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## Editorial

“Pro Ethnologia 8” is again dedicated to the study of Arctic nations. The destiny of the little nations in the North is currently gaining more and more attention. The gradually globalising world economy and continually changing social-political conditions set difficult adaptation problems for little communities. In order to survive in the modern world it is important to maintain ethnic and cultural identity. The articles of the present publication deal with questions related to the worldview of the northern people with their social-economic development and the depiction of indigenous Arctic nations in early Russian and western source materials.

Mihály Hoppál’s article “Shamanism at the Turn of the Millennium” gives a panoramic overview about the problems of shamanism today. The author differentiates between shamanism in its traditional meaning and neo- or town shamanism. Traditional shamanism is characteristic of the communities which have practised it continuously whereas neo-shamanism is an especially characteristic feature of the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. M. Hoppál gives an account of the many traditional forms of shamanism and contrasts them with town shamanism.

The article of a young researcher Kirill Istomin “Kolva Volost and Kolva Ethnographic Group as an Example of Transition from Nomadic to Settled Way of life. An Attempt at Analysis” is noteworthy for its subject. The historic and cultural development of the depicted Kolva Nenets ethnographic group has been quite original. K. Istomin describes an example of the complicated Arctic cultural contacts in the northernmost areas of the European part of Russia. This specific ethnic group of the Nenets has been greatly influenced by the Russian and Izhma-Komi neighbours. Besides, they have been in the special centre of the attention of the Russian orthodox clergyman.

Art Leete's article "An Outline of Ob-Ugrians and Samoyeds in West-European and Russian Sources from the 11<sup>th</sup> through the 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries" is an attempt to analyse the medieval knowledge connected with Arctic peoples. The author tries to compare the works of relevant Russian, West-European and Arabic authors. He describes the most typical medieval stereotypes of the images about the people who lived at the edge of the world, including the Khanty, Mansi and the Nenets. The fantastic descriptions of the West-Siberian indigenous people disappear by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and are replaced by more realistic ones.

Anzori Barkalaja's article "On the Sacrificial Rituals of the Pim River Khanties: Part Two" deals with the collective sacrifice of the river Pim Khanties in December 1997. The article is the continuation of a review in "Pro Ethnologia 5" about a similar sacrifice of the reindeer in 1995. Besides the description of the ritual the author has added a thorough explanation about the gods of the Khanty people. The information about Ob-Ugrian spirits and gods is contradictory in the scientific literature and even fieldwork does often not bring clarity to the case. It is extremely important to understand the author's viewpoints in this complicated question as sacrificial rites are very closely connected with gods.

Art Leete's review about the work done in the religion research group at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Finno-Ugric History Conference (*Congressus Secundus Historiae Finno-Ugricae*) in Tallinn in the autumn of 1998 concludes the current issue of the magazine.

The research group dealt with the relations of the Finno-Ugric people with different religions and faiths.

The present publication is a continuation of previous "Arctic Studies". The edition is related to the carrying out of the Estonian Science Foundation and Open Estonia Foundation project "Cultural Identity of Arctic Peoples". We are grateful to our thorough reviewers for practical amendment suggestions. Hopefully "Arctic Studies 3" can add something interesting and essential to the research of Arctic nations to this time.

Art Leete

# Shamanism at the Turn of the Millennium

Mihály Hoppál

It is important to distinguish two separate tendencies in the research and development of shamanism. The societies in which shamanism can be observed as a living cultural phenomena, can be placed in two categories. One is shamanism in the traditional sense, where, in essence, the functioning of shamanism can be considered continuous (Hoppál 1996; in this article we can look at the manifestation of post-modern shamanism). The other form of active shamanism today is urban or neo-shamanism. These new shamans are characteristic figures of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first type is generally studied by researchers using ethnological and ethnographic methods in the traditional sense. This is typical of European and especially Russian ethnographic research. Many valuable papers, articles and monographs have been written using this method during the course of the last century. The manifestation of urban shamanism belonging to the second type is studied using American anthropology (social anthropology), but the tools and methodology of *urban anthropology* may also be used.

Though we used the expression *shaman-ism* in the title, more and more researchers are convinced that there is no such thing as a general manifestation which could be covered by this expression, only regional variations in the manifestations of *shaman-ism*. Or when Russian practitioners of classical ethnography used the expression *shamanstvo*, they were thinking in essence of local variations, whose characteristics they described and recorded. In German, several people (e.g. Findeisen 1957) used the expression *Schamanentum*. In English the word *shamanhood* was proposed (Pentikäinen 1998: 36). The fact is that field researchers have realised in the last few years that the concept of shamanism developed by Mircea Eliade (1964) is too wide and empty (Basilov 1997); individual forms and local vari-

ations of shamanism fall outside his general constructs in many respects and in the end they started criticising the theories of the great Romanian historian of religion. Though we must not forget that Eliade did some excellent work on comparative manifestations in the history of religion, he never saw a living shaman and did no field-work of this kind. We must acknowledge that he knew the subject well (at the time!) but still created an *-ism* according to the academic fashion of the time which, emphasising a few signs, he meant as a general model. One of the characteristic signs he thought most important was trance or rather the different techniques to achieve it. The first reviews of his book brought up the fact that fully developed (ecstasy or) trance techniques do not exist everywhere though in the shamanism he described, regional manifestations do belong in this category. My own experience up to now and my meetings with Yakut, Buryat, Manchū, Korean and Japanese shamans and shaman women, show that even if there was some kind of altered state consciousness, it was almost unnoticeable and was not significant in terms of the whole ceremony. We must also note from Eliade's book that the work he did on shamans was commissioned and he did it in order to make a living at the end of the forties in one of the most elegant neighbourhoods of Paris, so that he could work on a novel at the same time, because that was what was important for him at the time. Eliade the writer was perhaps more important than Eliade the scholar but there is no doubt that his poetic imagination influenced his objectivity as a scientist in many respects. The most important consideration for the Romanian writer-historian of religion was reconstruction. Of course, this is not a problem, but we must bear in mind these biographical details when talking of shamanism and when referring to this valuable work which is still unsurpassed.

To go back to the two types or to the situation of shamanism today at the end of the millennium, permit me to give an account of my own experiences. More and more shamans have appeared recently, some of whom soon turn out to be charlatans rather than the bearers of continuous traditions in the ethnographic sense. But it is important that several ethnographic films have been made on a few older shamans who appear genuine. They learned their songs clandestinely from their elderly masters in the fifties. Perhaps they also learned

something about movement by close observation and so they can be considered authentic. Though their clothes were made recently of modern materials, the most important and typical signs are visible of them. Or if they did not possess special shaman costumes, they used at least some traditional tools and methods for making drums. (Mark Soosaar has made a very interesting film on a Khanty shaman “Father, Son and Holy Torum”.)

By the distant river Amur or in other northern territories where the local authorities did not persecute the shamans to any great extent, many traditions still existed right up to the 70s and 80s. I would like to tell a very typical story about the Nnganasan of the Taimyr peninsula. On my first longer trip to Moscow in 1975, at the Ethnographic Institute of the Academy (then still the Mikluho-Maklai Institute), Alexander Oskin projected some film (fragments of film to be more precise) which he shot together with Yuri Simchenko at the last ceremony held by the Nnganasan shaman, Demnime Kostierkin. Unfortunately, the material has still not been edited into a film and the whereabouts of the film material unknown even though this is a visual and ethnographic document of inestimable value, since they had immortalised one of the last, in the classic sense, Siberian shamans. A few years later Lennart Meri, today President of independent Estonia, then a writer and ethnographic filmmaker, also shot a longer scene with the same great shaman. Then there followed a long interval, until in the last few years, several Scandinavian film crews went to see Demnime’s relatives and descendants, who from time to time sang the songs they had learned and showed certain ceremonies, frequently reconstructed them for the camera, and performed the ceremonies they had seen when they were young. In 1995 they were invited to a folklore festival in Southern France and performed as a group of five, in the extreme summer heat, dressed in their clothes made for a northern winter. It was humiliating for an ethnographer to see the 6 or 8 minute production by the little group from so far away, headed by the great shaman’s daughter Yekaterina, as they sang their songs summoning the spirits, hummed the melodies and conjured up the rhythm of the drum. The production was a success but I thought to myself that this commercial production (the audience of holiday-makers sat in a circus tent) meant the end of shamanism. A few days



later I met the group in Paris in the district beneath the Sacré Coeur cathedral, as they bought cheap presents for the relatives left at home. Then I realised that Siberian shamanism would not end precisely because the shamans could earn money with their productions and that means a kind of continuity. For to buy and take presents from a distant land is a moral obligation. It was also interesting that the melody sung by the small group of family members, was in essence consistent with the melody learned from the great shaman. I know this for a fact as I collected and placed next to each other several scenes shot at different times for an educational documentary film. So even if the ritual context is no longer authentic, some elements of shamanism can survive and can be preserved for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Less widely known but just as interesting are the regional variations of shamanism in China and what has happened to them. I myself have travelled in Manchuria and Xingjiang. As we know China is, or rather was a communist state, which differed in many respects from the version of communism in the Soviet Union. Among other things, the ethnopolitics of nationality problems is very different from Russia. While in China, the Han nationality counts as an overwhelming majority within the population, all the others, even national minorities of several million, do not represent any danger in the eyes of the government. Despite the natural propagation of Chinese culture, local traditions could survive to a certain extent, since the standard of living of peasant communities had not changed for a century or even longer. This meant, that for example in Manchuria, shaman traditions have survived right up to today and are still alive in family ceremonies and community gatherings. Fortunately, excellent video film has also been shot of these rites in recent years, which I have had the good fortune to see and which are admirably suited to help us understand the essence of shamanism, to acquaint ourselves with the mechanisms of the ceremonies and recognise the details which are so accurately described in the books on Manchu ceremonies ordered by the Emperor of China at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Traditions of shamanism have survived not only in Manchu villages but also among minorities living in other territories of North Eastern China, for example among the Oroch, Dahur and Evenki

peoples. An excellent monograph recalling these is about to be published according to information I have received from the editors. It is called: **“Living Shamans: Shamanism in China”** (edited by Guo, Wang, 1999).

China is one of the most immense countries of the Earth. Its territory is inhabited by over fifty different nationalities. In this territory we can acquaint ourselves with the shamanistic rituals of twelve different national minorities which all play an important part in the culture of these peoples. The book is the first comprehensive illustrated monograph produced in China and the authors provide a picture, for the first time, of the shamans of the small nations living on the edges of Chinese culture. There is very little information available about the shamanism of the peoples living in China or about the shaman figures of Chinese folk culture itself (the village magician). (The Tungus word form shaman probably also comes from this root, at least according to some scholarly explanations and hypotheses.)

This book by our Changchun colleagues is an important source, a publication which will be much quoted in the following decades by numerous scholars who work in the field or the comparative analysis of shamanism. And even more people will turn to it for the sake of the more than two hundred colour photographs that it contains. The value of these pictures is that they are authentic. They are not pre-arranged tableaux but snap-shots truthfully reflecting the living customs of the various peoples, preserving the gestures and movements of the participants. Thus the photographs will pass on to the next generation the arrested moment for preservation. The book is the old and the new all in one.

Indeed, for a visitor arriving from a distant culture to live the life of an observer in China, the pictures of the shamanism of the local minorities evoke the conditions of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. These are pictures of classic shamanism which are unlikely to be encountered any more in present day Siberia. Scholars of Eurasian shamanism will be particularly grateful to the book and its authors, finding its pages an inexhaustible source for comparisons. Thus for example, the authors write on the function of flat brass mirrors in keeping evil at bay and about the fact that they protect the heart (Buryat and Tuva shamans still use these as important shaman at-

tributes “received from the heaven”) (Van Deusen 1997). The role of sacrificial trees is also a central theme – the fact that in Manchu ritual cosmic trees lead to heaven and that in the shamanistic cosmology the heavens consist of nine stories.

