

National Press of Siberia and the Far East History: An Exploration of the Current State

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Abstract

In this article, there are definitions of the features of functioning of the national press of Siberia and the Far East throughout the 20th–21st centuries. From the moment of emergence and at different stages of the history, the national press has carried out the major socio-cultural tasks: serving as a universal remedy of information and cultural education of the native population of Siberia and the Far East, been the catalyst of development of national writing and education as well as national literature. Newspapers and the magazines issued in national languages, promoted preservation of ethnic traditions and originality, made a certain contribution to interaction of cultures of the people of Russia.

A quantitative method in data collection has been used to calculate the titles and circulation of newspapers and magazines published in Russia in 1991–2021. The given statistics of release of the printing periodical press at the beginning of the 21st century testifies to the degree of sophistication and the maturity of the institute of the national press, and the growing amount of challenges in the expansion of media space of the country. This paper analyses various points of view for a state role in the development of the print national media, and their influence on the evolution of ethno culture of the people. Moreover, it also locates the importance of finding national press as being of bigger independence. There is a revelation of the value of the national periodical press in interaction of cultures of the people living beyond the Ural.

The paper unearths the reasons for the necessity of expanded use of languages of the people of Siberia and the Far East for the press. The paper concludes that the current state of the national press remains unstable. The resumption of the thematic repertoire and the appearance of new publications for information needs of the audience have not helped the national press in the 21st century to reach the circulation level of 1990.

Keywords: national press, newspapers, magazines, periodicals, Siberia, the Far East, the media space.

Introduction

Siberia and the Far East is a multinational region. It is generally accepted that Russia has at least 50 indigenous nations belonging to ten separate language families: Uralic, Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Yeniseic (Ket-Kott), Amuric, Ainuic, Yukaghiric, Chukchi-Kamchadal

and Eskimo-Aleut. According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger some aboriginal languages of Siberia, including Sakhalin, Hokkaido and the Kuril Islands are classified as critically endangered or extinct. In 2015, the list of vulnerable languages was updated by Vote; the Uralic language has decreased from of 20 to only 15 speakers due to the number of speakers of Vote (Atlas, 2022).

The publication of printed materials in the national language is an integral attribute of the social environment of any ethnic group. The development of the national press determines, among other things, the level of attention and support of small nations by society, the degree of consistency and maturity of the state in which these people live (Mishanin, 2012). The printed word not only performs the function of preserving the language, national originality and identity, but also contributes to the revival and ethnocultural evolution, the progress of a small nation, and involves it in interaction with the cultures of other nations (Akhmetova, 2013).

Despite the rise in the national self-awareness among people, inhabiting Siberia and the Far East, experts started talking about negative tendencies in the region that will contribute to the disappearance of the national press from the country's media space. It seems paradoxical.

To find out the state of the modern print media in national languages, let us turn to facts, statistics and the authoritative opinion of media experts. In this study, we aim to answer the following research questions:

- What role did the national press play in the interaction of cultures of peoples living in the region in different periods of its functioning?
- What is its participation in the evolution of the ethno culture of its own people?
- What is happening in the printed national media today?
- At what stage of development are they?
- What should be the participation of the Government in supporting the national press?

In order to answer to all these questions we started with the definition of "national press". The term "national press" is usually used with the following meanings. The first one is that all newspapers and magazines published in the national region (close to the concept of "regional press"), or this is a work of periodicals addressed to the people living in the given territory. The second concept encompasses print (electronic) media published in national languages. In this article, we will use the present-day definition of the term.

The purpose of the study is to explore the formation and prospects for the development of the national press in Siberia and the Far East in the 20th – early 21st century.

The main tasks:

1. to discover the factors of formation, functions and purpose, formal and substantive features, and the main trends in the development of the national press in Siberia and the Far East from 1920 to 2021.
2. to analyze quantitative changes in the titles and circulations of newspapers and magazines in the languages of indigenous nations to determine the current state and dynamics of the national press development in Siberia and the Far East from 1990 to 2021.
3. to evaluate the factors hindering the national press development in Siberia and the Far East in the 21st century.

Research Methodology

This study uses a comparative historical method for analyzing the social and state role in the preservation and development of national press in the 20th-21st centuries.

Data collection was carried out using statistical collection from the "Press of the Russian Federation" and "Russian Statistical Yearbook" for 1991–2021 (see Tables 1-4). These collections present statistical data that characterize the development of the Russian economy as a whole, as well as its sectors. A quantitative research method has been chosen to calculate the changes in titles and circulation of newspapers and magazines published in Russia in 1991-2021. This method of data collection makes it possible for the study to provide greater insight into the current state of national press in the region.

