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## Editorial

This issue of *Pro Ethnologia 12, Latest Reports on Ethnology* has been compiled from the reports given in the conferences of young ethnologists, called “Ethnological Voices”, held in the Estonian National Museum. The conference “Ethnological Voices” which has been organised since the year 1999, addresses undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as young researchers in ethnology and other relevant subjects. So far, the conferences have not concentrated on a specific topic, and their main aim has been to offer involvement opportunities necessary for the performance of young researchers. Therefore, initially, the organising committee did not set themselves the task of publishing the conference papers. After the second conference, however, I decided to make an attempt to publish a selection of conference papers in a separate edition. In addition to the conference reports, the present issue *Pro Ethnologia 12* also includes a few more papers not directly related to the conference.

It has proved difficult to highlight researchers only because of their age. Instead, it would be better to find another reason for the publication of the volume. Consider, for example, the aspect of generation. Despite this fact, the authors published within this issue may not have the necessary links between their ideas, if scientific aspects are considered. Yet looking from an outside perspective, the authors have certain traits in common, an assumption, which can be controversial.

Most of the authors have attended Tartu University within the last decade (except Svetlana Karm who graduated from Izhevsk State University, the Udmurt Republic). I must also admit that there are some other authors who should be included in this issue. Yet, for whatever reasons, their papers were not received. Therefore, even if this issue is called the issue of the 1990s generation, it remains a

limited selection, rather than a comprehensive overview of the young authors in the 1990s.

These authors have had an entirely different background, compared to their senior colleagues. They have had the experience of traveling around the world and studying in different universities abroad during their study period. Also, teaching ethnology in Tartu University has been much more profound and flexible in the 1990s than it was in previous times. Therefore, these researchers have had greater access to international contacts and a new environment, considering theoretical, as well as ideological aspects.

Despite the fact that the authors in this issue are not linked to one another by subject areas, they definitely are connected in other aspects, and this would be such as a more theory-centered approach, a search for internal underlying implicit structures within culture, as well as an emphasis on mental aspects of culture and mental attitude in general, all prescribed by the 1990s.

Svetlana Karm outlines the aspects of the Udmurt world view through the works of Bernát Munkácsi (1860–1937), a Hungarian researcher. Although Munkácsi was engaged in popularisation and a description of Udmurt traditional culture, he has remained the leading researcher into the Udmurt world view. A more detailed analysis of the Udmurts' religious beliefs has then to be completed by other researchers in the future.

Liivo Niglas, in his article about the identity of the Yamal Nenets, analyses the special nature of the relationship between Nenets and reindeer. The article has been written in response to the workshop discussion “Changing Ethnic Identities”, published in *Pro Ethnologia 10*. The workshop was held within the 41<sup>st</sup> annual conference of the Estonian National Museum, called “Cultural Identity of Arctic Peoples”, held on 15 April 2000. One of the subjects discussed in the workshop was the idea of L. Niglas about reindeer being a basic factor of the Nenets world view. In this paper, he extends his ideas about the Nenets' identity and responds to the criticism of the workshop.

Similarly, Laur Vallikivi focuses on the analysis regarding the culture of the reindeer herder Nenets. This article, based on the report delivered at the conference “Ethnological Voices 3” deals with

the challenges and problems concurrent with the integration into society of the Yamb-to Nenets group who had lived in social isolation until the 1990s. The author concentrates on what he regards might be interesting, namely on how adaptation to new circumstances takes place by way of conversion – by a voluntary transition to the Baptist faith. He shows how this has affected everyday life, world outlook and social relationships.

Indrek Jääts deals with the connections between the Komi nationalist movement and Russian Orthodoxy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He argues that a number of processes within nationalism may be, in principle, universal. The nationalist identity movement started in France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and then moved on to other parts of Europe, and by the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the second wave of this also spread across the peripheral areas of Europe, including the Komi region. This paper concentrates on the report delivered within the conference “Ethnological Voices 2”.

Monika Rauba offers a fresh approach to the social changes in Võru County, Southern Estonia, since the 1980s. Rauba is suspicious of the attitudes suggested by the press and studies, arguing that the significant social and political changes of the 1980–90s have not brought about equally rapid transformation in the Estonian rural people’s world view. Rauba claims that a number of aspects of the new “changed” lifestyle were already part of the rural lifestyle in the Soviet period. The author has paid special attention to the farmers’ attitude to their life before and after Estonia’s becoming an independent country, i.e. in a kolkhoz and after the break-up of kolkhozes. This reveals that people’s lifestyles, attitudes and ways of life have not undergone significant changes. This paper is also based on the report delivered during the conference.

The issue concludes with Pille Runnel’s survey of home pages, a key element of the Internet, focussing on the home pages of young Estonians. She analyses the level of the individual, tracing the strategies used for making oneself “visible” in the Internet. In home pages, the author outlines the four main functions: orientation (home page as a source of information, notebook, archive), self-expression (means of entering a higher status), self-introspection, creativity.

The editors are grateful to the authors who participated in the conferences “Ethnological Voices”. We are also indebted to the Tartu NEFA group, as well as to everybody who has assisted the organisation of the conferences and publication of this issue. Finally, we thank our reviewers for their crucial contributions.

January/November 2001

Art Leete

## **Religious Beliefs of Udmurts at the End of the 19<sup>th</sup> – Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Based on the Texts by Bernát Munkácsi**

**Svetlana Karm**

This article aims to look into one aspect of Udmurt culture, their religious beliefs. Despite the fact that the subject area has been addressed before (Vladimir Vladykin, Vladimir Napolskikh, Aado Lintrop has already aimed at reconstructing the change in the Udmurts' attitudes towards mythology and religion in the 19<sup>th</sup>–20<sup>th</sup> centuries), in this paper, a new approach to the subject area has been taken. The present paper is based on the material collected by one person – Bernát Munkácsi, a Hungarian researcher between 1885–1915. This paper, then, being based on the works of one researcher only, does not aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject area. Rather, the main task of this author is to create interest in the works of Munkácsi. This paper does not address prophesies, dreams, magic, or totemic and shaman beliefs, aspects of which were all characteristic of Udmurt religious culture, and accounts of which can be found in the works of Munkácsi.

As with most peoples, the Udmurts have a magnificent oral tradition – folklore – as well as traditions and customs. And people are bound by them and follow them throughout their lives.

Bernát Munkácsi (1860–1937), a Hungarian researcher has done a lot of work involving the collection and publication of Udmurt folklore. Being a linguist, ethnologist, literary critic, historian, as well as folklorist and teacher, his contribution was enormous: he



published 357 works during his lifetime. These included articles, reviews, dictionaries, monographs, publications about folklore and dialects (some of them consisting of many volumes) about Hungarian, Mansi, Udmurt, Mari, Chuvash, Tatar, Ossetic and some other peoples and languages (Kelmakov 1987: 12).

Despite the fact that Munkácsi has not compiled one paper on any particular aspect of Udmurt ethnography, his contribution to the study of Udmurt heritage is highly valuable. His texts involve accounts of social and economic aspects of life, ideology and religious attitudes of the Udmurts. The texts also include systems of ethnic and ethical values of the Udmurts, their particular characteristic features, and special features of their language. To sum it up, Munkácsi sees an ethnic group as a whole, involving language, folklore, beliefs, folk art. His approach, then, is based on the concept of *ethnos* as a whole. "In addition to purely linguistic interests, I paid special attention to the spiritual life of the Votyaks. Through a study of their beliefs, attitudes and customs, I attempted to connect the two purposes, so that linguistic accounts would be of interest when psychological aspects of the ethnic group are considered. I found fairy tales, motifs, sayings and superstitions to be extremely fascinating, and they also comprise my collection," says Munkácsi in the preface to his book (Domokos 1993: 62).

Already during his lifetime, Munkácsi's works on Udmurt issues had a highly valued status among specialists. I. Smirnov, professor of Kazan university, who was among the best well-known ethnologists interested in the areas around the river Volga of that time, valued most highly the earlier works by Munkácsi. In his popular work "Votyaks", he stated that "one of the most valuable aspects of Munkácsi's works is the devotion with which he has transcribed his texts. His issue has no counterpart in our literature. He should be a model researcher for everyone engaged in the study of foreign texts" (Smirnov 1890: 291). Kuzebai Gerd, Udmurt poet and researcher also valued highly the works by Munkácsi. After he had studied folklore collected by different authors, he claimed "the works by Munkácsi to be the best to be read. Munkácsi's notes include every

possible item of information, e.g.: where, by whom, when and in which village the accounts have been made; in addition, all dialects are in the original form. On the basis of that, it is possible to examine how folklore and language of a district have changed through time” (Gerd 1929: 20).

It was at the end of the 1960s, however, when Munkácsi’s views about Udmurt issues were fast growing in popularity. Researchers of Udmurt subjects published a large number of articles both in scientific journals and in the press (Gilmayev 1976: 153–154; Keimakov 1974: 54–57; 1977: 46–47; 1980). V. Vladykin and Lyudmila Khris-tolyubova also analyse the works of Munkácsi in their historiographic overview of Udmurt ethnology (Vladykin 1970: 127–128; Vladykin & Khristoljubova 1984: 31–32). The fact that the “Great Soviet Encyclopedia” includes an article on him also indicates Munkácsi’s great popularity (*Bolsheva*... 1974: 115–116). The legend “Heroes from Kalmez”, recorded by Munkácsi in his fieldwork trip to the Udmurts in 1885, is of special interest to linguists (Uvarov 1980: 38–42; 1982: 18–20; Yashin 1983: 8–9).

In his article “The Udmurts and Hungary”, Péter Domokos states that “Munkácsi has been the most effective populariser of the Udmurts in Hungary and Western Europe” (1967: 328). In his book “*Уральские языки и народы*” (“Uralic languages and peoples”), Péter Hajdú has also claimed Munkácsi to be among the leading researchers in the field of Uralic languages and peoples (1985: 354–355).

With the publication of his elaborately laid out special edition “*Подарок Мункачи*” (“A Present from Munkácsi”), Munkácsi reached out to a wider audience. The collection was published in Udmurt, Hungarian and Russian in 1983. It has been supplemented with photographs; in addition, it contains vivid descriptions, excerpts from his diary and a selection of texts from the collected works of Munkácsi (e.g. songs, legends). Excerpts from the diary in Russian were also published in the edition “*Край родниковый*” (1984), the introduction of which is written by Anatoli Uvarov.

The abundant text material collected by Munkácsi provides a valuable resource for linguists, as well as ethnologists and folklor-

ists. Therefore, Péter Domokos, Vladimir Vladykin, Tatyana Perevoshchikova-Vladykina and Aado Lintrop use his material and refer to his works in their research (Domokos 1993; Vladykin 1993; Vladykina 1998; Lintrop 1997; 2000).

Research into the material compiled by Munkácsi (e.g. Udmurt folklore and collected ethnographic texts published in two volumes, as well as his dictionary of the Udmurt language) has, however, not been completed.

### **Bernát Munkácsi as a Researcher of the Udmurts. Folklore Collections and the Dictionary**

Bernát Munkácsi had already become interested in the Udmurt language while being a student. Reportedly, he had the first direct contacts with, and learnt basic skills of the Udmurt language through the works by Ferdinand Johann Wiedemann (*“Grammatik der wotjakischen Sprache nebst einem kleinen wotjakisch-deutschen und deutsch-wotjakischen Wörterbuch”*. Reval, 1851) and Boris Gavrilov. The work by B. Gavrilov *“Произведения народной словесности обряды и поверья вотяков Казанской и Вятской губернии”* (Kazan, 1880) was the first collection of Udmurt folklore to be published in the Udmurt language with a Russian translation.

Munkácsi was persistent in research into Udmurt cultural heritage. Therefore, it was he who was sent on a study trip to the Udmurts by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1885. When he reached there, he was a relatively well prepared researcher. He had two papers on the Udmurt language published by that time *“Votják nyelvtanulmányok”* (“Theses on the Votyak language”) in *“Nyelvtudományi közlemények”* (“Linguistic messages”) XVII, XVIII (Budapest, 1883, 1884) – with B. Gavrilov’s texts (e.g. 120 riddles, 6 fairytales, 21 plots and 96 short songs, 5 prayers (*kuris’kon*) in Latin transcription with Hungarian translation). At the end of the first issue, there is a short dialect glossary on which his Udmurt-Hungarian-German dictionary was based. In his second article, Munkácsi provides a vivid historiographic overview of Udmurt linguistics and deals with all the source material available in this sub-

ject area (he refers to researchers, such as M. Buch, N. Potanin, T. Aminoff, B. Gavrilov, G. Vereshchagin, I. Smirnov, N. Pervukhin, V. Bekhterev, S. Kuznetsov – the list covering almost all researchers in the subject area).

On 25 April 1885, a 25-year old Munkácsi arrived in the city of Kazan, which he called a “Mecca for Finno-Ugrians”. During the three months (from June to August) of his stay among the Udmurts living in the districts of Sarapul, Yelabuga, Malmyzh and Glazov, within Vyatka *guberniya*, and also among the Udmurts living on the other side of the Kama River in Ufa *guberniya*, he collected an enormous amount of material involving almost every aspect of Udmurt culture and everyday life.

After 30 years, Munkácsi met the Udmurts again: this was during World War I in the Esztergom concentration camp. Thanks to the application by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, some researchers (such as B. Munkácsi, Dávid Rafael Fokos-Fuchs, Beke Ödön) were allowed to work with the prisoners whose mother tongue was any of the Finno-Ugrian languages.

The work with prisoners started on 30 May 1915. He had 25 Udmurts coming from different regions (Munkácsi 1952: XII–XVI).

The folklore and ethnographic texts collected from them were published in a number of volumes, which might be called the Encyclopedia of the Udmurts. The volumes involve accounts of the Udmurts’ material cultural heritage and spiritual life at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Now, briefly, I will describe the materials in the above volumes. In order to illustrate the large volume of Munkácsi’s folklore edition “*Votják népköltészeti hagyományok*” (“Udmurt folklore traditions”) (1887), I will provide some figures here. The edition involves 277 songs, 168 superstitions and beliefs, 148 riddles, 17 fairytales and stories, 15 prayers (*kurtis’kon*), 10 legends and traditions, 5 sayings, 12 proverbs and short sayings (saw), 11 curses and 1 oath (644 items altogether). After each text, the author has added his comments. Basically, the edition resembles a diary in which the author also describes his working conditions and situations, his route, informants,

shares his experiences and knowledge with readers. Then follow folklore and ethnographic texts: superstitions and beliefs, riddles, legends and cosmographic tradition, historical legends, spells and fairy tales involving magic, fairy tales about water and forest fairies, about animals, stories about everyday activities, jokes, prayers, description of the plough feast (*akashka*), sayings, proverbs and short sayings, curse words, prayers of thanksgiving, personal names and place names, songs. The items are listed in accordance with Munkácsi's edition.

In this edition, however, of special interest are prayers (Munkácsi 1887: 188), sayings and the oath (p. 192). The above texts involve accounts of the pantheon of the Udmurts and their number magic. The oath reveals their system of values and their protection strategies on which purification of the Udmurts is based and to what they swear their oaths.

Excellent pieces of research done by Munkácsi are also a collection of cosmogonic myths, called "*Dun'n'elen köldemez*" ("Creation of the world") (p. 49), an epic folk tale "*Kalmez batörjos*" ("Heroes from Kalmez") (pp. 6–63)<sup>1</sup>, fairytales "*Šundölen emespijež*" ("Son-in-law of the Sun") (pp. 317–318), and a very ancient piece "*Muš utt'š'an gur*" ("Song for calling bees") (pp. 317–318). And again, the comments added by Munkácsi to all text samples are also of particular importance and value.

Regarding the huge amount of vocabulary items collected during the fieldwork trips to the Udmurts in 1885, Munkácsi started to compile the Udmurt-Hungarian-German dictionary "*A votják nyelv szótára*" I–IV (Budapest, 1890–1896). Munkácsi himself has commented on the book: "It is a great pleasure to tell you that the dictionary of Udmurt language is now complete. I have overcome my sentimentality, yet I must admit that when I added the last note to the dictionary manuscript this afternoon, I burst into tears. The generous *Inmar* has assisted me so far. What Reguly, Castrén and Aminoff were not able to complete – that is to take care of their volumes and

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<sup>1</sup> Before it was argued in literature whether it is a folk tale or an epic poem; then it was agreed that it is part of an epic poem that has got lost (Uvarov 1980: 38–42; 1982; Yashin 1983: 8–9; Domokos 1993: 119–122).

arrange them in order – the possibility that came to me by divine grace. Although it took me 14 months of work in perfect tranquillity, I was ambitious and full of enthusiasm because I believed my work would be widely approved by specialists and a major step forward in the world of science” (Kelmakov 1987: 17).

The dictionary contains about 9000 words (Domokos 1993: 134), involving elements of a dialectal, historical, etymological and explanatory dictionary. An important aspect of the dictionary is that under entry words, very often an ethnographic information has been provided.

Munkácsi published accounts from his diary of the 1885 fieldwork trip under the heading “*A votjakok közt*” (“Among the Udmurts”) (1892). His report for the Hungarian Academy of Sciences about the fieldwork in the Esztergom concentration camp was published as “*Jelentés az esztergomi fogolytáborban végzett votják nyelvi és néprajzi tanulmányaimról*” (“My notes regarding the Udmurt language and ethnography, written down in Esztergom concentration camp”) (Akadémiai Értesítő Budapest, 1916 – Februar 15).

In his book “*Volksbräuche und Volksdichtung der Wotjaken*” (“Udmurts’ traditions and folklore”) (1952), folklore and ethnographic texts collected in the concentration camp have been published. The book was not published in his lifetime – this was edited and published by Professor D. R. Fokos-Fuchs, student and co-worker of Munkácsi.

The comprehensive volume containing over seven-hundred-pages of text involves accounts about every aspect of Udmurt culture. The introduction to it provides any information about the material (e.g. time, location of collection, circumstances, methodology and informants, editing the material for publication, classification principles). The material was classified as “About everyday life”, “Beliefs”, “The Bear cult and hunting”, “Prayers and sacrificial ceremonies”, “Magic”, “Fairytales, legends, and stories”, “Riddles”, “Proverbs and sayings”, “Songs”, “Nursery songs and the drawing of Lots”, “Appendices and commentaries”. The chapter “The Bear cult and hunting” is one of the most original parts of the edition. There is no similar material about the bear cult among the Udmurts available

in the works of other authors. The fourth part of the edition contains materials of sacrificial ceremonies, prayers, and incantations. With this edition, then the whole human life from birth to death has been examined (Munkácsi 1952: 108–109). What is also really fascinating is the system of money calculation suggested by Munkácsi (1952: 226–227).

Thanks largely to the works by Munkácsi, many issues of Udmurt ethnography and especially their spiritual life have been clarified through an abundance of source material, which is growing in importance.

### The World of Udmurt Folk Beliefs

“In general, Udmurts are hardworking, albeit cheerful and good-hearted people with a poetic disposition. Those who are able to appreciate their naive attitude, can find many positive aspects in their songs, as well as in witty proverbs and stories,” said Munkácsi, with regard to the works about the Udmurts by Gavrilov (Kelmakov 1987: 14), and he held this attitude throughout his lifetime.

In this paper, I look into the spiritual life of the Udmurts using the works by Munkácsi and formulate the concept of the religious beliefs of the Udmurt at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

How did life come into existence, and what about the Earth? Who is the creator of them? What was the primary cause of everything? These were the issues that have concerned the Udmurts, as with any other ethnic group and for which they have sought solutions. “In the beginning, there was nothing in place of the Earth, there was only water everywhere. There, *Inmar* went boating with a large vessel. Once he thought, “How can I create the Earth here,” and told *Šaitan* to come to him. He told *Šaitan*: “Go to the bottom of the water and take whatever you find there to the surface in your mouth.” *Šaitan* then started to sink but there was no bottom at all. Then, finally he met a crayfish that asked him: “Where are you going?” – “I am sinking to the bottom and what I find there I carry to the surface in my mouth,” he said. “Come on, I have lived here for 12 years and never

seen the bottom before.” Šaitan however decided to sink further. It took him lot of time to get the bottom where he took a mouthful of sand and returned to the surface. When he went back to *Inmar*, *Inmar* said: “Spit out the mouthful of sand and do not leave any sand in your mouth.” Šaitan however did not obey that command. Immediately the Earth emerged from the sand he had spat out, while the sand that remained in his mouth started to swell up. When *Inmar* saw his assistant’s swollen cheek, he said: “Why didn’t you do what I’ve told you? I asked you not to leave any sand in your mouth,” and demanded that Šaitan should spit out the rest of the sand. If Šaitan had done what he was told to do right away, the surface of the Earth would have been flat and even. From that sand he spat out later, valleys and high hills emerged” (Munkácsi 1887: 49).

The world creation motif involving the supreme god and his assistant who is his younger brother in the shape of a bird appears among most Finno-Ugric peoples. The devil or Šaitan later replaces the shape of the bird (Vladykin 1994: 72–73).

*Inmar* was the chief god, “the most important god, and a central personality, in the mythology of Votyaks. *Inmar* was the creator of the world, initiator of justice (fair treatment) and good things in general; on whom defenceless people could trust and rely. His throne was in heaven and he ruled by thunder” (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 56–57).

The topics of the ancient Udmurts did not involve the creation of the Earth and heaven only, they also involved other phenomena around us: storm, thunder, crop failure, and illness. What does a hunter’s success depend on? Why do people sometimes get lost in the forest? Why some people can keep bees, while some cannot? ... As they were not aware of the real reasons behind the phenomena, they explained them by the involvement of supernatural creatures that resembled humans, but were much stronger or skilful in one or another field, either in the forest, water, hunting, fishing, farming.

