

Why are the Khanty and Mansi silent figures in the politics of memory in the North of Western Siberia?

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The area of the North of Western Siberia is a unique project of historical memory. Part of its uniqueness is due to the fact that virgin oil lands continue to remain relevant, unlike other Soviet projects for the development of areas and socialist constructions. The development of the territories of the North of Western Siberia began in the 16th century, but the historical memory of the region dates back to the 1960s. The main plot for the historical memory of the region was the development of nature and the appropriation of natural resources. The most important figure of memory for the North of Western Siberia has become the image of a pioneer oilman. Commemorative practices of the Great Patriotic War were used in the formation of the memory of the conquest of nature. Representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the Khanty and Mansi have become the default figure in the historical memory of the North of Western Siberia. Despite the national projects for the preservation of the culture of Indigenous peoples, their representatives did not become part of the region's memory project. Thus, the Indigenous people are ousted from the region's memory project by the figure of a pioneer, with the arrival of which the history and historical memory of the North of Western Siberia begins.

Introduction

The space of the north of Western Siberia is a unique project of historical memory. That is because, unlike other Soviet projects for the development of areas and socialist construction projects, virgin oil continues to develop and retain its relevance (Barabanova, 2020).

In this article, we will only consider a part of the north of Western Siberia - the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous County - Yugra, since that territory became the center of oil and gas production and underwent the most changes after its discovery in the middle of the 20th century. This event became a continuation of virgin history and got the name "virgin oil". Back in 1965, F. Gurari wrote in his work "Virgin Oil of Siberia" that "so far we have virgin soil in front of us. Everything is still young in it - from virgin lands to the first openwork towers, from blocks of the first cities to the first heroes of the oil harvest" (Gurari, 1965: 65). It should be mentioned that the region is actively implementing its projects of historical memory, among which we can single out the actual memory of the conquest of virgin oil and a project to lengthen the history of the region.

The development of the territories of Ugra starts as early as in the 16th century, but the historical memory of the region begins in the 1960s. That is due to the fact that during this period oil production began, and the area was reborn. There is a long history of area exploration and the historical memory before us, such as the "young cities" of the Urals, whose life started in the era of industrialization (Veselkova, 2016; Veselkova, 2017). The main plot for the historical memory of the region was the development of nature and the usage of natural resources (Barabanova, 2021).

At the same time, the settlement process of virgin oil continues. Severe climatic conditions and remoteness from the center determine the temporary nature of the stay in the region. The involvement of Ugra in the national memory projects and the lengthening of history allows us to talk about the gradual transformation of the area, and its habitation. To implement this project, the region is actively involved in all-Russian and all-Siberian memory projects.

To this day, the memory of the Great Patriotic War is rightfully considered to be the main project in the politics of historical memory (Miller, 2009). Its implementation in Yugra began as early as 1945 when an obelisk was installed on the territory of the Surgut river station dedicated to the Surgutians who left to serve at the front line in 1941-1945. In 1995, the wooden obelisk was replaced by white marble. As in many other regions, the monument was installed in a place that represents the beginning of the road to the front. Since the Ob was the only transport artery in the region, it became the river port from which the Surgutians headed to the front. In 1968, a memorial of Glory was opened in Surgut, the core of which was a wooden obelisk in honor of those who died during the kulak uprising of 1921 (Wealthy peasants who used hired workers in the 1920s - 1930s. They were subjected to repression, their property was confiscated, and they were exiled to the remote territory of the Soviet Union). This successful case shows the process of absorbing the memory of the revolution by the Great Patriotic War at the local level (Boltunova, 2017). It should be noted that the creation of a large complex was the main feature of the 1960s; large monuments and memorials were installed throughout the Soviet Union (Popov, 2019).

The north of Western Siberia, just like Siberia as a whole, was a place of exile for many years (Alekseeva, 2020; Ficpatrik, 2001; Istoriya ssylki...). Commemorative practices related to the victims of repression are still taking shape. In 2018, a monument to the victims of the repressions of the 1930s and 1940s was opened on the Ob River embankment in Surgut. This monument is dedicated to Russian peasants who were exiled from the European part of the Soviet Union to the North of Western Siberia in the 1920s - 1930s. Today, the exiles continue to be the same figure of silence as the Khanty and Mansi

The museum complex "Old Surgut", which was opened to visitors in 1999, takes an important place in the process of lengthening the history of the region. The complex of 14 wooden houses is located on the river Saimaa. Its purpose is to give a visual representation of the historical appearance of Surgut in the 19th century. "Old Surgut" has become an artificially created place of memory. At the same time, let's keep in mind that Surgut of the 19th century was located in a completely different place, and the buildings presented at the exposition are just reconstructions. Since the opening of the complex, it has managed to turn into a place of memory for many citizens, thanks to the well-organized exhibition work.

