

spelled following Spanish conventions in order to facilitate Spanish literacy acquisition.

Like most conference proceedings, *Sustaining Indigenous Knowledge* will most likely have a limited distribution. Any Siberianist having an interest in the sociopolitical context of indigenous languages should read most of this book, if not all of it. The chapters on the tundra schools may be useful for teaching, as they are the most ethnographically engaging for students. The price for libraries is very reasonable, and PDFs of individual chapters can be downloaded from the publisher's website: [http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/sustainingik\\_E.html](http://www.siberian-studies.org/publications/sustainingik_E.html).

*Alexander King*  
Franklin and Marshall College

***Aginskaia Street, Tanets s Ognem i Aliuminivye Strely: Prisvoenie Kul'turnykh Landshaftov***

**Vladimir Davydov, Nikolai Karbainov, Veronica Simonova, and Veronica Tselishcheva**

(Khabarovsk: Khabarovskii Nauchnyi Tsentr DVO RAN, Khabarovskii Kraevoi Kraevedcheskii Muzei im. N.I. Grodenkova, 2006), 192 pp., index. ISBN: 5-94961-030-X

The book takes a critical look at the conceptions of and values placed on traditional and indigenous cultural elements based on research in Russia.

Veronica Simonova explored the senses of place that indigenous students experience at the Herzen Institute in St. Petersburg and in their home villages. In the city, their sense of place is shaped by ambient noise and artificial lights, and the dangers they perceived were largely human. By contrast, after living in the city, they felt their home villages and the surrounding environment to be populated by discomfoting quiet, darkness and supernatural powers. The experience of studying at the institute with other indigenous northerners also led to the students' stronger realization that they had distinct ethnic identities.

Veronica Tselishcheva discussed the construction of ethnicity by the people in an indigenous village in Khabarovskii Krai and the institutionalization of identity by the government. She uses the themes of classification, time, and space to discuss how the Russian government and some academics define ethnicity in essentialist terms, members of

this ethnicity define it in retrospective terms and social, cultural, and economic behavior is tied to place.

Nikolai Karbainov studied land use in the context of the settlements around Ulan-Ude. Economic and social factors have attracted migrants to urban areas where they established settlements on land they viewed as public and open for use by whoever needed it, according to the land tenure principals in their agricultural and pastoral communities of origin. Late in the Soviet period one of these settlements obtained legal status, establishing a precedent for settlements that later municipal administrations have variously treated with ambivalence to eviction attempts. The cultural conflict can be summarized by different norms and justifications for land use: the residents view their land use as self help and use of a public good in the face of a severe conventional housing shortage; whereas the municipality and some citizens view the residents of these settlements as freeloaders (*nakhalovki*), a stereotype prejudicial of the diverse residents of these settlements and an inaccurate description of the doctors, officials, laborers and pensioners who live there.

The final ethnographic study concerns the role of rituals and material objects in ethnic identity and cultural continuity. Veronika Simonova describes drums and aluminum arrows as examples of the relationship between objects and culture. The commodification of culture can perhaps be seen as a process active among members and non-members of a particular ethnicity. For the first example, Simonova describes ethnic ensembles that perform reenactments, stylized rituals, and dances that are partly oriented toward audience preferences. Audiences are looking for authenticity, which they see in terms of objects connected to the past or tradition. The instance Simonova gives for this is an ensemble using an actual shaman's drum, which according to traditional custom should only ever be touched, let alone used, by a shaman. However, to the audience the shaman's drum is a symbol of authenticity. The other drums the ensemble uses were manufactured in Yakutia, distant from the traditional, local connection of the drum, its materials, maker and user in Nivkhi culture. Similarly, Simonova discusses the recreation of a bear ritual that some among the Nivkhi ethnic group consider to be a defining, essential element of cultural meaning and continuity. During the recreation an aluminum arrow was used, rather than a traditional wood arrow with iron tip, which an informant found to be related to the negative outcome of the ritual.

The ethnographic chapters are interspersed with theoretical chapters by Davydov and Simonova who discuss a variety of topics related

to the concept of a cultural landscape, construction of identity, uses of ethnicity, and authenticity for social and political purposes. The authors of the ethnographic and theoretical chapters make several points I would like to highlight. First, culture is produced and reproduced by actions, thoughts, and behavior. While it may be tempting to view culture in an essentialist fashion (traditional elements mixed with modern elements), this obscures human agency. There are continuities across time and space, but culture is in a constant state of production. Second, concepts of cultural authenticity and tradition are used for many purposes. These are qualities sought out by some cultural bearers to shape and affirm identity, by some tourists as a meaningful commodity and by some social scientists as part of their research interests. Individuals from these groups define authenticity various ways. Tradition is also included in criteria for defining indigenous people in Russian law. Third, social scientists sometimes view indigenous people through the lenses of exceptionalism, the exotic or tradition. Instead, the authors suggest inquiries and methodologies that are relevant to people's every day experiences and problems and using approaches that are "discourse—local, rather than ethno-territorial" and a focus on the human rights of indigenous people (119, 174).

Given the substantive findings outlined above, I found a few of the authors' statements to lessen the strength of analysis or forego opportunities for synthesis. This includes the final statements of the introduction where the content is hedged: "we do not offer specific answers and there are no pretenses to absolute objectivity of conclusions" and that the book "is a suggestion of topics for discussion" (8). There were also a few passages where the authors summarized the ideas of others with little synthesis (46, 117–128, 164). Nevertheless, this work will be of interest to those using constructivist paradigms, those with an interest in contemporary indigenous social and political issues, and social scientists working in Russia. The authors challenge current and historical constructions of culture and touch on serious questions about the practical, academic and policy consequences of how culture and ethnicity are constructed and used.

*Karl Mertens*  
*Boise State University*