The ritual part played by shamans in animal sacrifices was very important – in the case of the Manchus it was the shaman who cleaned the horse before the sacrifice. Almost all Eurasian people (including the Finno-Ugrians of the Volga area) display the ritual elements whereby they pour strong spirits in the ear of the sacrificial animal; if it shudders they see this as a sign that the deity has accepted the sacrifice. The photos and descriptions by the authors testify to the fact that there is practically no shamanistic ceremony without sacrifice and the subsequent communal eating. This also shows that the shamanistic rituals were the occasions for reinforcing cohesion within the community.

Similarly evident is the fact that homage to the ancestors is one of the most important elements of shamanism. Naturally, the prominent figures of the shaman pantheon were the most outstanding heroes and bravest warriors (e.g. Baturu Mani in Manchu culture) but we also find among them the seven spirits of the Plough star constellation. Naturally, shamans with uncommon skills or abilities were also much respected (e.g. shamans who could walk on fire). (I must note that I would have been glad to see more detailed and longer explanatory captions alongside the pictures of this.)

Foreign readers will open this book with a great deal of curiosity and thus expect more with regard to the old Chinese sources; they might like to see longer quotations from Chinese sources which are difficult to access and which mention shamans (or religious specialists fulfilling a similar social function.) To find and quote these texts is the task of Chinese scholars. It is also up to them to select representations concerning the early history of shamanism from among the material contained in the constantly increasing number of books containing reproductions of rock drawings. In the case of such an important source book as the present one, it would have been important to name the precise place (the name of the village) where, and the time (year) when each photograph was taken. Naturally, we know that the pictures were taken in about the 1980's and 90's and are the result of

two decades' work on the part of the authors. I am particularly grateful to them for their persistence in this labour – for the perseverance with which they carried on with their research despite the difficulties and thus preserved valuable material in a visual form.

Finally, let me describe a personal memory which is closely associated with the authors of this book. It was during my first trip to China in 1993 that I first met my Manchu colleagues in the city of Changchun. We discussed the questions and problems of shamanistic research as colleagues. I owe them the experience of seeing an old Manchu shaman reach the verge of trance – the effect on his face survives in a photograph, which I took at the time. This is the photograph on the front cover of the Hungarian and Japanese editions of my book “Shamans: Souls and Symbols” (Budapest 1994; Tokyo 1998).

The proliferation of publications about shamanism show that the growth of academic interest is entirely in sync with the fact that a cultural phenomenon which was thought to have disappeared, or was forbidden because it was judged politically damaging, is today taking on a new lease of life. It is important to establish this, as it has become clear at the end of the millennium that, from time to time, certain cultural phenomena can be born again or can be revived. An indication of this renewal is that the social functions of shamanism, which are considered the most general, find a mode of existence in the context of modern life. They are the following:

1. A healing function
2. The shaman ceremony as one man/woman theatre
3. The shaman as poet and minstrel
4. The shamans' ritual roles or functions in the community
5. The acceptance of roles as political leaders

These social spheres of action can all be found in the classic descriptions, which are the products of Russian ethnographic literature. It is not surprising therefore, that at the end of the millennium, all over Eurasia in regional shamanism, there are examples almost everywhere of modern versions of these functions. Let us take them in turn. As far as the healing function is concerned, it is not just a question of the survival of a local system of beliefs but quite simply of a

basic need, which forces the local people of remote regions, who have no medical care, to use the services of shamans who are reviving ancient folk medicine. It is important to note that, going by my experience, – and this is not mentioned in earlier literature on the subject – the shamans do not so much heal as prevent the complaints occurring. During ceremonies, they cleanse patients, who are losing their mental or physical balance, of negative influences; put more simply, the shaman works on the re-establishing of balance.

They do this by making predictions for the future, by throwing light on possible causes, by simple cleansing ceremonies, for instance by burning incense or the use of a “magic” (Kenin-Lopsan 1993) laying on of hands (as we managed to capture on film in Tuva in 1997).

Personal impressions of the shamans’ taking on of ritual roles tell us that, as the individuals responsible for organising ceremonies, they provide a kind of therapeutic atmosphere for those taking part, as we experienced in Korea, or as we saw during the filming of ceremonial animal sacrifices among the Buryat. The shamans, as leaders of the ceremony, were not just the performers of the ceremony but were teachers at the same time. They taught some of the participants (anyone interested and especially young people) how to behave appropriately in such an honoured, or what might best be described as “sacred”, situation. Closely linked to this social role is the fact that the shamans must recite long texts, sing them, recite them, and in many cases improvise them on the spot. This means that the shaman, though he is familiar with the tradition, the traditional melodies and rhythms, must still create the poetic text with the help of which he can summon the spirits. The use of poetic text on such a festive occasion, not only lifts the atmosphere of the ritual above the everyday, but allows the audience to participate in a kind of artistic experience. One more important circumstance is worth mentioning here, namely that, especially among the people of the ex Soviet Union, the shaman texts are always heard, even today, in languages which the authorities had almost succeeded in making these minorities forget. In other words, the shaman is the guardian of linguistic traditions. The preservation of linguistic texts also means the survival of ancient linguistic rhythms, which, on the one hand, help improvisation, and on the

other, phonetically preserve the mythological information which allows the texts to be re-created from time to time. V. V. Ivanov and V. N. Toporov wrote very interesting articles of *Mify narodov mira* (1980–1982) in the 70s on what this mythological information might be, in volumes, still unsurpassed, by the excellent Russian school of semiotics. According to their deliberations, the names of gods and the naming of local spirits, mountains, rivers, guardian spirits of rocks, can be considered as micro-texts which concentrate information within them, from which collective memory and the shamans' individual poetic creative skills can re-construct the shaman world view. This world view contains ethic judgements, provides models for standards of behaviour and thus makes orientation in the world easier for the individual. Among the rules on ethics, one of the most important is the unconditional respect for nature and the environment, the maintaining of the rule that we do not destroy the immediate environment unnecessarily, that is to say we maintain the state of balance which we inherited from our forefathers. Because this is the only way we can guarantee the next generation a decent life and a living in their native land.

Lastly, the undertaking of political roles. This social function is mentioned in older specialist literature, since even in the Mongolian empire of the great khans, which was an extremely hierarchical society, the role of the *beki* was well known and had the function of direct participation in political decision making, what is more, by the side of the Khan and the general. The shaman had a distinguished role because it was he who knew the various techniques of foretelling the future and was able to give advance warning of the right moment for various military undertakings. This was particularly important at a time when armies were equipped with bows and arrows, since the weather (dry or wet conditions) could influence their success a great deal. It is interesting that at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, those shamans who have suddenly appeared, as if out of nowhere, are not just healers in the narrow rooms of city blocks, do not just organise communal animal sacrifices somewhere in the Buryat hills or even in the inner city of Seoul, but also take on the political role of poet and appear in public to defend the interests of their homeland or their community. This acceptance of a political role is particularly impor-

tant (Balzer 1998) when the minority ethnic groups have hardly any educated representatives, so it is those who are literate or writers who have skills in public speaking, who must represent the minority politically, somewhere in the city or in parliament. It is no accident therefore, that the Vogul poet Yuvan Shestalov is one of those who deliberately states he is from a shaman family, even though a few decades ago, this was not something people readily talked about. Another person who has learned such strength of character from her shaman ancestors, is the young Nenets woman who performs songs learned from her grandmother, rewrites her words and perhaps will one day herself be a poet. But as she said, despite her college education, she would like to go back and live among her own people. She is not the only one. We found other examples among the younger generation of researchers who are beginning to study manifestations of shamanism, precisely because, as the only educated members of their nation, they feel it is their duty, or their sense of being chosen obliges them, to become acquainted with the traditions and be the ones to pass them on (Lar 1998).

I think that if my friend, Valeri Nikolaevich Basilov<sup>1</sup>, were here with us, he would now get up and say that these new young shamans of today are not genuine, but even so, these new manifestations must be examined. I must say that I was greatly encouraged by the words of my late and suddenly departed friend, because these young men and women city dwellers, who are descended from shamans and consider themselves the continuers of the tradition, spoke convincingly about their moral obligation to pass on the traditions. And this in turn means that not only is regional shamanism alive and well at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but will carry over into the 21<sup>st</sup> as well. To quote the famous phrase: Shamanism was alive, is alive and will go on living.

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<sup>1</sup> More about V. N. Basilov see Hoppál 1998: 179–183.

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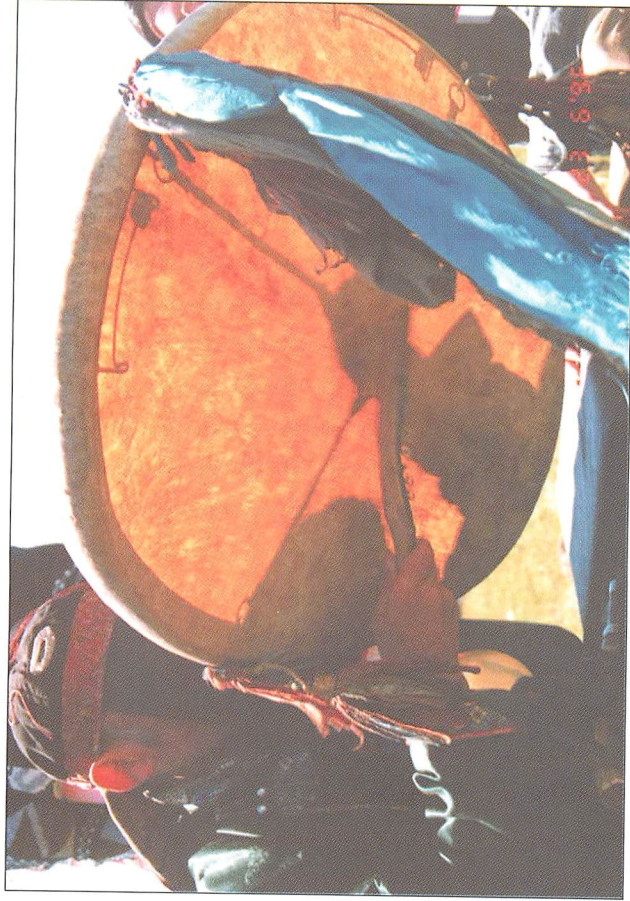
Buryat animal sacrifice at the shore of Lake Baikal. 1990s



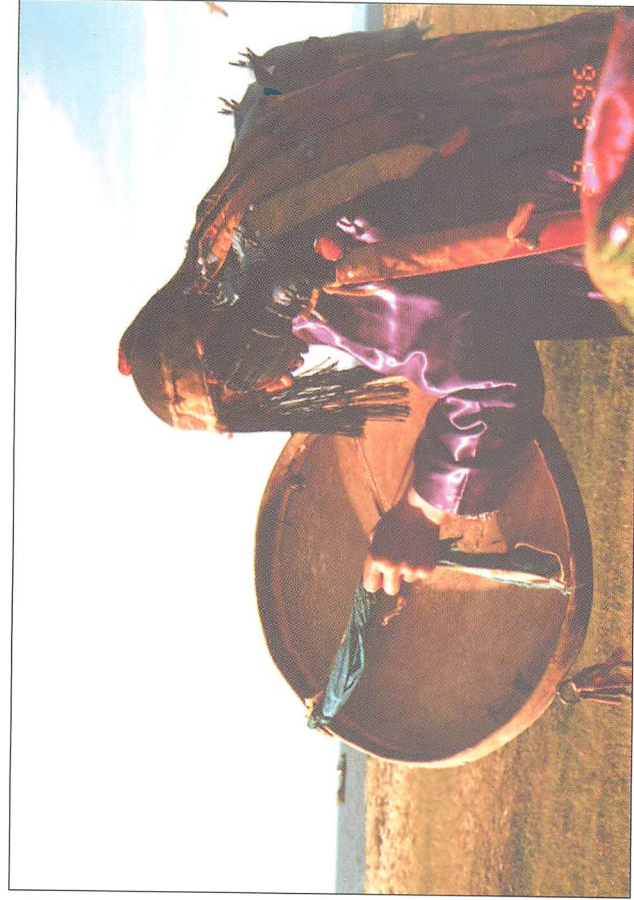
The great shaman of Mongols, Zerim-zaakin