*Inmar* was not, however, the only god the Udmurts had. What was the Udmurt pantheon like? Some unique data about this issue is available in spell words – prayers (Munkácsi 1887: 147–168):



*Völös' Tod'õ Jugõl Badd'z'õm Immar* – Chief White Light Great God;

*Kõlt's'n Immar* – “ordinary epithet used with *Immar*, in more recent Christian literature usually angel; spirit that protects cereal crops, bread” (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 163);

*Kozma Immar* – (Munkácsi does not provide any explanation, can be *kuaz* – weather. Often *Immar-kuaz* has been addressed);

*Mudor* – “unknown word, usually a synonym for *Voršud'* (see next item), (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 713);

*Voršud* – God of family cult;

*Irnu* – heavenly rain (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 54);

*Mu-Köldõs'in* – Earth-Mother (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 724);

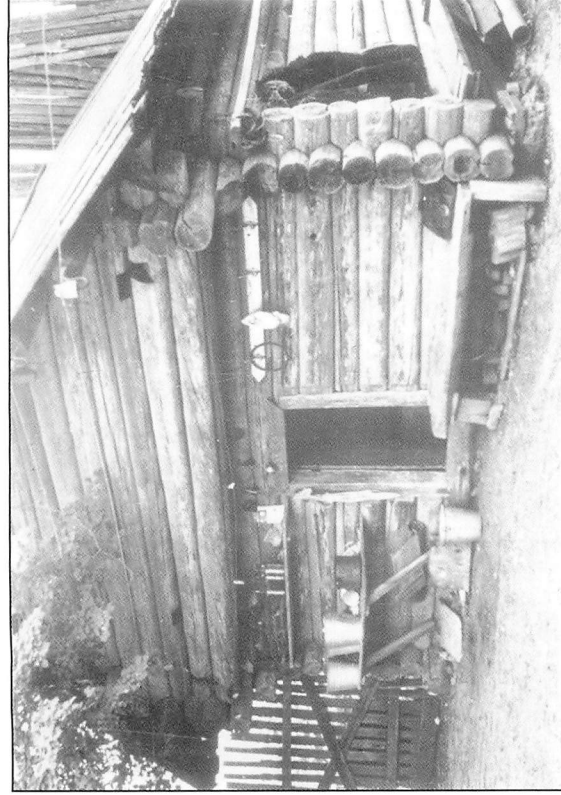
*Lud in-vu* – Spirit of the Udmurts' sacred grove (*Lud*);

*Bõdd'z'õm kua-peri* – Spirit of the Udmurts' sacred barn.

The Udmurt pantheon is closely related to their economic activities and family organisation, which are especially evident in the rituals connected with farming, the bear cult (hunter cult), as well as family and kin worship with the ancestor cult and worship of sacred places.

What was the task of each deity? The supreme god *Immar* lived in heaven, provided people with light and warmth; *Kõlt's'n Immar*, *Köldõs'in* was responsible for bread and other foodstuff; *Voršud*, *Lud in-vu*, *Bõdd'z'õm kua-peri* were closely connected with the arrangements within the kinships of Udmurts, with family and kinship cult.

*Kuala* was the sacred “worshipping barn of the Udmurts” (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 230), as it was here where *Voršud* – one of most kind-hearted spirits who protected humans and their homes – lived. He lives in a summer sacred barn on top of a pole (*Voršud jubo* or *bõdd'z'õm mudor*) near the sacrificial site (here are the *fetish*-like items, such as a rectangular box of tree bark with a wooden cover with some spruce twigs and a vessel with a spoon near there). *Voršud* is the most important part of the family's religious ceremony. In most feasts and important events, sacrifices are made to the *Voršud*, his sacred nature spreads over the whole summer sacred barn (*Kua*), the

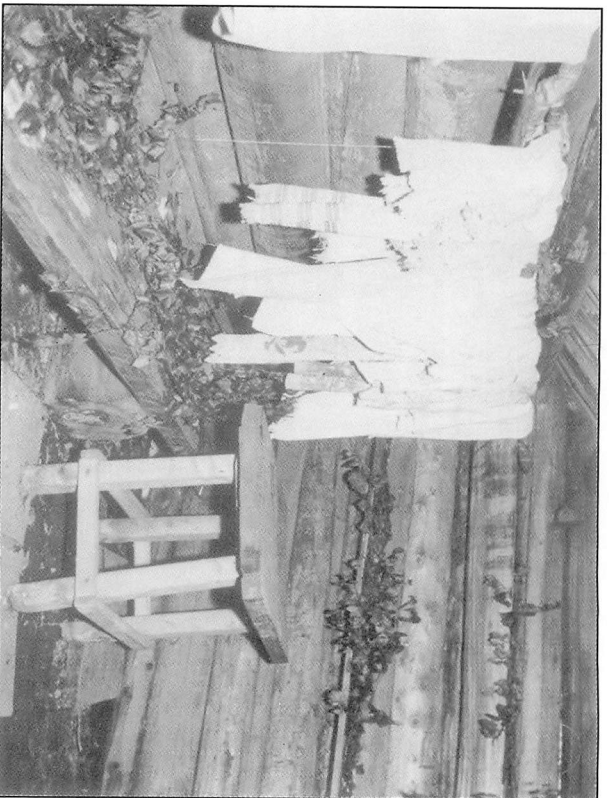


Photograph 1. Yekaterina Bulatova's summer barn *kuala*, with an approximate age of 100 years. Front view. Novyi Sentek village, Zavyalovo district, Udmurtia. Photograph by Priit Härmas 1977. Photographic collections of ENM (Fk) 1828: 156.

Udmurts' domestic chapel. In Christian terminology, the term *Voršad* has also taken on the meaning 'Holy Spirit' or 'angel' (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 683).

In addition to family sacred barns, where only family members say their prayers, there are also the sacred barns belonging to the kin (*bōdd'ž'ōm kuala*). These can be managed by kin members who are in direct line of descent from their primordial ancestors. The number of kin sacred barns (*bōdd'ž'ōm kuala*) in a village equals the number of the kin living there.

Kin also used holy groves (*lud*) as sacred sites. The word *lud* means 'field' or 'small wood near a village', especially sacred site. Usually, sacred sites were separated from the rest of the wood. No matter where *lud* was located, either in the wood or in the field, people fear this involved magic powers. On workdays, no one was allowed to go there without a valid reason, while at feasts, people

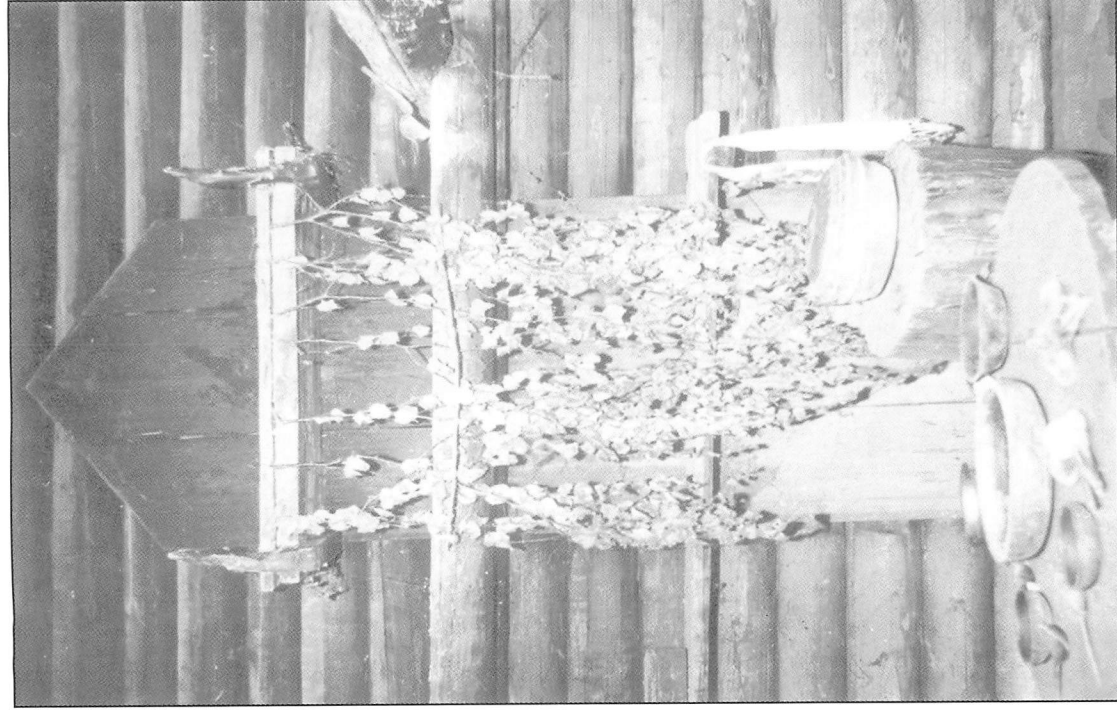


Photograph 2. Internal view of the kin sacred worshipping barn *bōdd'z'ōm kuala*. Ritual towels and birch branches. Kuzebayevo village, Alnash district, Udmurtia. Photograph by Priti Härmäs 1978. FK 1862: 186.

should not go there without an offering. It was not allowed to take animals there, cut twigs from trees or take a single slat out of the grove. It was not allowed either in the *lud* to make any noise there or set traps for wild birds. Sacrilege was an ultimate sin there (Munkácsi 1887: 310).

All items in the sacred site were sacred, as with trees that they were holy. The Udmurts believe that the spirit of *lud* punished those who tried to cut a tree there. They died on the spot or were disabled for the rest of their life (Munkácsi 1952: 140).

All the sacrificial ceremonies of a kin were performed in the grove or sacred barn. Worship and sacrifices made by a family were made in the family sacred barn that was located in the yard and considered as the family sacred worshipping place.



Photograph 3. Internal view of the kin sacred worshipping barn *bōdd'ž'ōm kaala*. A pole decorated with birch branches, *voršud jubo* or *bōdd'ž'ōm mudor* (location of the protective deity of the kinship) and ritual tableware. Varklet Bodya village, Agryz district, Tatarstan. Photograph by Prit Härmäs 1980. Fk 1920: 48.



Photograph 4. Skulls and shin bones of the sacrificial animals that have been dedicated to dead parents, hanging from a spruce. Yarklet Bodya village, Agryz district, Tatarstan. Photograph by Priit Härtmas 1980. Fk 1920: 31.

Family and kinship cults are also closely related to ancestor worship, which is apparent in funeral customs in particular.

Udmurt funeral customs reveal two different attitudes to the dead. On the one hand, they were respected, offerings were made to them, they were addressed for help, e.g.: “Do not do any harm, protect one’s family and domestic animals, protect the sown crop, do not feed it to worms or insects!” (Munkácsi 1952: 45). People also provided the dead with food, drink, clothes, household goods and tools, as well as money for the after life. On the other hand, they were scared; people tried to get rid of them as soon as possible using magic and other means. They were lost, so that they did not find the way back home and disturb their living relatives there. “When leaving the graveyard, someone takes an axe and makes a line on the ground after each person, saying: “You stay here under the ground, lag behind others,” while saying the name of the buried person” (Munkácsi 1952: 109).

In addition to higher (supernatural) deities affecting human destinies, the Udmurts also had their conception about spirits and souls who could use their almighty power both for the goodwill or ill will of a person.

That is the way superstitions about *vumurt* or *vukuz’o* – “god of water and fishing – emerge. Usually, he inhabits the bottom of a river or pond and sometimes comes out (combing his hair) and therefore is quite frightening. In general, he has adopted a hostile attitude towards humans: drags them to the bottom, destroys mills, and helps fish to get out of nets. One can feel his significant impact even on land: he spreads eczema, scabies and other infectious diseases. The feast-day – *jö völe sulton* – (resembles the Epiphany) is also held in honour of him. On that day, people go together onto the ice and sacrifice a duck (thrown it into a hole in the ice) on behalf of the village community. This ritual sacrifice is made because he did not drown people. In order to avoid minor problems in the future, coins are thrown into the hole” (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 691–692).

Images of the following spirits are also created, e.g.:  
*N’ulesmurt* – spirit or fairy of the forest,

*Palesmurt* – half-human, yet spirit of the forest,

*Korkamurt* – spirit or fairy of the house,

*Kõl'dei* – god of infectious diseases and plague (Munkácsi 1887: 191),

*Albastõ* – hostile spirit who lives in a stall, in a stable as well as in swimming areas and frightens people with his manifestation, and even swallows them together with their hair (Munkácsi 1890–1896: 25). In addition, some other spirits have been identified.

Spirits inhabited everywhere; the Udmurts used to explain natural phenomena through spirits. They explained events in their personal lives, as well as unexpected natural phenomena by the involvement of friendly or hostile spirits. Similarly, life and activities of humans were thought to have been caused by the spirits living within humans. The Udmurts have two different spirits: *lul* ('spirit of the living person') and *urt* ('spirit of the dead person'). They believed that the latter becomes a moth (*urt bubõli*). Many Finno-Ugric peoples share the same attitudes towards spirits (Vladykin 1993: 243).

It comes out, then, that both coming into this world and leaving this world are the work of two spirits: *lul-vir s'otis' peri* ('the spirit who gives the soul and blood to humans'), and *lul bas'tis' peri* ('the spirit who takes the being away from humans') (Munkácsi 1952: 108).

Human life, both its successful events and failures, was believed to be related to either support or hostility on the part of gods and spirits. In order to improve relations with them, different sacrifices were made to them.

With the work by Munkácsi, it is possible for the first time to follow the whole sequence of sacrificial rituals – from birth to death.

“On childbirth, a duck was sacrificed to the spirit who gives the spirit (*lul-vir s'otis' peri*). Later, seven more ducks were sacrificed to him. Two pikes were sacrificed to *Inmar*, and a lamb to *Kõldõs'in*. A cock was sacrificed to the spirit who takes away the spirit from humans (*lul bas'tis' peri*); a grouse to the one that limits the freedom and free will of humans (*ujin mõnis'-vetlis' perios*); a duck was offered to the spirits of the night (*ujin mõnis'-vetlis' perios*) and to the spirits of the grove (*lul-jõl perios*).

At a wedding, a bull (*kurban*) was sacrificed at that same place where prayers to *Inmar* were made, and thereafter two geese which “should be taken to the god”. In other words, the geese should be bridles.

On wedding, a sheep was also sacrificed to *Inmar* under a birch tree; a couple of fish to the sacred site in the field (*busō vös'*); a stallion to the spirit of the Evil Eye (*biger miz'*), a sacrifice that was promised before: a deer to the spirit who makes humans impure (*vožo miz'*); and a ram to the sacrificial sites of the Nylga and Vamya families (*Nōlga juruk, Vamja juruk*).

When a married couple first goes to the kin's sacred worshipping barn (*bōdd'ž'ōm kualta*), two geese were offered as “ultimate sacrifices”, and a couple of ducks which would hand the geese over to the god. Then, a deer was offered in the sacred worshipping barn.

When a man was taken into the army, a couple of geese were sacrificed to him in the *lud*. On death, a stallion was sacrificed for a man and a cow for a woman” (Munkácsi 1952: 108–109).

Udmurts used to live a fully religious way of life. Through sacrifices made during religious ceremonies and rituals, they aimed to win the gods' sympathy: they wished that the gods would fulfil their wishes, to protect them from getting into trouble and bad luck.

What are then the things the Udmurts asked from the gods? Their prayers involve no wish to have privileges meant for clergy members. In their prayers they ask for worldly rewards for themselves, their families and neighbours. They prayed that they had a good harvest, good weather, and an increase in livestock. They prayed for a happy life with fewer troubles both in the family circle and village community, as well as good health for themselves and their close relatives. Their prayers had neither humility nor reconciliation. The Udmurts “sign” a contract with their god saying that they make further sacrifices only if the god has accepted their previous ones: “Oh, my almighty *Inmar*, my *Kōlt'š'n!* Please accept my sacrifices and prayers! May the crops grow like willows, oh my *Inmar!* Add a load to the load and a haystack to the haystack, my generous almighty *Inmar!* So that we could eat bread with our good children! Give



warmth and a light rain to the crops that have been sown; protect them from heavy rain and strong wind, my generous almighty *Inmar*! May we have good health and wealth, my generous almighty *Inmar*! Something I should have said earlier, I perhaps said somewhat later. Please accept these prayers, my generous great *Inmar*!” (Munkácsi 1952: 110).

Religious beliefs, magic words and traditions form people’s morals, values and their values protection system, through which the Udmurts achieve their mental purity. “I swear in the name of *Inmar*, sun, moon, bread, fire, earth, and my future that I have not done it” (Munkácsi 1887: 192). Curse words address the Underworld and basis of the universe, as well as god of infectious diseases and plague (*Kōl’dei* and *Albastō*) (Munkácsi 1887: 191).

The most important aspects that form the concept of morals are attitude to work, family values, and worship of the dead and gods. The Udmurts do not aim to please their gods in the hope that they would have gratitude in return in the after life. All myths are connected with farming, hunting and fishing, which teach people to fill time with working, rather than sitting idle. Fairytales glorify inventiveness, wit, diligence, bravery and generosity. Proverbs and sayings on the other hand value a decent upbringing, family values, and love for children and work: laziness and sitting idle are also the main targets of reproach and rebuke in oral tradition.

The Udmurt folklore, which Bernát Munkácsi has carefully collected, provides a valuable treasure for generations to come.

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# About the Identity of the Yamal Nenets<sup>1</sup>

**Liivo Niglas**

Bronislaw Malinowski, in the final chapter of his classic work “Ar-gonauts of the Western Pacific” (1922/1987), makes conclusions about everything he regards to be the real aims of ethnology science. Among other things, he declares:

“What really interests me in the study of the native is his outlook on things, his *Weltanschauung*, the breath of life and reality which he breathes and by which he lives. Every human culture gives its members a definite vision of world, a definite zest of life.”

The very possibility and desire to see the world through the eyes of a person originating from another culture stands as a reason why I have already carried out fieldwork on the Yamal peninsula Nenets for several years. When living and working among the Nenets, I am primarily charmed by the “peeking” into the inner world of the Nenets, offering an emphatic pleasure. I am interested in how a Nenets perceives the surrounding reality around him, how he interprets this and how he forms it into an arranged system. I have called such a system “the world view” (Niglas 1997a). One of the most important components of “the world view” ruling in a society is the

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<sup>1</sup> This article is the complemented variant of the poster presentation at the conference “The Identity of Arctic Cultures” (April 13–15, 2001, ENM, Tartu). I would like to thank all the participants in the discussion of the poster report, their comments and critical remarks have essentially contributed to the completion of this paper.

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person's psychological self-conception or identity, which is formed from the answers to the questions: who am I?; in what way do I differ from others?; what are my rights and obligations?; who are my friends and enemies?; etc. As is written by Robert Redfield, the introducer of the term world view, "self is the axis of world view" (Redfield 1962: 270).

The goal of this article is to observe some features of the identity of the Yamal area Nenets, the reindeer herders living mainly in the tundra, and factors that have influenced their development. Although the investigation of the Nenets identity is not the direct topic of my research, some ideas have emerged during my fieldwork and these I would like to point out in this report. I need to underline that I am dealing with thoughts, not with allegations that have undergone a thorough check. A number of ideas presented in the article have arisen during casual meetings with the Nenets living in various environments. However, I dare to regard the main idea of the article to be adequate, as during fieldwork, I faced it again and again when researching different topics.

Namely, I am of the opinion that the self-concept of the Yamal Nenets about themselves and their place in the surrounding world is to a large extent connected with the reindeer. This becomes especially obvious when analysing the mutual attitudes of the tundra Nenets who deal with reindeer herding and their fellow Nenets grouping who live in settled villages. I claim that the very reindeer is the cultural phenomena by which a Nenets determines himself. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasise that for the Nenets reindeer breeders, this animal does not merely concern a symbolic mark or sign by which to make themselves conscious for the world. Differently from many other cultures that deal with the reindeer, where people do not come into particular contact with the reindeer on an everyday level (the Sámi people) (see Paine 1994), or where this animal has a minor role as a source of subsistence (the forest Nenets, the Khanty people) (see Verbov 1936; Kulemizn, Lukina 1992), the Yamal Nenets are in a permanent, very intensive and vitally dependent contact with their livestock.

The article is based on information collected during ethnographic fieldwork (1996–1999) which was carried out in the seventh brigade of the Yar-Sale reindeer herding state farm in the Yamal peninsula. I have also been in close contact with the members of other brigades and briefly with the herders of neighbouring state farms and, therefore, I believe that the cultural phenomena touched upon in the present paper are characteristic of the reindeer herders in the Yamal region as a whole. The beliefs of the village Nenets, being important from the point of view of this article, originate mainly from the inhabitants of the state farm centre, the Yar-Sale settlement. I have also visited smaller Nenets villages, Yaptik-Sale and Kutopyugan. Likewise, I have been to Nenets households both in Salekhard, the capital of the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug (region) and in the industrial town Nadym. Therefore, I believe that I have obtained an overview regarding various ways of adaptation and social-economic environments of the Yamal area Nenets. Where possible, I have used relevant published literature and statistical materials.

### **Identity and Ethnicity**

In general, there is an opinion that “identity” is difficult to define as a concept. The most characteristic feature of identity can be considered that of a unit (human being, group, people) which sees itself, and is seen by others, as different from other units – “I” or “we” is differentiated from “he” or “they” (Rapoport 1982: 10). In social science and cultural research, the concept of identity is habitually used together with such words as ethnicity, culture, group, region, etc. As a result, we have terms, which are used to characterise the connection of a human being with a certain cultural tradition, ethnos, human grouping or region (Seymour-Smith 1986: 145). Depending on the activity situation and level, the emphasis is laid, either by the person himself or by the “others” who communicate with him, on his origin, lifestyle, or on his being the member of a narrower grouping. Despite the fact that lately, it is customary to criticise the concept of ethnicity and clearly determined “cultures” (see Levine 1999; Harrison 1999), we can definitely speak about ethnic identity in the case of the

Nenets. However, his ethnicity has more a rather political than cultural character, as both the language and the lifestyle are quite different among various groups of the Nenets.