In this study, we have analyzed quantitative data of national press issued in 9 languages: Altaic, Buryat, Tuviniian, Khakass, Yakut, Mansiysk, Nenets, Khanty, Chukotka.

Findings

According to the received data, over the first post-Soviet decade, the number of such newspapers decreased by more than 2 times - from 56 to 23 units, and circulation (1990-2021) - more than 10 times - from 53,722 to 3,447 copies (Tables 1-2).

However, we can note an increase in the issue of newspapers in the second decade of the 21st century compared to the 2000s by 4 times - from 23 to 84 (Tables 1-2). The share of magazines for the same period decreased by 4 times in terms of titles - from 11 to 3 and 6 times in terms of circulation - from 607 to 101 thousand copies (Tables 3-4).

In comparison with 2000s, the issue of magazines in 2020 increased by 4 times - from 3 to 15. Thus, the figures are almost equal to the figures of 1990 (Tables 3-4). The circulation has been decreased from 1990 to 2020 by more than 2,5 times (Tables 3-4).

National press of Siberia and the Far East: in the context of Russian History from the 20th to the beginning of the 21st centuries

The process of forming national periodicals among the nations of Siberia, the Far East and the Far North dates back to the Soviet times (in some cases, a little earlier). Periodic press among small nations began to emerge with the completion of the development and introduction of writing, and the formation proceeded under the influence of the growth of national self-awareness, changes in the socio-economic development, and the national and social structure of the region's population. The formation of the national press fell in the 1920s - early 1930s in the capital of Siberia in the early 1920s - Novonikolaevsk (now Novosibirsk). Several newspapers appeared and functioned in the languages of national minorities living due to various circumstances in Siberia: *Sibiriyas Tsinya* (Latvian for Struggle of Siberia, 1920-1936), *Azad Seber* (Tatar for Liberation of Siberia, 1921-1936), *Taisnaiba* (the only newspaper in Latgalian in the USSR, 1926-1937), in *Od Eryama* (in Mordovian), *Siberi Teataya* (in Estonian, 1920-1936), etc (Posadskov et al, 2007).

The beginning of the revival of the national press of the small nations of the North has been the release of pages, and the appendices in the languages of these nations in their places of residence. Thus, one of the first to publish materials in the Nanai language was the newspaper of the Nanai district of the Khabarovsk region. In order to spread the new alphabet, a special newspaper *Uchebny Put* (*Tachiochiori Pokto*, 1932, the village of Naihin; since 1935 - *Stalin's Way*) began to be published there. As the national writing developed, interest in the newspaper increased significantly. In 1935, about 27 issues were published with a one-time edition of 300 copies, and in 1940 - 110 issues with a circulation of 1,000 copies were published. The newspaper *New Way*, the magazine *New Life* (*Sikun Baldin*, No. 1, 2, 1936) were published in order to study the Nanai language in the pedagogical school in Nikolaevsk-na-Amure (Onenko, 1980).

Articles in the national languages of the small nations of the North has been regularly published in regional, district and regional print media in Siberia and the Far East in the second half of the 1930s. Materials were published in the Nivkh language in the regional newspapers of Sakhalin and in the regional newspaper *Sovetsky Sakhalin*. In Nikolaevsk-na-Amure there has been an attempt to publish a separate newspaper *Nivkhsкая Pravda* (11 issues were published before 1935). Articles in the Aleutian language periodically appeared in *the Aleutskaya Pravda*, and in *the Okhotsk - Evenkiyskaya Pravda* in Evenk. In Anadyr, the district newspaper *Sovetskaya Chukotka* (*Sovetskaya Chukotka*, 1933; since 1993 - The Far North) has published materials in the Chukchi and Eskimo languages. In Magadan, there has been the experience of publishing a regional newspaper - *Sovetskaya Kolyma* (1935) in the Nivkh language as well as newspapers *Aidit Orochel* (1935-1936) and *Orotty Pravda* (1936-1941) in the Evenk language.

According to Perepelkina & Elfimova (2010) and Elfimov (1980), in 1935 there has been six newspapers in the languages of the indigenous nations of the North in the Far East:

four of them have been published in the national language; two others were mixed: Russian-Even and Nanai-Russian, circulation – 500.