Mongol shaman during an offering ceremony at the Lake Baikal (1997)



Mongol shaman during an offering ceremony at the Lake Baikal (1997)



Mongol shaman during an offering ceremony at the Lake Baikal (1997)



Healing by Tuva shaman



Ritual in Kyzyl by Tuva shaman



Ritual in Kyzyl by Tuva shaman

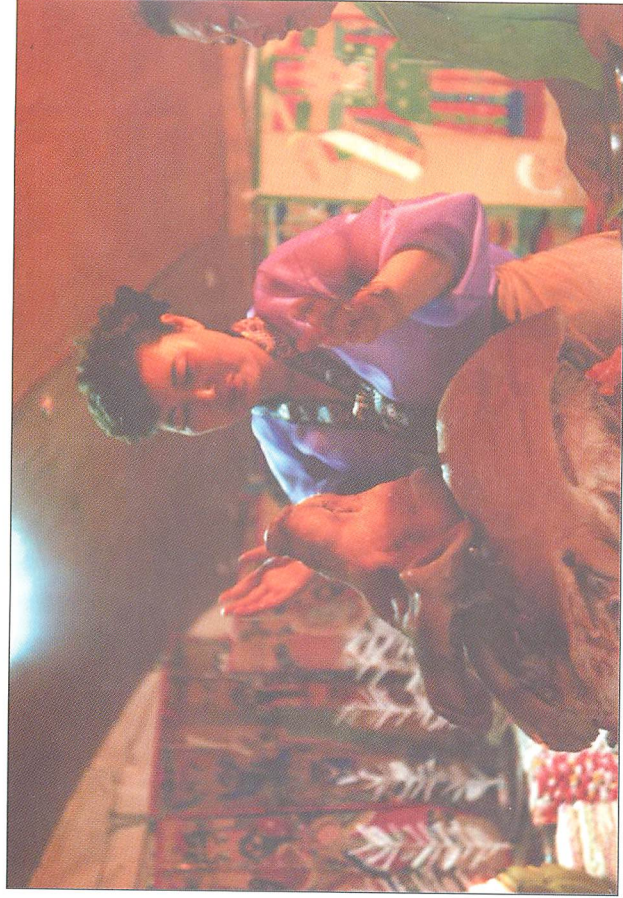




Shaman in Tuva



Korean shaman woman (*sundang*) during a ceremony (*kut*)



Korean shaman woman (*sundang*) during a ceremony (*kut*)

# **Kolva Volost and Kolva ethnographic group as an example of transition from nomadic to settled way of life.**

## **An attempt of analysis**

**Kirill Istomin**

### **Introduction**

The phenomenon of transition from nomadic to settled way of life is one of the most basic shifts in the culture of a people. As such, it has attracted the attention of ethnologists and cultural anthropologists for a long time. However, this phenomenon is not yet completely researched and the mechanisms occupied in it are not well studied. Therefore, every example of such a transition is important and needs investigation in order to research the whole phenomenon.

The aim of this paper is to discuss one of the examples of this process – the emerging and development of traditional economic complex of one of ethnographic groups of European Nenets – the Kolva Nenets. This still little researched ethnographic group has its localisation in the north of the Komi Republic, Russia, on the middle and low Kolva River, the tributary of Usa, inside the borders of so-called Kolva Volost. This is a place in the forest – tundra zone to the south of the huge tundra belt going from the Pechora River on the west to the Polar Ural mountains on the East (so-called Bolshezemelskaya Tundra – ‘Tundra of the Big Land’). The group is different to the neighboring Nenets population living in the tundra zone first of all by its settled way of life and the usage of Izhma dialect of Komi language as the first language. Historically, the group of Kolva Nenets derived from the tundra Nenets population in the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century by the process of sedentarisation. By the second part of this century, when it had abandoned its native Samoyedic lan-

guage and begun to use the language of the majority population of the forest tundra zone of the region – Izhma Komi. Thus it formed the distinctive ethnographic group, separated from the Tundra Nenets population by the set of cultural, linguistic and economical differences. However, in 1920s, Kolva Nenets still regarded themselves as a part of Nenets people, felt their unity with the tundra population of the Samoyedic origin and directly separated themselves from the Izhma Komi population, whose language they used.

Unfortunately, now this identity, as well as the most part of culture of Kolva Nenets, is destroyed. This is mostly provoked by the oil and gas drilling started in the region in the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the founding of the town of Usinsk connected to it. The appearance of this quite a big industrial town, which was populated mainly by Russians, in the center of the Volost (about 15 km from the village of Kolva) caused a significant change. The ecological and ethnical situation of the region changed and made the preservation of the traditional Kolva Nenets economy as well as many cultural norms impossible. As a result, most part of the population of former Kolva Volost identify itself as Komi and Russians now. In recent ethnographic literature there is even an opinion, that the group has completely disappeared (*Komi-z'ryjane...* 1993). However, in the process of writing this article, its author has received a growing set of evidences coming from informants as well as professional ethnographers making their fieldwork in the region, that the people referring to themselves as *Kolva Yaran* (Kolva Nenets) still exist in the north of the Usinsk region of the Komi Republic and in the Bolshezemelskaya tundra. The author is especially grateful to Dr. Tuula Tuisku from the Arctic Research Center, Rovaniemi, Finland for her interesting comments concerning this question. This shows, the modern state of the ethnographic group has to be further researched.

This paper is based on archive materials of 1920s, which can be found in the State Archive of Political Parties and Movements of the Komi Republic (SAPPM). First of all, a very accurate report of observation of Kolva Volost made in 1925 needs to be mentioned (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*). This report was made by the Komi regional department of the Committee of Assistance to peoples of Northern Regions, also known as the Committee of the North. Since

this was an operational document of the Committee, which was not aimed to be published, but to be used as a base for planning of the Committee's activity (the foundation of so-called cultural bases) in the region, it seems like the document must be reliable enough. Besides that, the author of the document is not Komi or Nenets but Russian worker of the Committee and, therefore, his opinion about the cultural position of the Volost tends to be more or less an opinion of an outsider. While this fact is a pity, there is still one serious advantage from it – the opinion of the author cannot be regarded as influenced by Komi or Nenets ethnocentrism and the very complicated interaction between these nations.

Besides this document, two other documents were also used. The first is the report about the activity of the Committee in 1925. This report is written by the Komi department for its main office in Moscow. Since the document was also not written for publishing, but as a source of decision making, it must also be reliable enough. Some parts of the document can be checked against the first document. The third document is the report about the planned control of the financial activity of the artei *Samoyedin*. The report was made in 1922 by the financial department of the government of the Komi Autonomous Area (Oblast). The document contains a number of references to its primary sources (bills, financial acts, gross-buchs and so on) and even copies of this sources. All this shows that the source must be reliable enough.

These sources make it possible to reconstruct an image of the Kolva Nenets way of life in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century and give a base to infer about the process of transformation of their culture. Since the history of the Kolva Nenets' culture and cultural transformation is actually the history of sedentariness, this inferring can illuminate the whole phenomenon of transition from nomadic to settled way of life.

This article starts with the brief description of the history of the Kolva Nenets ethnographic group and its culture and economy in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century as they are reflected by the mentioned documents. An attempt to analyse of this data is made in the second part of the article. As a result of this analysis, an image of the trans-

formation of the Kolva Nenets' culture in 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century is given.

### **The history of the Kolva Nenets ethnographical group and its economical and cultural position in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century**

The history of Kolva Nenets started in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its origin are connected to the name of well known orthodox Bishop Veniamin, who conducted his missionary activity among Nenets population in the 1820–1840s. In 1827, this bishop founded a church, in 20 km from the mouth of Kolva River. The reason for choosing this place for a church for newly baptised Nenets was, that the place was situated on reindeer routs and, therefore, was visited by Nenets at least twice each year (Zherebcov 1991). On the other hand, this place was situated on the border between the tundra, forest tundra and taiga ecological zones, among huge grasslands in the mouth of the river and, therefore, it suited well for permanent dwelling. Immediately after the foundation of the church, two Nenets families founded their permanent houses near it. After some years these families were accompanied by one Komi family and the newly established dwelling got an official name *Kolvinskaya Yselka* (later – the village of Kolva) (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 2). It seems as if, the emerging of this first settled population of the region was directly connected to the missionary activity. The fact is, that Bishop Veniamin as well as many others orthodox missionaries tried their best to destroy the nomadic way of life among their neophytes. Bishop Veniamin himself wrote, that the nomadic way of life makes it impossible for orthodox Nenets to visit church regularly and, therefore, it is a sin. This aspect of the activity of the Bishop Veniamin is mentioned by several authors (Zherebcov 1982, Khomich 1995), but often overlooked in research while overshadowed by the other (progressive) aspects of his missionary activity, the foundation, for example, of Nenets' grammar and the translation of the New Testament on the Nenets language. Of course, these aspects gave a lot to the development of Nenets culture, but we should not forget, that Veniamin was first of all an orthodox missionary and

the propaganda of truly Christian way of life in its orthodox sense was his primary goal. Therefore, the settling of Nenets ought to be one of the results of Christianisation and the foundation of the Kolva village was a part of this process.

Although Kolva attracted some part of Tundra Nenets population, in the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century its population grow very slowly. However, in the 1860–1880s, the process of settling of Tundra Nenets in the village significantly accelerated. The surnames of the Kolva's inhabitants became more diverse and by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the dwelling already had all the surnames of European Nenets. The sources mention such surnames as Mohto (which can be defined as a surname of the Valei clan), Sadibej (Sangibej), Hojurov (Hoju), Olim (the Vyuchei clan), Sadej, Narta (the Sadei clan), Manzadej, Palja (the Khatanzei clan) and Hahle, Sando (the Vanoita clan). In this period (i. e. in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century) there were 64 households with 300 settled Nenets in the community. Besides that there were also five Komi households (the number of residents is not mentioned in the sources). The total population of the village including nomadic Nenets, who were not residents of the dwelling, but were officially included in its population by the government (in Russian official terms *pripisany*) were 404 human beings (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 3).

At the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, some other dwellings of settled Nenets came to existence in the region. The biggest of them was the village of Makhariha having 9 households with 79 inhabitants (all of them were Nenets). Among other dwellings Ivan-ju-Vom and Os-Van can be mentioned (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 3).

The sources allow to make some conclusions about the way of life and traditional economy of the settled Nenets population. The basic economic activity was the cow breeding, hunting and fishing (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 5). Therefore, the economy of this part of population was complex and included foodproducing (cow breeding) as well as foodextracting branches. The sources contain also evidences about some agriculture in Kolva, which was based on potatoes and barley growing (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 5). However, this branch was not important for the Kolva population due to its ineffectiveness and high risk of a loosing harvest to frost. Cow



breeding in addition hunting were market-oriented. An essential part of the cow products, basically milk and butter as well as fish, meat and skins obtained from fishing and hunting were for sale in Russian market. These were an exchange for the industrial goods and food as well as for trading with Tundra Nenets population for reindeer meat and skins the Kolva Nenets needed. Unfortunately, the sources do not give an opportunity to determine the importance of each of these branches in the economical complex of the Kolva Nenets. Since the market of products of hunting was very small in 20s, the ratio of sectors during that period fixed in the documents was placed on the side of the food-producing branch.