The name “Nenets” (*ненэць* – human being) came into general usage only after Soviet ethnographs began to use it in their written works and this replaced the terms “Samoyeds”, “Yuraks”, “Yurak-Samoyeds” in scientific and official phraseology. In fact, the imagination of the existence of a unitary Nenets nation came into being only during the Soviet period. Mainly due to the forcefully carried out concentration of nomads into settled villages, and a “cultural policy”, which stressed unity but practised russification, the concept of the “Nenets nation” began to form in the thinking of indigenous people who were divided into various territorial and kinship groups (Копыtoff 1955: 21).

For the Nenets themselves, group identity was more important than ethnic identity, and they determined themselves mainly through the patrilinear clan (Khomich 1955: 25). In the Yamal area, differently from the European Nenets, the clan system and identity has maintained its viability until today, also regulating, in addition to marital relationships, the religious behaviour of people.

Even today, there are massive differences between various Nenets regions. In some cases, differences in dialects serve as a basis for regional identity, but chiefly, they originate from culturally detailed peculiarities. For instance, the Yamal region covers the Yamal peninsula together with an area from the southern shore of the Ob-bay up to approximately Nadym town; forest tundra growing there is used as a winter pasture land for the reindeer. Although this Taz river basin forest tundra area is also the home of the so-called Taz Nenets, a clear distinction is made between the different groups. The difference is said to be in the fact that the Yamal Nenets have larger herds, they spend most of the year in bare tundra and they pronounce some words differently. The Yamal Nenets call the Taz ones forest people (*ныдар' ненэць*); they should not be mixed up with the forest Nenets who are regarded to be a separate ethnos living in the southern taiga and speaking a totally different language and who are called the tree people (*ня' ненэць*).

According to Frederik Barth's definition, the Yamal Nenets could be regarded as a separate ethnic group which is biologically self-reproductive, shares certain cultural values and has a common activity area and definite identity (see Huttunen 1995: 121). Still, similar to the majority of ethnic groups, the Yamal Nenets have to fight for their traditions and identity, against the dominating culture and this results in the strong influence of Soviet or Russian culture on the lifestyle of some of the Nenets<sup>2</sup> who have moved from nomadic cattle breeding to a settled village life. The identity has also changed.

Several researchers have actually criticised the usage of the term "identity", because this would point to the unchangeable or fixed character of a human being or a group. According to them, it would be more reasonable to talk about the continuously developing identification process, not about stable identity (Seymour-Smith 1986: 145). The identity of a human being is changing constantly, corresponding to his/her movement in time and space. This is revealed especially clearly by so-called social mobility, when a person moves from one social stratum to another, changing his/her lifestyle and evaluation judgements. When researching the identity of the Nenets in the Yamal region, it becomes explicit that, besides the above mentioned ethnic self-determination, an important identity factor today is social differentiation, proceeding from lifestyle. The most distinct discrepancy can be made between the so-called tundra and village inhabitants, at the same time, the transition from one category to another is easy and relatively frequent.

### **Different Lifestyles**

Four different social layers of the Nenets have been pointed out. First, the Nenets or the so-called tundra inhabitants are a group who practise a nomadic lifestyle and traditional ways of subsistence and

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<sup>2</sup>The population of the Yamal region was, 15,592 people, as of January, 1 1990. Out of them, there were 7701 (49,4%) Nenets, 319 (2%) Khanty, 11 Mansi, 6 Selkups and 4670 (30%) Russians and 2885 (18%) of the representatives of other nationalities (Pika, Bogoyavlensky 1995: 62). Consequently, the amount of indigenous people among the local population is less than half.

culture. The second category is formed by the Nenets who live in stationary settlements and do not deal with traditional areas, and are, as a rule, only partially assimilated, many of these being called the lumpen-proletariat. The third group includes the Nenets who live in larger centres, according to their living standard and lifestyle, they do not differ much from the representatives of other nations. The last category are the mestizas born from mixed marriages, they are the group least connected with the traditional Nenets culture (Kharyuchi 1998: 49).

All these classes differ from each other by economic activity, lifestyle, material welfare and social conditions. The Nenets living in larger centres (Salekhard, Yar-Sale) and in similar economic conditions as the representatives of other nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, Tatars), have, in the majority of cases, proper education and work in positions that require creativity or responsibility. They could be placed under a common denominator "the Nenets intelligentsia". The formation of this category is also facilitated by the requirement of political correctness, dating from the *perestroika* period, stipulating that in the management of local authorities or economic enterprises there should be one or two representatives of the indigenous peoples. In the majority of cases, they have high ethnic awareness and it is exactly them who represent their fellow nationals in cultural and political arenas (see Kharyuchi 1999), but quite a large number of these people do not have direct contact with the traditional culture practised in the tundra.

The Nenets proletariat living in villages includes people who, for some reason, have remained living in the settlement after finishing boarding school or after military service, finding low-skilled work (building, taking care of a polar fox farm). Living in small villages, they are in relatively close contact with the tundra inhabitants, either through close relatives or economic connections. It was namely the local proletariat that suffered, most of all, in the chaos following the collapse of the Soviet economic system. As everywhere in Russian Arctic (Kauppala 1998: 27), the unemployment rate is high in the Yamal region (personal report by L. Yaptik). This has resulted in poverty, increased alcoholism and violent deaths, which have taken a



lot more serious forms compared with the tundra inhabitants (Pika 1993: 68).

People born from mixed marriages are less strongly connected to traditional Nenets culture and, as a rule, the majority of them has switched over to the Russian language. The economic situation of the mestizas can vary a lot, but the important fact is that they can better adapt themselves to modern living conditions and they are more eager to make various inter-ethnic contacts (Kharyuchi 1998: 49). In the Yamal, about 10% of settled Nenets are connected with ethnically mixed families, whereas there are practically no mixed families in the tundra (Pika, Bogoyavlensky 1995: 65). In the Yamal tundra, only one Russian is living there who deals with reindeer herding. He is the former veterinary assistant of the Yar-Sale state farm and he is married to a Nenets woman and has totally accepted the traditional Nenets lifestyle.

The traditional means of subsistence of the Nenets have been nomadic reindeer herding, besides fishing, hunting and the catching of sea animals. Although reindeer herding has preserved as an important field of activity among the majority of the Nenets groupings, the Nenets living in the Yamal peninsula can be regarded as the real reindeer people. Firstly, the Yamal is a region where more than half of the representatives of the indigenous population are engaged in reindeer herding. As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, more than 50% of the 9670 Nenets living in the peninsula were involved in reindeer herding (*Byulleten...* 1999). The Yamal Nenets can be regarded one of the largest and most compact group of reindeer herders in the whole world (Pika, Bogoyavlensky 1995: 62–64). Secondly, until the present day, the traditional Nenets reindeer herding is cultivated in the Yamal region – “classic large herd reindeer breeding” (Krupnik 1976). This term, when expounded, means that reindeer herds are immense, consisting usually of several thousand animals and their herding implies constant movement to fresh pasture lands. Because of migration throughout the year, the family members with all their household possessions also move together with the herders. If, before the introduction of state farm rules at the end of the 1930s (see Golovnev, Zaytsev 1992: 70–71), the main economic unit was a patrilinear ex-

tended family, consisting of several nuclear families, then, in the Yar-Sale state farm that has existed until today, the reindeer-herding group consists of the families of 7–9 herders. The task of the brigade is to take care of the state farm herd comprising three-four thousand reindeer throughout the year. They come to the state farm centre only a couple of times a year – in spring, to join the planning meeting and to replenish supplies and in autumn, to take the animals to the slaughterhouse. In addition to brigades, hunters also work for the benefit of the state farm; their task is to shoot polar foxes in the tundra. They, too wander with their families and reindeer herds throughout the year. In a changed economic situation where polar fox skins are ridiculously inexpensive, they mostly deal with fishing and increasing their herd. Consequently, in the case of the Nenets living in the tundra, we are dealing with real nomadic herders, whose life is spent, on a large scale, among the reindeer in the tundra.

In the majority of cases, social movement proceeds from the tundra to the village, first and foremost, among the girls who finish school, and who, on a number of occasions, marry a local non-Nenets. However, during recent years, also a reverse process has started to take place. The difficult economic situation, prevalent in the northern regions of Russia, forces many families to look for employment in the tundra, where it is possible to subsist by herding and fishing. A pre-requisite for this is the existence of the reindeer, which are usually kept in the herd of some close relative. In the seventh brigade, almost half the herders had earlier been living in the village or studying in the town, but, for several economic and psychological reasons, they had returned to the tundra.

### **Tundra versus village**

From the point of view of identity, it is first and foremost a person's lifestyle, proceeding from his/her living environment, which is important. It is the lifestyle which often serves as a basis for differentiating between "we" and "they". The Nenets themselves make a clear distinction between the Nenets who wander about the tundra and those who live in the village, calling the first *hoj' ter*

(mountain/tundra highland inhabitant) and the others *harad' ter* (village/town inhabitant).

A tundra inhabitant regards the village to be an alien, inconvenient and even dangerous world. The village is the place, described by a Nenets with the following words: a place where "I would get into trouble" because "I would not have my reindeer over there", only "noise and constant drinking". The people and their reindeer who have migrated from the tundra, become "strange" in the village: people start drinking and quarrelling; and the reindeer get nervous amidst big houses and rumbling vehicles and might bolt. Unfortunately, such "strange" behaviour often has more serious consequences. When taking a closer look at the statistics concerning violent death cases among the indigenous people, it becomes evident that the majority of homicides and suicides of nomadic herders are mainly committed in villages, especially in autumn when part of the herd is brought to the slaughterhouse in the state farm centres (see Pika 1993: 66).

Although tundra inhabitants seem to prefer staying in the homely tundra, the village plays a vital role in their world. There are probably no groups of nomads or migrating cattle herders in the world that could exist totally independently from settled communities. Regardless of the fact that the majority of things necessary for life is obtained from practising nomadic cattle herding, people also need something that can be offered to them only by the village. Firstly, the products of cattle farming do not fully satisfy the requirements of people for food, and secondly, for normal existence, it is necessary to have a variety of things manufactured by settled people. For the satisfaction of this necessity, different groups of nomadic cattle herders use various ways<sup>3</sup>. Mostly, there is "a reasonable symbiotic relationship" between nomadic herders and the village inhabitants, which implies the exchange of livestock products for the produce of settled people (Johnson 1969: 12). However, this does not encompass only trading – such a symbiotic relation can also acquire other forms.

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<sup>3</sup> An overview regarding various types of nomadic cattle herding and their connections with stationary settlements can be found, for instance, in the works of Goldschmidt (1979) and Barfield (1993).

Under some conditions, the state farm organisation, which has preserved in the Yamal until today, can be observed as a certain symbiotic relationship between tundra and village inhabitants. The state farm enables the Nenets, under given specific economic, political and demographical conditions, to maintain and maybe even increase the share of reindeer herding in their lives, by supplying the brigades with foodstuffs and veterinary help and by destroying wolves. It is possible that the reindeer-centred world outlook and the identity of the Nenets acquired its current form namely due to the state farm, because the herders have not always been in charge of such large reindeer herds (see Niglas 1999). This can also serve as an explanation why the central role of the reindeer in the structuring of the mental world of the Nenets, highlighted by me, has not been observed by the earlier researchers (see Yevladov 1992; *Istochniki...* 1987).<sup>4</sup>

### **Genuine Human Being**

The Yamal and other eastern Nenets call themselves *ненэй ненэць*, which means the “genuine human being” (Khomich 1995: 25). It seems to me that, according to the tundra Nenets, the authenticity of a human being starts gradually disappearing, after they settle in the village. And not so much because the village Nenets wear Russian clothes, live in Russian houses and for most of the time, speak the Russian language, but rather because they do not have reindeer.

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<sup>4</sup> I still think that the contradiction between the visions of different researchers is not so much conditioned by the situation that has changed during time past, but by the different aims and methods of the very researchers themselves. Both Yevladov and Chernetsov studied the Yamal Nenets in the framework of constantly further-moving expeditions, aimed at obtaining a general picture of the Yamal people's life environment, economic situation, everyday life (Pika 1989: 100), or of the language, archaeology, customs and beliefs (*Istochniki...* 1987: 9). The aim was to write down, take photographs, obtain ethnographic information, to as much an extent as possible. I have limited myself with the research of only one Nenets group and I am not so much interested in concrete, superficial, visible and audible information but, rather in the human being's abstract understanding regarding the surrounding world, located in the subconscious and sifted out from the above information. Therefore, the results are different.

On the basis of information collected during fieldwork, there is a reason to suppose that an important component of the Nenets identity is the connection between man and reindeer. Reindeer herding is not only an economic activity that provides a livelihood. In addition to its important role as a source of subsistence and meat animals for food, reindeer are the only means of transportation for their nomadic herders, both for the fulfilment of the work tasks of the herders and for moving camps to a new location. Reindeer skin is also an indispensable material for sewing overcoats and covers for conical tents. Consequently, it may be assumed that in a situation where the potential material and technical aid in settlements is hundreds of kilometers away, the physical survival of a human being in the tundra depends directly on the reindeer, both in the case of the state farm brigades and the private cattle herders who deal mainly with hunting and fishing. During the course of my research, I have come to the conclusion that reindeer also play the central role in guaranteeing the mental welfare of the Nenets, thereby being the source of social prestige, good friend and kin relationships, and the favour of gods (see Niglas 1997a).

It seems to me that being a Nenets, i.e. being different from the non-Nenets, anticipates close contact with this animal. This is acknowledged by a widespread opinion that “genuine Nenets” live in the tundra together with their reindeer herds. On the one hand, such understanding reveals the scornful attitude of some tundra Nenets towards their fellow natives who live in villages “like Russians”. In reply to my question to the Nenets about the reasons for moving into settlements, the herders have often explained that the people who live in villages are these who cannot cope with tough weather and work conditions in the tundra. Also, the Nenets who work in villages, are generally regarded to be idlers and free-loaders. Even the attitude of the herders towards the veterinary assistants, who are appointed to work at the brigades, but who often stay in the state farm centre, is sporadically scornful.

At the same time, the Nenets who live in villages, usually regard their tundra fellows with respect. The high prestige of the reindeer herders among the village Nenets is expressed in joyous and painful

nostalgic childhood memories and in the proud listing of relatives/acquaintances who work in one or another reindeer herding brigade. Whenever possible, settled Nenets try to get to the tundra, in order to, dressed in traditional clothes, participate in a couple of exchanges of camps or to catch the reindeer with arkans. Those who have inherited or received the reindeer from their relatives, are especially keen on going to the tundra. Presumably, in connection with the collapse of the Soviet economic system, the prestige of the reindeer herders in the eyes of village inhabitants has increased even more during recent years. In a situation where many representatives of the indigenous people in settlements have no jobs, the meat brought by the relatives from the tundra, is often their main food supply and sales article.

The respective attitude towards the tundra inhabitants is probably expressed most revealingly during sports competitions, held in the framework of the annual herders' day. The official festivity of reindeer herders, organised in Yar-Sale at the beginning of April is one of the few occasions where the Nenets who have come from the tundra, seem to feel secure in the village. They wear their best clothes, drive their best reindeer and display objects of admiration for the village people. With their colourful clothes and self-confident behaviour, they differ distinctly from the village Nenets. On several occasions I have heard myself how Russians explain to their children that these are the real Nenets not like the local village drunkards. Unfortunately, it has to be admitted that there are plenty among the tundra inhabitants who have also become the victims of alcohol by night-fall.

Competing in traditional sports events (lasso throwing, wrestling, triple jump, etc.) is a deed of honour for the majority of Nenets herders, and it is treated with a full seriousness, both by the participants and the audience (see Niglas 1998). The most popular event is the reindeer race, attracting a large crowd of spectators on the frozen river meadow. The other events are being participated only selectively, but everybody wants to join in the racing, including even young boys, as the herders are judged namely on the basis of the animals in the yoke. This is evidenced by the most precious prize for the winner of the contest – a snowmobile. When observing the sport-

ing competition events, it becomes clear where the line is drawn between different identities. On one side are the spectators – Russians and village Nenets – and on the other side are the participating reindeer breeders. Participating in the race is one of the most relevant indicators of identity also among the Sámi people (see Huttunen 1995), but with a difference that among the Sámis, this has only to do with a purely ethnic symbol, as the reindeer yoke has not been used as an everyday transportation means for a long time (see Paine 1994), but for the Yamal Nenets, it is a great part of their actual world.

It is very characteristic, when speaking about the differences between the tundra and village Nenets, that the concept of purity is being used. The tundra people regard themselves to be purer than the village inhabitants, and, for this reason, to hold a higher position. Such a partial take-over of a dominant culture has also been called identity pollution (Harrison 1999:10). The village inhabitants themselves also admit their lower position in the prestige hierarchy. At least this is what a young Nenets woman alleged, having lived in the Yar-Sale for more than ten years. However, this is only supposed to apply to the first generation of village Nenets; the second and especially the third generation of the Nenets living in the settlements have a scornful attitude towards their fellow nationals who follow the traditional lifestyle, and regard them as primitive savages. Quite a few of the Nenets youth, being brought up in the village, could not understand how “a cultural foreigner” as I was, could tolerate, for months, the prevalent non-hygienic conditions of the tundra and the weird customs.

No doubt, the concept of purity is of utmost importance for the Nenets, and again, this is primarily associated with the reindeer. On the one hand, the reindeer is regarded to be an extremely pure animal, the latter being used as a justification for eating raw meat and for scarce hygiene possibilities. It is claimed that pure meat and the clothes and sleeping places, manufactured from pure leather enable the people to live a healthy life in the tundra<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand, the

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<sup>5</sup> At this point, we can, for example, draw a parallel with the Japanese who utilise the idea of purity in the construction of their ethnic identity (see Harrison 1999: 10).

term “purity” is associated with the right, subject to rules behaviour, one of the most relevant measuring tools of which is the welfare of the cattle.

### **Life among the Gods**

A large part of the system of taboos and customs, regulating human behaviour and therefore, also the way of thinking, is directly connected with the reindeer. Everyday activities of the Nenets are restricted by a great number of various behavioural norms and taboos. Violating them is a major sin and brings along the displeasure of gods. An especially large number of taboos is used for the regulation of women’s behaviour, as, because of menstrual blood, women are regarded to be unclean and, therefore, dangerous to fellow citizens (see Niglas 1998). Here, again, the distinguishing between the “genuine” and village Nenets becomes evident, the behaviour of the latter differs remarkably from that of the herder. The importance of observing taboos and the scornful attitude of the tundra Nenets towards village people is probably best characterised by the explanation of an old herder about the reasons for the sickly look of the reindeer. Namely, he was convinced that the weak health and bad resistance of the herd animals does not proceed from the overload of the Yamal pasture lands, pursuant to the reasons given by scientists (*Priroda...* 1995: 399–400), but from the fact that village women step over the horns of the reindeer, scattered near the state farm slaughterhouse. In accordance with the beliefs of the Nenets, things connected with the reindeer, when getting under the feet of a sexually mature woman, immediately become impure and, for this reason, they also negatively affect the living animals. Usually there are a number of things, used in cattle breeding, lying about the campsite of the nomadic herders (narta driver’s sticks, lassos, tools), and it is the obligation of the women to skilfully steer past them while executing their everyday duties. If it happens that a woman accidentally “soils” something, it is necessary to quickly carry out a ritual during which the item is cleaned in the smoke of burning reindeer grease.



The guaranteeing of the welfare of the reindeer from supernatural forces is the real objective of the large number customs of the Nenets nomadic cattle herders. And this is valid not only with regard to women. Even such an innocent activity as looking at the reindeer without any concrete reason can bring along the death of the animal. Consequently, during their daily activities, people have to constantly have in mind the connection of their behaviour with the safety of the reindeer, and this is also reflected in the Nenets identity. Only the one who obeys the taboos associated with the reindeer is considered a genuine Nenets.

Staying far away from the herd, the village people undoubtedly have very few opportunities to directly endanger the reindeer with their errant behaviour. Still, stepping over a piece of cord lying on the floor in a flat denotes a non-Nenets behaviour, because theoretically, this cord could be used in somebody's harness some day in the future. A remarkably more realistic danger emerges when the tundra Nenets come to the village for foodstuffs or for participating at the herders' day.

One part of human identity is the relationship of a man with the supernatural world – his religious convictions and their application in forming one's life. Again, the reindeer has an important role to play. For the Nenets, the "pure" reindeer is the main sacrificial animal. In the animistic religious system, characteristic of the Nenets, sacrifice serves as the basic means of communication with the supernatural forces. In the Nenets world view, the profane and religious are densely interwoven and even the routine slaughter of the reindeer, the aim of which is to obtain meat, constitutes in itself a sacrificial rite. Similarly, various "sacred" animals associated with concrete deities are differentiated in the herd, and with regard to these animals, specific behavioural patterns are stipulated. For example, women are not allowed to touch some of them, they are not harnessed in front of a sledge and their horns are not sawn. In such "magic world view" (Wax, Wax 1962), all things and phenomena are alive and connected with each other. Similar to the following of behavioural norms, sacrifice and taking care of the sacred animals is an instrument for a human being to control, at least to some extent,

the omnipresent Power which has personified into a large number of master-spirits, clan and home deities, etc. The aim is to maintain one's place in the world, and thereby, the identity.

In the settlement where there are no reindeer, the traditional supernatural world is also without a more unapproachable reach and becomes more and more "Russian". The characteristic of the Nenets understanding that the entire natural and tangible environment is full of magic, energy, loses its importance in village conditions. For instance, fire and water, holding a very significant sacral meaning, are lacking such a meaning compared to what they have in a chum, in a flat with all conveniences – a flame coming from a gas cylinder and the water coming from the "wall" (tap) do not any more involve their intrinsic supernatural power (Kharyuchi 1998: 50–51).