In 2002, a monument to the "Founders of Surgut" was installed in Surgut, depicting the prince (Fedor Boryatinsky, who, together with the voivode Vladimir Anichkov, arrived in Western Siberia), a Cossack carpenter, and a priest. In 2020, the Embankment of Life graffiti appeared on

the embankment near the river port of Surgut, reflecting important stages in the history of the city. And although the emphasis is on the period of discovery of oil and gas fields, the period before the Russians came to these territories was also shown.

The inhabited space indicates a gradual transformation of cities of temporary residence into permanent ones. And the space occupied by these cities is completely reclaimed from nature. Small sculptures or compositions are created, scattered around the city, creating a recreational area. These sculptures often claim to be the symbol of the city. For Surgut, as the largest city of Ugra, these are the numerous sculptures of a black fox, which can be found primarily in the "Old Surgut" and areas next to it. The black fox is a symbol of the city, placed on its crest. A hotel and a cafe are named after it. But near the building of the local history museum, there is a sculptural composition of a smile, which is also called a symbol of the city in many guidebooks. Smiling fish is a symbol of a city rich in fish and cheerful people.

Here we should refer to the proposed by D.S. Zaikin periodization of the symbolic policy of constructing the "Ugra" identity, which began in the late 1990s with the addition of the toponym "Yugra" to the official name of the region. In 2018, the second stage has started, in which the authorities of the region are implementing an active identity policy. In the course of implementing the task set, the regional authorities actively support the commemorations of Ancient Ugra in the context of museum work, competition events, publication of the academic history of Ugra, etc (Zaikin, 2020: 252). The project to lengthen the history of the region logically fits into this periodization proposed by Zaikin. The concept of "Ugra" identity is designed to melt into a single monolith disparate groups of "temporaries", which will create a new identity, while representatives of the Khanty and Mansi remain outside this project since it is not focused on them.

The Khanty and Mansi have become silent figures in the historical memory of the north of Western Siberia. Despite the national projects for the preservation of the culture of the Indigenous peoples of the North, their representatives did not become part of the actual project of memory of the development of virgin oil. Hence, the Khanty and Mansi were ousted from the region's memory project by the figure of a pioneer, with the arrival of which the history and historical memory of the North of Western Siberia begins.

Considering the space of historical memory of the North of Western Siberia, the question arises: have the Khanty and Mansi completely disappeared from historical memory? And here the most appropriate answer would be: not completely. In this work, we will consider the local memory projects that involve representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the North.

Results

The project of conquering nature

First, we should refer to the actualized past of the North of Western Siberia, and the memory of the conquest of nature. The most important for this project was the image of a pioneer oilman. Monuments to oil workers are part of the memory of all oil regions. It should be noted, the similarity of their compositions. Most of them have a drilling rig and a symbolic fountain of oil. At the heart of the composition of the monument to the Labor Feat of Generations of Surgutneftegaz Oilmen, opened in Surgut in 2016, is a fountain of oil gushing from the bowels of the earth. In the center of the composition, there are 11 bronze figures – a geologist, a surveyor, an engineer, a driller, an electrician, an oil and gas production operator, a welder, a builder, a driver, and a chef.

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The monument "Oil Crafts of the Master" in Nyagan (2010) also uses the symbols of the oil industry and depicts an oil fountain.

There are monuments to the pioneers planted all over the major cities of Ugra. But in different parts of the region, the figure of the pioneer is seen differently. In Nefteyugansk, the monument to the "Pioneers" (2012) is a monument to the legendary "landing force" of geologists who began the exploration of the subsoil of the Ust-Balykskoye field in 1961. The stella in the center reminds of an oil rig surrounded by three sculptural groups: builders, geologists and oilmen, and young families. In Surgut, a monument dedicated to the "Geologists of the Middle Ob" or pioneer geologists was installed, to honor the Salmanov group, which began exploration in 1957.

