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Factors for Language Decline in the Russian Far East: A Case of the Alutor in Kamchatka

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Introduction

This paper expounds on a language decline process of the Alutor, one of the indigenous peoples of Kamchatka, the Russian Far East. In recent years, a considerable number of studies have been conducted on the history and present situation of Northern Minorities, including those in the North of Russia. Vakhtin,[1] for example, sketches a whole picture of Soviet/Russian policies toward Northern Minorities. According to Vakhtin,[2] most of the surveys published from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s targeted the languages of indigenous peoples in East Siberia. Vakhtin is also highly rated for his detailed survey on Northern Minorities' conversation ability in their languages.[3] Despite these works, there still exists a huge gap in terms of detailed studies on the sociolinguistic aspects of each ethnic group, based on solid statistical data. In order to understand the various problems faced by Northern Minorities and also other people in the world, it is important to have a more precise understanding of their backgrounds.

In this paper, using statistical data, I discuss how the language decline of the Alutors has progressed. To be precise, I compare the number of native Alutor speakers by year in regard to the following three factors: population change, amalgamation, and change in educational policy.[4] The results show that the language has declined severely as a result of these factors.

The construction of this paper is as follows; the first section provides general information on the Alutor people and their language. In the second section, I consider each of the factors mentioned above. The third section gives final remarks.

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1 Nikolai Vakhtin, *Native Peoples of the Russian Far North* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1992).

2 Nikolai Vakhtin, *Iazyki narodov severa v XX veke: ocherki iazykovogo sdviga* [Languages of the Northern People in the 20th Century: Sketches of the Language Shift] (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt Peterburge, 2001), p. 161.

3 Ibid.

4 Vakhtin (*Native Peoples*, pp. 15-22) outlines how the following factors influenced the minority languages: industrial development, population movement, Russian language policy, forced relocation, and the boarding-school system. The study is certainly a notable feat considering that such a survey had almost never been conducted, particularly in Russia. However, Vakhtin selects mainly the people of East Siberia and Chukotka for his study; therefore, there is very little information about Kamchatka.

General Information about the Alutors and Their Language

Figure 1. Koryak Autonomous Region

The Alutors are a minority indigenous people of Kamchatka whose traditional occupations are fishing, hunting, gathering wild plants, and reindeer breeding. The self-designation of this people is *nəməlʔən* "Nymylan" (literally translated as "an inhabitant of a village"). The word *alutalʔən* "Alutor" just means "an inhabitant of the village Alut."[5] Thus, "Nymylan" may be appropriate for indicating the whole ethnic group.

The Alutor language, together with Chukchi, Koryak,[6] Itelmen, and Kerek, belongs to the Chukchi-Kamchatkan language family which is integrated into a linguistic group termed "Paleo-Siberian."[7] Most speakers of Alutor live in the Koryak Autonomous Region (henceforth, KAR) which is located in the northern part of the Kamchatka Peninsula.[8]

The Alutors obtained the status of an independent ethnic group in 2000 due to the Government Decree of the Russian Federation.[9] According to the

5 This village was known as *Oliutorka* in Russian.

6 The Koryaks are traditionally divided into two main groups: Reindeer Koryaks (*olennye/kochevye koriaki* or *chavchuveny*) and Maritime Koryaks (*beregovye/osedlye koriaki* or *nymylany*). The Alutors have commonly been regarded as a subgroup of the Maritime Koryaks, however, since the 1960s, some Russian linguists have been distinguishing between the Alutor language and Koryak.

7 This group consists of several language families and isolates which have no genetic relationship to each other.

8 Based on linguistic and ethnological studies on Koryak, Nagayama assumes that the Alutor people reside in the following villages: Olyutorka, Wetwey, Kultushno, Tilichiki, Wywenka, Ilpyr, Anapka, Tymlat, Ossora, Karaga in the Eastern coast of Kamchatka peninsula, and Rekinniki, Podkagernoe and Lesnaya (Palana) in the Western coast (Nagayama, Yukari, *Ocherk grammatiki aliutorskogo iazyka* [Grammatical Outline of Alutor], Endangered Languages of Pacific Rim Publications Series A2-038, Suita, Japan: Faculty of Informatics, Osaka Gakuin University, 2003, pp. xii-xiii).

9 Minority Electric Resources, Government's Decree on the List of Small Indigenous Peoples

All-Russia Population Census of 2002,[10] the population of the ethnic group was estimated at about 3,000, i.e. 35%[11] of the total Koryak population of 8,743.[12] According to my survey, the average age of the youngest speakers is about 40, but most of them speak Russian in daily communication. Thus, the number of Alutor speakers is estimated at approximately 200-300. At present, the Alutor children do not acquire the language of their parents and grandparents any longer. The number of native speakers is decreasing year after year; thus, this language has seriously been endangered.

Alutor mainly comprises three dialects: Alutor proper, Karaga, and Lesnaya.[13] In addition, some dialects of Koryak spoken in Penzhina District resemble Alutor in morphology, others in phonology. It should be noted that these dialects of Koryak are spoken by the so-called "Maritime Koryaks" whose lifestyle is similar to that of the Alutors. It is also important to note that the "Maritime Koryaks" share the same self-designation with the Alutors, namely nəməlʔən "Nymylan."

At present, the orthography of Alutor is under construction, and there are no published educational materials on this language. However, some Alutor authors[14] and teachers in elementary schools in KAR have attempted to describe the language based on the orthography of Koryak which was created in the 1930s (first based on Latin, and then on Cyrillic scripts).

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of the Russian Federation (2000) http://www.minelres.lv/NationalLegislation/Russia/Russia_IndigenousList_Russian.htm (accessed on 21 June 2006).

10 These statistical data also reveal that 23% of the entire population of Koryak speaks Koryak. This suggests that the Alutor language has approximately 700 speakers. However, this estimate appears highly optimistic, considering the fact that the younger generation of less than fifty years of age scarcely acquires neither Koryak nor Alutor, while people who are fifty years old and over account for 11% of the entire population.