Kolva cow breeding was highly developed and very effective. Its system has a lot of very striking similarities with the Izhma system of cow breeding, which gives an opportunity to suggest the borrowing of the system from the Komi. However, in the 1920s Kolva Nenets had many more cows than neighboring Komi population (in Kolva village there were approximately 4–5 cows in every household) (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, attach. table 2). Cow breeding was generally realised in Izhma way, i.e. in summer cows were pastured on neighboring grasslands without any observation. For most of the day, owners were occupied in preparing hay for winter storage only visiting their cows in the evening for milking. It seems like the Kolva Nenets hay storage was also more sufficient than the Komi one: there are evidences that Kolva Nenets always had enough hay to keep their cows giving milk in winter (*Komi-Zyryane...* 1993), while Komi had to use alternatives for cow feeding after January. An interesting fact is that, just as in Komi villages, the hayfields were the private property of the households while summer pastures were common property. The basic cow product utilised by Kolva Nenets was milk, meat was less important. The greater part of the obtained milk was further processed and sold in the form of butter and cheese. Such an important innovation as a mechanical separator for butter production was adopted by Kolva Nenets quite early. In 1924, there were two such separators in Kolva (they were bought by Kolva Nenets for collected sharing) and Kolva inhabitants expressed a desire to buy third machine as soon as an opportunity arose (*Otchet ob obsledo-*

vanii..., p. 8). These evidences show, that Kolva cow breeding was strongly market-orientated.

Kolva hunting was practiced in the form of market trapping as well as in the form of meat hunting. Kolva Nenets trapped blue tundra foxes and some ermine. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, trapping began to lose its importance due to decrease of the population of these animals in forest tundra (Khomich 1995). On the other hand, the sources contain information about highly developmental practice of rearing small blue foxes in Kolva. This practice is quite traditional for tundra Nenets (Kercelli 1911), but Kolva Nenets had further developed it and achieved quite spectacular results. In 1924, there were more than 200 mature blue foxes reared rown in Kolva and the author of the document even expressed hope, that this practice has a change to be developed into a highly productive market-oriented industry (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 6).

The methods of meat hunting were the same as among Tundra Nenets (Khomich 1995). In summer, Kolva Nenets hunted moulting birds, beating those unable to fly with sticks on rivers and lakes. They also trapped squirrels with stitch traps, made collective rides for moulted ducks (who also cannot fly and therefore can be driven to a closed water reservoirs and killed there in huge amounts) and so on (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 5).

Kolva fishing included Tundra Nenets as well as traditional Komi fishing practices. For example, Kolva Nenets used a traditional Komi fishing tool known as *gymga* (cone shaped fish trap made of twigs). Fishing rods were less popular (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 5). Although hunting and fishing were intensive, according to estimation of the document's author, Kolva Nenets used only a small part of the hunting as well as fishing resources of Kolva Volost. Kolva Nenets themselves said, that they did not have a reason to develop hunting, because they did not have a possibility to sell its products on the narrow market of the 20s (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 6). This means, that the food-extracting branches of the economy of Kolva Nenets were also market-orientated.

The described economic complex was characteristic for the most part of the Kolva population. However, it was not until the second

part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when a big group whose basic occupation was large-herd reindeer herding emerged in Kolva. At the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, about ¼ of Kolva population was occupied in reindeer herding, but it can be easily imaged, that reindeer herding had been more popular some decades before that (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 7). In the same time, a significant part of reindeer herders were occupied with others kinds of Kolva activities (for example cow breeding) and had, therefore, a mixed economic pattern.

Kolva reindeer herding was of semi-nomadic character and had a lot in common with Izhma reindeer herding with in its most important parameters. It was very often, that only males migrated with their reindeer while their wives stayed in the village and stored hay for cows. In winter, reindeer were pastured in areas situated near the village and their migrations formed a circle with a diameter up to 20 kilometers around it in the Izhma Komi fashion. In summer, Kolva Nenets made quite a distant migration to the tundra zone to the North-East reaching Yugorski Shar Peninsula and even the coast of Arctic Ocean near the mouth of Kara River. Therefore, these migrations could be up to 1000 km long. Usually Kolva Nenets started their migration at March in order to use the snow leaving in lower places in Tundra for travelling by sledges. Having a stop in their way for reindeer calving, they reached their summer pastures in July. In August they began their return journey having a stop in autumn pastures. During their migration, Nenets did not follow the direct way. The migration pattern was influenced by the morphology of tundra – for example, Nenets tried to follow the lines of hill ranges for they are drier and contain more food for reindeer. This pattern is basically the similar to that of the Tundra Nenets.

The basic economic unit among the Kolva Nenets reindeer herders was household consisting of people living in a single house in the village. The household almost always coincided with a big family. Responding to the pasturing conditions and the size of herds, some households could join together for the whole pasturing season or for a part of it. Usually, but not always, these households consisted of relatives. It seems like the clans did not have any influence upon the households' unification. The average size of Kolva Nenets herds were smaller than one of Izhma Komi, but much bigger than one of

Tundra Nenets. In the 1930s, an average Kolva reindeer herding household had approximately 350 reindeer. At the same time, an average Izhma Komi reindeer herder had about 500 reindeer while average Tundra Nenets household include about 120 reindeer (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, attach. table 4; *Otchet o deyatelnosti...*, p. 2). Although it is very difficult to evaluate the level of marketability of the Kolva reindeer herding, some conclusion about it can be done from the observation of so-called *Samoyedin* reindeer-herding artel, the voluntary union of reindeer herders organised as a share company. In the 1920s, this organisation incorporated the most part of the Kolva reindeer herders. According to the report of observation of this artel, the reindeer herders themselves consumed not more than 40–45% of the utilised reindeer-herding production (*Otchet o proverke...*, p. 3). On the other hand, the percentage of the production sold outside the Volost was not very big either (about 25%) (*Otchet o proverke...*, p. 3). Therefore, we should conclude, that more than 25% of the reindeer herding production was distributed in the Volost itself among the non-reindeer herding population. It can be easily imagined, that this production was distributed in exchange for the production of cow breeding, hunting, fishing and may be agriculture. In this case, we should admit some kind of economic specialisation inside the population of the Volost. Although the percentage of reindeer herding production for sale was not very big, the reindeer herding of Kolva Volost definitely cannot be labeled as natural, i. e. aimed to satisfy only the needs of the reindeer herder.

Therefore we can say that, at least at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Kolva economy had a strong connection with market forces. The sources contain evidence about two links with of these connections:

The first link was the close trade connections with the Tundra Nenets. Kolva Nenets had contacts with the tundra during the whole history of the ethnographic group. The document of 1920s contain evidence about approximately 300 nomadic (Tundra) Nenets, who spent winter near Kolva and other villages of settled Nenets and were therefore included by the officials in the population of the Volost. Although there is no evidence that these Nenets were the only Tundra Nenets spending winter in the Volost (in contrast, the region is one of the most popular winter places for Tundra Nenets now and it

can be supposed, that it was not less popular in the past), even 300 is quite a great amount of people for Bolshezemelskaya tundra (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 3). These Nenets were in permanent contact with the Kolva population during the winter and trade was an important part of this contact. The basic goods exported to the tundra were milk products (cheese and butter) which were already very important for Tundra Nenets' consumption the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. A significant role in the Kolva export was also played by things, which can be labelled as European goods (bread, hunting ammunition, etc.) obtained by Kolva Nenets from the southern direction of their trade links. All these goods were traded in exchange for the products of reindeer herding (reindeer skins and partly meat). It should be mentioned here, that neither Nenets nor Komi know reindeer milking (*Otchet o proverke...*, attach. 3).

The second direction was to the south, consisting of links with the Russian market. Kolva Nenets got access to this market through Pustozersk, Cherdyn and Izhma merchants. In this direction, basically the products of food-extracting branches (furs and valuable fish) and only partly the products of cow breeding were sold. It could be easily imaged, however, that a part of goods obtained from the trade with Tundra Nenets was further sold in this direction as well. It is obvious, for example, that the trade mediation was a significant part of the activity of the *Samoyedin* artel (*Otchet o proverke...*, p. 3). It can be concluded, however, that the development of trade mediation was accelerated by the politics of the Committee of North. On the other hand, it is obvious that the propositions of trade mediation (any may be mediation itself) was in the Volost before that. The goods obtained from the south included basically products of agriculture, however, that a significant part of these goods was the objects of orthodox cult (body crosses, church candles and icons). For example, these objects compiled 25% of goods bought by the *Samoyedin* artel for its members in 1925 (one should keep in mind, that it was quite dangerous to buy such things at that time, when the struggle of Communist government of Russia against religion took its most strong forms) (*Otchet o proverke...*, attach. 5).

Here it is possible to say some words about the wide-spread opinion in literature about unequal market relationships between Izhma

Komi and Nenets and the full economic dependence of the later on former. It can be mentioned first of all, that the proponents of this point of view (Islavin 1847, Zhuravsky 1911 and so on) neither referred to the settled Kolva Nenets. As it can be seen from the sources, at least at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, that this dependence did not exist. It is doubtful, that it could exist in the previous time, because the Izhma Komi and Nenets needed the same kind of things and the content of their export was also basically the same. The fact of the change of language, which is often used as an argument for the dependence of Kolva Nenets on Komi, clearly points to a strong cultural influence, but not to the economic dependence. Since the Kolva Nenets were an ethnic minority in the region, the change of language could easily occur due to this fact only. But the relationships between these groups were far more complicated than simply co-existence. They were accompanied by a number of cultural borrowings from the both sides. These relationships presupposed the numerous contacts, which could result in the borrowing of the language of the majority by the minority.

The social life of Kolva Nenets was quite different from that of the Tundra Nenets. One of the central position in the social life of the latter was occupied by clans. The clan of every Nenets can be easily defined by his surname, and the belonging to a clan significantly influenced the pattern of social interaction and even the manner of conversation between Nenets (Khomich 1995). The clan is the main organising power for collective actions in Tundra and the source of the juridical power. But, although in the 1920s, many Kolva Nenets still remembered the tundra clans to which they belonged, these clans did not play any role in the social life of the villages (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 3). On the other hand, a significant role in the social life was played by the institutions of the Orthodox Church. The church building was the place, where Kolva Nenets gather together to solve the problems of the Volost. The mobilisation of the population of the Volost to do different common works, such as making fences for cows, cleaning of pastures and so on was made also through the institutions of the Orthodox Church. The church was the official owner of the public objects of the Volost, (for example of the milk separators mentioned above) the job of baying, repairing and

reconstruction of these objects was done also through it. The most outstanding and the best know example of the church social institutions in Kolva is the so-called "reindeer herd of God". This herd was compiled from reindeer, voluntary presented to the church by the Kolva reindeer herdersto the church. This herd was pastured by a specially hired reindeer herder who got a salary from church founds. Leaving apart the sacral meaning of this herd for Kolva Nenets, we can conclude that it had a stabilising economic effect as well. Every reindeer herder who had lost his reindeer for some reason could borrow reindeer from this herd. At the same time, every inhabitant of the Volost, whose surplus fell down below the level needed for surviving, could get an assistance from the herd without an obligation to return the debt. Therefore, the herd definitely was some kind of institution of economic and social insurance.

### **The analysis of the presented data**

As it follows from the data presented above, the core of the Kolva Nenets who settled under the influence of Christianity and changed the "full of sin" (in the opinion of missionaries) nomadic way of life to the completely Christian way of life near the "house of God". It is definitely not by accident, that the attitude to Christianity is the most distinct difference between the spiritual cultures of Kolva and Tundra Nenets. On the other hand, the common peculiarities of traditional economy and spiritual culture (for example, language) of Kolva Nenets and Izhma Komi allow us to suppose also the influence of the neighboring Komi population upon the new settlers. It can be concluded, that Christianity was the reason of settling for the Kolva Nenets, but the influence of the settled Komi population was the necessary precondition of it. As can be judged from the peculiarities of the economic activity and some elements of material culture (methods of cow breeding and pasturing, the logged houses of Izhma type), the technologies and knowledge needed for the permanently settled way of life were borrowed from Izhma Komi.

