingualism is still common even today. For example, there are Koryak-Even-Russian speakers in the southern part of Tigil'skii district, and in earlier times some of them spoke Itel'men as well. This reflects the significance of trans-ethnic relations and the particular identity that results from involvement in local networks that transcend a person's own ethnic group (see Sántha, *this volume*, who shows how this affects ethnic identities at different scales).

It is clear that, because they ensure human adaptation to harsh natural environments, trans-local and trans-ethnic networks have long been a widespread pattern in the circumpolar North. We are indebted to Soviet archaeological and historic studies, such as those of Krupnik (1993), for deeper insights into the processes of mutual economic exchanges and cultural developments between coastal and inland groups in the Russian North and the Far East. A prime example is the connection between sea-hunters and reindeer herders, which even back in ancient times gave those populations a more reliable basis both for survival and for maintaining thriving cultures. For Alaska, similar open social systems toward neighboring groups were pointed out by Burch (1980). Thus, although it tends to be disregarded (or even discredited) in some of the current approaches taken by social anthropology for that region, historic and even prehistoric research is certainly useful and informative in dealing with the question at hand.

Such extended trans-ethnic social networks and cultural exchanges have long provided the basis for important and often vitally necessary innovations that helped these peoples to adapt to changing natural and social environments. In northern Scandinavia, in the course of occasionally tending cattle or goats for Norse settlers around the turn of the first millennium (Kasten 1984, 68–72), the Saami became familiar with foreign techniques. This gave them useful knowledge that they could later apply as they made their gradual transition from hunting to reindeer-herding. In a similar way, in Central Kamchatka it was from Koryaks, whom they approached in times of need for a supply of reindeer meat, that Evens learned the advantages of a stronger emphasis on extensive reindeer-herding for meat production. Previously, they were primarily hunters who

used their reindeer mainly for transportation, until the game population declined or became depleted in some areas (Bergman 1926, 149; Kasten 2003, 88).

Right up until today, close (and, in a sense symbiotic) coastal-inland trans-ethnic relations have been maintained in the western parts of Kamchatka between Even and Koryak (Chauwchu) reindeer herders on the one side and Itel'mens and coastal Koryaks (Nymylans) on the other. Such networks, which were usually maintained by every family (often over many generations) by means of the *priiatel*-institution (a kind of long-term preferred trading partnership), were eventually extended toward the east as well, to Kamchadal and Russian settlers in central Kamchatka along the Kamchatka river.[9] The life histories of older people from this area provide rich information on how these relations continued to be maintained even through Soviet times. The ties survived despite the introduction of new types of social and work organization (in *kolkhozy* and *sovkhozy*) and the Soviet identities that accompanied such changes (Kasten *et al.* forthcoming). These life histories reflect various layers of each person's identity, and they provide, from that individual's point of view, valuable insights into how the person's identities have changed over time. The tendency has been for identities to become increasingly complex, usually with some aspects being downplayed at the same time that others gain in importance in order to cope with particular situations.

These data show – and this is of considerable significance for the question we are dealing with here – that informants understood ethnic differences more frequently as assets that were useful in creating these networks, rather than as obstacles, while their own immediate identities as sea-hunters or reindeer herders have been emphasized. Apparently, what gives the individual or group pride and self-consciousness is primarily a distinctive occupational qualification, an ability (or better preparation) to use a particular resource, whose product one can then bring to that relationship as a valuable asset. By comparison, it is clear that one's ethnic origin was less explicitly pronounced and hardly relevant in these accounts.

This leads to the question: Why, then, is there such a bias toward emphasizing *ethnic* identity in most anthropological research (see Habeck, this volume) and in actual politics? A review of the ethnographic literature on the peoples of the Russian North, and in particular on Kamchatka, reveals some diverging trends in how the ethnic element has been treated in these works. Scientists and travelers (such as Georg Wilhelm Steller, Carl von Dittmar, and others[10] who worked in Kamchatka from the 17th until the 19th centuries) usually took a very broad view, so they did not lose sight

of the interrelations among the different ethnic groups that they described. With the rise of ethnology or anthropology as an academic discipline in its own right, however, the focus of research often shifted to a single, allegedly well-defined *ethnos*. The leading ethnographic works published in the 20th century have usually included a chapter on "interethnic relations," or something of that sort. But their view generally focused narrowly on a selected group of people (cut off from its actual setting, which, in fact, was often a multi-ethnic one), which was then described and analyzed more or less as a closed entity.