11 Nagayama (*Ocherk grammatiki*, p. xiii) calculates that Alutors, including Lesnaya and Karaga people, account for approximately 35% of the entire population of Koryaks. If these two groups are to be excluded, Alutor accounts for 25%, and its speakers are estimated at about 150.

12 Federal State Statistic Service, *2002 All-Russia Population Census* (2004) http://195.133.159.86/index.html?id=11 (accessed on 25 June 2006).

13 For extra information on the dialects refer to S.N. Stebnitskii, "Nymylanskii (koriatskii) iazyk [The Nymylan (Koryak) Language]," in G.N. Prokof'ev, ed., *Iazyki i pis'mennosti narodov Severa, Ch. 3: Iazyki i pis'mennosti paleoaziatskikh narodov* (Leningrad, 1934), pp. 49-50; S.N. Stebnitskii, "Aliutorskii dialekt nymylanskogo (koriaktskogo) iazyka [The Alutor Dialect of the Nymylan (Koryak) Language]," *Sovetskii Sever* 1 (1938), pp. 65-66; A.A. Maltseva, *Morfologiia glagola v aliutorskom iazyke* [The Alutor Verb Morphology] (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 1998), pp. 3-5; and Nagayama, *Ocherk grammatiki*, pp. xiv-xv).

14 Kirill Kilpalin is the only author who has published folktales in Alutor (K.V. Kilpalin, *Ania: skazki Severa* [Ania: Tales of the North], Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky: RIO Kamchatskoi oblastnoi tipografii, 1993), making use of the Cyrillic script. Mikhail Popov has additionally provided Russian translations for Kilpalin's texts.

As with other minority languages, Alutor is rich in unique grammatical features that cannot be predicted from a knowledge of major languages. However, the grammar has not been sufficiently studied. Therefore, its extinction will be a great loss not only for its speakers and their descendants but also as a human intellectual resource.

Process of Language Decline

Many authors have pointed out that the proportion of native speakers of minority languages in Russia, as given in the results of the All Soviet/Russian Census, is an overestimation. Vakhtin,[15] for example, explains how ambiguous is the definition of "mother tongue" (*rodnoi iazyk* in Russian). Consequently, the term does not reflect the number of people who actually use the target language in their daily conversations.

As already mentioned, the average age of the youngest Alutor speakers is about 40. As a rough estimate, all people over 50 could speak Alutor fluently in 2002. Based on this estimate, I assume that people over 40 would have spoken Alutor in 1989, over 30 in 1979, over 20 in 1969, over 10 in 1959, and all the population would have spoken Alutor in 1939. Serious decline is found during the period 1939-1959 (–23%) and 1959-1970 (–32%).

Table 1 and Figure 2 show the number of native Alutor speakers and their percentage to the total Alutor population in my estimates.[16] The percentage of native Koryak (including Alutor) speakers which is given in the All Soviet/Russian Census is also shown for the purpose of comparison.

Table 1. Estimated Number and Percentage of Alutor Speakers[17]

	Alutor Population	Alutor Speakers	Alutor Speakers to Total Alutor Population (%)	Koryak Speakers to Total Koryak Population (%)
1939	2,445	2,445	100.0	100.0
1959	1,785	1,373	76.9	94.1
1970	2,578	1,165	45.2	81.6
1979	1,981	632	31.9	69.6
1989	2,300	426	18.5	52.4
2002	2,349	250	10.6	29.5

15 Vakhtin, *Iazyki narodov*, pp. 77-79.

16 Multiplying the Koryak population by the estimated percentage of Alutor (35%) gives the Alutor population. Multiplying the Alutor population by the estimated percentage of the corresponding generation gives the number of Alutor speakers. Note that a part of KAR was transferred to neighboring Magadan Province in 1958.

17 Source: Goskomstat Rossii, *Chislennost' i sostav naseleniia narodov Severa: po dannym perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda* [The Number and the Structure by Nationalities of Northern People: on the Data of Population Census in 1989], Tom I, Chast' I-II (Moscow: Respublikanskii Informatsionno-izdatel'skii Tsentr, 1992); Goskomstat SSSR, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia*

Note that the Koryaks whose traditional occupation is reindeer breeding keep a comparatively high percentage of native speakers. This can be explained as follows; there were few Russian speakers in reindeer camps, and reindeer breeders had many occasions to speak in their native language. Anyway, this data shows that both Koryak and Alutor speakers have suffered a sharp drop in number over the last 50 years.

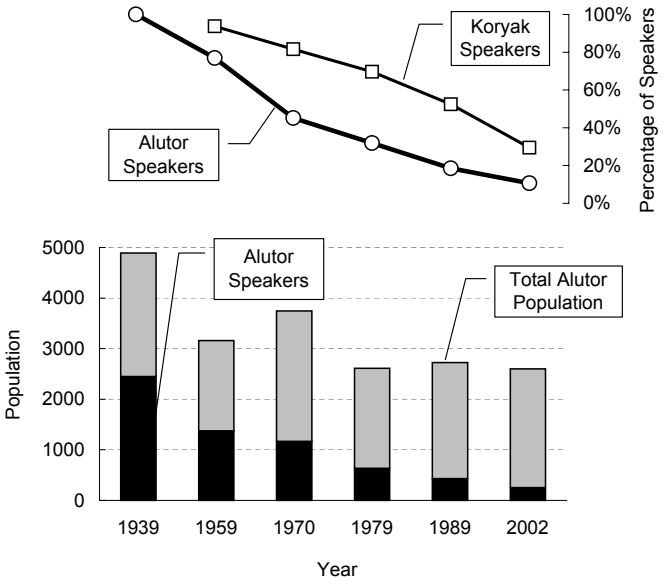

Figure 2. Percentage of Alutor and Koryak Speakers to Total Population[18]

As mentioned above, the following three factors have impacted on the language decline in Kamchatka. They are certainly applicable to other Northern Minorities in the Russian Far East.