At the stage of creating national periodicals, the printed word has taught literacy and enlightened, has promoted the development of languages, has preserved national traditions and, in general, has formed the ethnic culture of the people. At the same time, the newly created Soviet national press has adapted to the needs of power and built into the organizational structure of the media and the propaganda. Without fail, in the languages of the peoples of Siberia and the Far East, who had their autonomy within the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic), several newspapers (sociopolitical, youth, children's, regional) and magazines (literary, artistic, and professional) have been created and functioned. For example, by the end of 1930, five national newspapers were published in the Gorno-Altai Autonomous Region (now the Altai Republic). The main one was *Kyzyl Solun Tabysh (Red News)*, founded in 1922), then it was renamed *Oyrotyn Jepi (Oyrot Territory)*, since 1923). It was replaced by *Kyzyl Oyrot (Krasnaya Oirotiya)* has been published since February 25, 1925), then it has begun to be called *Altaydyn Cholmony (The Star of Altai)* since January 1948. In addition to the main officialdom, there has been published the regional *Kyzyl Shor (Krasnaya Shoria)*, the village of Kuzedeevo), the newspaper has been published only in a joint Altai-Russian version in 1930-1932; youth newspaper *Komsomolets Oirotii* (1930-1936) in Russian and Altai languages; the newspaper for the peasantry *Kolkhoz Izhine (Kolkhozny Put, Ongu dai village)*, in 1930-1931) in Altai, then in the Altai-Russian version. One-time circulation of all periodicals have been 6,100 copies (Ivanov, 1970).

Having emerged in the conditions of the rise in national consciousness, many newspapers have not lasted long. Affected by the problems of a material and technical nature - the absence or weakness of the printing base, finances, trained editorial and journalistic personnel, qualified translators. Often there has been simply no audience capable of reading in their native language.

In the post-war (WWII) years literary and art magazines have replenished the national press of the region: in 1946 an almanac has been published in the Tuvan language *Ulug-Khem*, in 1947 - *Baigal* in the Buryat language; in 1952 - *Khakassia Ottary* in the Khakass language and in 1959 - *Akh taskhyl*. In general, the process of expanding the space of the Siberian-Far Eastern national print media has been suspended. This was the result of the ideological orientation towards the accelerated rapprochement of nations, their merger in the future and the emergence of a new historical community of people - the Soviet people. The process of gradual displacement of national languages by Russian, which has a higher potential and sphere of influence, had begun (Koroteeva, 1988).

The decline in the circulation and the termination of the publication of some periodicals in the languages of the indigenous and small peoples of Siberia, the Far East and the Far North have also reflected the policy of national leveling. This has been facilitated by the assimilation of people, a decrease in the number of people who know the language of their nation and want to learn it (Petruk, 2014), and year-on-year decrease in the readership of national newspapers and magazines.

The process of publishing periodicals in the national languages in the Asian part of Russia in post-Soviet times has proceeded irregularly. Revolutionary transformations of all spheres of society in the 1990s has affected the existence of the national press in two ways. On the one hand, they have brought to life a powerful surge of national spiritual awakening, have increased the attention of the society to the problems of language and education, and have significantly expanded the readers' interest in publishing books, newspapers and magazines in national languages. With the beginning of the democratization of national relations in Russia, the desire to preserve the native language has acquired the character of a popular movement. It has been based on the principle of the survival of ethnic groups, when the slogan "The language is alive - the people are alive" was filled with concrete content. On the other hand, the democratization of the press contributed to a radical change in the number and composition of participants in the emerging regional media space.

The wave of national awakening has led to the appearance in periodicals of numerous materials in the languages of the small nations of Siberia, the Far East and the Far North living in this region, giving rise to the creation of new national newspapers and magazines. Thus, in Chukotka newspapers have systematically published individual pages in the Evenk language, periodically publishing materials in the Evenk language and in newspapers of various “uluses” of Yakutia since 1990. In Kamchatka, the newspaper *Aydit* has been published with parallel texts in Russian and Evenk languages. Some articles in the Evenk language have been published in magazines: *The Pink Seagull* (Yakutia, 1991-1992), *Aiverette* (Chukotka, 1989-1995). In 1989, in the Eveno-Bytantai region of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), in order to develop the Evenk culture and the Evenk language, a new regional newspaper *Bytantai uottara togalni* (*Lights of Bytantai*) has been created, which had quickly become popular among the readers (Krivoshapkin, 1994). Eskimo-language publications sporadically has appeared in two district newspapers of the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug such as Chukotka and Murgin Nutenut. The literary pages in the languages of indigenous peoples (Ulchi, Evenki, Nanai) have appeared in the regional, city and large-circulation newspapers of the Khabarovsk Territory. They have been presented by authors of different nationalities, special headings, dedicated to the cultural and historical events of the native land (Lazareva, 1996). *Nivkh-div* (*Nivkh word*) is a unique newspaper, which has been publishing in Sakhalin since 1990. It is the only one publication in the world published in two dialects of the Nivkh language.