Lately, within the framework of the so-called cultural awakening, certain religious rituals have begun to be practised, however they remain very distant from traditional religious behaviour. I have myself witnessed how an honoured Nenets writer feeds tiny statues of gods on his bedroom dressing table – altar, accompanied by his prayers, before he commences with his dinner. In the tundra, it is also customary to treat home deities with food from time to time, but this is done seldom and as a rule, in the framework of certain events. Likewise, it has been started to switch rituals which are traditionally held mainly in a limited circle of relatives, into the programme of mass events, arranged by public organisations and administrative structures. The organisers of such activities are usually from among the national intelligentsia, and they have to admit themselves that often, this has to do more with a performance than with a seriously taken religious rite (Kharyuchi 1998: 53).

I believe that under the changed lifestyle, it really is impossible to preserve the religion of the ancestors one-to-one, and the consequent result would be the formation of a new and adjusted religious behaviour and world cognition. To a great extent, this proceeds namely from the fact that in the world of the village Nenets, people lack the vital connection with the reindeer. As mentioned above, it is the dependence on this animal that determines the religious behaviour of a human being in the tundra, be it the observance of taboos or carrying

out of a sacrificial rite. I suppose that being a genuine Nenets is directly connected with proper religious behaviour and, therefore, living in the village for a long period, it is not possible to preserve the traditional self-concept. An important part of the world view is the vision regarding the locality and character of the supernatural power; and if this alters, the imagination of a human being of him/herself also changes.

### **Conclusion**

The role of the reindeer as the moulder of the Nenets identity is really immense. This is fully understandable when taking into account the importance of this animal in the everyday life of the Nenets – in the tundra, the reindeer provides people with food, outdoor clothes, lodging, means of transport and also with the possibility to communicate with supernatural powers. Or, as the Nenets themselves prefer to express this: “We live here (in the tundra) only by the grace of the reindeer.” The connection of the tundra Nenets’ identity with the reindeer becomes obvious in comparing them with their settled fellow native grouping. According to the Nenets who permanently live together with the reindeer, these people who live in villages are about to lose their “genuineness” – this part of the world view, developed during generations, which gives an answer to the question: who am I? For what reasons do I differ from others?

Naturally, the picture given in the article is very much one-sided, centring mainly on the reindeer herders’ vision of themselves and their surrounding world. However, at least the first generation of the village Nenets underline the certain superiority and purity of the tundra inhabitants, substantiated by their close connection with the reindeer. But the gaps that have emerged in the identity of the Nenets who have settled in the village, will, during the course of time, be filled by new concepts and the next generations will already see the world and themselves from a totally different viewpoint – inferiority proceeding from adaptational difficulties will be replaced by scornful superiority and the Nenets gods will totally disappear or alter beyond recognition.

Consequently, the people of the Nenets origin, living in the Yamal peninsula have several various identities and they are constantly changing due to social movement of an individual or a group. But one of the most significant criteria, on the basis of which the very Nenets determine themselves and on which the others see them, is their relationship with the reindeer.

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# **Adaptation to the Other: Jamb-to Nenets in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century<sup>1</sup>**

**Laur Vallikivi**

## **Introduction**

The Jamb-to Nenets nomadic reindeer pastoralists in the eastern part of the Bolshezemelskaya tundra in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug of Russia, hid themselves from the authorities all throughout the Soviet period. Ten years ago, this group of people started to look for their place in society as private cattle keeping was legalised in Russia. The Jamb-to Nenets came eye to eye with different challenges and problems. In a contact situation with the Russian world, this group suddenly faced the issues concerning new identities, religion and economy. The most intense and interesting contact, which occurred, was on the religious level. By now more than a quarter of the representatives of the Jamb-to Nenets group have been converted to Baptism. The following article gives a survey of the formation of the Jamb-to Nenets group and the influence of Baptism thereon.

The life of the Nenets in the European part of Russia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century has undergone great changes like that of most northern nomads in Russia. The policy of collectivisation and sedentarisation that started in the 1930s has by now developed into a situation where most Nenets have been alienated from the traditional nomadic way of life. During my first ethnographic fieldwork in Malozemelskaya tundra in the Nenets Autonomous Okrug (region), I came into contact with the Nenets living in the village as well as professional rein-

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deer herders in the tundra. Namely, since the 1960s–1970s the so-called exchange herding system has been established on the collective farms of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug. On each collective farm, there are a certain number of brigades of reindeer herders which, in their turn, have two shifts: while the herders of one shift are working in the tundra, the others occupy themselves with the so-called local branches of manufacturing. Women, children and old people live in the village permanently. Some women, often the wives of older herders, work in brigades as paid housekeepers. This is an extremely low-paid, hard job with low prestige. Most Nenets women work in the village cattle-shed, fur farm, school, kindergarten or some other establishment. Reindeer herding has become paid labour not comprising the whole family but only men who have to live in the tundra for one or two months separately from their family. Collectivisation and sedentarisation have totally changed the life of the Nenets. Russian-language education, military service and jobs in a multiethnic environment have brought about the Nenets' merger into the Soviet and Russian culture and created people with two cultures (see Balzer 1999: 143).

An essentially different picture is provided by the Jamb-to (Long Lake) Nenets, residing in the eastern part of the Bolshezemelskaya tundra, with whom I stayed during my fieldwork in December 2000. They roam about in the tundra with their privately owned reindeer herds all the year round and have never been members of a collective farm like the other European Nenets. There are 21 families with approximately 140 people altogether. In the summer, they migrate with their reindeer herds on seaside pastures between the villages of Amderma and Ust-Kara and, in the winter, in inland regions in the Korotaikha basin, which are rich in lichens. In addition to reindeer herding, hunting and fishing are also important, especially for those families who have smaller reindeer herds (50–200 reindeer). During the whole Soviet period, the Jamb-to Nenets generally followed the social and land-usage pattern that was common at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and even in the 1920s.

### Seeking Shelter in an Open Field

In the 1930s–1940s a different life began for the Jamb-to Nenets. Due to collectivisation, repression against shamans and *kulaks*, and compulsory school for children, the Nenets opposed the Soviet power, which found its most acute expression in the form of “meetings” called *mandalas* (1934, 1943). These uprisings resulted either in the imprisonment or death of the participants. Due to these events, a great number of Nenets families in the eastern part of the Bolshezemelskaya tundra decided to keep away from the collective farms as long as possible, although by the end of the 1930s most of the European Nenets had been forced to join them. The Jamb-to Nenets, however, managed to stay away from collectivisation, escaping to the foothills of the Polar Urals. In 1943, the most populous *mandala* of the region existed in the Polar Urals where the kinsmen of the Jamb-to Nenets also participated. It is known that in the Polar Urals the military killed one part and arrested the other of the participants in the *mandala*, and not one of them returned to the tundra (Bjørklund 1995: 77).

The Jamb-to Nenets who did not join any collective or state farms, became, according to Soviet laws, illegal people who herded their reindeer on the state lands and did not fulfil the tax, education or military obligations. The hidden way of life of the Jamb-to Nenets became possible due to three factors. First, they herded their reindeer mostly on pastures different from those of the collective farms, and moved along different routes. The second important factor was the economic activities of the collective farms on the territories of three administrative units (the Nenets Autonomous Okrug, the Komi Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Yamal-Nenets Autonomous Okrug), due to which the local authorities lacked any control over the reindeer herders and this made it possible for the Jamb-to Nenets to present themselves as reindeer herders from another administrative unit. Third, the natural conditions, especially the Urals, provided a good sheltering area for the Jamb-to Nenets.

Also, at the end of the Soviet period the local authorities ignored the “problem of private herders”. In 1983, the administration of the Nenets Autonomous Okrug learned about the existence of the Jamb-



to Nenets due to a typhoid epidemic inside the group. Some of the Jamb-to Nenets were hospitalised and all the members of the group were registered at the militia department. Nothing regarding this event was made public and the Jamb-to Nenets were free to live and use the state pastures as before (Tolkachev 1990).

As the Jamb-to Nenets escaped from collectivisation, they preserved, during the whole Soviet period the way of life, the characteristics of the European Nenets' small herders at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Krupnik 1976). During Soviet times, each Jamb-to family had fewer than 100 reindeer on average. People roamed about only in the open tundra and hunted polar foxes, sold them and, for the received money, bought foodstuff. Money was connected with a certain risk, although in reality it was possible to trade with state offices buying up hides, and the Jamb-to Nenets took their hides there. However, the illiterate Nenets were also deceived by the state merchants. During Soviet times, a few Jamb-to Nenets women gave birth to their children already in hospitals, not betraying the fact that they did not work on a collective farm. Some Nenets were also able to go to school. In one case, the parents themselves took their two sons to school for three years, in another two children of one family were taken to Naryan-Mar boarding school without the parents' consent in a helicopter which was collecting the children of the reindeer herders from the collective farm.

In spite of keeping away from the authorities, the Jamb-to Nenets communicated with their relatives and friends who had joined the collective farm, had been educated at school and knew Soviet life better. This was one of the factors which to a certain extent influenced the Jamb-to reindeer herders' judgements and inclined them to decide in favour of hospital births as well as work for state offices buying up hides. The Jamb-to Nenets' ideal was not an autarchical way of life, but survival in severe natural and economic conditions.

The European Nenets have had long-term economic contacts with the Russians and Komis. For hundreds of years, the Nenets have bought the imported "Russian goods" (flour, salt, sugar, tea, woollen cloth, guns, etc.), and these products had become indispensable for them in a certain way (Krupnik 1993: 92). Therefore, the Jamb-to

Nenets did not break contacts with settlements even in the Soviet time. However, there have always been those who have been more interested in the advantages of civilisation as well as those who have kept themselves as far as possible from them. So during the last decade, there have been innovations introduced by men who had received some education during the Soviet period and who were more active communicators with people outside the group. Nowadays, they also organise the religious life of part of the group as well as the economic relations with settlements.

### **Rapid Changes in the 1990s**

Due to the political changes at the beginning of the 1990s, the Jamb-to Nenets had an opportunity to start integration into Russian legal space and society. The first steps included the foundation of a reindeer herders' co-operative association (1993), obtaining passports, sending their children to boarding schools (beginning from 1995) and securing pensions and child allowances from the state. At the beginning of the 1990s, only a few Jamb-to Nenets could speak Russian. By now, most of the Jamb-to children go to school. Most of the members of the Jamb-to group consider it necessary to have a certain level of education. Usually, parents take their children away from school after the third or fourth grade, when they have acquired Russian as well as elementary skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Most Jamb-to Nenets regard the obligatory eight-year education as unnecessary. In addition to the comprehensive school, the Norwegian State has launched a travelling school project, which teaches the adult Nenets. However, a great number of the over-20-years-old Nenets cannot speak Russian. The Komi language is spoken better as the Nenets in the Bolshezemelskaya tundra have had long-term contacts with the Komis.

### **Adaptation to New Circumstances through Conversion**

Religion has become one of the means of integration. Beginning from 1994, the Baptist congregation in Vorkuta started to convert

Jamb-to Nenets to the Baptist faith. During the past six years over a quarter of the Jamb-to Nenets have been baptised.

In contrast to the Orthodox Church baptising campaign for the European Nenets in the 1820s, the Baptist mission has proceeded from the principle of a voluntary requirement in the conversion of the Jamb-to Nenets. In the years 1825–1830, when over 3,300 European Nenets were baptised in five years (Veniamin 1855: 114), the Nenets, under the influence of Orthodoxy, developed a number of syncretistic ideas. The Christian supernatural creatures were attributed with pagan features. St. Nicholas became the closest assistant to *Num*, the chief god (Lar 1998: 17) and *Num* himself became the all-seeing god displaying the features of Jehovah (Castrén 1967: 146–147). Some of the “pagan” gods were Christianised and Christian saints “paganised” simultaneously (cf. Stark-Arola 1999: 99). The Nenets’ world view and religion have been flexible, non-dogmatic and rather pragmatic throughout history. While in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the European Nenets’ relation to the activities of the Orthodox mission was shaped by the suppressive policy of the state power, then nowadays many Jamb-to Nenets are interested in a dialogue with the missionaries and accept the new religion voluntarily.

Baptism has essentially changed the everyday life of the Jamb-to group. The believers have close contacts with each other. Collective reading of the Bible has become essential: however, only a few Jamb-to Nenets who know Russian are able to do it. Also they spend much time together praying in their own language and singing songs from Russian hymnals. The significance of Russian in the conversion to Baptism helps the group members to manage better in the Russian-speaking world; however, the first generation believers face great difficulties in understanding religious texts. In spite of the fact, that outwardly, the conversion has been quite successful and substantial, even in the case of voluntary conversion there appear syncretistic opinions, i.e., the “old” and “new” religion are synthesised in the way it happened in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of Orthodoxy. It is obvious that it is possible to understand the “new” only if you proceed from the existing or “old”. For example, the Christian God, who in the Nenets lan-

guage is often called “*Num*”, merges the new and old layers of the religious world view. So, for example, the shaman’s assistant spirits (*мадебүйе*) as well as other spirits of nature have turned into demons who keep appearing but whose activities are interpreted mostly negatively.

The loans accepted in cultural contacts are not passive but active, i.e., deconstruction and reconstruction of new elements occur constantly, keeping in view one’s own aims (see Stewart, Shaw 1994: 20). For example, Jamb-to Baptists often discuss the motifs of cattle breeding appearing in the Old Testament and in the course of such discussions the existing values are re-interpreted. More often than not biblical texts cannot be translated into the Nenets language as the latter lacks synonymous equivalents for the words in the Bible. According to Yuri Lotman, in such situations people create “the relations of conditional equivalence”, which means that, in order to interpret something, you have to make use of the information and stock of symbols existing in culture and, adapting that, create a new concept (Lotman 1999: 62). The importance of the existing culture and means of subsistence is also referred to by the fact that in most prayers I heard from the Jamb-to Baptists, they asked for the wellbeing of their reindeer and, through that, also people. The central symbolic role of the reindeer has not disappeared from the world view of the Baptists, either, as the Jamb-to Nenets’ everyday life depends, above all, on reindeer (cf. Niglas 1997).

In the Soviet time, all Jamb-to Nenets sacrificed reindeer, although, according to my Baptist informant, no major joint sacrificial rites were performed in the last decades. Almost all people had during the Soviet time or have even now guardian spirits – housekeepers (*мяд’ нухуця*) and often also Orthodox icons in their house. The reconciliation of the traditional and Baptist world views can be illustrated by the following story, which I heard from my main informant Afanasi Valei (36). Last autumn some disagreements about pastures arose between him and another Jamb-to Baptist. Afanasi has about 300 reindeer and the other Nenets has approximately a thousand-head herd. The owner of the bigger herd partly used the other man’s pasture, which made the owner of the smaller herd angry. Once it

happened that a wolf tore the muzzle of the leader in the herd, and he thought that the wolf had been sent by revenge on him. The Nenets believe that if a wolf tears muzzle, somebody has wished bad luck to its owner. Af had also been visited by wolves but they had not touched deer. He considered this as a warning from God not to be against his fellow believer. My informant, who has been four years already, referred to the fact that the richer man been baptised only half a year ago, does not understand the religion and therefore he holds that he had sent the wolf leader.

Baptism has brought about the replacement of certain others. While the prohibitions related to the uncleanes have lost meaning (e.g., prohibition to step over men's and to walk around the conical tent), instead of them he for example, the prohibition to consume reindeer blood, sumption of blood has been prohibited on the threat of deists like to all Christians (3. Mo. 17: 10–14). The Fifth Moses, Deuteronomy says, "Only be sure that thou eat not for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh" (5. Mo. 12: 23). In the Nenets animistic religion, has strength and spirit (Golovnev 1995: 215). Reindeer blood is considered to be pure, is sacrificed to gods and spirits and eaten. Women's menstrual blood, which also possesses a power on the contrary, considered to be very dangerous: in communities that certain rules have to be followed. During my fieldwork Nenets-Baptists never drank fresh blood or ate raw meat from the frozen ones. The Nenets generally consider raw meat which I was able to testify to during my first fieldwork as the reindeer keepers on a collective farm. Also, fresh blood, the organs with vitamins necessary for surviving in the tundra (Krupnik 1976: 71; Golovnev 1995: 216). The Nenets-Baptists, on the contrary, were of the opinion that raw meat and blood were good for health. As an example, one Baptist claimed that his stomach had been eating too much raw meat when he was young, and drinking is now only symbolic (in the form of juice) and

only a few times a year at the Communion service, when missionaries come to the tundra.

The most probable motive for conversion is the fact that Baptism offers possibilities, after the long period of social isolation and insecurity, of a closer integration into a wider social system, which is expected to offer protection and benefit (see Hefner 1993: 30). The conversion to Baptism is also connected with the striving for increasing prestige inside the group. So, for example, Ilya Valei (aged 33), head of the Jamb-to co-operative association, who first received the new religion, is, regardless of his youth, one of the most authoritative members of the group. On the other hand, part of the Jamb-to Nenets are strongly against the new religion. It may be assumed that decisions upon new religious choices can be influenced by the deficient functioning of the traditional religion due to the disappearance of shamans and collective sacrificial rites owing to the long-term pressure from the Orthodox Church and Soviet power. After conversion to Baptism, it is mainly any kind of religious collective activities that have become essential.

In the case of a Christian mission, a difference has to be made as to who performs the conversion. It makes a great difference whether the conversion is performed by the Orthodox Church or Protestant sect. The Protestant mission has historically been more exclusive and anti-syncretistic than the Orthodox mission (cf. Black 1992: 102). This also becomes evident in the comparison of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Orthodox mission and the contemporary Baptist mission. While as a result of the not most efficient Orthodox mission a number of superficial syncretistic beliefs and rituals cropped up (see Zhuravsky 1911: 26; Khomich 1979), then Baptism with its greater strictness and clearer monotheist dogmatism is trying to change the converts' world view more thoroughly. In addition to the peculiarities of the sect, factors related to time and place should also be analysed. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the activity of the Orthodox Church was closely connected with the process of establishing power in the remote areas of Russia. Baptism as an independent religious sect does not bring the Nenets face to face with direct subordination and "civilisation". Here also lies the essential advantage of Baptism for the Nenets. At the

same time, Russification is furthered by the dissemination of the Word of God in Russian and the introduction of the Russian system of values.

### **Altering Social Relations**

Conversion is not a merely religious phenomenon, it also comprises social dimensions. Ethnological literature mostly pays attention to the symbolical aspects of conversion and its social sides remain less significant. The conversion of the Jamb-to Nenets to Baptist faith cannot be viewed separately from the Nenets' entire social model or the economic activities.

The Nenets' social relations have long been regulated by the norms related to clans. However, concerning the European Nenets, the clan has lost many of its earlier functions during the last few hundred years, such as collective management of summer pastures, holy places and cemeteries. But the clan's self-consciousness, exogamy and the institution of mutual assistance function among the Jamb-to Nenets to a certain extent even nowadays. Differently from most of the European Nenets, the Jamb-to Nenets have preserved their clan names as surnames. The most important is the fact that until now the clan operates as one identity level.

As the clan's economic role had diminished among the European Nenets, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, territorial communities became the main economic and social units. Inside these, in their turn, were *parmas* or camps dealing with collective herding and comprising 2–5 conical tents (Krupnik 1993: 93–94). One conical tent was usually inhabited by an extended family or, less frequently, by a nuclear family. *Parmas* usually consisted of relatives or kinsmen who co-operated and helped each other. This institution faded among the European Nenets in connection with collectivisation, but among the Jamb-to Nenets it has survived and been vital until now. The formation of a *parma* makes it possible for the owners of the smaller herds to share the labour force so that herds can be guarded in shifts, which enables them to go hunting and fishing as well. In connection with the foundation of private herders' co-

operative associations for each Jamb-to family, certain pastures have been registered; in reality, however, people proceed from the unwritten law and the groups inside the community stick together more.

One of these groups is formed by the Jamb-to Baptists who keep near each other when migrating. The Jamb-to Baptist communities are more and more united by the *parmas*, which are based on religious belonging. Also, the strategies of spouse selection have altered. The Baptists' requirement that the members of the congregation are allowed to marry only another Baptist, have essentially changed marriage possibilities and customs in the whole Jamb-to group. While, before the conversion to the Baptist faith, a marriage pattern had developed where the members of the Jamb-to clan married certain members of another Jamb-to clan, then, at present, the precondition for a marriage is the proper religious belonging. Baptists can marry only other Baptists. Considering the small number of Baptists in the group, they face great difficulties in their search for a spouse.

The non-Baptists also face diminishing marriage opportunities inside the group. This can be illustrated by the following case. Years ago, two families agreed that their children would get married. However, the bride's parents had recently been baptised. The bridegroom's parents, on the contrary, did not wish to be converted. The bridegroom faced a choice whether to be converted or not: this depended on the bride's decision to become a Baptist or not. The missionary asked the bridegroom why he did not have himself baptised although he came to the river where the others were undergoing this process. The bridegroom explained that his father had told him to come there and check whether his bride had come and had herself baptised, and then decide how to proceed. The bride did not turn up and the bridegroom abjured the sacrament. The missionary now asked the young man to make a choice whether he gave up his "pagan" bride or baptising. The bridegroom was ready to give up his bride and chose baptising. Actually, the bride had recently been baptised, which the young man did not know and which the missionary kept in secret from him. Finally the young people were able to get married. If the bridegroom's parents had forgone their agreement,



they should have given to the bride's parents two more reindeer in addition to those two they had given them when they agreed to the marriage proposal, in order to compensate for denouncing their agreement (Goncharov 2000: 4). Until nowadays, the parents' will has been a decisive factor in choosing the spouse and negotiations are conducted between parents, and they have to agree on the dowry and bridewealth. On the initiative of missionaries, the idea of choosing a partner on one's own has gained more and more support. In connection with that, the traditional attitude towards the functions of the bridewealth and dowry is undergoing changes in Jamb-to.

Another problem is caused by close family connections. In Jamb-to marrying close relatives from the mother's side is considered to be a growing problem, or in other words, the patrilineal marriage rule is fading and kinship reckoning is becoming bilateral. Usually, marrying a close relative from the mother's side has not been considered a problem by the Nenets as according to the patrilineal descent they belong to another clan (see Startsev 1930: 91; Kostikov 1930: 13; Khomich 1995: 171). Marrying somebody outside the group is problematic – women who come from a collective farm are not appreciated as they “booze and are not good at handicraft” (A. Valei, 36). From the Baptist point of view, spouses can be found only by enlarging the number of converts or by marrying one's own congregation member from town. However, the latter is too problematic due to great differences in the way of life as well as way of thinking.