- Population change (= increase in newcomer population)
- Amalgamation of kolkhozes and liquidation of villages
- Change in education policy

In the following subsections, I will discuss each factor in detail.

Population Change

The proportion of non-indigenous inhabitants to the total population correlates with the language decline of the indigenous people. Obviously, the entire non-indigenous population is represented by Russian speakers. When the Russians first arrived in Kamchatka in the middle of the 17th century, none of indigenous peoples could speak Russian. Then, the more the Russian-speak-

1979 goda, Tom IV, natsional'nyi sostav naseleniia SSSR, Chast' I, Kniga 1 [Results of All Union Population Census in 1979, Vol. IV, Population Structure of USSR, Part I, Book 1] (Moscow, Statisticheskii Sbornik, 1989); Goskomstat SSSR, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda, Tom X* [Results of All Union Population Census in 1979, Vol. X] (Moscow: Statisticheskii Sbornik, 1990); Federal State Statistic Service, *2002 All-Russia*; Iu.A. Poliakov, ed., *Vsesoiuznaia perepis' naseleniia 1939 goda: osnovnye itogi* [All Union Population Census in 1939: Main Results] (Moscow: Nauka, 1993); Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda RSFSR* [Results of All Union Population Census in 1959, RSRSR] (Moscow: Gosstatiizdat, 1963, rep. Nenden/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1975).

18 Source: Same as Table 1.

ing population grew, the more the indigenous population acquired Russian. According to a special sociolinguistic investigation on the use of native languages in Siberia and the Far East undertaken in 1968, these languages were still used actively in family and daily life conversation.[19] Moreover, half of the population of the Northern people had acquired Russian as a second language by 1970, and 60% by 1979.[20]

Ogryzko[21] estimated the population of indigenous people at about 20,000 before the conquest of Kamchatka by Russians, and it decreased to 22% in the first 200 years. According to the data of 2002 Census,[22] over 10,000 indigenous people live in Kamchatka Province, including Koryak Autonomous Region. It indicates that these people account for 4.1% of the entire population in this area.

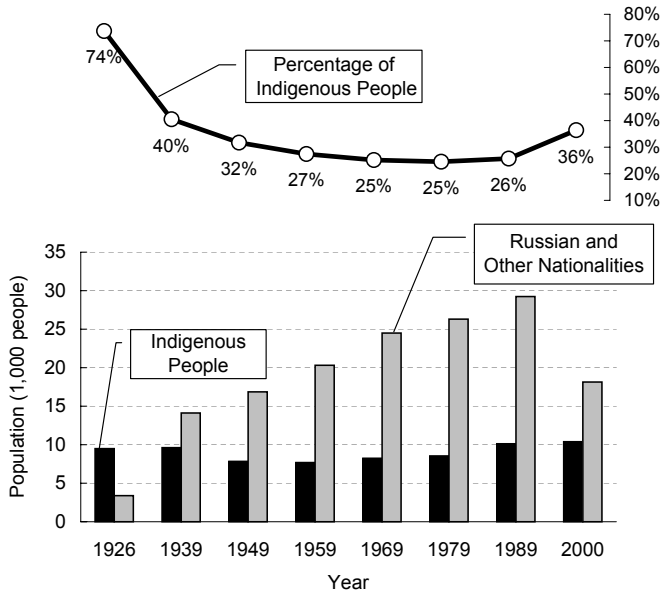

Figure 3. Change in Population Structure in KAR[24]

In KAR which was established in 1930 the growth of the non-indigenous population was not so rapid. Nevertheless, the indigenous population has always been smaller than the non-indigenous population. Figure 3 and 4 show how the population structure of KAR changed in the course of 1926-2000.[23]

19 I.S. Gurvich, "Etnoiazykovye protsessy [Ethnolingusitic Processes]," in I.S. Gurvich, ed., *Etnicheskoe razvitie narodnostei Severa v sovetskii period* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), p. 140.

20 Ibid.

21 I.I. Ogryzko, *Ocherki istorii sblizheniia korennogo i russkogo naseleniia Kamchatki (konets XVII – nachalo XX v.)* [Outline on the History of Approach between Indigenous and Russian Population in Kamchatka (The End of 17th – the Beginning of 20th Century)] (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo Leningradskogo Universiteta, 1973), pp. 9-41.

22 Federal State Statistic Service, *2002 All-Russia.*

23 Archive sources show only the total indigenous population in both Karaga and Olyutor districts in 1926. Comparing the proportion of Karaga population and Olyutor population, I assume that Karaga population accounted for about 30% of the total population of these two districts.

24 Source: Otdel po Delam Arkhivov Administratsii Koriakskogo Avtonomnogo Okruga (OpDAAKAO). f. 9, op. 1, d. 1, l. 35; d. 5, l. 1; d. 62, l. 1; d. 138, l. 2; d. 247, l. 2; d. 363, l. 5; d. 536, l. 1; Goskomstat SSSR, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979 goda, Tom IV*.