Having changed the founder, survived the transformations of the 1990s, stepped over or approached the 90th anniversary, the largest sociopolitical newspapers of the titular nations of Siberia and the Far East continue to exist and retain their readership and the so-called status of "newspapers of influence" (Posadskov, 2000). Among them were such newspapers as Buryad Unen (Buryat Truth, since 1921) - in Buryat; Altaydyn Cholmony (Star of Altai published since 1922) - in the Altai language; Khabar (Izvestia, News since 1927) - in the Khakass language; Shyn (Pravda, since 1925) - in Tuvan; Kyym (Iskra, since 1921) - in the Yakut language.

The Modern National Print Media

The modern picture of the national print media is constantly changing: some periodical projects are established, registered, but exist. Other disappear without ever seeing the light of day. Most of the current national newspapers and magazines are published in small print runs - from 500 to 1000 copies. The downward trend in the national press has gained momentum in the mid-1990s: the number and circulation of periodicals has begun to decline sharply. As for the last decade, there has been an increase in the issue of newspapers compared to the 2000s, but circulation has been decreased extremely (Tables 1-2).

Table 1: Issuing of newspapers in the languages of the indigenous people of Siberia and the Far East in 1990–2021 (number of titles)

Source: Russian Statistical Yearbook for 1991–2021

Language	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021
Altaic	1	2	3	4	4	6	9	10
Buryat	15	7	7	7	9	7	10	9
Tuvinian	6	8		1	9	12	10	9
Khakass	1	1		1	3	3	3	3
Yakut	29	27	10	12	35	44	43	43
Mansiysk	1		1	1	1	1	1	1
Nenets	1	1	1		2	3	4	3
Khanty	1		1	1	2	3	2	2
Chukotka	1			1	2	2	2	2
Total	56	45	23	28	67	81	84	82

Table 2: Issuing of newspapers in the languages of the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far East in 1990–2021 (circulation, thousand copies)

Source: Russian Statistical Yearbook for 1991–2021

Language	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021
Altaic	1675	1376	89	673	158	639,8	805,1	409,6
Buryat	3556	1548	2833	3912	718	575,3	720	325,1
Tuvinian	14153	4229		16	1609	1451,9	614,6	349
Khakass	1600	603		420	458	373,2	424,3	173
Yakut	32707	22118	1412	974	7975	6677,4	4092,1	1882,5
Mansiysk	2	12	30	23	30	35	46,2	20,7
Nenets	19	21	36		56	792,9	486,7	127,1
Khanty	36		38	39	87	80,1	132,2	60,8
Chukotka	24			1	44	52,7	206,5	99,3
Total	53772	29907	4438	6058	11135	10679	7528	3447

The share of magazines for the same period has decreased by 4 times in terms of titles and 20 times in terms of circulation (Tables 3-4). As for the 2nd decade of the 21st century, there has been an increase in the issue of magazines compared to the 2000s, but circulation has been decreased extremely (Tables 3-4).

The formation of a new system of national periodicals has fallen in the second half of the 2000s. The renewal of the thematic repertoire, the emergence of publications designed to meet the new information needs of the audience, has made it possible to achieve (and even surpass in some cases) the previous quantitative positions of newspapers and magazines by the end of the first decade of the 21st century. However, it has not been possible to achieve the previous level of circulation figures for the national press (Tables 1–4).

Table 3: Issuing of magazines in the languages of the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far East in 1990–2021 (number of titles)

Source: Russian Statistical Yearbook for 1991–2021

Edition language	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021
Altaic	1	1		2		1	1	1
Buryat	3			3	3	3	1	1
Tuvinian	2	1	3		1	2	2	2
Khakass	1				1		1	
Yakut	4	3			9	14	10	8
Total	11	5	3	5	14	20	15	12

Table 4: Issuing of magazines in the languages of the indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Far East in 1990–2021 (circulation, thousand copies)

Source: Russian Statistical Yearbook for 1991–2021

Edition language	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2021
Altaic	4	9		16		5	4	3
Buryat	36			6	17	6	6	3
Tuvinian	57	30	30		14	18,5	14	0,9
Khakass	2				2		1	
Yakut	508	100			160	375,6	213	93,9
Total	607	139	30	22	193	405	238	101

Statistics show that by the end of the 2nd decade of the 21st century the national press of Siberia and the Far East has found itself in an ambivalent state. The numbers of titles and circulation are slowly growing, but they are unlikely to be able to reach the 1990 level. The situation is aggravated by the fact that small-circulation newspapers and magazines have lost the system of state orders and distribution networks and now they do not reach the readers, despite the fact that most of such press is subsidized from the state budget. The demand for information and the demand for local periodicals is increasing, but newspaper circulation is falling: the high cost of subscriptions and mail services affects (Borisov, 1995). According to the media experts, such publications will soon disappear from the regional media space if they are left without government support (Mikhailov, 2012).