Thus, in a way, it was anthropology itself that constructed its *ethnoses* as prime subjects for its own forthcoming research, and this also shaped the discipline's research methodology. The all-too-common pattern, even today, is for graduate students first to study the language of *one* particular native people, and then to conduct fieldwork aimed at investigating a particular aspect of its culture or to test a theory by means of the example of that specific people. From the outset, this involves a methodological bias: the researcher will automatically focus on that particular ethnic group and pay less attention to, or even ignore, its more complex multi-ethnic environment or the network into which it is usually embedded.[11] On the other hand, there is a logistics problem if the field anthropologist has to master simultaneously several languages spoken in a given area, for example, Even, Koryak, Chukchi and Russian in a place like Khailino. This situation tends to encourage quite a different field methodology, one more strongly inclined to work in collaboration with a team of native experts from various ethnic groups, an approach that might avoid or reduce the aforementioned ethnic bias toward one or the other group. The same can be achieved by giving preference (in the initial research design) to studying an entire area or networks of people, rather than a single ethnic group, whereas the latter has often been the case in the past.

In summation, then, a methodological bias that focuses on the "ethnic" in issues relating to identity may not be ascribed primarily or entirely to the anthropology of the former Soviet Union (Habeck, *this volume*); obviously, it was already encouraged with the rise of (western) anthropology as a discipline. The questionable understanding or conception of certain human groups as "bounded" ethnic entities, fostered or "authorized" by anthropology, could then be instrumentalized either by state politics or by native organizations in their own different ways (cf. Eriksen 2001). Notwithstanding this powerful legacy, most concepts of *ethnos* must be seen as outdated in anthropological theory today (see Habeck). But *ethnos*, even in its more or less imagined forms, nevertheless remains a useful category in current politics (at least for some groups, as will be shown below), and therefore warrants our attention.

"Lived" and/or "declared" identities?

Comparative research in life histories (focusing on local variations and varying ways of enculturation and socialization, according to the *Zeitgeist* prevailing during different historical periods) provides informative insights into how the respective layers of identity are established and arranged among different age groups and local populations. The examples cited above show how, by transmitting knowledge between generations within the family (for example, by passing environmental and supernatural knowledge of the hunting territory to [grand-] sons, or decorative patterns in the fabrication of garments to [grand-] daughters), the framework for early layers of family identity are installed during childhood and the years of youth. Through the oral tradition and common values and language (including its particular local varieties), additional patterns are offered to young people, encouraging them to identify as members of a given local group.

Through individual trans-local and trans-ethnic contacts and experiences during one's later life, these identities then become even more complex and, at the same time, may enable the individual to differentiate him- or herself from other members of his or her original group. Even within a single family, I was able to trace such diverging identities or views (with regard to reindeer-herding methods and worldviews in general) among three Koryak brothers in Anavgai. Each of them had been educated at different levels and in different ways, and they later had different duties and held different positions in the reindeer-herding industry. It was striking how strongly one of them identified himself with traditional environmental knowledge. In contrast, one of the others believed in the technical progress that was praised by Soviet ideology, and in the related methods in which he was trained by the Communist Party at a reindeer herders' college elsewhere in the Russian North (Kasten *et al.*, forthcoming).

There is an entire generation (now in their 50s and younger) who went through boarding-school education and never experienced the traditional villages before they were shut down, or subsequent resettlements. For them, identities other than the locally focused ones already mentioned have gradually become more important and were more often referred to in our conversations. A good example is the feeling of belonging and togetherness with other *odnoklassniki,* i.e. those who made up one's school class cohort. This shared experience created a particular strong identity, especially among the generation that is now middle-aged and younger. This identity tends to be maintained throughout one's life, and may be mobilized or drawn upon in times of need for practical assistance or per-

sonal support. Those who later worked in *kolkhozy* or *sovkhozy* built up another stratum of professional identities that gradually tended to overlie the earlier local or ethnic ones. This was especially apparent in the close partnership of a group of trappers and hunters in western Bystrinskii district who are of Even, Russian and Ukrainian nationality (or ethnicity).