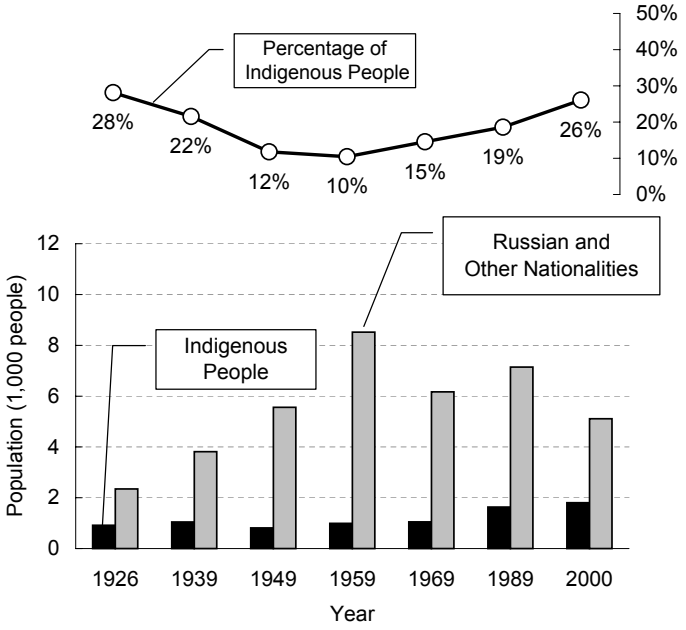

Figure 4. Change in Population Structure in Karaga district[25]

The non-indigenous population increased rapidly during 1929-1989 but it decreased in 2000. Karaga district has a fairly large portion of the non-indigenous population as compared with the KAR total. From 1939 to 1959, in particular, the non-indigenous population increased by more than 50% but it has reduced by about 30% after 1989. The economic situation in KAR may explain this. KAR experienced a rapid progress in the local economy in the 1950s which caused a remarkable increase in the non-indigenous population in this area.[26] The non-indigenous population has begun to move out after the dissolution of the Soviet Union because KAR, like other regions of Russia, suffered a serious economic crisis. Note that the size of the indigenous population did not change through this period.

Davydov gives an earlier date for the period of the progress in local economy. Having over-fulfilled the yearly plan for the first time in 1937, fishing became by 1940 the primary industry in the KAR.[27] The fish catch in KAR, in particular, dramatically grew during World War II. In 1945, it achieved 2.5 times more than the level of pre-war time.[28] Above all, Karaga district thrived on its fishing industry which produced 47.6% of the KAR total fish catch in 1940.[29] Consequently, it is natural for Karaga district to have a large proportion of the non-indigenous population as compared with the KAR total.

Figure 5 shows the fish catch in Karaga district and KAR. Similar to the changes in population, the fish catch in Karaga district also shows a big increase from the 1940s and a sharp drop down to 50% after 1989.

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25 Source: Same as Figure 3.

26 V.V. Antropova, *Kul'tura i byt Koriakov* [The Culture and Life of Koryak] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1971), pp. 136-140.

27 V.V. Davydov, "Ot Bata k Trauleru [From Dugout to Trawler]," in E. Gropianov and K. Klikov, eds., *Svet v Tundre* (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky: Dal'nevostochnoe Knizhnoe Izdatel'stvo, 1970), pp. 15-18.

28 Ibid., p. 26.

29 Ibid., p. 18.

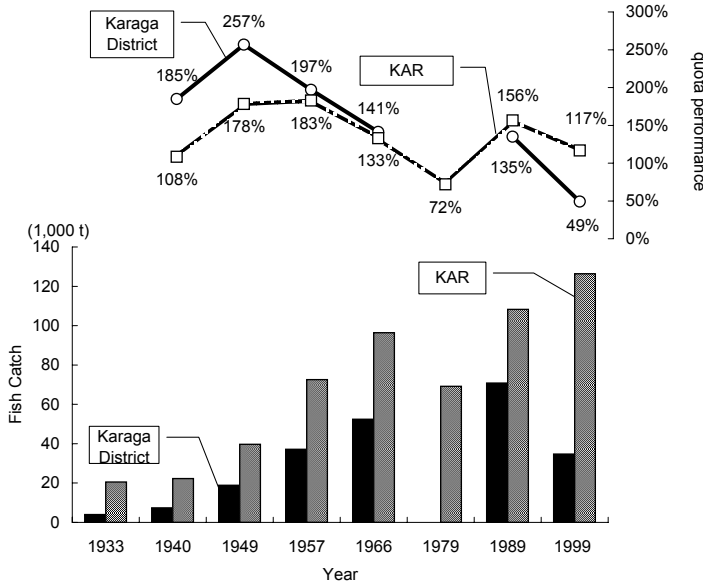

Figure 5. Fish Catch and Quota Performance in KAR and Karaga district[30]

However, Figure 4 shows only the permanent residents; it does not include the number of seasonal workers. Since I have no statistical data on the population of seasonal workers, I merely introduce some information that I have received from my language consultants. Tatiana Golikova (born in 1937 in Anapka, Karaga district) remembers that seasonal workers appeared after Word War II. Tatiana Golikova and Egor Chechulin (born in 1961 in Anapka) say that the population of Ilpyr village where they lived after the liquidation of their home village Anapka increased 3-4 times in summer due to the influx of seasonal workers. Having married indigenous women, some of the workers settled there permanently. Statistical data show that Ilpyr had 2,422 residents in 1964.[31] Alexei Appolon[32] (born in 1950 in Podkagernoe, Penzhina district) remembers that 1,000-3,000 workers came to Tymlat village, adjacent to Ilpyr, in the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s. Most of them came over by contract or agreement. He adds that Bashkir students were sent to this village for practical training.

Incredibly high salaries in the fishing industry attracted seasonal workers from various part of the Soviet Union: European Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, and Mordvinia. Alexei Appolon says that he once earned 2,000 rubles by working in the fishing industry during his summer vacation, while the average monthly salary of teachers was about 150 rubles at that time. All workers born in KAR received some allowances in addition to their basic salary, and accordingly, their income was about three times higher than that of newcomers, who received only the basic salary. Thus, it was beneficial for employers to bring seasonal workers from the mainland, even at the cost of bearing their transportation expenses.[33]

30 Source: OpDAAKAO f. 9, op. 1, d. 8, l. 3, l. 22-25; d. 254, l. 1; d. 370, l. 1; d. 519, l. 3. No data on Karaga district are available for 1979.