The Jamb-to Nenets group is a good example of a process where, during a long period, people have adapted to outward political-economic and religious institutions and at the same time generally preserved their traditional way of life. In a contact situation, unfamiliar elements are not accepted passively but adapted actively and creatively. This adaptive process operates continuously by synthesising the “new” and the “old” and inventing “new traditions”. So the elements of the new religion and new social rules are used according to one's own interests, i.e., they are merged into the existing world picture so that the “new” is perceived as something valuable and useful.

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*Translated by Tiina Mällo*

# **Komi Nationalism and Orthodox Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

**Indrek Jääts**

## **Introduction**

The Komis are among the peoples who inhabit the Russian territory and whose nationalist movement has yet to be studied in detail. Researchers working with nationalist movements of the peoples of the former Russian Empire have limited themselves to relatively large ethnic groups, which had separate soviet republics during the Soviet period. Quite a large number of research papers on the Baltic peoples, Ukrainians, as well as Transcaucasians and even Central Asians have been published. On the autonomous republic level, ethnic groups have not yet been studied in detail, except only recently the Tatar people and Chechens, whose nationalist movements have been more powerful thus becoming the day's top news. Nationalist movements of the Finno-Ugrians within Russian territory are almost an untouched topic so far, probably because of the relatively weak and "safe" nature of the movements. Being a titular ethnic group in their republic, a number of ethnic minorities in Russia play an important part in the political life of their region, and the nationalist movements of these ethnic groups, including Komis, will be a far more crucial factor in the overall domestic policy of Russia in the near future. In the case of the central government deciding to cut national independence of regions or reduce ethnic diversity, for example or in the case Russia might collapse. In order to understand nationalism, we should know their history. A characteristic feature of nationalism is the use of old legends, symbols and texts, beliefs ingrained in history for the solution of their contemporary problems and tasks.

This paper addresses one of the central aspects of Komi nationalism – relationships between the Komi nationalist movement and Orthodox Christianity. As it turns out, the relationships used to be complex and controversial already when the Komi nationalist movement first emerged and has continued to be today.

### **Stephen of Perm**

The key figure of the Komi Orthodox Christianity is Stephen of Perm (also Stephan Hrap). Stephen came from Veliky Ustyug. He had a good religious education, and in addition to Komi and Russian languages that he had acquired probably in his childhood, he had a good knowledge of Old Slavonic and Greek. The general attitude is that, for the conversion of the Komi people to Christianity, Stephen invented an original Komi alphabet in about 1372 (the “Old-Permic alphabet”)<sup>1</sup> and translated some of the most common holy texts into the Komi language. In 1379, on his own initiative and supported by the great prince Dmitri Donskoy and the church administration of the Moscow principality, Stephen started his missionary work in the Zyryan Komis’ territories which formally belonged to the feudal republic of Novgorod. From the year 1380 on, he lived in Ust-Vym, where a monastery and the first churches were built. On the monastery’s estate, a well-known workshop for making icons was built, books were rewritten and a chronicle recorded. In the monastery school, local clergymen were trained for further missionary work. In 1383, the Perm Bishopric with its centre in Ust-Vym (subject to the Moscow metropolitan) was established to the south west of the present Republic of Komi. Stephen was appointed the first

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<sup>1</sup> The origin of the Komi alphabet is unclear. Rein Taagepera has stated Komis involved in merchant activities already had an alphabet or some sign system and Stephen just started to use it in his missionary work. However, because his superiors might have frowned on his use of a pagan alphabet to translate holy texts, he pretended to be its creator. Taagepera is perfectly logical in saying that if Komis did not have the alphabet before the missionary work, why did not Stephen use the Cyrillic alphabet, rather than invent a completely new one? (Taagepera 1999: 295). However, no record of the pre-Stephen Komi text has been preserved.

bishop. This marked the transition of the Komi Zyryans' lands to the Moscow principality, yet at first Stephen was quite on his own and his bishopric resembled a feudality with a considerably high degree of autonomy. In 1396, Stephen of Perm died, the successful conversion of Komis to Orthodox Christianity being completed by his successors (Gerassim, Pitirim, Iona etc.). In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Komi-Permyaks were also christianised (Lytkin 1889: 3–12; Kotov 1997b: 88). Then Orthodoxy moved on to northern and eastern areas together with Komi settlement. In 1492, with Filofei being bishop, the territory around Vologda, which was separated from Novgorod Bishopric, was united with the Perm Bishopric, and they formed the bishopric of Perm and Vologda. Bishops then preferred Vologda as a residence, instead of the remote and provincial Ust-Vym, and thus Komi areas became peripheral areas of the bishopric. Russian bishops then moved away from the Komi Orthodox tradition and let it fade gradually (Lytkin 1889: 15–16; Kotov 1997a: 90; Rogachev 1997: 198–199). The Orthodox Church in Komi became Russian and provided strong support for the authorities until the end of the tsarist period.

### **Komi Orthodox Tradition in 18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

The Komi Orthodox tradition created by Stephen of Perm did not disappear completely, however, but underwent a rebirth in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was carried out by sons of the Komi clergy, separated from their native environment from an early age and put to Russian church schools (seminaries) (in Ustyug during 1738–1786, in Vologda from the year 1786). In the 18<sup>th</sup> century and first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, clergymen were the only learned people among Komis. As a result of the translations of religious literature made by clergymen, a special Komi jargon full of borrowings from Russian developed (Lytkin 1889: VI–VI).<sup>2</sup> The use of the Komi lan-

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of that Komi jargon are the grammar of the Zyryan Komi, compiled by Filipp Kozlov, translation of the Gospel of Matthew into Zyryan Komi by priest A. Shergin, grammar of Zyryan Komi by P. I. Savvaitov, a well-known archaeologist and professor of the Vologda church seminary and translations of religious

guage by clergymen was based on the Komi Orthodox traditions created by Stephen of Perm. Without such a background, the Komi Orthodox church would have paid far less attention to the native language, as was the case in other eastern Finno-Ugrians. Already in 1843, the clergymen who were to be sent to Komi, received training in the Komi language in the Vologda seminar. In 1896, the Komi people had an official celebration of the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of Stephen of Perm, with special religious ceremonies in Komi and processions led by a cross and readings about his life (*Istoriya...* 1981: 94; Yekishev 1996: 85). St. Stephen was not, then, forgotten, the tradition created by him has continued to the present day. With the permission to hold church ceremonies in the Komi language given by the Orthodox clergy, they considered mainly religious aspects. However, because in the tsarist period, the Komi language could be published only by religious means – holy writings – this played an important role in the emergence of Komi-speaking intelligentsia and Komi professional culture.

### **Orthodoxy in the Komi Area at the End of the Tsarist Time**

The first all-Russian census of population held in 1897 showed that 98.5% of all Zyryan Komis living in the Russian Empire were orthodox, and 1.5% were old believers. Among the Komi-Permyaks, the percentage rates were 97.49 and 2.51 respectively (*Die Nationalitäten...* 1991: table 007). In tsarist Russia, Orthodox Christianity was the state religion and part of the official nationalism. The fact that the majority of Komi people were Orthodox also affected the position of Komis among the peoples of the empire and consequently the development of their nationalism. Thanks largely to the effective missionary work in the native language carried out by Stephen of Perm and his successors, Komi people were really converted to Orthodoxy relatively early. Orthodox Christianity was familiar to them and officially recognised. Unlike the Nenets, Khanty,

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works into Komi by A. Y. Popov. Indirectly, that tradition would also include the works of some other linguists (e.g. A. J. Sjögren, H. C. von der Gabelentz, M. A. Castrén, F. J. Wiedemann) on Komi language based on these authors' works.

s who were 'christianised' superficially and of conversion, there were no pagans among dominantly Orthodox and resembled Russians re fully integrated into the empire and contate. Unlike predominantly Lutheran Estonolic Polish people, Islamic Tatars or partly Siberian peoples, Komis did not have this claim against the central government. Also, discrimination against the Komi people. Their us confessions was just like Russians and mostly agrarian and settled ethnic groups that empire relatively early, such as Votians, epsians and Mordvins (see also Kappeler onal subdivision of Komis probably did not of their nationalism. There was no point of claims between Komis, the central govern- ead, the common Orthodox identity united

17 Orthodox churches and over 200 chapels of the present Republic of Komi. The Ortho- portant role in the educational system, was ity, started the temperance movement in the n was the centre of spiritual life; their priests tation in the village community. By the end ynasties of Komi Orthodox priests had been ox clergy had a significant impact upon the lligentsia (Malkova 1996: 154; Rogachev nsus showed that, among the Zyryan Komis *blast*, the number of people from the clergy respective figure among the Zyryan Komis *blast* was 461 (0.4%). The latter figure corre- e statistics of the empire. Among Komi- re were practically no persons from that es- hen who were most probably wives of Rus- t... I: table XXIV; VII: table XXIV; X: table V). Komi-Permyaks were at the edge of the



Komi Orthodox tradition created by Stephen of Perm, they did not have their own clergy and the formation of their native intelligentsia was also delayed.

We might conclude that Orthodox Christianity has been a controversial issue if Komi nationalism is considered. On the one hand, mostly Orthodox Komis were well integrated into, and loyal to the Russian Empire. Komi peasants were patriots of Russia and believed in the benevolent tsar. On the other hand, the Komi native Orthodox tradition, created by Stephen of Perm, provided the opportunity for the emergence of Komi intelligentsia and Komi professional culture and consequently for the Komi national movement. There had been no violation of religious freedom of Komis, yet they faced some discrimination based on estate and language in the first place, the controversy that the emerging Komi intelligentsia made people aware of and expressed this through nationalism.

### **Komi Nationalist Movement**

The ultimate aim of the nationalist movement is the nation state and its flourishing (Gellner 1994: 2221, 2227). The Komi national movement started in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was relatively early compared to other eastern Finno-Ugrians. This is an example of nationalism more typical for Central and Eastern Europe. Unlike the peoples with a long history, Komis did not have the tradition or experience of statehood – they developed the nation on a cultural basis, in particular language and elements of local folk-culture as the only sources for that. Nation-state, or at the very least, political autonomy appeared as a mirage in the future and thus the first nationalist leaders did not even think of them seriously. The primary purpose was to create a nation that would then make the effort to have its own state. Until the end of the tsarist period, Komis remained on a level where a few nationalist intellectuals dealt with issues such as native language, folklore and history and were sympathetic towards their suffering people, trying to “awake” them and provide them with cultural enlightenment without much success (see Hroch 1968: 24–

26). Georgi Lytkin, Ivan Kuratov and Kallistrat Zhakov were the most remarkable of such nationalistically minded intellectuals.

During that period, Komis were predominantly peasants. The 1897 census showed that only about 14% of all Zyryan Komis and 6% of Komi-Permyaks were literate (*Pervaya...* I: table XV; VII: table XV; X: table XV; XXXI: table XV). School education was in Russian, no periodicals were published in Komi, and the existence of the Komi written word was possible only in religious writing.

In order to go further into the issue of the relationships between Komi nationalism and Orthodox Christianity, I will discuss the attitudes of the three most outstanding Komi nationalists to Orthodoxy.

### Georgi Lytkin (1835–1907)

was the son of a wealthy Komi merchant who went bankrupt. He was among the first Komis to receive secular education from the beginning. In 1859, he graduated from the St. Petersburg University. Lytkin outlined Komi cultural history with a very comprehensive book “Komi Area During Perm Bishops and the Komi Language”. He was famous as a translator of holy texts into the Komi language, as a linguist and promoter of the Komi literary language (see Jäätis 2000a: 101–120). It is unclear, however, how Orthodox he was – his wife was Protestant. At the beginning of the 1860s, he and his wife were *narodniks* – members of the 19<sup>th</sup> century socialist movement – in St. Petersburg and followers of Chernyshevsky. Being a Komi nationalist, Lytkin most probably made use of the only channel opened up to the Komi written word – religious writing – in order to develop Komi writing and literature. Lytkin continued the tradition of the Komi Orthodoxy established by Stephen of Perm and timed his translations of holy writings published with government support to coincide with the dates connected with St. Stephen<sup>3</sup>. Yet, Lytkin op-

<sup>3</sup> In 1883, on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Perm Bishopric, Lytkin published a scientific paper “The Five-Hundredth Anniversary of Komi”, published in the December issue of the publication of the Ministry of Education *Журнал Министерства Народного Просвещения*. Lytkin was able to attract the attention of Grand Duchess Aleksandra Yossifovna to his translations of religious writings, followed by

posed the traditional Komi writing created by his contemporary clergymen, accusing it of the abundance of Russian text. He defended the idea of the pure Komi language, referring to the translations made by Stephen. Possibly Lytkin, being a nationalist, attempted to remove Stephen from the contemporary Orthodox Church.<sup>4</sup> He admired and respected St. Stephen. Lytkin supported the idea that Stephen was, at least, partly of Komi origin, and that the apostle of Komis was also the creator of the Komi alphabet and writing (Lytkin 1889: 5, 14, 61–62). Lytkin then elevated Stephen to the status of a national hero and a prime example to himself. Lytkin has worked hard to elevate the Komi literary language, known as early as from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, to a position in national pride. He might even think about the possibility of the national Komi Orthodox church, as there were national Orthodox churches in Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania. The titles of the translations made by Lytkin leave the reader with the impression that he had devoted his whole life to Orthodoxy. A more detailed examination of Lytkin's life revealed that, for him, religious writing was only a means he used to achieve nationalist aims. He found it useful, after all, that Komi peasants received Orthodox teaching in their native language.

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favour with K. P. Pobedonostsev, the chief prosecutor of the General Synod of Russia and the blessing of the General Synod. On the same year, also the parallel edition of Old Slavonic and Komi of the Divine Liturgy by the Yoann Zlatoust was published. To mark the five hundred year anniversary of Komi people's Christianisation and the unification of the Vychegda-Syssola area with Moscow, the Empress Maria Feodorovna of Russia demanded that 200 copies of the book should be sent in her name to Komi schools in Vologda, Arkhangel, Perm and Vyatka *guberniyas* (Lytkin 1889: II–III). In 1896, I. D. Delyanov, Minister of Education, sent Lytkin, as a deserving person of the Komi matters, to participate in the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Stephen of Perm (Zorgenfrei 1927: 49). Lytkin's personal opinion was that the remains of Stephen should be taken back home and buried in the St. Stephen cathedral in Ust-Syssolsk (Lytkin 1889: 13, 40).

<sup>4</sup> The counterattack by contemporary clergymen or "seminarists" as Lytkin called them followed (see for example *Zhurnal...* 1884: 91–94; *Vologodskiya...* 1901: 484–489; 1904: 126–138).

### Ivan Kuratov (1839–1875)

was the great poet of the Komi people, who has had the reputation of being a founder of Komi literature in Soviet literary criticism since World War II. Born the son of a deacon, he attended the Yarensk church school and Vologda church seminary. As with many of his contemporaries, with a similar educational background and full of high ideals (Nikolai Chernyshevsky and Nikolai Dobrolybov being the most prominent of them), he was disappointed in the official church and government authorities already during his school years. Because of overall inequality and poverty around him, he was also disappointed in God and turned away from a God who let that happen (Berdyayev 1990: 41–42). Kuratov became an intellectual sharpening many ideas of the *narodniks*. He believed his mission was to serve his suffering people and offer enlightenment, the aims that did not coincide with loyalty to official Orthodoxy (Feodorova 1980: 34–38). During the Soviet period, Komi literary critics have searched and found atheist and anti-clerical motifs in his poems.<sup>5</sup> In his works, he used elements of Komi pagan folklore, planning an epic poem “*Yag mort*” and the poem about Pam, a Komi animist priest and opponent of St. Stephen (Mikushev, Rochev & Chistalev 1979: 22; Martynov 1988: 60, 78, 88). Being close to the *narodniks*, Kuratov saw literature as a means to awaken the masses and fight for the improvement of their standards of living. He then criticised the sentimental and religious attitudes in the verses by P. Rasputin, a Komi writer from the clergy. Kuratov considered the Orthodox Church to be an obstacle to further progress. It is unclear, however, whether he was a convinced atheist. After graduation from the seminary in 1860, Kuratov went to study at the ecclesiastical academy in Moscow, although he was expelled from there soon after because of his involvement in a student movement (Feodorova 1980: 39). He recognised the positive impact of the 14<sup>th</sup>-century Komi’s conversion to Russian Orthodoxy. During the Vologda seminary period, trying to disguise their content, Kuratov wrote his poems in the Komi al-

<sup>5</sup> The poems “To me, listen, dyak” (1857), “Oh my song” (1860), “When I was reading the Bible” (1860) (Martynov 1988: 60).

phabet created by St. Stephen (Feodorova 1980: 34). Waiting in vain for the publication of his works in the Komi language, Kuratov also planned to use the translations of religious literature into Komi to promote the Komi literary language as Lytkin did. Kuratov has translated some excerpts of the Gospel of Luke into Komi (Tiraspol'sky 1983: 120; Vaneyev 1989: 16).

### **Kallistrat Zhakov (1866–1926)**

was active in Komi public life, as a philosopher, researcher, and writer (see Jääts 2000b: 1267–1295). His father was a peasant handicraftsman, icon painter, close to clergy. Zhakov had a secular education. At the Vologda county school, he showed his liberal attitudes and was expelled from school for expressing atheist views. Yet his aspirations took him to the Zaozersk monastic school in Vologda *guberniya*, from where he was also expelled because of his often-conflicting nature and liberal attitudes (Turkin 1990: 5–45; Zherebtsov 1990: 26–41; Mikushev 1993: 5–25). Apparently, Zhakov was not in conflict with the religion as such but with the official Russian Orthodoxy and the narrow-minded clergymen. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he developed a new philosophical-religious teaching called “limitism”, according to which God or Primary Potential is the same for everybody, although known by different names and forms. In his religious beliefs, Indian religions and philosophies, as well as the teaching of Leo Tolstoy influenced Zhakov (Belokon 1988: 112–124; Zherebtsov 1990: 26–41; Mikushev 1993: 5–25; Muravyev 1993: 93–96). It is obvious his teaching did not fit in the existing framework of the Russian Orthodox Church. Zhakov saw his contemporary Orthodox Church as oppressive, idealising in his predominantly Russian and highly romantic writings the ancient pagan period of Komis, the golden age when everybody was living in harmony with Nature and the whole of the Universe, before their conversion to Russian Orthodoxy. Among other issues, Zhakov also addresses the well-known conflict between St. Stephen and Pam, the leader of pagan Komi people. Yet unlike Lytkin, Zhakov is thoroughly in favour of Pam (Demin 1993: 11; Mikushev 1993: 18–21).

Pam, the clever man, pagan priest, with fine story-telling skills, poet and philosopher – is among Zhakov's most popular personalities. Another work by him idealising the pagan ancient period is the epic poem "Biarmia" (1916). Based upon Komi mythology and folklore, the poem romanticises Biarmia, a powerful and wealthy Komi state of merchants on the lower course of the North-Dvina River in the early Middle Ages. He also had, among other good characters, *sotnik* Pan, who resisted Russian Orthodox mission (Demin 1993: 11; Korolev 1993: 83–84). Apparently, this literary epic reflects the yearning of Komi nationalists for a glorious and prestigious history and independent state tradition.

## Conclusion

As we can see from the above, there is a major difference (and controversy) of opinion about Russian Orthodoxy among these three Komi nationalist intellectuals. They do not represent any common attitude toward Orthodoxy, all of them having a unique and strong personality. During the Tsarist period, Komi nationalism was only, in its initial phase, trying to find its way. Each young nationalist grouping needs its own respectable narrative of history. Unlike most Finno-Ugric peoples, the Komis had their alphabet as early as the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the fact that undoubtedly enhanced the self-pride and self-esteem of Komi intellectuals and, through their activity and propaganda, common Komis as well. The Komi language Orthodox tradition was revived by Georgi Lytkin who considered the second half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century to be the golden age of Komi history (Annus 2000: 88–95). This golden age of St. Stephen was destroyed by his Russian successors as Perm bishops, whose negligence toward the Komi alphabet let it die. Stephen of Perm was the main national hero for Lytkin, who considered himself to be a follower of Stephen's work and acted for the restoration of the golden age. Kallistrat Zhakov, on the other hand, saw the Biarmia state of merchants as the golden age of Komi history when people lived in harmony with Nature and with the whole Universe. Orthodox Russian missionaries from Moscow destroyed this golden age. For Zhakov, Stephen was the negative

character, he idealised the pagan Pam, the wise man. Ivan Kuratov, however, has not expressed his clear preferences, being more of an atheist compared to the other two. His writings include evaluation of both paganism and Komi language Orthodox tradition created by St. Stephen.

Which relations have been there between the Komi nationalism and Orthodoxy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? In the 1920s, as with much other nationalism, the Komi nationalism displayed itself in full bloom, while Orthodoxy was in disgrace and a target of political repression – the clergy as a social class was destroyed. From the 1930s onwards, the Komi nationalism and the Orthodoxy were both in disgrace. The 1990s marked the rehabilitation of Orthodoxy and release of political pressure on Komi nationalism, yet the relations between the two seems to be distant. Although the Syktyvkar and Vorkuta Bishopric covering the whole Republic of Komi was established, it remained just a part of the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian is used as the only language. Stephen of Perm won admiration and respect again. In 1996, the 600<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death was celebrated. In Ust-Vym, centre of his missionary work, churches have been renovated. The book “Komi Area during Perm Bishops and the Komi Language” by G. Lytkin was published again. It is still unclear whether Stephen is considered to be rather a Russian missionary or an apostle of the Komis. It is still an open question whether to include Komi Orthodox tradition created by St. Stephen to the Komi nationalist narrative or cast it aside and develop the Komi national identity on paganism.

