Settlements of Bystrinsky District in the XX-th century: Emerging and Development

Alina Igorevna Kirillova,
Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University,
Russia, 683032 Pertopavlovsk-Kamchatskii, Pogranichnaya Street, 4
e-mail: astra1155@yandex.ru

ABSTRACT
The article analyzes the state role in national settlements emerging and development among Russian Far Eastern nomads in the XX-th century on the sample of Bystrinsky district, Kamchatka. The author used archive materials, books and collected documents and materials of Ethnographic expedition of Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University to Anavgay in 2005. The basic methods are analysis and classification. The topic of the article is actual because of modern re-estimation Soviet period of Russian history. Based on Soviet and Russian authors' books.

Keywords:
Bystrinsky district; Bystrinsky Even; national district; national village

Academic Discipline And Sub Disciplines
History, Ethnology

SUBJECT-CLASSIFICATION
Russian History XX-th Century, Kamchatka Ethnoses History

TYPE (METHOD/APPROACH)
Historical Case-Study, Transformation Methodological Approach
Introduction

Since 1922 Soviet Government became the real power in Kamchatka. According to official data the majority of region’s population was nomad natives. Soviet Government understood the necessity of forced economical development of Kamchatka and its close integration in the Soviet state. Nomadic mode of life was typical for Kamchatka’s natives in the beginning of the XX-th century. Because of their lifestyle it was too difficult to rule the natives.

Effective governing of the territories inhabited by national minorities allowed to organize permanent taxation system, follow the population dynamics, explore the natural and mineral sources of the territories, integrate the natives in Soviet economy and society. Also it provided new ideology propagation. In early 1920-s one of ways of management was the organization of so-called cultbazas (special places where the nomads could receive medical aid, veterinary help, etc.). They were located on the crossroads of the reindeer-breeders’ routs.

It’s necessary to note that these routs could be changed in case of climate problems or natural disasters, not every nomad family visited cultbazas. That’s why this form couldn’t solve the problem of national minorities’ management and provide information and ideological work with the locals. Also the collectivization process required centralized management and basic festivities to perform the plans, control indicators’ implementation, the Communist party policy providing and ideological control over population. Started in late 1920-s collectivization process determined the national settlements and villages emerging.

Later economical development and the growth of kolkhoz (collective farms) system, its optimization in 1950-s, caused mass closing of these settlements, their re-organization and agglomeration.

Transformation methodological approach helps to explain traditional culture development contradictions. According to this theory transformation process has several directions: convergence and divergence. [6, p. 231]. One of them is increasing convergence that becomes apparent in globalization process, especially in modern social infrastructure development, technological process and equalizing typical mode of life. Also in national villages cultural transformation process follows in divergence line. Its manifestations can be found in ritual revitalization, native language studies and ethnical community development [4].

Transformation methodology provides basic studies of ethnical societies, but it reveals typical characters of the processes and shows the general lines of development. Modern trends of historical science development require additional detailed studies due to regionalization process [10, pp.2-3]. That’s why case-study method could be used in regional or some micro-historical explorations [1, 3, 9]. Another trend of modern historical science is the growth of archive sources studies and usage [1, p.352]. Performing this investigation the author used transformation and case-study methodology and also worked with archive materials of Kamchatskiy krai State Archive (furher – KKSA) and Far Eastern Russian State Historical Archive (further– FE RSHA).

Settlements in 1920-1950-s

National district as a separate administrative and territorial item had to unite the representatives of the same or similar ethnical groups. Soviet power created Bystrinsky Lamut (later Even) National district to improve tax collection and population management. Local management institution, rodovoy sovet, was established for a group of 40 or more men [12]. The first meetings of new committees were supposed to be held in the center of Kamchatka region, in Petropavlovsk [13]. The region’s authorities believed that the bureaucracy of newly-created administrative units had to be controlled. But soon it became clear that it was impossible to perform because of nomadic lifestyle of some ethnical groups and remoteness of Petropavlovsk from many national districts’ territories. So it was decided that local settlements were to be founded.

In 1924-1926 nomad Evens who lived on the territory of modern Bystrinsky district were divided into 3 branches (groups of families): 1) Anavgay (in other spelling Anauen); 2) Kekuk (in other spelling Kekuknay) and 3) Lauchan according to their traditional nomad routs. All the groups usually met once or twice a year on the bank of the Uksichan river, where they discussed the routs of wandering, news, taxation problems and collected the taxes (natural tax - yasak) to be delivered to Petropavlovsk, the regional centre, and sell some goods. This point of encounter was decided to choose as the place for Bystrinsky Lamut National district’s centre. It was called Esso. The other three family groups meeting places were also decided to make settlements. So we can see that in 1926 there were 4 settlements: Anavgay, Esso, Kekuk and Lauchan.