31 OpDAAKAO f. 9, op. 1, d. 105, l. 1.

32 The interview was held on December 16, 2006.

33 Alexei Appolon; the interview was held on December 16, 2006.

The following passage in Rethmann[34] supports the above statements.[35]

> ...the majority of Russian and Ukrainian "newcomers" (*priezhie* [sic]) arrived in the mid-1950s. At that time, government programs encouraged a form of economic development that invited the increased presence of Russian and Ukrainian workers and their families at the northeastern shore. The majority of whites [...] worked in the flourishing fish industry. The incentives were attractive: The wages were three times higher than on the mainland; the family of every worker received a well-equipped apartment.

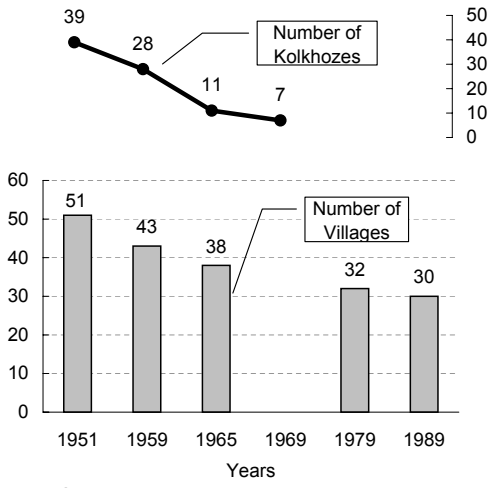

Figure 6.
Number of Villages and Kolkhozes in KAR[36]

All the facts mentioned in this section confirm that the rapid increase in the newcomer population in KAR is artificial rather than natural growth.

Amalgamation of Kolkhozes and Liquidation of Villages

The amalgamation of kolkhozes began immediately after the establishment of KAR in 1930.[37] The main purpose was to enhance productivity. Along with the amalgamation, "unpromising" villages were liquidated. Figure 6 shows that the number of kolkhozes decreased to 13% during 1936-1969. No official documents or resolutions are available concerning the liquidation of villages because villages were not accounted for in the statistics.[38] The liquidation process in KAR was completed in 1993.[39]

As many authors have pointed out, these operations caused many problems for the indigenous people. For example, Khelol,[40] in her preface to Milgich-

34 Petra Rethmann, *Tundra Passages: History and Gender in the Russian Far East* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), p. 21.

35 However, she does not specify the sources her description is based on.

36 Source: Antropova, *Kul'tura i byt*; Khelol, *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie problemy*; Tsentral'noe Statisticheskoe Upravlenie, *Itogi Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1959 goda RSFSR*; Goskomstat SSSR, *Vozrast i sostoianie v brake naseleniia SSSR: po dannym vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1989 goda* [Age and Status in Marriage of Population of USSR: on the Data of All Union Population Census in 1989] (Moscow: Finansy i Statistika, 1990); OpDAAKAO f. 9, op. 1, d. 60, l. 10; d. 96, l. 1; d. 363, l. 1.

37 Antropova, *Kul'tura i byt*, p.130.

38 T.M. Khelol, *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie problemy razvitiia ranee zakrytykh sel v koriakskom avtonomnom okruge* [Socio-Economical Problems on the Evolution of Earlier Closed Villages in Koryak Autonomous Region] (Moscow/Palana: Izdatel'stvo MGU, 2000), p. 15.

39 Tatiana Khelol, p.c.

40 N.N. Milgichil, *The Magic Rope: Koryak Folktale*, Endangered Languages of Pacific Rim Publication Series A2-035 (Suita: Osaka Gakuin University, 2003), p. iii.

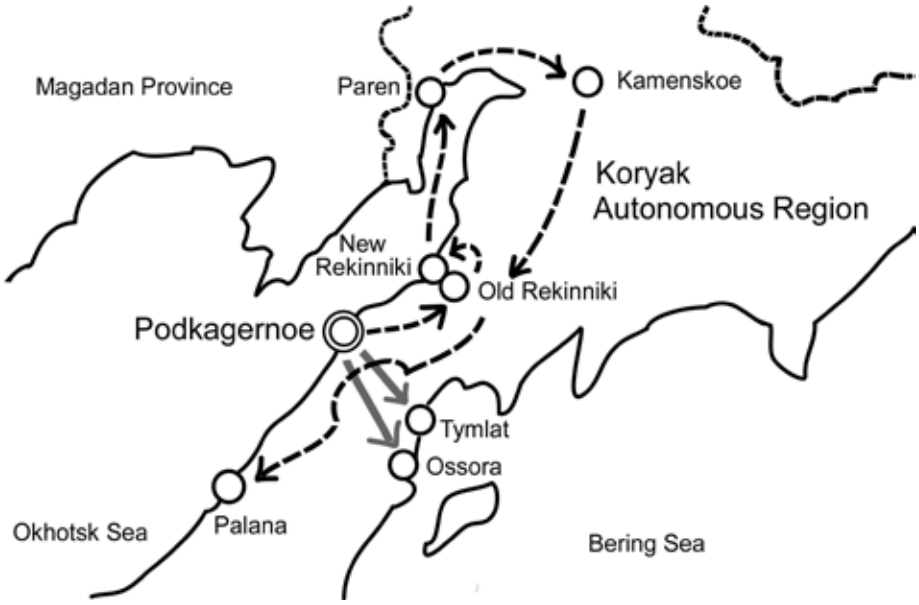

Figure 7. Iosif's Relocation Route

il's work, describes the forced relocation of the Nymylan-Koryaks as follows:

> After the liquidation of villages, the inhabitants were sent to Manily, Kamenskoe, and Paren. Still now, people prefer to keep company with those from the same village, straining to maintain, in this way at least, their mother language, legends and history. However, most of the older generation found it very difficult to adapt to a new way of life, and they passed away still longing for their former homes and communities.

Here are two stories about the forced relocation of the Alutors. One is cited from Kravchenko,[41] which is told by Iosif Zhukov (born in 1950, Podkagernoe).