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*Translated by Epp Uustalu*

# **Changed Rural Society – Changed Lifestyle? The Example of Võru County, Estonia**

**Monika Rauba**

Since the second half of the 1980s, Estonian rural society has been through radical changes that have prompted rapid reaction, new attitudes and, very often, a new identity among people. The changing of jobs, especially considering physical aspects (i.e. from farms to settlements and towns) caused by the reorganisation and dissolution of collective farms, also altered the pattern of people's activities, such as family, household and leisure. These changes have become the key factor of sociological studies, and in theory, the overall changes in lifestyle can also be witnessed.

Considering radical changes in Estonian rural society since the 1980s, two events are usually highlighted: the 1989 Farm Act that legalised (private) farms and the 1992 agricultural reform which dissolved or else reorganised kolkhozes and sovkhozes – the previous employers in rural areas. It would be relatively easy then to jump to conclusions about the changes in rural people's lifestyle caused by the above factors (see Kelam 1993; Kahk & Abrahams 1994). A closer look at the subject area might reveal, however, that this statement is not true.

This paper is based on the observations made during fieldwork trips<sup>1</sup> to Võru County between 1998–2000, first for a diploma thesis and then for the master's thesis. The purpose of the theses was to trace the formation of the new social class – the farmers at the end of

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<sup>1</sup> The interviews have been recorded and transcribed by this author and the rights belong to her.

the 1980s and in the 1990s. The fieldwork trips and later on the listening to interviews, however, led me to the “heretical question” about how much of a courageous stand we can take, after all is considered, on the changed lifestyle among rural people. It is impossible to arrive at any firm conclusions on the basis of the available data collected during the fieldwork trips in the districts of Sõmerpalu and Antsla, Võru County, these having been carried out during the last three years. For this, the fieldwork lasted for too short a period. Also, conclusions can be drawn on the basis of my interviewees’ comments, the twenty registered farmers or sole proprietors. Therefore, my purpose is to highlight some of the outcome from my research and, on the basis of that, warn about the use of the concepts *way of life* and *changed lifestyle in rural areas*, widely used in the media.

To take this subject further, different aspects of the concept *way of life* should firstly be considered. Sociologists have provided both narrow and broad definitions of the concept. The narrow definition says that it is a system of everyday activities, a division of activity between different areas of activity and particular activities. According to the broader approach, the way of life is seen as a network of connections between living conditions, the range of activities and the way of thinking. This then also involves people’s attitudes to their activities, their conceptions, values and aspirations. The main factors affecting the way of life are living conditions and vital activity on the one hand, and conceptions, aspirations and orientations on the other (Hion, Lauristin & Vihalemm 1988: 7).

Jeja Pekka Roos, a Finnish sociologist has also provided a broader concept of the way of life, seeing it as a specific combination of 1) living conditions; 2) everyday activities (including interaction); 3) a way of thinking (1983: 39).

In Estonia, lifestyle studies carried out so far have involved the narrow approach involving only the so-called objective characteristics (*Elulaad ja elukeskkond* (Lifestyle and Home Environment) 1981; Hion, Lauristin & Vihalemm 1988. *Meie muutuv elulaad* (Our Changing Lifestyle)). Considering sociological methodology, the quantitative assessment approach of the studies is comprehensible; however, it may prove superficial in the research of cultural patterns.

This paper relies upon the broader approach of lifestyle, suggested by J. P. Roos, and a claim made by Orvar Löfgren, saying: “There is always a danger that studies of contemporary cultural changes remain superficial when new attitudes, styles, cultural forms are interpreted as a radical change of values and attitude patterns. We can use new things, new fashion and new attitudes, yet very often the underlying structures of culture are likely to persist behind the changing surface” (Löfgren 1981: 27).

### **Private Households as Illegal Farmsteads**

The positive attitude of rural people towards the emerging farming in the 1980s was not totally unexpected. All interviewees with a rural background already had their private gardening and husbandry during the period of collective farming.<sup>2</sup> Individual allotments, as they were called, have always been a distinctive feature of collective farms. Workers in the sovkhoses or kolkhozes received permission for individual garden and farm work in return for compulsory work in the state farms (0.6 hectares of land as a rule). They were allowed to keep a cow, heifer, pig and piglets, sheep and poultry. This type of private farming was of particular significance alongside state farms (Misiunas & Taagepera 1998: 216).

*We had cows already when there were no farms and this was not allowed really. Then we had a cow-house full of animals, 17 cows and 20 sheep, and I even do not remember how many pigs we had (a man, born in 1948).*

*... it is of course that we used to earn extra money besides regular jobs [in the kolkhoz] /---/, this was enough for everything we needed /---/. We got initial investment [for the farm] from markets in Russia. We sold all kinds of vegetables and meat. I traded at the markets of Jõhvi and Pechory, as well as Pskov. /---/ Then we built the buildings and bought a car (a woman, born in 1943).*

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<sup>2</sup> Collective farms involve both kolkhozes and sovkhoses. In this context, the two need not be differentiated.

Despite the small standard size of private allotments, they made a significant contribution to the overall agricultural production. According to statistics, private allotments provided as much as 42.5% of the 1969 total agricultural production for marketing. In some products, the production rate of private allotments was even higher than the public sector. 90% of wool and 85% of fruit and berries, for example, were produced by the private sector (Pajo, Tamm & Teinberg 1994: 3–4).

The issue concerning private households has been a relatively sensitive issue throughout the period of Soviet collective farms. This type of ownership was proclaimed as a leftover from the old traditional society, which should be gradually eliminated. On the other hand, as it also comes out in the interviews, private households were allowed, but their size depended on the attitude of a particular collective farm administration and their interpretation of laws.

*In a kolkhoz, you worked in the public sector, and this was definitely the most essential activity you were allowed to consider. And this private thing, you were not allowed to have it at all. I remember, that when I had to carry out censuses of population, a teacher did not dare say she had a cow in the presence of a school principal. Karli went to school then, it was in 1988, a parents' meeting, and that it principal suggested that we should decrease the amount of animals and deal with our children instead. Then he was not saying that it was prohibited to keep animals, but he thought that it was not recommended (a woman, born in 1945).*

By the mid-1980s, such households had increased in size, and had a better status if legal aspects are considered (*Eesti NSV maakodeks* (Land Code). 1983). During the collective farming period, if possible, a wife stayed at home in many families to look after the private household, while men continued working for state-owned farms. At the end of the 1980s, there was still a legal vacuum, when the previous acts no longer fitted adequately into the particular situation and new acts, meant to fill the role, were neither yet passed nor were they working. Interpretation of laws fell exclusively within the competence of local authorities.

*I was the first of us to [quit my job and] stay home /---/, my husband continued working in a collective farm (a woman, born in 1943).*

*When my husband quit his job, he got an invitation from the militia, in which they demanded that he should stop his parasitic and vagrant way of life /---/. A woman, then, was allowed to stay home, but not a man. This was immediately before the singing revolution. If he did not return to work within two months, they would have taken him to prison. Despite this many people did not go to work around here, and nothing happened really (a woman, born in 1950).*

This type of farm, capable of affording a living, provided a necessary starting point for the official registration of a farm. The attitudes of farmers towards their households did not undergo fundamental changes with the fact of the foundation of a farm. As a general rule, people quit their jobs in state farms after the creation of private farms. On the other hand, their households were already, in fact, more important to them in their heart of hearts than when working in collective farms, and this attitude started to expand more rapidly. Also, people were able to profit from their significant experience about entrepreneurial ability, responsibility, farming and management from their previous household practice. Therefore, reliance upon clear-cut statements, e.g. how a normal wage earner became a decision-maker in his own farm, should be critical. Despite the fact that indicative evidence changed, economic prerequisites, and ways of life, for the establishment of farms had existed before. Considering the attitudes and the way of life of my interviewees, no radical changes in their lives can be reported.

The farm-oriented attitude was also evident among the people who had not established their own farm nor become sole proprietors by now. The network of collective farms was also there and ensured people's safety, then being supplemented by extending private households. The decision to found a private farm was postponed, yet the government by Prime Minister Mr Edgar Savisaar (1990–1992) provided the most favourable conditions for the creation of private farms. *During this period, farmers were in a favoured status*, said an informant, born in 1947. This man described how he obtained a bank

loan with a favourable interest rate, a cheap tractor and fertilisers at a minimum cost, almost for nothing. The 1992 monetary reform, abandoning the subsidy program for farmers and a sharp rise in the cost of living deferred the decision of many people to set up their own farms in the uncertain future.<sup>3</sup>

### **Sole Proprietor or *Weird Farmer***

Next, I will look into the notion *weird farmer*. With the compulsory establishment of collective farms and proletarianisation of farmers, the so-called weird class was created (Lõo 1995), a representative of which can be called the *weird farmer*. This is a kind of economically active rural person, being a worker, owner and host in one person, whereas in different places, at different times and so on, those different activities condition and interfere with each other. Being a full-time worker in a collective farm, the *weird farmer* was a hardened example of a factory worker whose pragmatic attitude can be exemplified by the following rule of social exchange: “as the wages, so the work”. He was a host and owner in his extra workplace at home in his farm to make a living (Lõo 1995: 45).

The above pattern is also there in the current situation of farming in Estonia. With the abolition of the Farm Act at the beginning of 1991, also the term *farmer* disappeared from the official language – sole proprietor replaced this. At present, farmers can choose between different forms of business. And the situation is that most of my informants reported that their main sources of income are outside farming (e.g. trade on wood and other products, tourism and services).

*... in the tax office, I am registered as a sole proprietor. This guarantees a wider range of activity areas, and we specified our activity*

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<sup>3</sup> Another aspect is connected with the attitude of farmers towards the system of collective farms. According to statistics, in 1990, about 60% of rural people were in favor of the maintenance of collective farms (Pajo, Tamm & Teinberg 1994: 13; Alanen 2000: 2264). A clever farmer saw that it would be easier to manage a farm if collective farms were maintained, so he would also get some support from there and should not, for example buy the whole set of machines.

*area as production of agricultural products. In the commercial register, one can write whatever activity areas, either production of berries, car repair or keeping a shop. I, for example could set up a saw-frame in the yard, or become a dealer. In the commercial register, my fields of activities are production, processing and sale of agricultural products, sale of wood, agricultural services, transport within the Republic of Estonia, production of handicraft pieces /---/. When I began to file myself in the commercial register, I was recommended in the Farmers' Federation to write all down, everything I have on my mind. When the collective farm was dissolved /---/, a former zoo-technician set up a studio for making chip-boards here /---/ A former head veterinary surgeon has got a vet shop now /---/ (a woman, born in 1943).*

Farmers have not then had the chance to concentrate only on farming under the present-day free farming circumstances. In many families, at least one member works outside the private farm. As with the *weird farmer* of the Soviet period, the present day farmer is, also in many cases, a worker outside his farm and an owner within his farm. The workplace outside the farm is inevitable for the development of the farm, however, it also interferes with farm management and working the farm at full capacity.

### **Winners and Losers in the Estonian Rural Society**

Another problem affecting farming is that of the farmer as an employer. The local importance of the farmer as an employer has not increased much after the dissolution of collective farms. Despite the fact that the 1989 Farm Act legalised the hiring of people to work for a private person (RT 39, 1989: 853), the economic activity of most farms is based on the work of their family members. None of the informants had a legally binding contract of employment with their employees. For seasonal and other urgent works, in most cases, farmers ask for their relatives and acquaintances sometimes also their neighbours based on mutual benefit, to help them. The farmers who have lived in a village and worked for a collective farm throughout their lives, as a rule were against hiring a workforce for their



farms. In some cases, this appeared in different contexts. There are a number of reasons why the system of farmhands has not developed and does not function effectively in Estonia, and why people are not always eager to talk about that, e.g.:

*... there are the people who would not be able to find a job for themselves and who have to be taken to work somewhere. /---/ Those who have stayed in the countryside and who could possibly come to work for you are all rotten or depraved. And when I have to look after them all the time and tell them what they have got to do, I rather do not want anyone (a woman, born in 1943).*

Such people, known as “anti-social people”, are very often the only available labour force in rural areas. *More enterprising people have their own farms and have a lot of work to keep them busy (a woman, born in 1943). With such people, one should always expect heavy drinking sessions, and one can never be quite sure if they would come to work the next day or not (a man, born in 1946).* As one of the hostesses (born in 1950) told us, once when they went to see their relatives for one day and arrived home in the evening, their cows were not milked yet, a tractor on its side, and the farmhand hired for one day was very drunk.

From the employee’s point of view, one of the negative aspects of becoming a farmhand is the lack of social security guarantees. Even if a farmer has got enough money to pay for particular jobs, however, when people are hired on a legal basis, also social security tax and sick fund payments have to be paid for them. And such extra expenses very often impede reaching an agreement.

*The day before yesterday /---/ I went to a farm designed for tourists, and a host complained there was no workforce /---/. The front of a house needs to be painted, but there is no labour force, although they walk around here, nothing to do really /---/ this is very simple /---/ farmers are prepared to pay workers, but not hire them on an official basis because of social security taxes /---/. I would help a good friend of mine, but not as a farmhand – as they were use to be called – on a permanent basis (a man, born in 1954).*

The above statement reveals the third problem related to farm workers. For most informants, the topic of hired labour was among the most sensitive issues. Most farmers stated they use a hired workforce at random, they were reluctant to talk about that, as if feeling guilty. They repeatedly stressed that they did not have a farm-hand as such, *but sometimes people come to help us* (a man, born in 1949). This embarrassment might be caused by the difficulties to set up the employer-employee relationship after the equal status in a kolkhoz.

People faced nearly the same situation during the former period of major reorganisation of rural life. Paul Hinnov has recalled that during the first years of kolkhozes, especially former farmers “could not get used to being ordered, managed, admonished by someone else, or even to receiving threats of violence from others, especially their neighbours” (Hinnov 1999: 41).

Hired labour was used without any embarrassment or inconvenience by the informants who lived in towns during the Soviet period before the restoration of their forefathers’ farms.

Lastly, the term *farmhand* has a relatively negative connotation in the present-day rural society. Being a farmhand would be one of the most humiliating moments in someone’s life. As a villager put it:

*When unemployed, you are used to whine at a local authority and get hardly sufficient social security benefits, but you are the boss of your own life after all. Becoming a farmhand in your neighbour’s farm, however, indicates that you are not able to manage your own life any longer, and people would think of you as someone else’s farmhand, a loser who has damaged his reputation among villagers* (a man, born in 1950).

The above does not imply the lack of hired labour in rural areas, however. In order to make the *farmer-farmhand* contract look more respectable for both parties; it is solved through payment. As with collective farms, salary is often in kind or is based on mutual benefit or support, thus avoiding the employer-employee (which equals the *winner-loser*) relationship.

## Post-Figural Culture versus Pre-Figural Culture

The fourth topic of discussion involves the development of private farms in the rapidly changing very open information society. It is interesting to examine the attitude to a farm as a topic in the history of farms. The idea of the 1989 Farm Act was the restoration of the traditional farmer lifestyle (RT 39, 1989: 844). In these years, a large number of non-profitable farms were set up, if economic aspects are considered.

*... in these years, you had a farm when you had any household – be it beds for vegetables or a sheep. Even Miss Võru County was a farmer – she had a sheep, a dog, and a cat. The calculation was based on the assumption that next year, there would be two sheep, two dogs /---/ (a man, born in 1948).*

People with an urban background, full of enthusiasm, started the restoration of their (grand) parents' farms, most likely for historical value only. An artist who went to live in the countryside: "The farm has been restored as it used to be in my parents' lifetime. A hand mill, weaving looms, spring-carriage, sleigh, as well as many tools and things in my farm come from previous times" (weekly *Maaleht* 1990, 13 Dec.).

In the second half of the 1990s, the overall cultural identity changed in Estonia, yearning for the pre-war Estonian Republic weakened (Ruutsoo 1997: 89; Suni 1998). Being a production unit, a small farm was then seen as non-profitable and non-competitive in the free market situation (Kaubi 1999: 818–819). A contemporary farm, as a specialised production unit using modern technology, became top of the agenda. Because new farmers had to make, in new circumstances, the decisions about production and financial matters, different training courses and seminars in agriculture and accounting were organised for this purpose. Although people found their previous professional experiences in a collective farm to be extremely useful, the answers revealed the attitude that *in my age, knowledge is a surprise no more* (a man, born in 1948). Despite the availability of consulting services and diverse courses and seminars arranged, there is no high demand for them (not to say they are unpopular) among rural people. During my first fieldwork trip, I learnt that only two

informants-farmers had attended any of the seminars. More often people have turned to consulting services on agricultural orientation advice for their farms, yet they have a kind of grudge against them, too.

... *when you want to get some advice really, you should go to an old man who has a lot of experiences in it. There [consulting services] was a young woman, just having received her university degree and without any practical experience at all !--! I asked her something, she took a book, page this and that, and read something out. Then I realised that was no use (a man, born in 1948).*

The above respondent confirms the overall attitude towards consulting services, including the kind of advice they provide and people working there. The man took the attitude because of the age and urban background of the adviser. An important point here is the value system of the society preceding the information society, which valued tradition with elder society members being the main information and tradition carriers (a feature of post-figural culture). This is in striking contrast to the information society situation where new information is transmitted and training carried out by people of the same age or even younger than people trained by them (a feature of pre-figural culture). Therefore, such a way of thinking does not represent any value for most respondents.

For most blue-collar rural workers, personal and work experiences are far more important aspects for obtaining knowledge and social skills, compared to written sources and economic analyses. They have obtained experience, useful in everyday life, by observation of others or holding a piece of wood in their childhood and continued with other work assuming more responsibility, rather than by participating in seminars. *Ergo*, the criterion of truth is practice.

These are only a few of the fieldwork experiences involving rural lifestyles. It depends on a particular group of people, subject area and scientific method, however, such radical changes which people have undergone. Changes in lifestyle, new attitudes and values remind me of a countryman, Taavi, in the short story "*Laadaliset*" ("Countrymen at a fair") by Ervin Õunapuu. Despite the fact that he rejected all kinds of new ideas and, at that time, also thought a shop assistant

wanted to make a fool of him, he bought “a truly magic device with which one can talk over long distances”. He took it from a pile of hay and placed it on a bench indoors. He pressed the buttons on it, put it close to his ear – “he knew Liisa was in the stall watering sheep, and thought it would be nice to tell her that the weather was nice outside and he is back home from the village of Lihula together with a new talking machine...”

During my fieldwork, I have come across a large number of rural people, of the Taavi type, who have new trends in their behaviour but whose way of thinking has not undergone any major changes. Therefore, most changes so far have been only on the surface, involving the outside surface. As a general rule, the people’s way of life is heavily dependent upon the possibilities society has opened up to them and how they conform to people’s attitudes, level of requirements, needs and interests. However, alterations in the routines of everyday life are long-term and complicated processes. Existing attitudes and values have a significant impact on future events, and very often their basic structure persists and may also repeat in changed situations.

## **Conclusions**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1980s brought about a number of radical changes in the rural community of Estonia. The 1989 Farm Act was the first link in the whole chain of legal acts restructuring Estonian rural life in the 1990s. Some rural people quit their jobs in collective farms and the formation of private farms, once again, became a major issue in Estonia. Collective farms – the main employers in rural areas – were reorganised as smaller partnerships or else were dissolved.

Theoretically, we might also jump to conclusions from the above changes as if radical change also took place in people’s minds. However, ethnological fieldwork, carried out by this author during 1998–2000 in Võru County, showed that the above statement taken for granted in the beginning, was not supported by the outcome of closer examination. (The purpose of the fieldwork was to examine the for-

mation of farmers, a new social status, at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s).

This paper is based on the four examples which are examined within the wider context of ways of life, i.e. not only as a system of daily routine activities, but also involving people's attitudes to their activities, their ideas, values and aspirations.

Although, with the establishment of collective farms, private farms were seen as remnants from the old regime, society tolerated the existence of people's private households. By the mid-1980s, these households had become production units with considerable output. Such private households from Soviet times, the so-called survival farms, provided a fascinating starting point for the official formation of farms in the 1990s. Unlike before, in the present market economy situation, farmers are not entirely devoted to farming. As with the Soviet time collective farming, the present farmers are owners within their farms, but get most of their income outside their farms.

Unlike predictions, the importance of farmers as employer of their region has not increased considerably after the reorganisation of collective farms. Despite the fact that the Farm Act has legalised the use of workforce, production in most farms is based on the labour input of family members. Also, farmers show little interest in training through courses, seminars, or economic analyses. Knowledge obtained from personal experience is a far more important source of knowledge for learning social skills and obtaining knowledge, compared to theoretical material and economic analyses.

The people's way of life is heavily dependent upon the overall stage of the development of society, i.e. which opportunities society offers to people, and how they conform to people's attitudes, level of requirements, their needs and interests. However, alterations in the routines of everyday life are a long-term and complicated process. Existing attitudes and values have a significant impact on future events, and very often their basic structure persists and may also repeat in changed situations.

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*Translated by Epp Uustalu*

# **About the Ways of Becoming Visible on the Internet: Home Pages**

**Pille Runnel**

## **1. GLOBALISATION AND COMPUTER CULTURE**

The kaleidoscopic structure of contemporary culture makes the identification process, based on cultural symbols, difficult from the point of view of both an individual and society. The transformation and disappearance of popular and regional traditions has created a situation where in the way of searching, deriving from the past and selection, new meaningful units are being created – new ethnic and regional mythologies and ideologies are being born. These possibly refer to archaic cultures or are directed towards the future. From the point of view of youth culture, one of the most important aspects of the current cultural picture is the increase in the importance of (primarily profane) contemporary popular culture, carried by transnationalisation and globalisation, firstly, in the designing of a persons' self image, and secondly, in the expressing of the latter. The carriers of this phenomenon are also most certainly the computer networks.