When forming the memory of the conquest of nature, the commemorative practices of the Great Patriotic War were used. This approach manifested itself most clearly in the monument to the Conquerors of Samotlor (1978, Nizhnevartovsk), located on the Mound of Glory, at the intersection of roads leading to Samotlor Lake and the Megionskoye field. Today the monument is known as "Alyosha", being on a par with the other Alyoshas: Bulgarian (the monument to the Soviet soldier in Plovdiv (1957), the North Sea (the monument to the "Heroes of the North Sea" (1973) and Murmansk (the monument "Defender of the Soviet Arctic during the Great Patriotic War "(1974)". All four Alyosha memorials are similar in their compositional concept. Nizhnevartovsk "Alyosha" got a hammer instead of a weapon, and instead of a military uniform - a pea coat, tarpaulin boots, and a helmet, the uniform of the pioneers of virgin oil, per se. Nizhnevartovsk "Alyosha" can be considered as a continuation of the Bulgarian and Murmansk, that is, as a change from a military feat to a labor one. The enemy in this discourse is nature, from which space and resources have to be reclaimed. This struggle is as dramatic as the hostilities because, during the conquest, many discoverers suffered or died.

Representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the North act in the policy of memory of Yugra as antagonists to the oil workers, who are presented as the present and future of the region. In contrast to the oilmen, who enter into a war with nature, and win back space and resources from it after a difficult battle, the Khanty and Mansi stay in harmony with nature. And these harmonious relationships last for many centuries. On one hand, this allows us to use the image of the Ob Ugrians to represent the past region, and on the other hand, to portray them as an example of harmonious existence in the space of the North.

The commemorative practices of the memory of the Khanty and Mansi are implemented within the museum projects. In 1987, the open-air ethnographic museum "Torum Maa" was opened in Khanty-Mansiysk, the name of which is translated from the Mansi language as "Sacred Land". The museum is located on one of the seven sacred hills, not far from the confluence of the Ob and Irtysk rivers. The exposition presents a reconstruction of the life of the Ob Ugrians and is represented by a summer camp, a winter settlement, a sanctuary, and a hunting trail.

In the same year, the ethnographic park museum of the village of Varyogan began its work. Its authors were the Novosibirsk ethnographer I.N. Gemuev and a resident of Varyogan reindeer herder Yu.K. Aivaseda (Vella). Through joint efforts, a unique collection was assembled, introducing the culture of the Agan Khanty and the Forest Nenets. The task of the exposition is to acquaint visitors with the traditional types of nature management, life, and folklore of the peoples of the North. In 2016, the house museum was included in the structure of the museum of Yu.K. Wells (Istorija muzeja Jetnograficheskij park-muzej s. Var'jogan...).

In 1988, the Museum of Nature and Man of A.P. Yadroshnikov, whose collection formed the basis of the exposition. The exposition contains zoological and ethnographic collections dedicated to the harmonious existence of man and nature. For example, the exposition "The World of the Sacred River Trom-Agan" introduces visitors to the life of the Trom-Agan Khanty and Russian old-timers. Over time, Russkinskaya became a place of attraction for those who want to get acquainted with the traditions of the Khanty and Mansi (Istorija muzeja Russkinskoj muzej Prirody i Cheloveka imeni Jadroshnikova Aleksandra Pavlovicha...). Every March, the village hosts the "Day of the Reindeer Breeder" - a traditional holiday where competitions are held, such as: throwing an ax, reindeer sled racing, archery, throwing a lasso (tynzyan) on a pole, which is used to drive a reindeer sled (trochee) (Nacional'nyj prazdnik narodov ...).

In 1990, the village of Sosva was created from the initiative of the teacher of the Mansi language, A.M. Khromovaya, the ethnographic park-museum "Nayotyr Maa" (translated from Mansi "Land of Ancestors"). The exposition of the museum includes traditional dwellings and buildings harmoniously integrated into the natural landscape.

The ethnographic museums have become an important platform for building a new policy of memory in relation to the Ob Ugrians. Not only traditional museum methods of representing the traditions of Indigenous peoples of the North are involved, but also emphasis is placed on interactive workshops: masterclasses on making toys and traditional jewelry, theatrical excursions, etc. for this.

Ethnic camps, where tourists can touch their culture, have set a new direction in creating the memory of representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the North. This is not a museum complex, but rather a theatrical performance, a showcase, which is shown by the Khanty and Mansi themselves. In 2009, in the Nizhnevartovsk district of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug-Yugra, not far from the village of Varyogan, the Amputinskoye camp was opened for visitors, where residential and outbuildings are presented for tourists, as well as reindeer sled rides, fishing, collecting herbs and tasting national cuisine. In 2011, a similar ethnic camp "Karamkinskoye" was opened near the village of Agan.