> We lived in a very beautiful place: between the villages of Rekinniki and Lesnaya. In winter, we lived in an earth house near hills; in spring, on a river shore; in summer, we moved to the sea. [...] Everything was in abundance there: fish, fur animals, meats, mushrooms, and berries. And it had BEGUN. Our reindeer were seized. They moved us to Rekinniki. They didn't give us a residence. We lived at my mother's relatives with 4 families in a flat. Everybody spoke Koryak. But when I went to a school, they spoke only Russian. If someone spoke in a native language unwittingly, they made him stand in the corner.
>
> Then "Old" Rekinniki had closed. We were sent to a "New" one, which was constructed in a swamp. After the fourth grade, for further education, we were sent to Paren, across the large Penzhina Bay. [...] Then, Paren closed. We were detached from our families and sent to Kamenskoe, to a boarding school again. We learned only in Russian.

41 V.T. Kravchenko, *Mengo* (Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky: RIO KOT, 1995), pp. 30-31.

Figure 7 shows the whole route that Iosif was forced to pursue.

Iosif has explained about his schools as follows. He studied in Rekinniki until the fourth grade. Then he moved to Paren because Rekinniki had only a four-year school. Then the Paren school switched from a seven-year to a four-year system. Thus, children in the fifth grade or older had to move to another village, Kamenskoe, which had a seven-year school. After graduation from school, Iosif landed a job in Palana, where he still lives.[42]

Alexei Appolon, Iosif's nephew, described the relocation in greater detail. In 1959, when he was 6 years old, Podkagernoe was closed. The inhabitants of Podkagernoe were moved to Old Rekinniki. There were no cars at that time; therefore, people traveled by dogsleds, reindeer, or horses with all of their household goods. However, after two years, people were again relocated to another village, New Rekinniki. New Rekinniki had closed in 1981, and people, including Iosif's relatives, were moved to Tymlat and Ossora located on the Eastern coast of Kamchatka.[43] Some were moved in 1980, like Alexei and his family, but others stayed on in Rekinniki until 1981.[44]

The next story was told by a native woman (born in the 1940s) during my field research in 2000. Her native village was liquidated during the Soviet era.

> I had two children at that time: my elder child was 3 years old, and the younger one was at the breast. My husband and most able-bodied people, including women, were working with the reindeer herd, far from the village. Despite an announcement two months beforehand that our village was going to be liquidated, nobody believed it. One day, when I was at home with my children, a truck rode up to the entrance, and several men entered the house. These men began to load all our belongings onto the truck, and I watched them helplessly. Then the truck left for a pier, where a fish carrier was berthed. I had no choice but to go after the truck. When I arrived at the pier, the fish carrier was already full of people with baggage. Then all the people who were in the village on that day were moved to another village.

The liquidation of villages led people to a multiethnic society, from an almost monoethnic one where they had lived until that time.[45] Some of the villages to which they were sent, for example, Tilichiki, Ossora, and Kamenskoe, consisted mostly of newcomer populations while others consisted of various ethnic groups who were also relocated from their native villages. Consequently, the relocation caused an increase in mixed marriages. From my observation, Russian is dominant in mixed-marriage families, so it is clear that the increase in such marriages is accelerating the process of language decline.

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42 Iosif Zhukov; the interview was held on November 2006.

43 Other stories about the relocation of the inhabitants of Rekinniki and Anapka can be found in Rethmann, *Tundra Passages*, pp. 42-43.

44 Alexei Appolon; the interview was held on November 29, 2006.

45 Some Russian-speaking families, of course, lived in these "almost monoethnic" villages, working for administration, schools, and magazines. Even so, the indigenous population constituted more than 80% of the population in these villages.