In the same geographical area, it has fascinated me to see how, in the light of recent global environmental politics, another "declared" identity has been shaped, and how readily people have adapted themselves to it. Since 2000, a special United Nations Development Program (UNDP) for the Bystrinskii district has provided a number of benefits and privileges to those who practice traditional ways of resource use (*traditsionnoe prirodopol'zovanie*). While sitting together with community members over application drafts, I heard for the first time (and frequently since then) the new designation *traditsionniki*, i.e. a term that refers to those community members who are eligible for the UNDP benefits/grants. At that time, *traditsionniki* denoted a particular kind of belonging (or the identity of a specific group of people) regardless of the ethnic affiliation of their members. Later, in 2003, after successful lobbying by local native organizations, RAIPON came to an agreement with UNDP in Moscow that led to the allocation of certain funds from the program's budget exclusively to native people. Since then, the applicants' ethnicity has becoming increasingly pronounced by them.[12]

Diatchkova (*this volume*) illustrates how native organizations are now recruiting their membership by shaping and declaring a pan-ethnic native identity for the numerically small peoples of the Russian North. The key approach is to point out common features in their particular ways of adaptation to the natural and social environments, and even to hark back at times to earlier Soviet models of ethnos and culture. Further examples of the use (or manipulation) of people's ethnicity with regard to similar "ingathering" identity politics by the State are given by Darieva (*this volume*). In the case of Kamchatka, one now hears increasingly such regional designations as "Itel'meniya" or "Koryakiya," even though this is seen as problematic (or even felt as discriminatory) by other (native) groups living in these territories. However, most people were already accustomed to this sort of thing. There had been an earlier, and equally dubious and overly generalized Soviet policy of designating "titular" ethnic republics or districts, without paying sufficient attention to the actual ethnic diversity of their (native) populations.[13] The question is to what degree this may create anger or even conflict, especially when historically evolved local identities are broken up in favor of ethnic ones. It promises to become contra-productive in the (most likely increasingly difficult) times to come,

when remote local communities will have to stick together and cooperate if they are to subsist and survive at all as viable social and economic units.

Another example illustrates how Kamchadal ethnic identity can be manipulated by state and native politics in quite similar ways. This local group (an ethnic mix derived from Russian settlers and native Itel'mens) has created and maintained its distinct ethnic identity for over 200 years. Right up until today, this is expressed, among other ways, through its own vernacular (see above). By government decree in 1927, however, it lost its status as a distinct ethnic group. It was declared that the Kamchadals were lacking certain criteria (such as, for example, a nomadic way of life) that would qualify them for indigenous status under newly established Soviet rules. In 1991 the government of the Kamchatka *Oblast'* revised its earlier decision, and in 1995 the Kamchadals eventually obtained their status as one of the numerically small peoples of the North. However, some Kamchadals openly favored joining the Itel'men group (and vice versa), arguing that such (declared) overarching Itel'men status would be politically opportune in certain ways, whereas others were concerned about losing the unique (ethnic) identity of their group. This example also shows the need for a diachronic approach. It allows us to understand the true dynamics of ethnic processes, under which new "ethnoses" may arise, at the same time that for other groups ethnic designations may become obsolete, or in changing political environments may be declared as such.

By analogy to what has been pointed out in this volume by Peter Schweitzer, Nikolai Vakhtin and Evgeniy Golovko, there is a continuum of forms of identity ranging from "identity as declared" to "identity as lived." We have seen how state and native politics, and anthropological science as well, set the framework or pattern by shaping, creating, inventing, or manipulating "declared" identities, to which people may then adapt, insofar as, or as long as, this seems opportune to them in their given situations. Thus, "declared" identities offer people new options, or additional layers of identification, above and beyond the existing ones. They can choose or reject these alternatives, or possibly balance them against earlier (and sometimes conflicting) identities. However, as soon as they adopt and incorporate them, these become their "lived" identities. Consequently, it is ultimately the people themselves who manage their identities from the set of options that is offered to them from the outside, on the basis of their own life experiences.