It was not after the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the most characteristic elements of the social life of the Kolva Nenets came into existence. The settled economy demanded a higher level of social

interactions than the characteristic for Tundra Nenets of that period of nomadic economy based on the large scale reindeer herding. Therefore, more sophisticated social institutions were needed to make these interactions possible. These social institutions were made on the basis and with support of the ideology of Orthodox Church. This can be easily explained by the fact, that the Orthodox ideology with its aim to determine the whole public and private life of members of the Orthodox Church, could offer a tight and complete model of the social interactions based on collective mobilisation. This model was suited well to the needs of settled way of life.

Traditionally, the Tundra Nenets whose mobility decreased because of their reindeer's loss as a result of epizootia, deep snow in winter (preventing the reindeer from getting a sufficient amount of lichen) or other reasons of this kind, based their life on the food-extracting branches of their economy (hunting and fishing). These branches were basically emergency source of surplus for the reindeer herding tundra population. Although these branches did not suite for the permanently settled way of life, they were kept untouched in the economic complex of Kolva Nenets and their technologies were basically the same ones as in tundra. Supplying the food-producing branches of traditional economy, they helped to keep equilibrium in the economic life of Kolva and were a source of goods to sell on the market. A complex economy based on food-producing and food-extracting branches is characteristic for many peoples living in the same natural conditions as Kolva Nenets (Ust-Cilma and North-Siberian Russians, part of Pomors, Karelians, Northern Finns, Sami, Northern Norwegians of Finnmark, etc.). Therefore, this economy could be supposed as an optimal adaptation for these climatic conditions.

Having abandoned the traditional reindeer herding, Kolva Nenets tried to keep as many elements of their traditional culture untouched as possible. For example, they preserved intact a significant part of their traditional diet, the traditional costume, some house-keeping tools and objects, means of transportation such as boats and so on. The raw material for making most of these objects as well as the base of the traditional diet was the production of reindeer herding (skins, meat, horns of reindeer and so on). Therefore, Kolva Nenets needed



to keep access to this production. The easiest way to obtain the production of reindeer herding was to start trading with Tundra Nenets. This trade ought to be quite profitable for Kolva Nenets because the Tundra Nenets' dependence on imported goods (and milk products in their account) was already very high in the second part of 19<sup>th</sup> century and become higher as time passed. On the other hand, Kolva Nenets also needed the imported goods (for example hunting ammunition) for themselves and had to begin trade with southern territories as well.

Since the need of imported goods always existed in the economy of Kolva Nenets, this economy originally emerged as a more or less market-orientated one. The market-orientation of the economy increased over the time and this fact allowed Kolva Nenets to occupy the equal position with merchants. Furthermore, Kolva Nenets could even try to occupy the positions of Izhma merchants in the Tundra trade when the Izhma was suppressed by Russian officials.

It is obvious, that this economic system provide quite a high quality of life for Kolva Nenets. In some aspects, the Kolva level of life was even higher than in Izhma (for example, Kolva Nenets had more cows and their cows could be milked all winter). Therefore it is obvious, that Kolva Volost attracted the tundra population. This fact was especially important in 1860s, when epizooties and overgrazing caused a very significant loss of reindeer among the Nenets of Bolshezemelskaya Tundra. As a result, a lot of Nenets completely lost their reindeer appeared in Tundra. These losers experienced big difficulties in returning to reindeer herding, because their pastures were occupied by more successful reindeer herders of Nenets or Komi origin, who could restore their herds faster. Therefore, these Nenets had to settle and change their economic pattern.

However, the traditional activities of the settled Tundra Nenets, i.e. hunting, fishing and gathering, could not supply their life for a long time. Therefore, a lot of losers were attracted to Kolva populated by the people of the same culture. This fact can be proved by the statistical data showing, that the population of the Kolva Volost rose most significantly from 1860 till 1880. In the same time, new Kolva surnames (actually clan names) were recorded (for example Horuci and Lehe) (*Otchet ob obsledovanii...*, p. 2).

The newcomers caused certain threat for the social institutions of the Kolva Volost. These institutions were based on the Orthodox ideology, and the presence of Tundra Nenets, who were still pagan or semipagan at that time, destabilised the community. Therefore, in order to be accepted in the community of Kolva Volost Villages, the newcomers had to accept some elements of the Kolva spiritual culture, basically the Orthodox ideology. However, there was at least one important difference between the newcomers and the core of the Kolva Volost population. In contrast to Kolva Nenets, the newcomers, who abandoned reindeer herding under the pressure of circumstances, wanted to return to it some day or at least keep relations with the Tundra as a cultural area. The social institutions of Kolva could assist them in turning their dream into reality. Therefore, the institution of the “reindeer herd of God” came into existence (it was mentioned in the first time in 1869). The presence of the common stock of reindeer gave the reindeer herders a possibility to restore their herds very fast and win the competition with the most successful reindeer herders of tundra.

As a result, reindeer herding returned to the economic complex of Kolva Volost, but it was reindeer herding of a modified form. The Kolva reindeer herders were economically, socially and spiritually connected to the village as a permanent dwelling place. The optimal form of reindeer herding in this conditions was the semi-nomadic one. This new form of reindeer herding used by the Kolva Nenets was formed under the influence of the Izhma semi-nomadic reindeer herding. The emergence of reindeer herding made the Kolva economy more independent from the Tundra market and, therefore, more sustainable. It also gave the new source of goods for trade.

## **Conclusions**

Therefore, using all the available material we can conclude, the following:

Kolva Nenets appeared as an ethnographic group, who had settled, bred cows, hunted and fished at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> century under the influence of the Orthodox Church and the neighboring Komi population. The formation of this ethnographic group finished

in the second part of 19<sup>th</sup> century by including the big group of Tundra Nenets and appearance of the Kolva reindeer herding. The balanced economic complex and sophisticated social organisations where the Orthodox ideology played an important role, provided quite high life conditions for Kolva Nenets. The market orientation of the economy allowed Kolva Nenets to occupy an important place in the economic life of Bolshezemelskaya tundra of 1920s and to compete with Izhma Komi for the tundra market. All this shows quite a successful adaptation of the old nomadic culture to the new settled life style and gives evidence, that the fruitful sedentarisation is possible.

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# An Outline of Descriptions of Ob-Ugrians and Samoyeds in West-European and Russian Sources from the 11<sup>th</sup> Through the 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries<sup>1</sup>

Art Leete

Researching Samoyeds in the modern sense is closely related to earlier descriptions of uncivilised peoples from the Middle Ages. The impact of earlier descriptions may be even greater than it is generally thought to be (18<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries are regarded as beginning of researching West-Siberian peoples). A number of contemporary ethnographic descriptions have already been applied by medieval and early-modern authors.

Reports of the Samoyed<sup>2</sup> and Ob-Ugric peoples can be divided into three separate periods (e.g. 11<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries; 18<sup>th</sup> century – beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century; ab. 1917 – present). Different ways of researching the Samoyed and Ob-Ugric peoples have also provided completely different descriptions of basic personalities of the native peoples, the topic addressed in the present paper. Basic characteristics of describing uncivilised peoples, including West-Siberian peoples, in the Middle Ages are also related to the personality models of The Other.

The 1<sup>st</sup> report period (11<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries) can be characterised as being *fantastical*. The first written records about Ob-Ugrians in Russian chronicles (which in turn mark the beginning of violent conflict between Russians and Ob-Ugrians) are regarded as the beginning of

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<sup>1</sup> This article has been prepared by support of the Estonian Science Foundation (project no 3134).

<sup>2</sup> In earlier sources, the Samoyeds are mostly the Nenets (Yuraks). The Samoyeds are also the Enets, Nganasans and the Selkups.

this period. The Battle of Poltava (1709) in the Great Northern War could be regarded as the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> period. As after the battle, a great number of West-Europeans were moved to Siberia and the descriptions by them already had a different philosophical and scientific basis as compared with the works of earlier travellers and chronicle writers.

### Early accounts of the Samoyed and Ob-Ugric peoples in Russian sources

The first account of the *Yugra*<sup>3</sup> in Russian chronicles dates back to 1032. That year, the Novgorod people, with Uleb at the head made a raid on the “iron gates”<sup>4</sup>, and were defeated there by the *Yugra* people, so that “only a few of them returned, while many were killed” (*Povest...* 1950b: 373; Shcheglov 1993: 16).

Probably, as in 1032 already the Mansi were regarded as remarkable enemies, not so incredible descriptions of Northern peoples could emerge in such circumstances then and hereafter, when they circulated in Western Europe.

There are more similar military accounts of the *Yugra* and Samoyed peoples in Russian chronicles. For example, they had violent conflicts with Russians in 1114, 1187, 1193, 1221, 1230, 1323, 1329, 1357, 1364, 1446 (or 1445), 1465, 1467, 1481, 1483 and 1499 (*Lavrentyevskaya...* 1997: 445; Shcheglov 1993: 17–21).

The Nestor Chronicle (C12) provides the first account actually discussing the West-Siberian cultures involving the Ob-Ugric and Samoyed peoples.

The Nestor chronicle suggests that Ob-Ugrians belong to the offspring of Noah’s son Yaphet (*Afet*). Yaphet was also regarded to own all Northern regions, including Scythia (*Skufia*). Among his pagan (*jazyci*) offspring, Yugras have been mentioned (*Lavrentyevskaya...* 1997: 1–5; *Povest...* 1950a: 9–10). The above conception with re-

<sup>3</sup> In chronicles *Yugra* signifies the Khanty (Ostyak) and Mansi (Vogul) peoples. Evidently in this case the Mansi are considered.

<sup>4</sup> The Urals

gard to the peoples of Eastern and Northern regions to be descendants of Yaphet is characteristic of European descriptions of uncivilised peoples in the Middle Ages.<sup>5</sup>

The Nestor Chronicle provides a description of Yugras and Samoyeds by a person named Gyuryata Rogovich:

“Now I am going to tell you the story that I heard four years ago from Gyuryata Rogovich, an inhabitant of Novgorod. He said: “I sent my messenger to Pechora, to the people who pay tax to Novgorod. After that he went to the Yugra land where the people speak incomprehensible language and in the North their neighbours are Samoyeds.” But the Yugra told the messenger: “We discovered a natural wonder that we had never heard before and it is already three years about the mountains that extend to the Arctic Ocean and high up in the sky. And there is much shouting and clamour and somebody is digging in the mountain in attempt to get out of it. And there is a small hole cut in the mountain through which they talk. But their language is incomprehensible. In order to ask for some iron, they point at iron and make movements with their hands. When someone gives them a knife or battle-axe, they give furs in return. The way there to the mountains is quite impassable because of chasms, snow and forests. Therefore, we never go there. The path also goes on into the North”” (*Lavrentyevskaya*... 1997: 234–235; *Povest*... 1950a: 167, 369).

For his descriptions of the cultural uniqueness and origin of the Yugra and Samoyed peoples, Nestor found support from the Mephodi

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<sup>5</sup> Descendants of Magog, son of Yaphet (1 Moses. 10:2) were also considered to be the Scythes, and their descendants the Yugra, Samoyeds and other Northern peoples in the Middle Ages and beginning of Modern period (Tokarev 1966: 48). The Bible does not provide the division of the world between Noah's sons. Nestor has borrowed the idea of Yaphet's ownership of northern regions from Gregorius Amartol's chronography. In “Tales of bygone years” Noah's sons divided the world by lot (*Povest*... 1950a: 10; *Povest*... 1950b: 205).