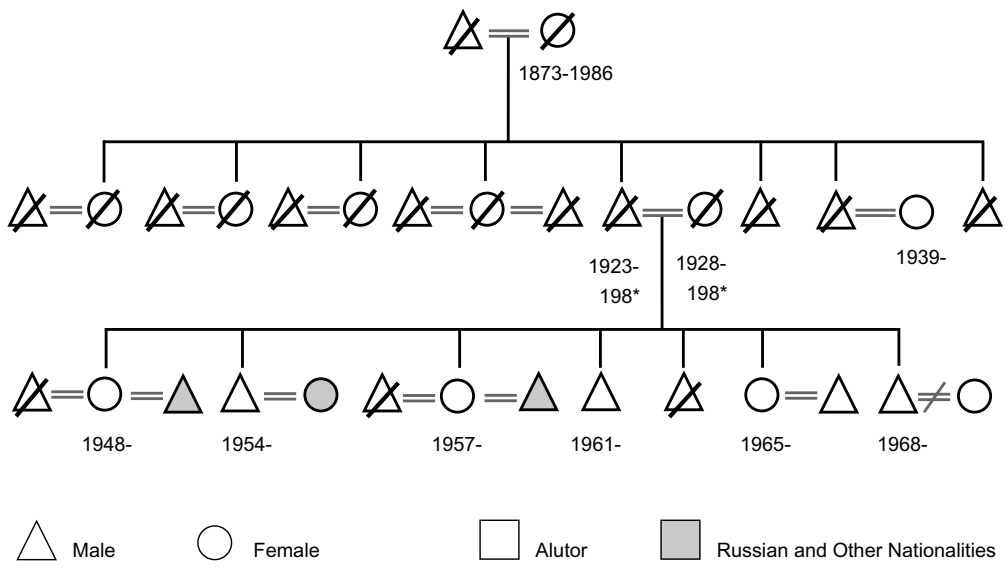

Figure 8. Kinship Chart 1

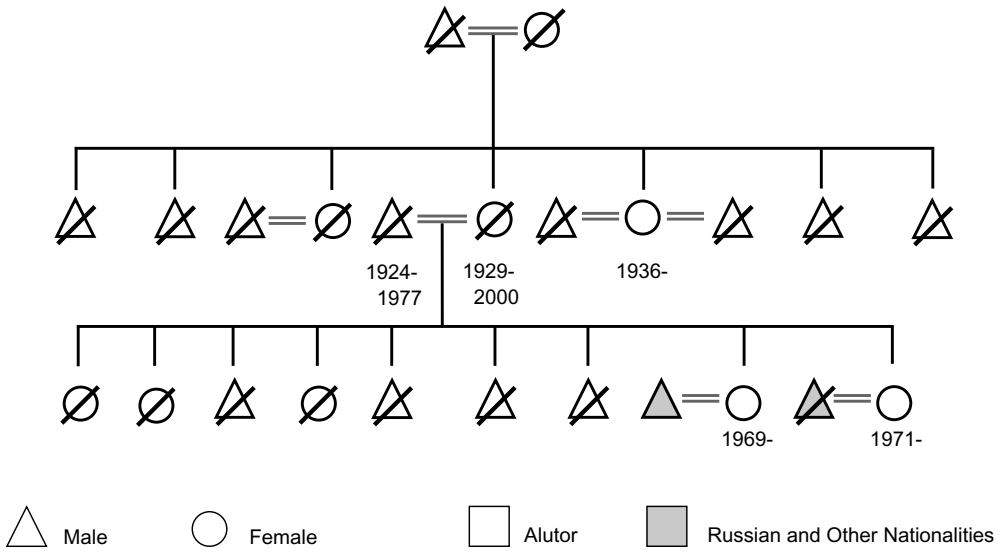

Figure 9. Kinship Chart 2

No statistical data on the rate of mixed marriage is available at this moment. However, the following two family charts which are based on my interviews with several Alutor speakers in 2002, represent the process of mixed marriages to a certain extent.

The family shown in Figure 8, whose village was liquidated in the 1970s, experienced a forced relocation. The inhabitants of this liquidated village were sent to another village, where most of the population was non-indigenous. Figure 8 suggests that mixed marriages in this area appeared approximately in the 1970s, after the forced relocation. The family shown in Figure 9 had not

experienced relocation, although mixed marriages are also found in the third generation. Since the main industry of this village is fishery, they had many seasonal workers from the continental part of Russia. Both of the men indicated in Figure 9 were such seasonal-working fishermen.

Education Policy

The change in education policy toward the minorities in Kamchatka can be divided into the following four periods:

- 1913-1949: Encouragement to use native language in education
- 1950-1979: Suppression of native language and culture
- 1980-1991: Reevaluation of native language and culture, and the beginning of its revitalization
- 1991- : Stagnation of language/culture revitalization because of financial difficulties

Figure 10 shows the change in the number of schools in KAR.

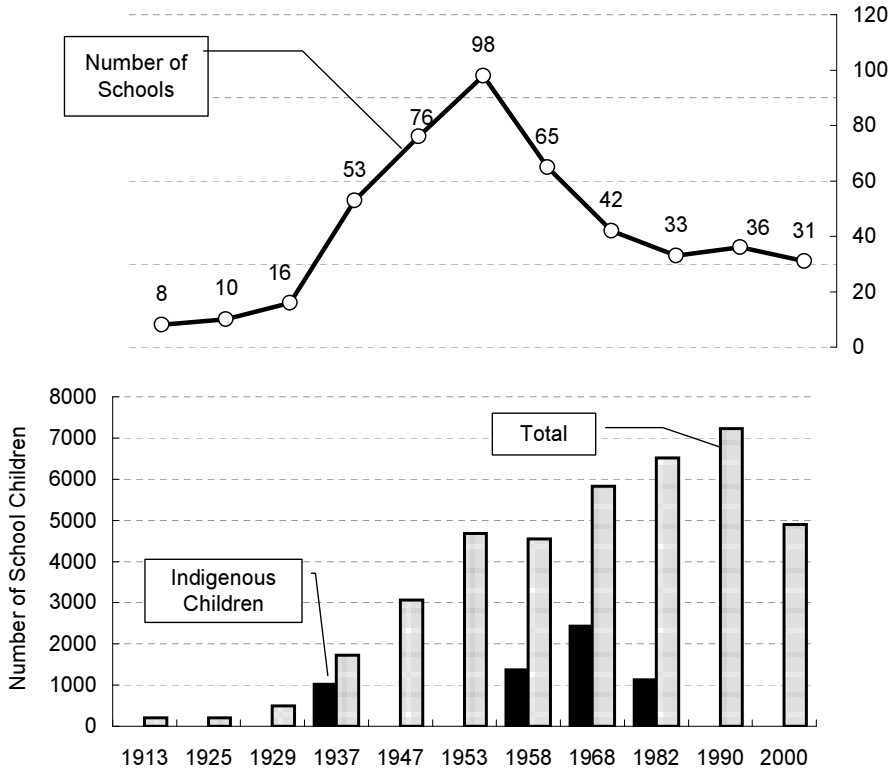

Figure 10. Increase in Schools in KAR[46]

46 Source: Antropova, *Kul'tura i byt*, p. 200; OpDAAKAO f. 9, op. 1, d. 1, l. 47 and d. 60, l. 12; Otdel Narodnogo Obrazovaniia Koriakskogo Avtonomnogo Okruga, *Istoriia narodnogo obrazovaniia v Okruge* [History of Public Education in KAR] (Palana, 1990). Data on the number of indigenous children are available only for 1937, 1958, 1968 and 1982.

Figure 10 clearly shows a rapid increase in schools before the 1950s, and a rapid decrease after the 1950s. During the first years the Soviet Government encouraged teachers to use indigenous languages at school, because the majority of the indigenous population did not understand Russian well.[47] Especially in the 1920s and 1930s education in the lower grades was conducted with the help of bilingual speakers.[48] Such "interpreters" worked in Koryak schools until the 1940s.[49]

In the 1920s-1930s, the Government planned to increase the literacy rate among indigenous peoples who often refused to send their children to school. The authorities often forced children to enroll to school with no heed to children's desires. Thus, some children were hidden when officials came to a village to find school-age children,[50] while others escaped from boarding schools.[51] The Government made many efforts to educate the native people: e.g., some Russian teachers acquired Koryak or Alutor, and their knowledge helped to establish Koryak orthography and/or to publish educational materials. Short-term Koryak courses for Russian-speaking teachers were held several times. Even "nomadic" schools were organized for children who lived at remote reindeer-herding camps.[52] However, all of these attempts were aborted after a short time, because few teachers agreed to work under such conditions.