In this chapter, I was able to show how declared Soviet, national, or ethnic identities[14] have been used by political interest groups to recruit followers for their particular agendas. In some cases, this may help to empower hitherto underprivileged groups. On the other hand, it may erode existing

trans-ethnic and trans-local networks that have served well in the past. Only the future can tell whether the current processes of "rebuilding identities" will prove to be viable pathways to reform in post-Soviet Siberia. Much will certainly depend on how such identities contribute to preparing people (on the basis of their strengthened self-consciousness) to enter into well-balanced partnerships with other groups, join with them in solving pressing problems, and thereby secure their survival under the conditions of the Russian North.

Conclusions

Our foregoing closer look into the particular dynamics of identity management among the peoples in the North has shed light on some of the methodological shortcomings of particular approaches into the study of identities. The snap-shot-like focus on social relations in their ethnographic present, which has been so widely employed in recent times, deserves to be looked at with a critical eye, and perhaps rejected in favor of a broader methodology that includes diachronic analysis and symbolic representations of identities as well. It is by analyzing the ways in which identities are symbolically displayed (as for example in material culture and language) and how these are manipulated according to specific individual goals and needs (within the framework of changing social and political environments over time), that dynamic processes and the possible motivations behind them can be more easily identified and better explained.

It is important that Habeck reminds us in the introductory chapter that *ethnic* identities are not the only ones, or that, until now, they may have been overrepresented in anthropological research. The really key question, however, is: Why has ethnicity dominated the identity debate for so long (as it still does so), to the extent that it cannot be ignored by the anthropologist? There are several answers. First, anthropologists cannot prohibit ethnic groups or organizations from using ethnicity in their political strategies, or lobbyists from playing the ethnic card whenever it appears opportune to them. Second, declared ethnic identities (as encouraged by state authorities or by native interest groups), such as ethnic territories or the newly conceptualized pan-ethnic identities of the numerically small peoples of the North, are real facts and will probably become an even more important element in (ethnic) politics in the years to come. This means that *ethnic* identity will inevitably remain on the agenda and should receive appropriate attention in anthropological research, since such processes require monitoring and careful, critical analysis. Toward this end, it helps to bear in mind the interrelationship between the anthropological bias with regard to ethnicity, on the one hand, and, on the other hand,

the frequent adoption in current political debates of such (scientifically "authorized") concepts by state and native interests groups.

Let me close by emphasizing that it is up to the researcher to decide what route to take. One extreme would be that of advocacy anthropology, which would involve giving preference to "declared" ethnic identities and treating these as the most salient or genuine ones. The opposite tack would be to ignore the ethnic dimension of identity, despite the prominent role it so obviously plays in actual politics. A third choice would be to opt for a somewhat balanced position in between, one that allows room for a critical study of ethnicity within the broader context of the multitude of options for self-identification on which people are able to draw.

Notes

1　I am grateful to the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and to the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology for funding field projects in the Canadian Northwest and in the Russian Far East. These provided the basis for most of the conclusions in this chapter. Furthermore, I would like to express my thanks to Chris Hann and Joachim Otto Habeck for their comments on earlier drafts of the chapter.

2　See, for example, the Fox Tale by M. P. Lomotseva (Kasten 2005a), and the *hamat'sa* ritual (Kasten 1990, 136–52).

3　The creation myths of other groups, such as the Nymylans (coastal Koryaks who live north of Palana), illustrate and emphasize their link to certain features of the natural environment and to the supernatural beings of the particular territory. In the shape of wolves they played, for example, a unique role in the establishment of the local community of Kinkil (Z. S. Yaganov, V. K. Belousova, E. L. Nesterova 2001, in Kasten *et al.* forthcoming).