It’s necessary to note that they weren’t traditional villages and their placement was rather vague. No wooden or stone buildings were there. The place for district’s administration was a traditional dwelling (yurta) that could be replaced. According to archive materials and eye-witnesses’ words in early 1920-s Evens had a nomadic school for boys. It was placed in the tent that earlier was used as the church [14]. This school also was mobile and could be replaced. In 1926 Soviet government donated a sum of money to built the wooden building for school and district’s administration. So the first capital buildings in Bystrinsky district appeared. The other nomadic settlements changed their placement and were founded on the paper only. It was difficult to find them and their administration in fact.

The collectivization process stimulated settled villages emerging. In 1932 this process started among the Bystrinsky Evens. According to preliminary kolkhoz joining (in fact it was obligatory) over 60 of 114 families entered into kolkhozes. These 60 families held only 21 % of reindeer livestock [7, p.103]. Soviet government realized the necessity of settled villages, they helped to control the emerged kolkhozes and involve new members into them. That’s why in the biggest kolkhoz, in Anavgay was started the settling process. The village consisted of yurtas, but it was prescribed the definite
In 1930-1936 because of collectivization process one more national settlement appeared – Tvayan (in other spelling Tvoyan), it was founded to optimize reindeer-herding and fishing. Due to collectivization process and settled villages emerging fishing became one of the main occupations of local population, fishing kolkhozes also appeared. Hunting was also important. Likewise fishing and reindeer-breeding it was controlled and rationed by Soviet government. Fishing and hunting were very important occupations in Tvayan [22]. In order to improve food, raw-materials and consumer goods supply Russian settlement Krapivnaya on the bank of the Kamchatka river was also included into Bystrinsky district. In Krapivnaya lived Russian people, who had capital wooden houses. Also there was a school for the locals, but no dormitory for the pupils [5, p.53].

In 1939 capital building started in Anavgay also. There was built the administrative building, a shop and a bakery [2]. In 1940 it was decided to change the village's placement and Anavgay was removed to its modern location. Capital wooden building were re-built there rather soon. So before the Great Patriotic war there were 6 settled villages in Bystrinsky district. Every village, except Krapivnaya, had its own administration and kolkhoz, a post-man. Some villages had bakeries (Krapivnaya, Esso, Anavgay). There was a hospital in Esso. Evens used thermal waters to wash themselves and lauder their clothes. In fact they had little clothes to wash, because in 1930-s they wore traditional fur-clothes, they almost didn't pillows and blankets.

The period of the Great Patriotic War and post-war period became the real period of active national villages development. Because of official kolkhoz establishing and appearing them as the real juridical entity with all the necessary statute documents the settled villages as the kolkhoz centres developed [20, 21]. Every national village included a primary school (the only secondary school was located in Esso), a bakery, a shop, a first-aid post (the hospital was also located in Esso), a post-office and a cultural centre so-called “izba-chitalhya” (there was a library, a hobby-club, a propagation centre and a cinema) and veterinary-aid post. Settlers lived in capital wooden houses. By 1950 there was radio in every village and some villages had electricity (Anavgay and Esso for example). Also there was a runway for small airplanes in every village.

So the analysis of Bystrinsky district national villages emerging, placement and development shows that all of them appeared because of Soviet national and economical policy. Their development required significant donations from the state budget, but the state provided settlers with all the necessary goods and tried to improve their mode of life. The main aim of Soviet government was complex economical development of national districts, involving the natives into Soviet economy and society, Soviet ideology propagation and popularization. Settlements appeared in the most comfortable for the locals places.

### Settlements in 1950-1980-s

The second stage of Soviet modernization changed state priorities in economy and settlements' placements. The top priority in economy became economic efficiency of the enterprises and kolkhozes. All the small and inefficient or low-profitable kolkhozes should be united with larger ones or closed. The settlements served as the central residences for local administrative yurta, kolkhoz yurta and citizens dwellings. Some people wandered around the defined territory with the reindeer livestocks. The heads of administration and so-called cultural army (provided Soviet ideology propagation and basic studies called “likbez”) visited reindeer-herders and organized studies in the villages. As to medical aid and veterinary help it wasn’t available in every village. The only school in 1930-s was located in Esso. Boys and girls from other villages had to live in the dormitory. For a long period (up to 1935-1936) there was no capital building for the dormitory and schoolchildren lived in yurta or in the classrooms [25].

Tvayan reindeer-breeding and fishing kolkhoz was also small and law-profitable. Soviet government of Kamchatka region decided to close it in 1963-1964 [18]. Also it was decided to resettle Tvayan’s population to settlement Bystraya. Earlier it was so-called labor camp where prisoners cut down trees [24]. People were taken to prison because of political reasons and economical wastes, especially lost of kolkhoz property. The main occupation of Bystraya’s residents became feeling trees and saving up logs. Because of rather long exploitation of this area soon the problem of total cut down appeared.