Subsequent years from 1950 up to 1979 were a period of great hardship for the minorities. The percentage of native speakers remarkably dropped in this period. As mentioned in 2.2, the Government amalgamated kolkhozes and liquidated small villages, and therefore, many villages and schools turned to be multiethnic.[53] Since parents' demand for the education in Russian had grown, schools in KAR adopted Russian as the language of instruction.[54] Note that parents just wanted to teach their children Russian, and it did not mean that they rejected their own language. Increase in the Russian-speaking population raised the number of native people who spoke, or at least understood, Russian. According to Vladimir Nutayulgin (born in 1965, Wywenka, Olyutor district), in the beginning of the 1970s, almost all children understood Russian well when they entered elementary school; he was the only child who did not know a word in Russian on his first day at school.

Another important scene in this period is the prohibition of using native languages both at schools and in boarding houses. Little information about it

47 Antropova, *Kul'tura i byt*, pp. 197-198.

48 Gurvich, "Etnoiazykovye protsessy," p. 139.

49 Natalia Voronova, born in 1948, Anapka, p.c.

50 Valentina Dedyk, p.c.

51 A.E. Kibrik, S.V. Kodzasov, and I.A. Murav'eva, *Iazyki i fol'klor aliutortsev* [Language and Folklore of Alutor People] (Moscow: IMLI RAN Nasledie, 2000), pp. 171-172.

52 Otdel Narodonogo Obrazovaniia, *Istoriia narodnogo obrazovaniia*, pp. 15-16.

53 Note that the indigenous population accounted for less than 50% in 1950s (see 2.1).

54 Ibid., p. 23.

has been found in published materials,[55] but the native people in KAR remember this period well even now. In addition, one Alutor male speaker (born in 1960s) told that every indigenous children had to live in a boarding school, even if his/her parents lived in the same village. He also said that teachers forbade children from speaking their native language, because both teachers and matrons knew only Russian. The majority of this generation who received their education in this period lost their native language, having been separated from their culture and language.

The amount of educational materials (Table 2) well reflects the change in the education policy. Most textbooks and readers in Koryak were published in the 1930s-1940s, although these materials are almost unavailable for school children now.

Table 2. Koryak Educational Materials[56]

	Textbooks	Readers	Dictionaries	Total
1923–1949	11	14	1	26
1950–1979	2	0	2	4
1980–1991	5	5	1	11
1992–2002	2	0	1	3

In the 1980s, due to the restoration of language rights for Northern Minorities, Koryak authors also began to publish educational materials.[57] Four textbooks and one reading material for school children, and one textbook for students were published in the 1980s.[58]

During the latest 10 years, efforts to publish educational materials in Koryak were frustrated because of financial difficulties. Nevertheless, teachers and researchers working on educational programs are still trying to revitalize their language.

In the 1980s, education in Koryak also restarted at many schools in KAR.[59] Now, in 2006, 18 schools and 14 kindergartens have Koryak classes,[60] out of 27

55 Vakhtin (*Native Peoples*, p. 18) outlines the physical punishment meted out in schools. However, Iosif's story (above) is the only case I found narrated by the indigenous people themselves.

56 Source: Matsumura, Kazuto, Koryak: Bibliographical guide (2004) http://www.tooyoo.l.u-tokyo.ac.jp/Russia/bibl/Koryak.html (accessed on 25 June 2006); Iu. Trushkova, "Koriakskii iazyk [The Koryak Language]," in V.Iu. Mikhalchenko, ed., *Pis'mennye iazyki mira: Iazyki Rossiiskoi Federatsii* (Moscow: Akademiia, 2003), pp. 270-273; Valentina Dedyk, p.c.

57 As mentioned above, no educational materials for Alutor have been published, since this language obtained official status as an independent language in 2000.

58 Valentina Dedyk, p.c.

59 Although Alutor lacks educational materials, many native teachers have lessons in this language, using their self-made materials.

60 There are two variations of educational program in KAR: (1) an hour "Native Language" and an hour "Native Culture" each week, in each grade, excluding the first (in Palana and Tigil); (2) two hours "Native Language" in the lower grade, an hour in the middle and higher grades each week (in other villages).

schools and 33 kindergartens throughout KAR.[61]

Final Remarks

The language decline in Kamchatka has been caused quite artificially. All factors mentioned in this paper show that the policy imposed by the dominant society directly impacted the status of indigenous languages.

Some may claim that assimilation of a minority people by the majority and the extinction of a minor language is a "natural" process in human history. Of course, we have already experienced such phenomena since the beginning of history. Nonetheless, we must distinguish between those that occurred over a number of centuries and those that have taken place during the last five decades. The former may well be considered as "natural" but the latter should not. It should also be noted that such a claim usually arises from the side of the majority.

The choice of whether or not to abandon one's native language is personal. However, the present situation surrounding the indigenous people in the Russian Far East does not allow them to make the choice. If humans have a power to create such a situation, they also have the power to avoid creating such a situation, too. Then, what should we do? Let us begin by making ourselves aware of the situation surrounding the indigenous peoples and their languages, and recognizing the historical background of their situation. If we shut our eyes to these situations and backgrounds, it would be akin to encouraging the decline of the languages. We have already experienced how our indifference to them can lead to an infringement on their human rights. We should guard against repeating our past mistakes. Nobody can truthfully say that the younger generation of indigenous peoples will never want to know their own language in the future merely because their parents were unable to pass on the legacy to them. We should not deprive the younger generation of their right to know the language of their ancestors.

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61 Valentina Dedyk, p.c.