The Arabic version of the legend tells about the bloodthirsty Yadzhudzh and Madzhudzh peoples. They were described as four-eyed (two eyes on the forehead and two on the breast), with long ears extending to the shoulders, covered with long thick hair and producing the voice resembling the snake's whisper. With the end of the world approaching, Allah had to set them free from behind the stone wall, so that they could produce total chaos (Kamanin 1969: 232–233).

of Patar<sup>6</sup> accounts of Alexander of Macedonia's activities, e.g.:

"In eastern countries, Alexander, king of Macedonia reached the sea called the home of the Sun. There he met the unkempt people of the Yaphet's tribe. Filthy as they were, he saw them eat all kinds of disgusting things, such as mosquitoes, flies, cats and snakes. Also, they did not bury dead bodies, but cannibalised them, as with miscarriages and unkempt animals. When Alexander saw that, he was scared that they would produce offspring and thus sully the whole earth. Thus, he sent them to Northern lands up to the hills. He ordered them to go high up to the hills. And, by God's command, the mountains closed as high as 12 cubits (ab. 6 metres). Also, the copper gates got shut and protected by a covering called *sunklit*?. Should anybody wish to take them, he cannot, even with fire, because *sunklit* cannot be destroyed either by fire or iron" (*Lavrentyevskaya*... 1997: 235–236; *Povest*... 1950a: 167–168, 369).

As was typical of the Middle Ages, remote cultures have been explained through antique character. With geographical knowledge progressing, folklore in the Middle Ages constantly placed the settled area of Yaphet's descendants on the edge of the known world. The settled area of the hyperborean Magogs then moved gradually farther to the Northern and North-Eastern areas.

According to medieval oral tradition, Alexander the Great traveled to the end of the world, and met there demons, mythical creatures and other inhabitants of the other world, pagan popes, *ichthyophages*, water nymphs, unicorns, hairy giants armed with cudgels (whom he fought with), fire-spewing *cynocephali*, *sciapodes* and creatures with horse's and bird's heads, governess of the Amazon, *gymnosophists*, fire-spitting birds, *cytloposes* and headless humans. He was also at the gates of the Garden of Eden (Ott 1998: 75, 76, 77; Cohen 1998: 42). In the Middle Ages such stories were regarded as real (Ott 1998: 76). As compared to the above, the

<sup>6</sup> Here the book "Revelations of Mephodi of Patar" is referred to, which describes the end of the world. The book is compiled by an anonymous author, but its authorship is assigned to Mephodi writer in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Patar is the city in the South-West Asia (*Povest*... 1950b: 424, 457).

<sup>7</sup> Sunklit (Creek *asugentios* – 'not mixed') – an esoteric substance that prevents against destruction caused by fire and iron (*Povest*... 1950b: 458).

description of Yaphet's race has a relatively realistic implication. Although that it is not about people's ability to interrelate the reality and unreal images of Alexander's trips to Eastern areas. Generally, Alexander of Macedonia is regarded as the symbol of the cognitive conquest over the unknown East, and especially in the Middle Ages, majority of the information pertaining to Eastern areas was related to him (Cohen 1998: 41). The Alexander's material was the gateway through which many of the monsters of classical provenance entered the imagination of the Middle Ages (Cohen 1998: 42).

"A story of the unfamiliar peoples living in Eastern regions", the description compiled at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century or beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is another important source for East-European natives. The text consists of the descriptions of nine "unfamiliar" tribes. These peoples inhabit the areas East of "Yugra land", and are mostly called "Samoyeds". The accounts are partly realistic and partly esoteric.

Some of different tribes of "Samoyeds" are described as cannibals. During the summer season some of them live in the sea, for on the land their bodies become cracked. Thus, they stay in water and dare not come onto the land. Some other Samoyeds are hairy from the navel to their heels, when otherwise they look like ordinary people. There is mention about headless Samoyeds, also (Tokarev 1966: 37-38).

"On that same land there live some other Samoyeds who have their mouth on the top of their head. They do not talk. They have coarse manners. When they eat, they cut fish or meat and place it on the crown of their head under a cloth or fur cap. And they move their shoulders up and down during eating. [---] Upstream on that same river Ob, there live people who walk day and night underground along some other river using lights" (Tokarev 1966: 38).

In other Russian chronicles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the peoples living to the East of the Urals are also called "black people" (Shcheglov 1993: 25).

The Russian chronicles of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century recording the Russian conquest of West-Siberia, provide stereotyped descrip-



tions of the Khanty, Mansi and Nenets peoples. The image of the “land of darkness” occurred in the Nestor’s Chronicle already, as well as some other aspects (eating disgusting things). The Rummyantsev Chronicle has provided the following description of the West-Siberian native peoples, e.g.:

“Ostyaks and Samoyeds have no laws. They worship their idols and make offerings to them. They eat the meat of animals and disgusting beasts, drink blood like water and eat roots” (*Sibirskiyе... 1987: 32*). Another variant of the Rummyantsev Chronicle also describes eating grass (*Sibirskiyе... 1987: 38*).

In Savva Yesipov’s Chronicle Siberia is also called “Northern land” (or “midnight land”) (*Sibirskiyе... 1987: 43, 75, 80, 91*). Yesipov has a somewhat longer description of the native peoples, as compared with Rummyantsev, although similar in most aspects (*Sibirskiyе... 1987: 45, 80–81*).

In chronicles similar introductory phrases describing native peoples’ character are often followed by descriptions of battles, showing Samoyeds and Ob-Ugrians as more or less equal foes of Russians. Thus, the descriptions do not give almost any information about the actual real image of Northern peoples among Russian learned people. Also, in spite of their somewhat derogatory attitude, the accounts contain basic characteristic features of these peoples, such as making animal offerings, eating raw meat, drinking fresh blood of a killed animal, etc. In most cases the routine introductory phrases of the chronicles do not contain any improbable or invented accounts.

The chronicle “A Story of the Unfamiliar Peoples Living in Eastern Regions” is exceptional among Russian sources, as there are abundant esoteric accounts of Samoyeds, as was typical of medieval West-European and Arab sources.

### **Early descriptions of West-Siberian peoples by West-Europeans and Arabs *Plano Carpini and Rubruc***

Europeans started to describe the lands to the East of the Urals in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Plano Carpini (Giovanni del Plano Carpine) traveled in Central Asia and Mongolia in the years 1245–47. Carpini has provided the first account of Samoyeds in Western sources. He describes them as inhabiting the area North-East of the Volga-Bulgars. According to him, “Samogeds live on hunting only; their tents, as well as their clothes, are made of animal hide” (Plano Carpini 1997: 51–52). Besides realistic evidence, Carpini has also provided numerous esoteric accounts in his descriptions of Northern peoples, when describing some people living in the neighbourhood of Samoyeds, e.g.:

“When moving forward, they reached a land by the ocean where they met some monsters. As we were made believe, they looked like human, while they had feet of an ox, the head of the human and the face of the dog. They spoke two words in human language, and barked every third like dogs. They, then, placed barking in the middle of their talk while they stuck to the subject, and so it was easy to follow their talk” (Plano Carpini 1997: 52).

Also, Plano Carpini repeats himself claiming that there are “Parossides” and “Samogeds” living in the area North of Russia, Mordvians, Main Bulgaria (Volga-Bulgarians) and Bashkarts (Bashkirs), and farther in the desert by the ocean there live the people who are said to have “the dog’s face” (Plano Carpini 1997: 74). Samogeds are also mentioned among the territories captured by Tatars (Plano Carpini 1997: 60).

Plano Carpini has also provided a detailed description about the meeting of Mongols with the people living below the Caucasus Mountains. This is obviously related to the legends regarding Alexander of Macedonia’s trip to Eastern areas (which are apparently related to the descriptions of Ob-Ugrians; connections are even more apparent considering the fact that at that time Europeans did not differentiate between the Caucasus and Urals. The Urals were considered to be a part of the Caucasus, while the Caucasus was believed to

extend throughout Asia West of the Indian Ocean) (see also Plano Carpini 1997: 385; Rubruc 1997: 122; commentary: Rubruc 1997: 397). Plano Carpini's description is as follows:

“According to oral tradition, the people living by the Caspian Sea, when they heard the rumble of the army approaching, started to destroy the mountain. And when Tatars returned there after ten years, they found ruins. When the Tatars tried to approach the locals, they had no success, as there seemed to be a kind of cloud between them which they could not surpass. When they got to it, they lost their sight. The locals, on the other hand, supposed that the Tatars were scared to approach and attacked them. When they reached the cloud, however, they were not able to proceed for the above reason” (Plano Carpini 1997: 47).

Rubruc (1253) has mentioned the *orenga* who tie polished bones under their feet and move with them on snow or ice with such a pace that they can catch birds and animals. And there are many other poor people inhabiting Northern areas, as long as they can endure severe weather conditions” (Rubruc 1997: 150; see also Kamainin 1969: 237).

Rubruc has described the northernmost parts of the world as follows:

“The edge of the Northern corner is unfamiliar because of extreme cold. There are both permafrost and snow. I asked about monsters or monster-like humans, mentioned by Isidorus and Solin<sup>8</sup>. The Tatars told me they had never seen anything like that. And thus we are very sceptical about the real existence of them” (Rubruc 1997: 150).

#### *Other authors/sources*

Arab historians Abu-el-Hassan Masudi (end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century – 956) and Ahmed Ibn Fadlan (first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century) placed the traditional settled area of the Yazdzhudzh and Madzhudzh peoples to the

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<sup>8</sup> Here probably the book “Collection of Noteworthy Things” by Gaius Iulius Solinus, Roman writer from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, is referred to, who was popular in the Middle Ages (see the commentary by Rubruc 1997: 400).

Northern Asia, East of the Ural Mountains, “land of eternal darkness” (Kamanin 1969: 234).

Ibn Fadlan tells about the land which is at a three-month distance from the settled area of Volga-Bulgars and where “the night is shorter than an hour”, the story that he originally heard from the ruler of the Volga-Bulgars. The ruler also told him about miracles which he said he had seen. For example, he met a man from the “tribe of giants” inhabiting an area around the Arctic Ocean. The giant was about five metres tall, with the head of the size of a big pot, a span-size nose, very large eyes and fingers. His terrible looks scared both the ruler and people in general. They talked to him, but did not get any answer. Then the ruler wrote down all his questions. The giant’s answers showed that he belonged to the Yadhudzh and Madzhudzh tribe and lived by the sea (Kamanin 1969: 234–235).

Also, a description of Siberia or “land of darkneses” by Ibn-Battuta, Arab 14<sup>th</sup> century traveller, should be highlighted. According to Ibn-Battuta, only merchants visited the “land of darkneses”, where they did not meet anybody. They left their goods there and the day after they would find the things provided by the locals in exchange at that same place:

“The guide is the dog that has been to that land before. Such a dog may cost up to 1000 dinars. The vehicle is harnessed to the neck of one dog and is pulled by three dogs. Should the first vehicle halt, the other also stop. People would never beat or scream at their dogs. When food is brought, they first feed their dogs and then give to other people. Otherwise the dogs would get angry with them and run away, leaving their host dying. After a 40-day trip<sup>9</sup>, the travellers reach the land of darkness. There they leave their goods that they had with them and fall asleep. In the morning they would find the furs of sables, squirrels and martens instead. If a merchant is satisfied with these goods, he takes them along, if not, he leaves them there, so that some more furs would be added, or else taken away during the following night, while leaving the merchant’s goods untouched. That is their way of buying and selling. People who have come there have no

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<sup>9</sup> According to Ibn-Battuta, the journey starts from the land of Volga-Bulgars (Timofeyev 1983: 175).

idea with whom they are trading: people or genies" (Timofeyev 1983: 176; see also Shcheglov 1993: 24).

Ibn-Battuta himself has not been to the "land of darkness", but refers to the Volga-Bulgars who have told him all that. Some researchers are sceptical, however, if he has ever been face to face with Bulgars at all. According to medieval standards, the work of Ibn-Battuta should contain material congruent with earlier works (Timofeyev 1983: 176–177).

Timofeyev has also considered various reasons why Volga-Bulgars gave misleading information to Arab travellers about Northern lands, e.g.:

"In an attempt to keep out Arab travellers from the Far North, they deliberately invented incredible stories of the wild and blood-thirsty hunters living in Northern areas who would massacre every foreigner that dares invade the land of darkness. It was not so hard to scare medieval merchants who considered polar lights to be fighting heavenly genies" (Timofeyev 1983: 175).

