Arctic Mirrors: Russia and the Small Peoples of the North, 1994, 456 pages, Yuri Slezkine, 0801481783, 9780801481789, Cornell University Press, 1994

"And, sovereign, having captured a shaman in battle, we asked him: what kind of man are you and do you have kinsmen? And he said: I am the best man of the Shoromboiskii clan and I have four sons. And so we kept him as hostage." For over five hundred years the Russians have been wondering what kind of people their Arctic and sub-Arctic hostages were. "They have mouths between their shoulders and eyes in their chests, " reported a fifteenth-century tale. "They rove around, live of their own free will, and beat the Russian people, " complained a seventeenthcentury Cossack. "Their actions are exceedingly rude. They do not take off their hats and do not bow to each other, " huffed an eighteenth-century scholar. They are "children of nature" and "guardians of ecological balance, " rhapsodized early nineteenth-century and late twentieth-century romantics. Even the bolsheviks, who categorized the circumpolar foragers as authentic proletarians, " were repeatedly puzzled by the "peoples ... from the late Neolithic period who, by virtue of their extreme backwardness, cannot keep up either economically or culturally with the furious speed of the emerging socialist society." Whether described as brutes, aliens, or endangered indigenous populations, the so-called small peoples of the north have consistently remained a point of contrast for speculations on Russian identity and a convenient testing ground for policies and images that grew out of these speculations. In a vividly rendered history of circumpolar peoples in the Russian empire - and in the Russian mind - Yuri Slezkine offers the first in-depth interpretation of this relationship. No other book in any language links the history of a colonize non-Russian people to the full sweep of Russian intellectual and cultural history. Enhancing his account with vintage prints and photographs, Slezkine reenacts the procession of Russian fur traders, missionaries, tsarist bureaucrats, radical intellectuals, professional ethnographer

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Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, Volume 8, Issues 1-2 Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History, , 2007, Russia (Federation), . .

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