Discussion

The national press has faced the challenges of the time, each of which is more complicated than the others and they pose a real threat to its further existence. Among them are:

- Market challenges, inability and unwillingness of the national periodicals to switch to market mechanisms of functioning.
- Material and administrative dependence on local authorities and the need for subsidies from the regional budget.
- Loss of readership due to a decrease in the number of readers who speak national languages (Voldina, 2012); duplication of information with Russian-language newspapers and magazines; low quality translation; boring marketing, etc. (Martynenko, 2000).
- Fierce competition with the electronic media, the latter squeezing out the traditional press from the emerging regional media space.

Modern trends in the narrowing of the area and the influence of national media in the information field of the country for national culture, and, accordingly, for the interaction of cultures of the nations of Siberia, the Far East and the Far North can be tragic. As Mikhailov says,

“The collapse of the national press really threatens the preservation of the languages of small nations and nationalities ... and, ultimately, the life of the nation itself”
Mikhailov, 2012.

The only possible way to overcome the unfavorable factors influencing the press is state support for the publishing practice of the national press, books and brochures. These existing problems are discussed at authoritative scientific forums. In particular, the head of Federal Agency for Press and Mass Communications (Rospechat) Mikhail Seslavinsky at the V Forum of the Regional and National Media, held in June 2014 in Kazan, made a statement that the regional and national press are not business projects and in the market conditions. It also said that the press in national languages cannot compete with commercial media. Therefore, the state is obliged to subsidize it. In 2013, the Rospechat allocated an impressive amount of 116 million Rubles to support the national media. However, in the opinion of the forum participants, these funds are still not enough (Regional, 2014).

The level of support for the press in general and for national newspapers and magazines in particular in the region has varied. The economic transformations of the 1990s, the transition to market mechanisms of management, material and financial problems led to the fact that “the national press of Siberia was unable to survive without being embedded in the structures of power and not being an appendage of these structures” (Yakimov, 2000). According to researcher Yakimov (2000), “the national newspaper is doomed to be embedded in the structure of power and, therefore, to serve its interests as long as it needs it.

Predicting the future of the region's national print media, researcher Bekbaeva (2011) points to "the importance of the national press gaining greater independence, turning it into an institution expressing the views of national and confessional groups of the population." At the

same time, she notes the need for state subsidies to national publications as a measure “guaranteeing the preservation and expansion of the network of publications in national languages” (Bekbaeva, 2011).

Conclusions

The National Press of Siberia and the Far East has accumulated vast experience over many decades of its activity, and it has preserved a variety of genres. This study summarizes and presents the features of the formation, development and functioning of the national press in Siberia and the Far East from 1920 to 2021. The authors reveal the specifics of the activities of the national press, taking into account the peculiarities of the region. An analysis of the number of titles and circulations of newspapers and magazines shows that the overall picture of the current state of the national press remains unstable. Indicators for the first decade of the 21st century has shown a sharp decrease in the number of titles and circulations of newspapers and magazines compared to 1990. In the second decade of the 21st century, publishers revived partially the thematic repertoire. They have also launched new newspapers and magazines developed to meet the new information needs of the national press audience in the 21st century. Nevertheless, the national press has not reached circulation level of 1990 (Tables 1-4).

As a result of the study, factors that influence the further development of the national press in the 21st century and pose a real threat to its continued existence has been also identified. Among them are: market challenges, material and administrative dependence on local authorities, loss of readership and fierce competition with electronic media.

In this study, the authors have put forward solutions to overcome the unfavorable factors of the functioning of the national press in the face of state support. However, authors consider that the state support is an uncontested way of saving the national press. The Government support will contribute to either conservation or partial (but no more) improvement of the existing situation. In this case, the transition of national press to market mechanisms of management will never happen.

According to the good judgment of Mikhailov (2012) “in a country with a market economy, this [Government support] cannot and should not last forever. The national media will sooner or later have to learn to survive in the media market or disappear”.

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