The above conception by Timofeyev might be a bit of an exaggeration, yet it is one of the explanations for this phenomenon. Ibn-Battuta's work, however, contains stereotyped descriptions of remote peoples and thus cannot be rationalised by real life.

Y. Simchenko has provided the following commentaries on West-Siberian geography in the given period, e.g.:

"Even in times of Gerard Mercator<sup>10</sup>, when there was quite a lot of information about the region, people with dogs' heads and faces on the breast, as well as one-legged and one-armed monsters were drawn on Northern areas by cartographers" (Simchenko 1975: 114). Mercator provides descriptions of cockatrice, who have feminine upper parts of their bodies and who have tail of the snake and wings of the cock from the navel. Also, he provides description of the island where live people with the dog's head. Mercator also describes wild Amazons (Tokarev 1966: 70–71). Simchenko has suggested that the image of people with animal heads might have been caused

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<sup>10</sup> Gerardus Mercator (original name Gerard de Cremer) (1512–1594), Flemish cartographer whose most important innovation was the map, later known as the Mercator projection. His major work "Atlas" was published in 1595.

by the misinterpretation of native peoples' distinctive clothing. The Arctic peoples used to wear headgear made of animal heads. The travellers who saw Samoyeds at a distance, then took them as having animal heads (Simchenko 1975: 115).

In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the mapping of Arctic areas underwent rapid changes. Also, changes in geographical worldview were put down on maps very quickly (Starkov 1992: 249–250).

### **Siegmund von Herberstein's Descriptions of the Peoples living to the East of the Urals**

Siegmund von Herberstein (1486–1566) visited Russia in 1517 and 1526–27, and published the book "*Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*" in Vienna in 1549 (Shcheglov 1993: 23). This was among the most thorough overviews of Russia in Western Europe until the publication of the travelogue by Olearius. In his "Commentaries" Herberstein also describes the peoples inhabiting the areas to the east of the Urals.

According to Herberstein, in an area East of the Urals around Pustozersk fortress, there live "diverse and innumerable peoples called "Samoyeds" (Samoged, Szamoyed), i.e. so-called "self-eaters"<sup>11</sup> (Herberstein 1988: 157).

He also states:

"These tribes would not go to Moscow, because they are wild and keep away from other peoples' company and cohabiting with others" (Herberstein 1988: 157).

Herberstein has also made an account of the Papini fortress by the Pechora River. In an area around that fortress there live people that Herberstein calls the *Papini* who "speak the language different from Russian" (Herberstein 1988: 161). It has been suggested that it can be Herberstein's misprint and here the Kanini Peninsula is meant

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<sup>11</sup> Herberstein provides Russian folk etymology which relates Samoyeds to cannibalism (see commentaries – Herberstein 1988: 157).

(commentary: Herberstein 1988: 336), the people, then, might also be Nenets(?).

Herberstein has stated that in an area around the Ob River there live Vogul (*Vogulici*) and Yugra peoples. He also provides names of the fortresses located in Western Siberia (according to him, Lyapin, Ob, Yerom, Tyumen, Grustina and Serponov fortresses), and also names of the rivers (Ob, Sosva, Irtysh and Nadym). Herberstein also acknowledges that locals are subject to Moscow (Herberstein 1988: 157, 160).

According to him, the Eastern bank of the Ob River is settled by “the black people<sup>12</sup> with no uniform way of speech”, called “coastal people” who bring along various goods which are then bought by the people of Grustina and Serponov (Herberstein 1988: 157; see also Shcheglov 1993: 23–24). He also writes about the coastal peoples inhabiting the areas around the Serponov fortress, who live in forest areas and who have “no dwelling houses” (Herberstein 1988: 161). Herberstein has also commented, e.g.:

“They say there is something strange and incredible, nearly the unbelievable story referring to coastal people. They are said to die on November 27 every year, the day on which Russians commemorate St. George. Then, next spring they will come back to life again like frogs, mostly around April 24. The inhabitants of Grustina and Serponov<sup>13</sup> villages used to trade in them in a unique way unknown in other countries. Namely, when the time to die or sleep came, the coastal people placed their things in a certain place. The inhabitants of Grustina and Serponov villages, then, exchanged the goods for theirs at an equal rate. When the coastal people came back to life, they demanded their things back should they find the exchange rate to be unjust. This, in turn might cause argument and conflict between them” (Herberstein 1988: 157–160; Shcheglov 1993: 24).

Herberstein’s description then has certain similarities with the accounts by Ibn-Battuta. It can also be another stereotyped descrip-

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<sup>12</sup>*Homines nigri, Schwartze leüt* (Herberstein 1988: 157).

<sup>13</sup> According to Herberstein, the Grustina fortress is placed by the river Ob upstream of Irtysh, while the Serponov fortress is around the delta of the Ob River by the Arctic Sea (Herberstein 1988: 159).

tion of the peoples inhabiting the Northern areas of Eurasia, more recent sources, however, do not record the phenomena of dying-resurrection. The above phenomenon of “trading by the dead” (“silent trade”) really existed in Western Siberia. Neither Herberstein nor Ibn-Battuta are much concerned with the ethnic origin of the peoples described in their commentaries, however. For the most part, they are described as imaginary people inhabiting the northernmost regions of the world whom none of the authors has probably ever met in real life.

It remains unclear how can “argument and conflict be caused” by people never seen in real life, although this contradiction is clearly of little importance in this paper.

Herberstein also gives an account of the river *Cossin*, coastal mountains, the river *Cassim* and the river *Tachnin*. According to him, around the above geographical items there live “monster-like people: some have their bodies covered with hair like animals, some are with the dog’s head, some have no neck and have the chest instead of the head. Some have long arms but no legs. In the river *Tachnin* there live fish with the head, eyes, nose, mouth, arms, legs and other human parts of the body, but they do not make any voice. The fish, as with most other fish, produce delicious food” (Herberstein 1988: 160).

Herberstein also provides the following commentaries to the above descriptoins, e.g.:

“All the accounts that I have provided so far, have been translated from Russian descriptions that have been brought to me. Despite that they involve quite a lot of esoteric and unbelievable accounts, such as the dumb people who die and then wake up again, Golden Woman, monster-like people and anthropomorphic fish. Although that I tried to ask about these phenomena, I was not able to find a single person who had personally seen all that (yet generally people believe that all this is really true). I would not, however, leave any material out, so that everybody would feel free in interpreting the material” (Herberstein 1988: 160).



## The concept of native peoples inhabiting the northernmost areas of Russia by Jan Huyghen van Linschoten

A Dutch traveller J. H. von Linschoten, together with other explorers, visited the Northern coast of Russia twice, in 1594 and 1595. The travelogue by him (van Linschoten 1915) is an important source of information reporting the endeavours undertaken by the explorers of the time.

The delta of the river Ob was the easternmost part reached by van Linschoten and other crew members. On their trips, the Dutch adventurers also met various native peoples, the Nenets being among them. In his book, Linschoten has provided descriptions of his contacts with local people. The Dutch first met a native person near the Vaigach Island on July 21, 1594, e.g.:

“... When going along the river bank, we finally saw a Lappish or a native person. As he did not understand us, he immediately ran away from us, so that we were not able to catch him” (van Linschoten 1915: 491).

Van Linschoten's travelogue provides a number of accounts describing misunderstood contacts involving the disappearance of native peoples, their attacks on the Dutch as well as the Dutch being scared of local peoples' attacks. They do not have the courage to approach them when seeing them at a distance (van Linschoten 1915: 496, 500–501, 573).

In his travelogue, van Linschoten has reported numerous misunderstood contacts with locals. They might involve the escape of the native peoples, e.g. “we saw some people travelling on reindeer sledges on the coast. Three of them then climbed up the rocks, in order to see us better. When they realised that we were going to land, they disappeared (*ibid.*: 497). On August 21, 1595, the Dutch saw the bags with fat, reindeer sledges and people's footprints in the Vaigach Island. They concluded, then, “that there had been people who, when they noticed our ships and crews, escaped and deserted everything. We did not touch their things but placed there some cheese and bread to indicate that we did not mean to do any damage” (*ibid.*: 573).

The misunderstanding might also have been caused by the attack on the Dutch by “the tall people”. Also, in some cases the Dutch,

when having noticed the native people, were scared to approach them because they were afraid of the aggressive attitude of the locals (van Linschoten 1915: 496).

One misunderstood contact was on August 6, 1594, e.g.:

“When it cleared up, we moved near the island. There we saw a person who was waving at us with a white scarf or reindeer hide. When we approached him in order to give him some bread, cheese and vodka, he however immediately escaped. Sitting on the sledge, he drove his reindeer so that they moved with a great speed. As we continued calling and chasing him, he disappeared” (*ibid.*: 500–501).

On each trip van Linschoten has reported one peaceful contact with native people (Nenets), which has provided material for further characterisation of them.

The description of Nenets met in 1594 begins with the escape of the locals. The Dutch are able to catch them as they went to the land unarmed calling to the departing natives, e.g.:

“They were armed with bows and arrows and goggled for fear of attack. We sent them some bread and cheese that pleased them, so that about 14–15 people came there” (van Linschoten 1915: 497).

Van Linschoten has also provided a more detailed description of Nenets, e.g.:

“Concerning the attitude and appearance of Nenets, they are poor and horrid people of small or medium height, with a flat ugly face, small eyes, without a beard which we were told later, they pick it for the sake of beauty. Their hair is very dark, straight and dirty, overlapping the ears” (*ibid.*: 497–498).

Van Linschoten concludes this description with the following judgement, e.g.:

“Most of them looked like monkeys and bastards. Everybody had arrows and a bow, not any more than the Persians did. They were very swift and with such fast movement that one could really envy their courage and swiftness” (van Linschoten 1915: 498).

In spite of the above radical statement, van Linschoten compared the native peoples with Spanish or Dutch peasants (*ibid.*).

Van Linschoten also describes the shy character of Nenets:

“As we were not able to understand each other, we said good-bye and went to the boat. On leaving, we were told to blow trumpets.

That scared them so that they wanted to escape. Then they realised it was an act of farewell. Everybody came to the shore, took off their caps, bowed and nodded, gesticulating with their hands as we were setting sail" (*ibid.*).

On August 30, 1595, the Dutch explorers met 25 Samoyeds and went to visit them (van Linschoten 1915: 576).

"They showed us the chief who was an elderly person of about 50 years old, clad as all the others, except for the cap with a star of coloured woollen cloth on top. He had two sons, both young and courageous, who had somewhat different arrows. They said the people in Vaigach, Novaya Zemlya and a vast area from the Pechora to the Ob were all related with one another and subjects of the chief. Many of them had just come from the Novaya Zemlya and Vaigach where they spend their holidays. For wintering, they go to the area around the Pechora where they live in forests. We learned from them that they were pagans and worshipped wooden figures and idols that were in piles in rocks and banks and were considered to be gods. Also, they worshipped the sun and planets that they called witnesses to their promises and pledges" (*ibid.*: 577).

Also, Nenets provide the Dutch with descriptions of the lands extending to the Yenisey river and would like to obtain flour, meat, fat and woollen cloth, in barter for seahorse teeth in exchange. The barter is called off as the Dutch considered it to be useless. The Dutch, then, wished to see the dwelling houses and wives of Nenets, however, because of swampy land around their settled area at some distance, they could not go to there (*ibid.*: 577–578).

The aspect that locals were almost regarded as being subhuman (monkeys), a fact that would not occur hereafter, might have been caused by the incompetence of the Dutch explorers in this area, as well as little contact with the locals. Van Linschoten did not focus his attention on the ethnic origin of the locals, or has no report of it. It is quite evident, however, that the Dutch explorers met Nenets people.

As van Linschoten thought Nenets to live on the edge of the world, it indicates that the Dutch expect soon after crossed the delta of the river Ob to reach China – the destination of the trip (van Linschoten 1915: 501–502).