The concept of globalisation is of great help in describing computer culture. Globalisation may be observed as the decrease in the importance of locality in the economic structure and as the designer of cultural values. Globalisation proceeds from the definitions of a room and a territory, thus designating a process, during the course of which, the territory, being the resource of cultural differentiation and identity, loses its almost omni-comprising significance. If the earlier social structures and the activity area of an individual or of the soci-



ety were determined space-wise, then today, we are talking about the death of the local community and the more radical Western cultural theoreticians (e.g. Paul Virilio) even write about the end of geography (Rannikko 1997). From the point of view of an individual, the notional weakening of spatial limitations brings along the splitting of the current lifestyle. Thus, the space or locality where everyday life is being lived, may not coincide with the things, places and ideas, which are of interest to this person to the extent previously accustomed.

The same phenomena can be found in Estonian youth culture. The latter is becoming more and more the part of Euro-American culture, with ambiguous boundaries. The daily activities of a human being are, in the main, still associated with the concrete place, his/her spare time interests and hobbies are not determinable geographically. These are often directed towards something else – be it the music of main stream pop-culture, films or the play life of a TV series, geographically distant acquaintances, all of whom or which have become accessible with the medium of the Internet. Adventures take place in fantasy worlds or the trips that take one far away from home; the period of everyday life between all this is observed as a temporary intermediary step or a transitional period.

Hereby, I am not trying to claim that there was a new human type becoming dominant – a rootless, urbanised cosmopolitan. I regard it as more probable that, relevant identity levels will be added in to the life of a, figuratively speaking, person facing the world. When observing the bundle of identity sources, the main components of which are, in addition to age and gender identity, also for instance, the real life communication circle, profession and such abstract phenomena as traditions and home place. These often change from an environment with a practical meaning into the one carrying symbolic values and, therefore, the level proceeding from global culture has been accrued. This is what a person puts together, under the impact of him/herself and his/her friends, from the so-called global, geographically not anywhere-belonging cultural pattern, and which actually, on the other hand, acquires a local, specific form.

The meanings of the last layer in the life of a human being are well conveyed by Internet home pages, enabling the making of assumptions regarding the relevant significance. Theoretically, it is possible to find anything in these home pages but in a number of cases, the information and symbolism originating from large-scale industry, mass media and other global structures are prevalent.

## **2. TECHNOLOGY AS THE RESEARCH OBJECT FOR ANTHROPOLOGY**

The orbit of interest for this short study is the individual-centred level of the Internet – mainly the young people – the home pages of the pupils and students (born in the 1970s and 1980s). The observation is centred on Estonian material. In this research paper, I am looking for answers to the following questions. How and what kind of meanings are given to the home pages, why and how do those people who have made their home pages accessible to others in the computer network, make themselves “visible” and how do they justify and interpret it themselves.

The material for the basis of the research has been collected from the home pages of private persons, registered in the Internet catalogue *neti.ee*. I have examined the taxonomic built-up of the home pages and carried out the component analysis of web-sites. However, the majority of information has been gathered by means of the observation of the web-sites, without directly connecting the findings with the database. In addition to such material, there are some interviews with the owners of the home pages, belonging to the same control group.

The computer seems to be a gold-mine to the researcher of contemporary western popular culture, but the research of such a subject involves a constant concurrent question: is anthropology, as a means of acquiring knowledge, actually expedient for dealing with such a topic? What kind of knowledge can anthropology create in the case of such disposition of the question?

Previously, I have analysed the possibility of fieldwork on the Internet (Runnel 1999), consequently, I presume that the ethnology/

anthropology of computers and the Internet, or of the research of communication technology, is possible *a priori* and also accomplishable in a certain manner. The article described and analysed mainly the method, concerning less the epistemological level, being the precondition of the method.

In ethnological research tradition, the basis has been formed, which describes and, to some extent, determines what does the studying of technology in ethnology mean. Is it possible to rootstock the research of computer culture to the same basis?

When observing definitions, classical ethnology has then used, as a starting-point for the research of technologies, for instance, the ethnologists Åke Daun and Orvar Löfgren describing the research of technology, in their book *Methods of Ethnology*, published in 1980, as the research of the means of labour and working:

“From the technological aspect, it is researched how a human being processes natural raw materials with the help of tools and by using specific techniques. Consequently, the technology-vision of a society is the description of the constructions of ploughs, specific building techniques, the manufacturing of household products and textiles. Studying material cultural products (items), there is often an attempt to describe and reconstruct the traditional peasant society technology” (Daun & Löfgren 1980).

Ethnographic method, being the essential part of anthropology and ethnology, has been developed primarily for the research of traditional communities and, as seen from above, the ethnologic point of view, regarding the research of technology, has also for a long time proceeded from peasant culture involving the usage of work equipment and methods.

In anthropological tradition, studying primarily the external societies than that of the researcher's own culture, the angle of approach was the same: first and foremost, the traditional society was studied, including technologies intrinsic to traditional society. The precondition for the idea of ethnography in anthropology was the existence of the relatively obscure reality. This reality had to be registered and, later, analysed. This anticipated the problems created during the

course of research. The British anthropologist, Mark Hobart (1999: 5), has criticised the fact that the research method of an anthropologist depended on the fact that it united naturalistic epistemology (facts are specified so as to collect them and possess them afterwards) and the weird conditions, set by the colonial government, under which the researching ethnographer was entitled to poke his/her nose into other people's lives and to write about this. Proceeding from this epistemological background, the anthropologists who so far have been researching mainly traditional societies, external to that of their own culture, would ask whether the anthropology that has adapted itself to the studying of societies with slow changes and to the more static side of such societies (e.g. traditions, customs), is capable of coping with the analysis of post-modernist society, by examining the society, the main nature of which is rapid changes, short-term cycles, weak fulcrums and fragmentation.

Popular discourse forms presume, as self-evident, that technology revolution is upcoming. Even some anthropologists have followed the progressive approach, when talking about the *advances* of technology and take technological innovation and social advance as more or less synonymous. For example, the anthropologist David Hakken has referred to the work of Robert McCormic Adams *Paths of fire: An Anthropologist's inquiry into Western technology* (1996), where Adams addresses the question, if anthropology, which is associated with "anti-technology" bias, has anything distinctive to add for understanding the change and the role of technology in it (Hakken 1999).

On the other hand, there are several works, which deal with contemporary technology-related topics from several perspectives, and do not follow the approach of Adams, described by Hakken. Their interests vary from work, communication and the role of technologies in different contexts, to information technology. But in fact, the anthropological approach towards technology studies is not yet formulated and clear.

One of the most promising ways to face the question seems to be in treating technologies as cultural phenomena. In my mind, one possible way is to choose a very traditional approach – several research-

ers have been successful, while starting from analysing the familiar categories. The very same “trap” of research tradition may also offer a solution. The fact that in the case of the Internet, it is not expedient to concentrate on the search or observation of revolutionary social changes, becomes clear when looking at how the channels (or also things), which sustain global culture, are the objects of anthropology in those studies that do not deal with western society but with contemporary, distant cultures. Paradoxically, it becomes explicit that these treatises do really often deal with this ‘little known reality’, much loved in anthropology, but at the same time, in these research papers, it has been learned to make the new phenomena which do not organically belong into the examined culture, graspable namely because the anthropologist observes the unknown object as a part of what he/she is interested in, often of traditional culture (e.g. Turner 1992; Spitulnik 1996; 2000; Ginsburg 1998; Wendl 1999). If the interesting (new, unknown) phenomenon, for instance communication technology, is to some extent a part of the already existing system, it becomes clear that, for comprehending this, the researcher has the “generation experience” of anthropologists and necessary analytical language.

For the explanation of this drift of thoughts, which sounds as if artificially constructed, it is easiest to observe traditional cultures, still contrasting to western society in some aspects, and their research story, on the basis of a concrete example.<sup>1</sup> An incident where communication technology switches into the already existent system is well illustrated in a case presented by a British anthropologist John Postill. Postill observes in his doctoral thesis, completed in the autumn of 1999, “Borneo Again: Media, Social Life and Nation-Building among the Iban of East Malaysia”, an episode of ‘media consumption’ among the Ibans. The example dates from 1997:

“The European style coffin had been fastened onto a bamboo pole. Male mourners carried it out from the house to the women, after this, the procession began to move. Some were

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<sup>1</sup> Communication technologies as part of both the western culture and traditional cultures have been studied, since the 1990s, by media anthropology, which treats these objects (e.g. radio, TV) as a natural part of the system.

carrying the food for the graveyard meal, others the deceased's grave goods: the clothes, comb, the favourite chair and table and his television. The television screen was smashed up."

Postill, proceeding from European interpretational manners, found it difficult to believe what he had witnessed, as according to his thoughts, it was not possible that a man who had to support 16 family members and whose household's most valuable item was a TV set, had so readily given up their only working television so that the departed member could 'still watch it over there' (Postill 1999, Chap. 3: 1).

After distancing from the direct experience, he found that what he had witnessed, had opened a way for him, to the local social life of things and into the associated system of values. I guess that in the given case, the items acquired their value, proceeding from traditional convictions, characteristic of the culture. A television set, for us primarily a channel of mass communication, changed into a TV set as an artefact, functioning as one part of this cultural system among others; probably because of the reality that in the light of a death of a family member, the relevance of the television set in the ritual system (symbolic value of the TV set) occurred to be more significant than the relevance of the TV set in everyday communication (utilitarian value of the TV set).<sup>2</sup>

From the point of view of this paper, this incident, characterising a distant culture, is important because it describes a case where a TV set did not entail a qualitative change, or even more, a new paradigm. New communication technology switched 'operating' and 'actively' into the system of values, customs and rituals of the society – in the

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<sup>2</sup> An obvious answer to the burial mystery was not hard to find. It was both given to me at a later point by the participants themselves and available in Richards' *Iban-English Dictionary*. Before sending an object to the afterlife the Iban must destroy it, for their Afterworld (*Sebayan*) is a back-to-front realm where things fall upwards, water is carried in sieves and cracked jars, light is dark (Richards 1981: 30) and television can only be watched on smashed-up screens. In *Sebayan*, the belief goes, the deceased will be able to make use of the object's "spirit" (*semengat*) (1981: 336). (Postill 1999, Chap. 3: 2).

given example, there was a place already existent for this.<sup>3</sup>

Although Postill's work, as a whole, indicates that a TV set, being an entirety, changed the daily behaviour of people. This change occurred, for instance, by re-structuring the ways of carrying out everyday activities in a household and in my mind, this funeral episode shows that the core part of the given culture had remained the same.

In contemporary western culture it is, to some extent, a lot more difficult to see the connection of a new phenomena (e.g. some cultural phenomena or technology) with its initial basis or background system, because our culture consists of namely these kind of things – for example, today, communication technologies form the core part of the culture.

In the following survey, describing and analysing the Internet home pages as one of the concurrent phenomena of modern communication technology, I have proceeded from a question whether it is possible, deriving from the basis of an individual, to find any links or functional connections, already existent in societal processes, where to place the computer, regarding its characteristics, together with the contingent cyberspace and Internet. Is there anything that would change? In order to find the answers, it is necessary to proceed to concrete examples.

### **3. HOME PAGES**

Internet is, when taken very provisionally, a small model of western society, an environment which has been called, by the theoreticians of the modern meme theory, a memetics laboratory, significant in the research of society, although admitting that here, a little more depends on the person's own choices, when accepting or disseminating one or another phenomena, than it depends in actual society.

A large part of the Internet is formed by home pages, which are the objects of the following survey. The home page and its owner can

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<sup>3</sup> Also, anthropologist David Hakken has stressed, that technologies should be approached holistically – not as simple artefacts, but as complex systems, involving both people, institutions, artefacts and practices (Hakken 1999).

directly evolve during the constant process of mutual reflections. One of the informants for the communication scientists, Daniel Chandler, described this experience approximately thus: writing down something and putting it up on one's web site helps the person to understand what he/she actually thinks about this matter (Chandler 1998). Building a web site and relevant received reflections may force the person to re-evaluate him/herself or his/her surroundings or see them from a different angle.

What is it that in real life brings the creation of the home page and what are the relevant departing points for people?

### **3.1. The creation story of home pages**

A vast majority of home pages in Estonian servers belong to young people, born in the 1970s and the 1980s. There are a number of reasons for the prevalence of this age group – starting from the social and ending with the practical hinterlands.

The large amount of school children among the owners of home pages can be explained by the fact that some of them get the opportunity to make a home page thanks to their school. The fundamentals of HTML language are sometimes taught during computer lessons (the programmes of computer studies vary, to some extent, from school to school, depending also on the preferences of the teacher). Many sites have been completed as training exercises, under the supervision of the teacher. If numerous home pages (often linked with each other) have a structure and even content which is similar in detail, it can be presumed that we are dealing with classmates and it is not sure whether it is the teacher behind the uniform structure or the influence of friends. Such “batches” can be mostly found in school servers, but they have been left aside from the observation, as those sites are not registered in the so-called public catalogue and it is not totally definite whether the owners of these sites would actually wish for wider public.

A certain amount of such web sites reach the general public due to the fact that in some higher educational institutions, learning how to make home pages has been a part of computer studies. For instance, a 30-year old man explained that his home page was commenced



during a course “Information Systems in the Internet”, where the participants were introduced to the basis for the creation of a home page. Analyses of visual awareness were carried out and the essence of hypertext was explained. It was explained how to build up web sites both visually and technically (M, 30). A personal home page had to be done as an independent work, in order to display the acquired knowledge.

Consequently, the starting point of many web sites can be deemed to be the want or need to obtain knowledge about the new environment and apply consequent technical skills. It is possible that this does not entail the desire to find wider public attention. Whether the site will be further developed later, during one’s free time, depends on the interest and possibilities of the person – only some years ago it was difficult to find the necessary server space, according to a couple of interviewees.

One of the aims of several information technology introductory courses is the teaching of the so-called web publishing basics. People, who have completed the course, acquire elementary skills for presenting the information necessary for the company. It seems that these skills and knowledge, regarding the ways for building up a formal web site, introducing an institution, can later be transmitted to the creation process of the personal home page.

The ways of creating a home page show, among other things, that the desire of an ethnologist to differentiate self-creation from that of the characteristic of a group, and personal from societal, is complicated – private and public level are mixed in this environment to a remarkably great extent.

### **3.2. Structure of home pages**

It is difficult to subject a home page to scientific analysis also due to other reasons – this does not have a certain limit, as with the help of the link system, it is connected to other pages. In addition, home pages lack a definite form. Researcher Kaido Einama, who has developed his lecture course about web publishing available on the Internet, determines this as follows:

“A web site is a system consisting of several information pages, without a concrete beginning and an end, differently from a book” (1998).

A home page can be built up in whatever manner – starting from putting up information in a text format, to the application of the semantics of contemporary fine arts, for expressing one’s difficulty determinable emotions or associations. Building a home page means, at the same time, the structuring and classifying of the world surrounding the individual, the selection of the suitable manner for expressing this.

Choices, associated with the technical mode of expression – for instance, on the level of the tricks of the trade, selected either consciously or without being conscious about them, deal with ‘acquired behaviour’. The choices become evident at the very moment when a person sits behind the computer with his/her home page construction programme and actual materials (or with thoughts regarding what to put up there) and commences with the practical building of the site.

If in daily life, the system of people’s knowledge and values is describable rather as an ambiguous field of contrastive impacts, then, when building a site, the classification is more specified and conscious during the course of work. In reality, it turns out that the prevailing built-up manner of individual home pages is often strictly taxonomic:

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Myself    | A text   |
| Talker    | Links to four talkers  |
| IRC       | A text   |
| Friends   | Ten links to his friend’s home pages                           |
| Links     | Ten links to the home pages of Estonian TV- and radio stations |
| Hobbies   | A text   |
| Photos    | Six links to the photos of his friends                         |
| Year 2000 | A text   |
| Download  | A possibility to download various programming languages        |
| Palace    | Link to Palace (a talker)                                      |
| Counter   | Counter  |

At the same time, it is interesting to note that, regarding their construction, they generally remind the home pages of companies and institutions, which I would conditionally call an infoweb. Infoweb is a colloquial phrase used, by some web designers of home pages for denoting home pages with a utilitarian and pragmatic tendency, as a rule, they are small and with purely illustrative elements. Infoweb is described as a declaration of 'American web design' (1999: M, 19), the most pure examples of the latter are the Internet portals and the web publications of newspapers, which deal mainly with the medium of information and are text-centred. Sometimes, this expression is also extended to the web sites of institutions, where the material displayed on the screen is not very extensive text-wise, but includes lots of factual information. As an example, the Tartu University web site, which is a database of the university as an institution and its sub-units, with all relevant contact information, activity directions and, in some instances, of work results, all interwoven in a complicated manner.

The concept of infoweb is not definable, however, the term, proceeding from the users, helps to describe the structure of the sites. The concept of infoweb could be determined as follows: a type of sites located in the Internet aimed at introducing or advertising the goals and/or services of a company or an institution.

Actually, the concept of a home page is primarily being used in denoting individual pages. The volume of units classified under this name is very unsteady, stretching from structures consisting of one page to complicated structures consisting of several tens of pages. In a case of one page, we are often dealing with the above-mentioned schoolwork. It is obvious that the volume of a home page depends on the connections between practical possibilities (work tools, server space, available time for building) and the interest of the person.

Regardless of the fact that some of the home pages can be born primarily due to the necessity to acquire technical skills or preserve data, I treat home pages, first and foremost, as communication (Runnel 1999). There are many reasons why usually, the infoweb form has been chosen when building one's own home page – in addition to such factors as, for instance, the requirements of the teacher or social control and customs. The outcome is also dependent on knowing that

it is not expedient to use the language of art in transmitting trivial information and, besides, the skills for such application are generally absent.

Communication requires that participants make their messages maximally understandable in a particular context. They therefore choose forms of expression, which they believe to be maximally transparent to other participants (Kress & Leeuwen 1998: 11). In most of the cases, home pages are also built up, impelled by the application of transparency.<sup>4</sup>

### 3.3. Functions of home pages

When generalising, two aspects may be differentiated in the functions of home pages, the mutual balance of them being in constant change: these are practical (primarily individual-centred) and communicative (directed outward).

The changing quality of the communicative and practical aspect of the object, in the given case, the home page, seems to be in correlation with the truthfulness of the presented material in home pages. If the home page is primarily a utility vehicle for the person himself, – e.g., containing information which is, first and foremost, necessary for the owner, then fantasy and the moulding of the reality into ‘a suitable form’ (in designing moral identity) does not have an important role in the construction of the site. If the communicative aspect is dominant, then, when expressing this, the result is playing with the degree of truth.<sup>5</sup> In the majority of cases, the aim of the owner seems to reflect

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<sup>4</sup> Here I do not consider transparency on the truth-false scale but structural clarity, a desire to better convey a particular message.

<sup>5</sup> The meaning and the degree of playfulness of a home page becomes evident in varying the structural components of the home page as any other artistic text, in their conscious or non-conscious relatedness. Linnar Priimägi has outlined in his book *Advertising art* that in each artistic text, it is possible to conditionally differentiate between three blocks: the first involves the elements, which serve the informational message of the work. The second level answers the question “which”. The task of the latter is to mediate the emotional, atmospheric message of the text. The third block is the so-called text strategic, creating an intercourse between the text and the reader, influencing also the course of receiving the text – e.g. be it the choice of colours, shrift, etc. (Priimägi 1998).

the reality exactly in the manner how he/she sees it or wants to see; in some extreme cases, the home page can constitute a total fiction and it is perceivable as a piece of art. This is comparable with the viewpoint of Jean Baudrillard, regarding the phases of the reality of images. Baudrillard, who analyses in his writings the destabilisation of reality, affected by the achievements of capitalism, has described the consecutive phases of images as follows:

- 1) It reflects deep reality;
- 2) It camouflages and distorts deep reality;
- 3) It camouflages *the absence* of deep reality;
- 4) It lacks any kind of connection with any reality: it is the pure simulacrum of itself (Baudrillard 1999: 14).

The ethnological study of objects describes the role of an object (home pages can also be compared with objects, conditionally) in the communication process as follows: together with the manufacturing and/or usage of a thing, a code is created; the right decoding of the latter guarantees the adequate comprehension of a certain situation, and a relevant behaviour. As an object (proceeding from Lotman's text concept) (Lotman 1990) has an ability to, in itself, create new ideas-meanings, (e.g. as a code text, cultural memory or medium), then a double code can be formed, which, from the point of view of the observer or the user/owner, can reveal one or another organisation of the text. This is how a game of meanings emerges in the text and as a result of this, one or another structural level is actualised (Kõresaar 1999: 15, 75).

The communicative aspects of home pages are somewhat more easily noticeable than that of the ordinary items around us – for example, a desk, car or a piece of handicraft, as the owner of the site, in some cases, points them out more clearly, for instance, with the help of (verbal) textual manifestations. However, in the case of home pages, these levels may be more ambiguous and mingled with each other, as home pages do not have established ways of usage and definite connections with everyday activities and behavioural manners of their owners, regulated with the help of social norms (and, therefore, noticeable with the help of norms or habits).

Next, I will examine the functions of home pages more closely, based on the description of the content level of a home page, and on the statements given by some owners of home pages. The owners of the selected home pages are (all names have been changed) Taavi (during the period of observation, a pupil in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade), Sirje, (a student), Anu (a student) and Liisa (during the period of observation, a pupil in the 11<sup>th</sup> grade). The examples have been chosen at random, but the peculiarity lies in the fact that usually, the index ratio of men and women being the opposite: on the Internet, there are more home pages created by men or boys than that of the female sex. According to the general impression, it can be said that the given home pages have less to do with MP3-s, net music and computer games.

The content of Taavi's home page originates from the personality of the owner. The visitor is given a thorough overview regarding the owner's creation, the things that are of significance for him and his friends (links to the home pages of the friends). It can be presumed that the starting point for the owner is not so much the description of the external world, but that of himself (primarily, with the mediation of mental characteristics).