The building of capital road to Esso and Anavgay from Petropavlovsk in 1961 and its all-year-round exploitation led to decrease of goods turnover in Krapivnaya and fall of its importance as the centre of Bystrinsky district supply [16]. In 1964 Krapivnaya village was taken to Ust-Kamchatsky district. Later in 1970-s the settlement was also closed.
So we can see that by 1970 only 3 villages in Bystrinsky district had remained, they were Esso, Anavgay and Bystraya. The level of life in the settlements increased. There were schools, medical-aid and veterinary-aid posts, bakeries, kindergartens, libraries, clubs (with cinema-show equipment), local administrative bodies and kolkhoz administrative bodies, post-offices. All the modern conveniences such as electricity, radio, television, running water were available for the residents.

In 1974-1975 the settlement of Bystraya was closed because of economical problems and high costs on its maintenance [15]. It also happened because of inefficiency of reindeer-breading and feeling trees there. The main problems of reindeer-breading in 1970-s were the lack of qualified staff (the profession of reindeer-herder was unpopular among the youngsters, traditional methods of herding were lost) and reindeer pasture depletion (extreme load on the territories led to total trample down of pastures). Population of Bystraya was re-settled to Esso and Anavgay.

By 1975 modern settlement network of Bystrinsky district had been formed. Esso and Anavgay were rather developed villages for that time. There was highly-developed social infrastructure in the villages.

Settlements’ development in 1990-2000-s

The dissolution of USSR in 1991 and first post-soviet years led to dramatic decrease of life-level in national villages. For example in 1992 local radio-station was closed [23], in 1994 in Anavgay even the post-office was closed [8]. The key problem of residents in 1990-s was total unemployment. Kolkhozes were closed as inefficient. In market-economy conditions reindeer-breading turned out to be unprofitable. There were no mass markets for its production (reindeer meat and fells). Because of unemployment population revenues reduced. Sometimes people couldn’t buy enough food. Of course this factor led to health problems. One of the most severe illnesses – tuberculosis – returned to villages of Bystrinsky district, in the Soviet period doctors believed the illness to be won [11].

Some residents found the way out in returning to the traditional areas of living that were forgotten in the Soviet period and started close to traditional mode of life (fishing and fish-processing, subsistence agriculture). These family settlements are unofficial they are called “rybalkas”.

Due to state national policy aimed at national minorities traditional culture preserve and special grant programmes the level of life in national villages increased in early 2000-s. Ethnotourism becoming popular, reconstructions of traditional Even villages and sites appeared. Products of traditional crafts also could be sold to the tourists, visiting Bystrinsky district. One important way of earning money is hotel-business. Accommodation is an integral part of tourism development. In 2000-s more than 6 mini-hotels and guest houses appeared in Esso [26].

Nowadays Esso and Anavgay have rather developed social infrastructure: clubs, modern schools, internet access, first-aid posts, post-offices, shops and cafeteria. Tourism infrastructure is slowly developing as well.

Conclusion

Development of small villages in national districts depends on state national policy, budgetary donations. Social infrastructure there couldn’t be profitable and requires constant financial donations. Tourism development in the district can help in solving some social problems of Bystrinsky district. At the same time state donations should be continued and special social programmes implemented.

References

Books and Press


Archive and field materials

[12]. FE RSHA F. R-3138 Inv.1 Fold.2 L.11
[13]. FE RSHA F. R-3138 Inv.1 Fold.2 L.12
[14]. FE RSHA F.R-2333 Inv.1 Fold.92 L.14, 14 t.
[15]. KKS A F.R-3138 Inv.1 Fold.915. L.69
[16]. KKS A F. R-121 Inv.1 Fold.151 L.1
[17]. KKS A F.R-88 Inv.1. Fold.712. L.171
[18]. KKS A F.R-88 Inv.1. Fold.778. L.79
[19]. KKS F.R-489 Inv.1. Fold.4. L.10
[20]. KKS F.R-121 Inv.1 Fold.121 L.47,
[21]. KKS F.R-195 Inv.1 Fold.19 L.3
[22]. KKS F.R-486 Inv.1. Fold.8. L.1-23

[24]. Memoirs of Banakanova P.M. // Materials of Ethnographical Expedition of KamSU to Anavgay in March, 2005
[25]. Materials of the Cherkanovs // Materials of Ethnographical Expedition of KamSU to Anavgay in March, 2005
[26]. Field Materials Diary. Kirillova A.I. Visit to Esso, July, 21-26, 2010

Author’ biography with Photo


In 2005 started local Kamchatka’s History studies. The principal interest is the history of Bystrinsky Evens in XX-th century, transformation processes in the area connected with the Soviet national policy.

Since 2007 work at Vitus Bering Kamchatka State University. Member of scientific laboratory Studies of Problem of Russian Far East.