4　The pole, newly erected in 1988, depicts ancestral beings that stand for the various neighboring local groups and that differentiate them from the Dzawad̲a'enux̲w' according to the myths outlined below.

5　Notice the particular ways the fingers and palms of the dancers' hands are positioned, which symbolize, in this case, seals and mountain sheep.

6　In contrast to most common "ethnic" (*natsional'nye*) ensembles, there are also others, such as *Shkolnye Gody* from Palana, that express explicitly the (in reality) multi-ethnic identities of the performers of the group and of their community.

7　"Language Death and Language Genesis on the Fringes of the Slavic World" at the Humboldt University of Berlin (February 24-26, 2005).

8　The same situation occurred with the Even language spoken in the Bystrinskii area in Central Kamchatka. There, children were obliged to learn from school books the dialect of the language that is spoken in the Magadan area, even though this differs greatly from the local version. Hence, young people can often barely be understood when they talk to elders who still speak their Bystrinskii dialect of the Even language.

9　Compare the *verde-* and *skötesren-*institution that connected Saami and Swedish settlers in mutual economic exchanges in the past (Kasten 1984, 93–9); see also Thuen (2004, 101–2) for similar arrangements on the Norwegian side.

10 See http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/sources.html

11 I experienced similar shortcomings and consequent irritations when I conducted research on the west coast of Kamchatka in 1993, initially in close collaboration with Itel'men native activists. Only during my later work in that area, and with other ethnic groups (Evens and Koryaks), did my perspective broaden and allow me a (probably more realistic) view into the local residents' more trans-ethnic identities.

12 For example, there is a woman of mixed Ukrainian-Koryak descent who, during her previous work in an Even dance ensemble, hardly referred to her particular native ethnicity. Today, to raise funds for her crafts program, she advertises herself on the internet with reference to her native family name (*Lukoshkiny vesti* 2005 [47], *neformal'nyi elektronnyi vestnik Bystrinskogo Informatsionnogo Tsentra*).

13 There were other commonly used ways, during Soviet times, that ethnic identities were manipulated to align them with territories. For example, orders would come down from above specifying which of the several native languages within a given district should be included in the native school curriculum, usually at the expense of the other languages. In a similar way, many residents, in particular those of mixed ethnic origin (this encompassed 50-80 % of all Northern indigenous children born in 1996, see Sirina*, this volume* 7), had to choose quite arbitrarily (usually, according to how it served their needs at the given time) which single ethnic affiliation or *natsional'nost* should be written into their passport. No provision was made for a category that reflected their (in reality more common) complex ethnic origins and identities.

14 The mobilization of *religious* identities has (so far) not been an especially prominent feature in the Russian North, unlike the situation in other regional contexts, with all the well-known consequences. However, missionary activity, as described by Vakhtin (*this volume*) for Chukotka, has also mushroomed in recent years in many native communities in Kamchatka and in most other places in the Russian North as well. It is interesting to note in this regard how native organizations such as RAIPON include "spirituality" in programmatic declarations for their "institutionalized" identities for the small-numbered peoples of the Russian North. In these declarations, a rhetoric is usually employed that sounds quite familiar to those of us who have read similar generalized statements from the North American Indian movement. And this is despite the fact that these professions of spirituality hardly reflect the "lived" religious identities of the concrete groups and people that have been described in some of the papers of this volume (see, in particular, Vaté and Jordan & Filtchenko).

References

Bergman, Sten 1926. *Vulkane, Bären und Nomaden*. Stuttgart: Strecker und Schröder.

Boas, Franz and George Hunt 1906. *Kwakiutl Texts.* Second series. Publications of the Jesup North Pacific Expedition, vol 10, pt. 1. New York/Leiden: G. E. Stechert & E. J. Brill.

Burch, Ernest S. Jr. 1980. Traditional Eskimo Societies in Northwest Alaska. In *Alaska Native Culture and History,* Y. Kotani and W. B. Workman (eds.), 253–304. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.

Dürr, Michael, Erich Kasten, Klavdiia N. Khaloimova 2001. *Itel'men Language and Culture.* CD (English, Russian, Itel'men). Münster / New York: Waxmann.