The following can be found on the page:

- a) his own creation including programming languages, school compositions, essays, made by himself;
- b) the world through the prism "what do I think about this" – is revealed by the list of main interests (incl. music, literature, films, computers). This section mainly describes world wide pop culture. The presentation includes a thorough list of cult-type books (for example, *Hobbit* and *Dune*), films (e.g. Stanley Kubric's *Space Odyssey*) and the relevant music world (the list ranges from classical Russian composers to the contemporary pop instrumentalist Mike Oldfield and to even newer fashion trends (*Radiohead*)). Conceding that the home page was not in Estonian, the visitor to the site could regard the owner to be a random European or American schoolboy. The only direct connection with Estonia in the list is the writer A. H. Tammsaare. The author himself also feels the impact of the mainstream global pop culture, admitting that *in the modern world, it is difficult to be original with anything at all.*

Sirje's home page has a practical inclination: it leaves an impression of a primarily personal database, communicative and self-introductory functions are of secondary importance. Regarding the subject matter of the page, links directing somewhere else are prevailing. The list of activities the owner has been dealing with is also in an important position. By the list of activities, there is a note "the reminder for myself", containing a hiking and travelling diary, with the list of visited places.

Considering the external world, the following has been collected on the home page:

- a) Aids or strategies for coping in the information society (e.g. dictionaries, the instruction of HTML programming language, being the basis for home pages, and the HTML-help, the psychological *Self help and psychology magazine* etc.);
- b) Archive type information collections: (for instance, ASCII art gallery, *Classical Midi Archives*, *Welcome to Laugh web*, *Music Music Music*; *Que's digital bookshelf*);
- c) References to other countries: (e.g. links to the states of Romania and Slovenia).

In the home page of Anu, the materialisation of the owner's self-identity seems to be of central importance. The owner herself has created such a category in taxonomy, as "I as such" and to the latter, she has added subdivisions "a little about me" and "more about me". Actually, the home page deals with the mapping of the so-called extra-personal circumstances: the owner's family, significant geographical places (Estonia, Tallinn, Tartu) have been pointed out. This is the chronicle of covered relationships, places and times, with a possible hidden message "I am what I have been through".

The most important categories of the mentioned home page are:

- a) School life;
- b) The foreign world – a school year in the USA, which had left a bright impression – the owner says that her "second family" is over there;
- c) Pictorial material – a biography since childhood until today, partially illustrated with photos.

The dominant function of the home page is communicative: it is probably aimed at creating contacts. This aspiration is also revealed by the quotes given in the category “I like/don’t like”:

I like “... to create new acquaintances, to communicate with people, to send/receive e-mails”.

Liisa has placed the material on her home page under the following subtitles:

- a) School;
- b) Haapsalu;
- c) Clamps (i.e. friends);
- d) Media (TV series, TV channels, radio stations).

Quantitatively, the media is prevalent on the page. Personal attitude towards the presented material has not been explicitly pointed out, but, with the help of the link system, it is possible to reach 18 television and radio stations and the home pages of the 10 more popular TV series shown on Estonian TV channels. Mediated reality or a dreamt up world, accessible when staying at home, seems to be the centre of the interests of this person. Liisa’s home page is probably completed in a computer lesson at school, as the visual and essential build-up of her friends is very similar.

Comparing the above-given descriptions with the topics, which were found on the home pages of the control group consisting of 25 people, it becomes evident that the tendencies are very much alike. The most frequently represented areas on the examined home pages are the following:

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Contact data (e-mail, sometimes also the real life information – phone number, address, etc.)                   | 22 cases |
| The person him/herself (biography, picture etc.)  | 20 cases |
| Friends (mostly links to their home pages)  | 11 cases |
| Media (links to newspapers/magazines, to the home pages of radio and TV stations)                               | 9 cases  |
| Persons beside the friends and the family: various examples and favourites (singers, musicians, writers, poets) | 9 cases  |
| Computer technical assistance (programs, colour codes, HTML-help etc.)  | 9 cases  |
| Photographs (the owner him/herself, his/her friends and relatives)  | 6 cases  |



|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Own creation (artistic photos, essays, other "formatted texts")                        | 5 cases |
| Infoserver (access to basic catalogues like WWW-värk)                                  | 4 cases |
| Anecdotes  | 4 cases |
| Music (in addition to the links for radio stations. In the web or in the form of data) | 3 cases |

Observing the substantive construction of the aforementioned sites, it is evident that there are also such topics and aspects which, as a rule, are not discussed in the home pages. The above-described expresses quite explicitly that, for instance, the individual home pages found on the Internet are a cultural stratum which, in general, does not carry a remarkable amount of information for one or another group, about their common past. The past is individual-centred: if at all, the dimension of the past is apparent in autobiographies, only on very rare occasions. The instances of general importance in the history are referred to, during the objectivity process of one's personality; for example, just as Erki (b. 1977), has presented a "summarised imagination of himself", describing, among other matters, his going to school:

*Years were passing in the same old groove. Comrades Brezhnev and Andropov had already lined themselves up at the Kremlin wall and were just waiting for comrade Tshernenko to join them, when it was time for me to start a long and hard road of obtaining knowledge, at a school with a number 44.*

Such examples of "switching" oneself into the general course of history are infrequent. More often, these kinds of revelations are directed towards the future: a part of self-introduction may contain thoughts about what the person would want to do and gain in a few years time.

For example, Kalev (b. 1977) writes:

*In the future, I intend to become a tough computer guy;  
May be even create my own company???(Who knows...)*

Partly, the lack of connections with the general course of history can be explained by the fact that the owners of the home pages are mostly young people, their personal life experience time-wise is

small. This phase of life is more future-oriented than retrospective. A historical dimension may be also added when the owner introduces (in a foreign language) his/her origin and the country where he/she lives, in this case, a brief description regarding the geographical location of Estonia, and sometimes, of recent history, is presented.

On the basis of the examined material, it seems that the individual home pages, owned mainly by young people, lack such functions as:

- a) The carrying of historical memory;
- b) The fixing or presentation of values connected with the tradition.

As a rule, the observed home pages did not reveal the person's connection with, nor the attitudes towards religion. I have not encountered references to the issues of religion, neither in the texts nor in the visual symbols of the home pages. This indicates a more widely noticed occurrence – today, religion is becoming an especially personal phenomenon, which is not exhibited to other people. In many cases, it is not possible for the visitor to the home page, to determine the economic status of the owner – the acquisition of the status concurrent with money is not prevalent on the Internet. However, there are some references – sometimes, the home, car or even parents are exhibited on the photographs, but this is not dominant. In the majority of cases, the acquisition of a status, on the basis of the material presented on a home page, depends on the manifestation of symbolic values; how is it revealed, I will discuss a little more profoundly afterwards.

In general, besides the so-called personal chronicle, home pages present things that are of interest for people, that are innovative and exciting – such phenomena and knowledge regarding what the owners themselves have found in the world, independently from official knowledge and education acquired from home and school. This material has an innovative orientation, and one of the aims for obtaining and exhibiting of this is to facilitate the description, determination and measurement of the individual's own world. The home page both describes and maintains these phenomena and objects, which are somehow significant for the owner.

The tasks that the owners attribute to a home page could be depicted as follows.

### ***1. A home page as an orienteering strategy – a notice board, notebook, an archive***

From among the above-mentioned, Sirje's and Liisa's home pages had such a function. Regarding the first site, the collection of references was diverse, starting from technical aid and finishing with references to literature texts. In the case of the second home page, this was revealed mainly in the links to the websites connected to media channels and favourite TV series.

One interviewee, a teacher of mathematics at University of Tartu, finds that for her, the home page is an important place for storing information, helping to save time when rendering and disseminating information.

*Before I began to put things up in the web, there were people stepping in every ten minutes – has my paper already been checked? – And it took me a lot of time to render such information.:) It is the same with lecture materials. – Knowing that I have an electronic synopsis for every lecture, there are people who turn up at the end of the semester and do not have a part of, or the entire synopsis – so I make it available on my web site (F, 50).*

This was written by the teacher in an electronically given interview. In addition, on her home page, she tries to present the list of conferences and seminars participated in by her during the last year, although there is not always time for systemisation and storing.

*Just now, writing the report at the end of the year and thumbing your notebook, you are trying to desperately remember, where did you go and what did you do, and some things do remain forgotten... and never reach the report to the institute... (F, 50).*

She has also set a task for herself to put all her published works up in the home page, so that they could be available for her anywhere.

Another interviewee, a student Kristjan, has worked as a teacher and maintained close contacts with his former school. Answering the question why can there be extracts from the books by French authors found on his home page, he explains that the hidden aim of putting them up is to make the learning of literature a bit easier for the pupils.

From the point of view of these respondents, one level of the home page functions in a similar manner – as a hybrid of a notice

board, notebook and an archive. Both interviewees confirm that the things are stored there either for themselves or for other people.

## 2. Home page as a way for acquiring a status

*Secondly, the home page is, in a way, in place of a business card. Who wants, takes a look and makes his/her own conclusions (M, 22).*

A home page may express the self-identity of the owner – materialise or exhibit his/her evaluational assessments and the desire for individuality. The home page contextualises itself in the relationships between its owner and social environment. The owner becomes visible in the background of the other. For the beholder, the home page is always a message about the owner's taste, skills, knowledge, about his/her belonging into a certain group, etc. The essence of the message of the communicational act by the owner of the home page, directed to the imaginary other party, is like that: "I can do this, I hold such information, I belong into these groups, live this kind of life". During and as a result of the representation process, the individual acquires a certain role or a status, pursuant to the system of values valid in this environment (Kõresaar 1999: 76).

Acquisition of a status can be conscious and aimed "image creation", and also a not so directly conscious activity. For example, at the beginning of the interview, Krisijan (22) explains that he wanted a home page for himself *just like that, for splendiddness. To be beautiful. Information is secondary.*

Afterwards, during the conversation, his viewpoints become clearer. For example, answering the question why has he not added the pictures of the well-known film series *Star Wars* to his home page, he says the following:

*First of all, I don't like them, and secondly, I think that there's nothing as non-individual as the Star Wars pictures or a Michael Jordan poster, or a Back Street Boys' bath towel. And if you look carefully at, for example, the home pages of the \*\*\*<sup>6</sup> users, then you see that the majority of places is full of this kind of crap. If Chateaubriand began one of his works with the words "I was born as*

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<sup>6</sup> \*\*\* – a school in Estonia

*a nobleman...” then Rousseau wrote in one of his stories approximately like that: “... and even if I am not anything else, at least I am special, as nobody else.” Without stopping myself mentioning that Rousseau is my big favourite, I have to say that least of all, I'd like to be “like everybody else” (Kristijan, 22).*

The above quote shows that with regard to this person, the choice of information is not accidental at all, or proceeding from “the splendid” but a systematic selection. It is interesting to mention that in many cases, compared with the above-given examples, a contrary process is taking place: the aim of the home page is to show the connection of one's value levels with the “non individual” global power structures. The examples of this tendency are trademarks like Nike, Adidas, Coca-Cola, Mitsubishi, etc., found on home pages. With the virtual consumption of these strong symbols or trade marks – by adding the links or logos of the named major producers on their home pages – the owners of the pages, either being conscious about this or not, demonstrate their competence, trend awareness, their connection with western capitalism. The symbol system of such home pages also asserts, among other things, the determination of consumption: “as long as consuming is meaningful, it is a systematic manipulation with signs” (Baudrillard 1999: 21–22).

In the virtual environment, consumption shifts from the product to its psychological surrounding – on the home page, people do no longer operate with physical objects, but with the symbolic values of things. What happens in real life, is especially clearly revealed in the virtual environment: the incentive for obtaining many things is not the need for the item, but for its label. This is paradoxical: on the one hand, by adding such bookmarks and references, people underline the power and status of their personality, on the other hand, this also seems to express a desire to dissolve in the world of mass production, to be without one's own self, to be standardised, and not responsible for one's preferences and their surroundings.

As can be seen, it is most of all the culture on its global-local scale that starts playing on this self-expression level. The network generation does not ask questions from themselves about Americanisation,

they alter this ‘other’ into an organic part of self-explanation, by choosing necessary elements of ‘pieces’ for themselves.

### 3. Home page as a “confession”

In addition to customary biographies found on the Internet, there are texts, the authors of which have been problematic, or with growing up difficulties while obtaining their education, or during their employment years. The home pages of the people with both conflicting and ordinary social skills provide their owner with a possibility to tell his/her story without direct listeners who could, verbally or visually, assess the speaker. One can talk about what has happened in his/her life and the conflicts he/she has been through, and, on the other hand, about achievements, lucky chances, and give his/her interpretation regarding all this, by highlighting some moments in the biography and lessening the others. People tend to adjust the past in their personal stories, thus creating a new reality (Latvala, quoted in Knuutila 1994). The communicative level of home pages deals with the life history of the person him/herself and with the objectivity of the experienced.

Regarding the stories found on home pages, it is needful to mention that these stories are never very long, but in addition to the habitual form of modern biography – *curriculum vitae*, containing the description of educational path and the list of jobs, these stories often include a more personal level. For example, a 23-year-old man describes the course of his life – the changing of his abode and school time under a title “My life story. And a little more”:

*/---/ During this time, my mother managed to divorce my father and take a new man. During this time, I finished basic schooling in the Tallinn Secondary School No. \*\*\*<sup>7</sup> and went to study further in the Tallinn \*\*\* School.*

*Being totally honest about this, I was expelled from there immediately during the first half year /---/ Next year I went to again study at the Tallinn Polytechnic School. That year I would have almost finished the first course /---/ only some weeks were missing /---/ After*

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<sup>7</sup> \*\*\* – names or numbers of the school

*this, in autumn, I went to study at the Tallinn Secondary School No. \*\*\*, where one nasty teacher (class teacher and the teacher of chemistry) forced me to leave because I did not attend school sufficiently enough, according to her (M, 24).*

The list of this young man's failures and wrong doings is not limited with the latter, however, by the moment of his writing he had reached a relatively satisfactory stage of life. This story – a so-called progressive narrative by type, and also many other texts, found on other home pages, are expressive examples of the creation of narrative identity. At the same time, these stories correspond with the norms of story-telling – particular expressions and events are chosen, helping to reach the desired result (in the given case, to the point where the young man is doing better afterwards); a valuing/evaluative framework is created for the event (e.g. see Gergen 1999). The quoted young man adds in his later biography that he is single and his searches for a live-in partner “are going on every god-dam day”. Consequently, this home page, similar to many others, also has the function of matrimonial announcement. This links well with the saying by Kenneth Gergen that people use progressive narratives especially in the early stage of relationships, in order to invest future hope and special values in the relationship (Gergen 1999).

Similarly to matrimonial announcements, people can look for (or are trying to create) other relations – friends, a job, an interested group, etc.

#### **4. Home page as a creation**

As already referred to earlier, home pages may also be observed as creative or artistic texts. This is not merely an analytical category – the owners themselves sometimes appreciate their home pages as creation, and also the people who visit them.

During a conversation in which I had to explain the essence of home pages to somebody who almost did not have any contacts with computers at all, the person looked at analogies from the world familiar to her. She found, almost immediately, that the creation and maintaining of a home page is as significant for the person involved, as is traditional handicraft when done as a hobby – this could be

weaving a hand-loom rug, making a candle stand on a lathe, or other activities that connect the aesthetic and practical levels.

One interviewee alters his home page relatively often – since putting it up, he has completed five different versions, changing the structure and design, and also partially the content. In this case, the home page is not amended but replaced by a new one. The owner sees this activity as a chance to withdraw from daily work for a while:

*First, I tremendously like the making of this. It is such a soothing pottering work and considering the fact that my days are characterised by constant moving about and "hustle-bustle", then from time to time, such peaceful change is simply necessary (M, 23).*

Regarding this interview, while creating the home page, the emphasis is on practising the activity. The proceeding obtains a meaning during the course of the activity: the goal is not a completed and finished product but the process – the playing with meanings and content elements.

### 3.4. Value levels related to home pages

The examination of the functions of home pages could be summarised by observing what types of value relations do these above-described functions carry in the world of thoughts of the individuals: it is possible to observe the entire culture as a system of values. An object or an item – in the given case, a home page – is associated with a more general cultural pattern and, vice versa, values connect the home pages with their owners, through values and functions.

In connection with computers and personal home pages, I would differentiate between the following more significant value levels:

- 1) **Utilitarian** – Internet and personal home pages are important producers/mediums/preservers of information.
- 2) **Symbolic** – computer, and what is found in it, is, in a way, a particular symbol of progress; the symbolic level is also revealed in the form of symbolic meanings, attributed to one or another single example found in there.



- 3) **Social** – home pages help to create and reproduce social relationships, express the belonging to a group.
- 4) **Aesthetic** – home pages act as medium channels for visual and verbal impulses and images: image languages that in the real environment are found in a remarkably sparse concentration (primarily, e.g. advertising boards, in printed matters, in other media (e.g. on television a totally new image language was once created by MTV)) and became manifest there. For its owner, the home page is a possibility for expressing his/her aesthetic convictions and understandings.
- 5) **Status** – this is not available for everybody. Intrinsically, the computer refers to professions with a slightly higher social status. As shown earlier, the material presented on a home page is, also, an instrument for the owner to acquire a certain status.
- 6) **Biographical** – used for self-perception: reveals the connections between oneself and the others (or, more precisely, the ambiguity of these borders), facilitates the expression of the relations of a human being to several types of information and relevant attitude towards this.
- 7) **Morality** – access to the Internet, made available by the medium of the computer, opens a possibility for the individual to presumably compare his/her habits, culture and social environment with that of others, in order to assess these values and the knowledge etc.

The list of value relations reveals what a complicated phenomenon is the examined object – we are dealing with an immense analytic field. In reality, despite the presented taxonomies and classification, this is an endless process, which can only provisionally be submitted to the classification, trying to draw borders and differentiate between phenomena. When observing the value levels, it becomes evident that neither of these values derives directly from technology and computers, but primarily, they proceed from society and cultural background.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> However, it is difficult to claim that some value systems definitely derive from e.g. an environment. When looking for concrete evidence for this on a home page, it turns out that it is not possible to determine the difference between a home page of

#### 4. HOME PAGES AND THE WAYS OF BECOMING VISIBLE IN SOCIETY

*...We are manifestations of relatedness*  
(Kenneth Gergen 1991).

Among the several categories of functions of the personal home pages, described previously, are those connected with the objectifying processes of the self, including the question as to how a person becomes visible to the others with the help of their home pages. As the previously presented list of the more common elements of the home pages of the control group showed, the owners of the home pages know the significance of the pages as communicative tools. It is stressed by the elements directly created for active communication (e-mail address of a guest book were at the top of the list), but in a more hidden way the whole home page with its components and structure is directed to that. But what kind of communication is it? What is the aim of it?

When talking about the ways of becoming visible in society, I proceed from the ideas of the British anthropologist Eric Hirsch. He has in his studies dealt with a person's ability to achieve specific forms of visibility in order to compare certain outcomes of the performances in Western and Melanesian contexts. By visibility, he refers to the ways in which a person or persons appear efficacious in specific cultural contexts of "audience-ship", moreover, in contexts involving historically particular forms of standardisation (Hirsch 1998: 208). He points out (*ibid.*). That in the Melanesian context the distinction between persons and objects, so significant in the West, is of less significance. In this Melanesian context, bounded entities (persons and objects) are created through unifying particular rela-

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an Estonian and that of a Scandinavian or American. Differences proceeding from regional and ethnic peculiarities are phenomena, which are very hard to be grasped and derived from. Undoubtedly, it is possible to identify certain nuances (e.g. the facts presented on home pages: place names, mentioned persons), but in the case of the structure and modes of expression, it has more to do with the details of the meta-level – difficultly determinable factors as ethnic history, etc. than with the details of a concrete home page.

tionships, that is their heterogeneity or hybridity generally present is submerged, in order to produce unitary person(s) or object(s). For example, several performances and rituals are directed to achieving this. Hirsch describes more closely a ritual, lasting for several days, which includes, among other things, ritual killing of the pig, building a new house in the centre of the village etc. The relationships are the starting point of the whole ritual, they do not disappear, although they are ritually obscured (Hirsch 1998). It is a way to create the abstract system above the level of the single individuals.

Melanesian rituals could be conditionally compared with the process of creating home pages in this sense that both show how concrete, intrinsic of the society technology is mobilised for the creation, expressing or maintaining of relations.

Internet helps to model the processes in our contemporary society. It is intrinsic of the western culture to differentiate between the person and the object. These two are as if two separate phenomena. In the western context the aim of several performances, processes and activities on an individual level, is to create relationships between a plurality of bounded entities (for example between individual and society, individual and mass-produced goods). In a western society, the achieving of visibility depends on the ability of being connected with units, located somewhere far away, it depends on creating a relationship between these objects and phenomena and one's life and the aim is to make them a part of one's activities. The objectifying forces and the objectifying process itself is anonymous. We are more and more surrounded by featureless mass products, which surrender to market flows. Everything, an individual has to do, is to apply them to their particular surroundings. The process of becoming visible in the Internet environment, which is shaped by this particular form of standardisation, is comparable with the process of work of creating relationships between a plurality of bounded entities through the rituals described by Hirsch.

The participants of the Internet environment do not participate in creating bounded entities (as it was the case in the example of the Melanesian society), but in the deconstruction process of it, by using, obtaining and "domesticating" them. Also the tendency of

“translating” one’s ideas, values and relationships to the language of categories, pre-formed outside your own group, characterises the culture-creating processes in the western society.

The very same thing, however, in smaller dimensions, takes place on home pages: the “acquisition” of links (e.g. Adidas, TV 3, *Riigikogu* (Parliament), a computer company, etc.) or smaller units, borrowing and putting up on one’s own home page means the relatedness to these structures and the attempt to express such a relatedness. One tries to say “I am related to this”, “I possess this”, “this belongs to my lifestyle”, and demonstrates the skills of living fashionable. If such deconstruction of bounded entities is successful, it means that the individual has also become visible.

In this sense, persons “are” what they “have” or “do” (Strathern 1988: 158, quoted in Hirsch 1998). An individual becomes visible in the relations connected with home pages and the things placed on the home page. His/her person is formed in the “power lines” between the relationship of social relationships, objects and his/her own self.

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