In the late 1980s Against the background of developing oil production and environmental problems caused by this process, ethnographic museums were created in Yugra. The initiators of their creation were residents from the peoples of the Khanty and Mansi. The exposition space is inscribed in the natural landscape and allows visitors to get acquainted with the everyday life of the peoples of the North. This technique emphasizes the message of the long-term harmonious relationship of the Khanty and Mansi with nature. These relationships are contrasted with the destructive activities of the oil workers, who leave behind oil spills, equipment, and other trash. The ethnographic museum and camps have become one of the few opportunities to look into the closed world of the Khanty and Mansi since it is almost impossible to get to a real camp, where they live and lead a traditional way of life. It should be noted here, that the memory of the Khanty and Mansi is built here, by the Ob Ugrians (Khanty and Mansi) themselves. They define the boundaries of accessibility to their culture and regulate the representation of the image of a person living in harmony with nature. The excursion programs focus on traditional practices and bypass the use of modern technology in the life of the people of the North.

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Socialist construction and technology

Places of memory in the North of Western Siberia are developing in the context of the memory of socialist construction projects. It should be noted that the oil target, together with The Baikal–Amur Mainline (from here and onwards BAM), is part of the project to commemorate the development of the North. But unlike the virgin lands, these projects have been successful and therefore not subject to oblivion. Monuments with the use of technology became a common case for commemorations of socialist construction projects. For the North of Western Siberia, it became airplanes and helicopters. In 2000, the Alley of Honor for Aviation was opened in Nizhnevartovsk. It presents the aircraft involved in the development of the territory in the mid-1960s: Mi-1, Mi-2, Mi-4, Mi-6, and Mi-8 helicopters, as well as An-2 aircraft. Near the airport of Surgut, the Mi-6 was installed in 2004. The helicopter was a gift from Utair airlines on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the united squadron for its contribution to the development of Western Siberia.

The usage of technology as a symbol of victory over nature is also common for other socialist construction projects. The DT-54 tractor became the main symbol of the virgin lands. Three monuments with this tractor were installed on the former virgin lands in Borets (1975), Zlatorunovsk (1979), and Tselinny. In commemoration of the deed of the BAM builders, the leading role is given to the railway and railway equipment – steam locomotives Ea-4249 and P36-0098 at the Vikhorevka and Severobaikalsk stations, respectively.

The traditions of the Indigenous peoples of the North stand against using the technology in commemorations of the development of virgin oil. The figures of the Ob Ugrians are used to fill out the urban space, especially in the capital of Ugra, Khanty-Mansiysk. Just like that, a sculptural group "The Khanty Family on Rest" (A.N. Kovalchuk and LLC TPO "Ekaterinburg Art Fund") was installed near the airport in 2007. In 2010, the sculpture "Mythological Time" was installed in Khanty-Mansiysk (artist Vizel G.M., sculptor Sargsyan V.A.), which reflects the ideas about the time and the world of the Ob Ugrians.

The images of representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the North convey the traditional way of life and their opinion on time and space, supporting the idea of harmony with nature. They refer us to the tradition and the past, which have become the personification for the project of lengthening the history of Yugra. The usage of technology in the commemoration of virgin oil once again points to modernity.

History Extension Project

Let's look at the project of lengthening history, whose commemorative features have been talked about earlier. The images of Khanty and Mansi take an important place in this project. They represent the ancient Ugra before the arrival of Yermak. In 1998, a memorial was opened in the Laryak village in honor of the 70th anniversary of the Nizhnevartovsk region, which "symbolizes the arrival of civilization on the Yugra land." In the center of the chum monument, where a resident encounters "the first man who brought civilization to the taiga land - a geologist" (Pamyatniki Nizhnevartovskogo rajona: putevoditel', 2010: 22).

A stele "To the Pioneers of the Yugorsk Land" (K. Saprichan) was installed in 2003 on Komissarskaya Hill in Khanty-Mansiysk, the capital of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug - Yugra. And it became the highest point of the city. The stele simultaneously resembles a Khanty

tent, a Cossack observation tower, and an oil rig. The relief panel depicts the history of the development of Yugra from the ancient period to the time of the beginning of the development of oil and gas fields, through the main characters of the period: the Khanty, the Cossacks of the period of Yermak's campaign and the oilmen. In the monument "The Bronze Symbol of Yugra" (Khanty-Mansiysk, 2005), the works of A.N. Kovalchuk, the Khanty, and Mansi also represent the ancient Ugra, and the modern times are personified by the working people, which include oil workers, geologists, and builders.

Hence, the images of the Khanty and Mansi are used to represent ancient Yugra in the project of lengthening history. They show the world that existed before the Russians arrived in the North of Western Siberia. If the oil workers are the main characters of the updated past, then the Khanty and Mansi are only elements in the growing project of lengthening the history and settling in the territory of the region.