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland 2001. A Critique of the UNESCO Concept of Culture. In *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives,* J. K. Cowan, M.-B. Dembour, R. A. Wilson (eds.), 127–48. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jordan, Peter 2003. *Material Culture and Sacred Landscape. The Anthropology of the Siberian Khanty.* Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.

Kasten, Erich 1984. *Kulturwandel bei den Samen. Eine ethnohistorische Untersuchung zum Kulturkontakt in Schwedisch-Lappland.* Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

— 1989 Sami Shamanism from a Diachronic Point of View. In *Shamanism: Past and Present*, M. Hoppál and O. J. von Sadovszky (eds.), 115–24. Budapest / Los Angeles: Istor Books.

— 1990. *Maskentänze der Kwakiutl. Tradition und Wandel in einem indianischen Dorf.* Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

— 1995. Community Development in a Kwagiulth Indian Village. In *Language and Culture in Native North America. Studies in Honor of Heinz-Jürgen Pinnow*, M. Dürr, E. Renner, W. Oleschinski (eds.), 355–67. München / Newcastle: Lincom.

— 1998. Handling Ethnicities and/or Securing Cultural Diversities: Indigenous and Global Views on Maintaining Traditional Knowledge. In *Bicultural Education in the North: Ways of Preserving and Enhancing Indigenous Peoples' Languages and Traditional Knowledge,* E. Kasten (ed.), 1–11. Münster / New York: Waxmann.

— 2003. Zwischen Tundra und Meeresküste: Korjaken und Evenen im Fernen Osten Russlands. In *Unterwegs – Nomaden früher und heute,* A. Hendricks (Hg.), 83–112. Gütersloh: Siegbert Linnemann Verlag.

— 2004a. Ways of Owning and Sharing Cultural Property. In *Properties of Culture – Culture as Property: Pathways to Reform in Post-Soviet Siberia,* E. Kasten (ed.), 9–32. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.

— 2004b. *Variatsii tantseval'nykh i muzykal'nykh traditsii v meniaiushchemsia kontekste: sokhranenie nematerial'nogo kul'turnogo naslediia narodov Kamchatki* [Variations of dance and music traditions in shifting contexts: Preserving the intangible cultural heritage of the peoples of Kamchatka]. The Fourth International Conference "Echolot-2004": Audiovisual Heritage. The State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, December 1-2, 2004.
http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/PDF/kasten2004b.pdf

— 2005a. *Feasting with the Seals: Koryaks und Evens in the Russian Far East*, Video DVD, with German/English/Russian subtitles, red. Erich Kasten, Michael Dürr, David Koester, Tjan Zaochnaia. Berlin: Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin.

— 2005b. *Offen für das Fremde – Kunst und Kultur aus Kamtschatka* [Maintaining the Traditional – Embracing the New: Art and Culture from Kamchatka]. Booklet for traveling exhibit, first shown at the Central and Regional Library, Berlin, January 29 - April 2, 2005. (German/English/Russian).
http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/PDF/kasten2005b.pdf

Kasten, Erich *et al.* (forthcoming). *Koryak and Even Language and Culture.* Video DVD series, with English and Russian subtitles.

Kortt, Ivan R. 1984. The Shaman as Social Representative in the World Beyond. In *Shamanism in Eurasia,* M. Hoppál (ed.), 289–306. Göttingen: Edition Herodot.

Krupnik, Igor I. 1993. *Arctic Adaptations: Native Whalers and Reindeer Herders in Northern Eurasia.* Hanover and London: University Press of New England.

Steller, Georg Wilhelm 1996 [1774]. *Beschreibung von dem Lande Kamtschatka.* Frankfurt/Leipzig. New edition (also on CD), E. Kasten and M. Dürr (eds.). Bonn: Holos.

Thuen, Trond 2004. Culture as Property? Some Saami Dilemmas. In *Properties of Culture – Culture as Property: Pathways to Reform in Post-Soviet Siberia,* E. Kasten (ed.), 87–108. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.