F. Salmanov - man and ship, man and plane

The figure of F. Salmanov became the central place in the memory of virgin oil. He led the search for oil in the region. In recent years, his figure has ousted the names of other geologists from historical memory, including under whose leadership the first deposits were found. His image of a young active pioneer geologist began to take shape as early as the 1970s. It can be assumed that Salmanov took an active part in creating the image of the oil discoverer, and over the years rebuilt his biography in the context of the idea of pioneers.

And just like that, in 1972, V. Vysotsky (a Soviet singer-songwriter, poet, and actor) wrote the song "Tyumen Oil", whose hero was a geologist who overcomes the skepticism of his superiors and colleagues in the search for oil. According to various versions, the prototype for Vysotsky was either Salmanov or Ervie (Kulagin, 2018: 162). Salmanov in his memoirs described his meeting Vysotsky, at which the song was first performed (Salmanov, 2003). The image of "Salmanov the pioneer" was preserved in the films of A. Konchalovsky "Siberiada" and A. Proshkin's "Risk Strategy". It should be noted that Salmanov took an active part in creating this myth around himself (Stafeev, 2007), publishing his books about his work in virgin oil (Salmanov, 1988; Salmanov, 2006).

After Salmanov's passing in 2007, a new round of commemoration came out. We shall mention that most of the events were timed to coincide with the anniversary. So, in 2007, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the start of the work of geologists in Surgut, the "House of F. Salmanov" was opened, the same place where a monument to the geologist was installed. As well as the other monuments: in Salekhard (2009), Khanty-Mansiysk (2010), Gornoprvdinsk (2014). Also, the name of the pioneer is immortalized in the names of the streets in Tyumen, Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk, and Pyt-Yakh, as well as on the boards of UTair (UUTnoe nebo UTair...) and Aeroflot transport aircraft (Samoletnyj park...). In 2018, Salmanov's name was given to Surgut Airport as part of the Great Names of Russia competition. On the one hand, Salmanov has become a place of memory in Surgut. On the other hand, the pioneer oilman is considered to be the place of memory for the entire virgin oil region.

At the same time, we cannot single out a similar character from the peoples of the Khanty and Mansi. Partially, this can be explained by the fact that the oilmen and Salmanov himself put a lot of effort into creating places of memory for their deeds. Oil corporations, as the heirs of the Soviet

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departments, are the main players in the politics of memory in the region today. Khanty and Mansi do not have such opportunities to found and maintain such expensive commemorative projects. Perhaps they do not have such a need, since they are not faced with the goal of developing the area, defeating nature, and appropriating its resources. Harmonious existence with nature eliminates the need to consolidate victories over it.

Conclusion

In the historical memory of Yugra, representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the North are the antagonists to the pioneers and oilmen. At the same time, the Khanty and Mansi are included in the projects of lengthening the history and settling in the virgin oil region. They represent a collective image of the past, while the oilmen, in turn, personify the present and the future.

It is important to note that the policy of memory of the oil workers is being implemented in the urban space, and Surgut has become its center. The Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug is one of the most urbanized regions in the Russian Federation. Cities have become a hub for shift workers, and the remoteness and inaccessibility of fields have led to the concentration of commemorations dedicated to virgin oil in cities. Khanty and Mansi remained outside the urban space. In the context of lengthening the history project of the region, the involvement of Ob Ugrians images enhances the contrast between the past and the present through the opposition of wild nature and the city. The city of Khanty-Mansiysk was founded in 1930 as the capital of the national district. Today it is the capital of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug - Yugra and the decoration from the court to the culture of the Khanty and Mansi. Sculptural groups and an ethnographic museum dedicated to the small peoples of the North are assigned to the district as a reference to the culture of the indigenous peoples. According to E.A. Pivnev, the Ob Ugrians that live in the cities, retain the historical memory of the land of their ancestors as "their land" and this image is actively involved in the construction of the ethnic identity of the Khanty and Mansi (Pivneva, 2019; Spodina, 2009).

It should be noted that the monuments serve as a reminder and at the same time they change the urban symbolic landscape, that is, they domesticate the space. Numerous monuments to pioneer oil workers reinforce the image of an oil target for the space of the North of Western Siberia. In the memory of the development of virgin oil space, representatives of the Indigenous peoples of the North act as a person living in harmony with nature.

Acknowledgements

The results were obtained in the framework of the grant of the Russian Federation Government, project № 075-15-2021-611 "Human and the changing Space of Ural and Siberia"

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