### Accounts of Nenets by Adam Olearius

Adam Olearius visited Russia in the 1630–1640s, and published his “Travelogue of Persia” first in 1647. This book also contains information about the way of life of Northern peoples. Olearius has noted that he himself has not been among these people, and he only reports what he has heard from Russians (Olearius 1906: 166).

Olearius has also described in detail the Nenets he unexpectedly met on his trip. In 1643(?) Olearius was lucky to talk to a few Samoyeds in the Moscow Kremlin. Olearius comments that the Nenets “spoke with complete frankness and comprehensibility, and gave their answers accurately” (Olearius 1906: 166). Olearius talked to them in Russian through an interpreter. Probably, the personal contact with the Nenets, as well as the fact that the meeting took place in Moscow, developed an ambivalent, though positive attitude by Olearius. This, then helped to create an approach refuting many unreal stereotypes of the native peoples.

Olearius identifies Samoyeds with “Northern Scythians”<sup>14</sup>, described by ancient historians (e.g. Pliny, Strabon, etc.). Based on Pliny’s description of the Scythians, in one case Olearius has described Nenets as wild man-eaters, e.g.:

“... even when their friends died, they mixed their flesh with the flesh of game and swallowed it” (Olearius 1906: 167).

Olearius is critical of the statement, as if Samoyeds had inhabited the area somewhere between Lithuania, Poland and Livland (the statement existed consequently). He places the settled area of Samoyeds to its correct place near the Urals, the River Ob and the Vaigach Island (Olearius 1906: 167).

Olearius rejected one more false assumption involving the physically abnormal imaginary people inhabiting in the Arctic as was suggested by earlier travellers, e.g.:

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<sup>14</sup> Olearius also refers to the name – *Abii Scythae* – available in “*Historiae Alexandri Magni Macedonis*”, the book by Quintus Curtius Rufus, Roman historian in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. According to Olearius, beyond doubt they were the “Ob-Scythies” (Olearius 1906: 167). Remember that Nestor also reported contacts between Alexander of Macedonia and Yugras.

“Sometimes when it is really cold, they pull their long overcoats over their heads with empty sleeves hanging on the sides<sup>15</sup>, the appearance producing an unfamiliar image to a stranger. At a distance, on board a ship landing at the coast, such an appearance might have confirmed the intuition of some earlier authors about the people with no head and the face on the breast. Also, there were people with feet so large that they covered their bodies. If there were really such people in the world, by now, I think we would have much more information about them. During the 100 years that have passed, both land and sea areas of the Earth have been researched thoroughly by Dutch, English and Spanish navigators. Their notes do not, however, provide any information about the existence of such peoples. When the large feet of these peoples have been reported, it might have been their skis – as they themselves called them – that were tall” (Olearius 1906: 170).

Olearius also discusses an article based on the travelogue by van Linschoten<sup>16</sup> from the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He reports the first impression of the Nenets inhabiting the area around the Vaigach Island being “totally wild”. Later on, the natives turned out to be polite and smart. In conclusion, Olearius reports the “unexpected” behaviour, with an indirect reference to van Linschoten, e.g.:

“They turned out to be quite rough and unreliable, although the Dutch were well disposed and friendly with them. When a piece of dried bread was given to one of them, he politely took it, but bit it right away while churlishly looking around. When they heard a faraway shot from the sea, they became scared and started to jump about like mad” (Olearius 1906: 171).

Olearius, then seems to be concerned with the Nenets’ ignorance of West-European etiquette involving table manners and presents. Also, he showed disapproval of the native peoples’ inadequate reaction to shooting.

<sup>15</sup> Here, Olearius is inconsistent: Nenets do not pull the coat without armholes (*malisa*) overhead on cold days only, but headgear has been fastened to their winter coat. The sleeves are empty, as Nenets tend to take their arms out of the sleeves and hold on their breast – if not doing anything.

<sup>16</sup> Olearius has not provided the exact source, however, the events are reported in the travelogue by van Linschoten.

Olearius asked a Samoyed about whether he would like to live in Moscow, rather than in his harsh native country. In response to him, the Samoyed made the following passionate patriotic speech (for some unknown reasons, using the third person singular in direct speech, which might also be a stylistic device applied by Olearius), e.g.:

““He really likes Muscovy, however most of all he likes the land where he was born. They are used to the life there, and live comfortably and well. He has no doubt the grand ruler of Moscow<sup>17</sup> would leave Moscow and come to live with them for the rest of his life if he knew about their good and idyllic life”” (Olearius 1906: 171).

As a Renaissance scholar, Olearius is familiar with making noted comparisons with ancient heroes. He, then, as a result of the above tirade, compares Nenets with the “Odyssey” by Homer and “Speeches” by Cicero on the basis of similarity in self-expression with the Odyssey or Ulysses (Olearius 1906: 172). To be more explicit, Olearius even adapted a text by Ovid to that particular environment (lib. 1 de Ponto eleg.(3)), e.g.:

*“Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos  
Ducit et immemores non sinit esse sui.  
Quid melius \*Roma, Scythio quid frigore peius?  
Huc tamen ex illa Barbarus urbe fugit.*

All we love dearly is the country we were born  
We cannot forget about it – we are unable for that!  
Where is better than in Moscow? What is poor Scythia<sup>18</sup>?  
Yet the barbarian heart yearns to get there” (Olearius 1906: 172).

Olearius, then concludes a whole period in the research of Northern peoples, and also introduces a new approach to the area. Descriptions of Nenets occur only in a few pages of the long chronicle, the aspect that should also be considered. The topic, then, is discussed not so thoroughly and systematically by Olearius.

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Romanov

<sup>18</sup> i.e. the land inhabited by Nenets

## Conclusions

About the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, after Olearius and since Grigori Novitsky<sup>19</sup> and other officers imprisoned in the Poltava Battle, as well as some other people who had received European education started to compile narratives, marks the beginning of a new period of describing Ob-Ugrians' and Nenets' basic characteristic features.

When somebody describes Siberian native peoples as fantastic creatures after Olearius had compiled his narratives, this would not change the general direction of the Arctic peoples' studies: the basic change away from the fantastic, the approach introduced by Olearius was underway, however.

The early period of Ob-Ugrian studies is quite expressive. We can assume that the impact of exaggerated description has extended over a long period of time, and is implicitly there in contemporary Siberian studies. The unreliable description did not, however, vanish from sight at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Odd descriptions were transformed into more adequate personality stereotypes. Considering K. Dwyer's (1977: 147–148) three-level model of understanding the anthropological other (with abstract universal, abstract individual and concrete individual levels), in medieval descriptions of northern peoples only the 1<sup>st</sup> level of abstract universal was covered. This level is regarded as preliminary, the most arduous and groping level of understanding The Other.

The scientific fantasy of the early period involving the peoples living in Northwest European areas has contributed a lot more to the modern research methods, as compared with a more reasonable, as well as routine and constrained way of expression of Russian chronicles. The style of West-European narrative presents the issues raised in a more explicit manner, so that they are easily appreciated. Also, the early period has provided material for further scientific discussion.

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<sup>19</sup> "A Short Description of Ostyak People", compiled in 1715 by Grigori Novitsky (Novitsky 1973) marks the beginning of a new research period.

“Scholars have long wondered how these strange creatures entered the collective consciousness of the West in the first place. An influential school of scholarship explains the relationship between observer and monster as one of simple misunderstanding. This rationalising approach sees the creation of the monstrous races as an accident, explainable by reference to imperfect knowledge and unscientific observation” (Cohen 1998: 39).

As has been said already, the absorption of all Northern esoteric creatures into geographical literature of the Middle Ages is not explainable by misunderstanding or mistakes in examination. The description of Northern lands demonstrate the worldview of learned peoples in medieval Arabia, Europe and Russia and consequently possible connections with practical examination are not so significant.

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- kommete, koduste, ilmalike ja vaimulike oludega hoolsasti üles tähendatud ja paljude enamasti elust joonistatud piltidega kaunistatud.* Tallinn: Olion.
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Translated by Epp Uustalu

# **On the Sacrificial Rituals of the Pim River Khanties: Part Two\***

**Anzori Barkalaja**

In the previous article, published in "Pro Ethnologia 5" I discussed the sacrifices of the Pim River Khanties, giving a more detailed account of the joint sacrifice of December 1995. Not having had the opportunity to be present at the ceremony, I had to put up with the information gleaned from my informers (Barkalaja 1997). In December, 1997, however, I was fortunate enough to participate in the joint offering (*jyyr*) of the Khanties of the same region, enabling me to present a better survey of the discussed phenomenon.

## **Sacrificial Ritual on Pim river, 1997**

In October 1997, I was informed that the Kanterov family had once again undertaken to arrange a joint sacrifice and I might have a good opportunity to participate. Since communicating with the Surgut region Khanties is extremely difficult, I did not succeed in specifying exactly when the ceremony would take place. According to my communication source, such sacrifices are usually held during the last waxing or full moon of the month of December (Barkalaja 1997: 58); therefore I judged that it would be best to arrive immediately before the moon waxed full. The last full moon of the year happened on Sunday, December 13. Unfortunately we were delayed because of transport failures and arrived only late on Saturday, learning upon

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arrival that the sacrificial ritual had begun in the morning of the same day.

The site of the joint sacrifice was located on a bend of the River Pim, where a copse of birches grew to the north of the river-bank. On the trees, I could see reindeer skins and stretches of textile hung there during the previous sacrifice (in 1995). At the right-hand side of the clearing between the trees and the river, a big fire had been lit. A few metres to the north-east of it, there lay the hide and head of a sacrificed reindeer with a red cloth tied around its antlers. On the strength of information obtained during the previous field-work it could be assumed that the reindeer had been offered to the Mother of Fire.<sup>1</sup> Later this assumption was proved correct. Lined up with that reindeer hide, there lay some other reindeer hides and one horse hide. All the hides were placed with their heads pointing to the north. A little way off from the hides, towards the trees, there was a bush with lots of cloth tied to it; bank notes were scattered on the ground around it. The Khanties had just been throwing bank notes onto the place of sacrifice. Expedition members were also offered a chance to sacrifice money; naturally we could not refrain. In the North-Eastern end of the birch copse, next to an old tree-stump, there lay two reindeer hides and one cow-hide with the head of a cow placed next to it. These hides were placed in the reverse direction, with their heads pointing towards the river. To the south of the site of sacrifice, nearer the river, there was yet another reindeer hide flanked by conical sheet-metal gourds. As a result of later questioning we learned that the reindeer had been offered to the "Lower"<sup>2</sup> god and the gourds were meant to be hats for him and his two assistants. The informant also explained what animals had been offered to what gods: the "Upper god"<sup>3</sup> was given two reindeer and a horse, one horse being valued as equal to seven reindeer. Further, the soul of one reindeer was offered to the moon, one to the sun, one to *Postajank-iki*<sup>4</sup>, one to *As-iki*<sup>5</sup>, one to *Pim-iki* – the deity of the river Pim. In addition, one reindeer was sent to *Choorys-nai*, two reindeer and a cow to *Myg-imi* (see endnote 1) and one reindeer, as mentioned above, to the "Lower" god.

Since tradition forbids to carry out sacrificial rituals in the dark, it was decided to continue them on the following day. Extremely cold

weather ( $-45^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) slowed down the performing of the rites; therefore, according to my informant<sup>6</sup>, some changes had been introduced to the tradition. Usually the shaman conducting the ceremony must, with the help of his drum, guide each reindeer's spirit individually to the lower or upper world, directly to the addressee, that is to the deity the reindeer was offered to. This time, the shaman rounded all the spirits of the reindeer offered to the gods of the upper world up into a herd and took them all together to the "upper way", where he "distributed the spirits to their addressees while moving up along the way" (quote from the informant). A small incident took place in connection with the use of the drum during the ceremony. Initially, the drum of Filipp K. had been chosen for use during the ceremony, but after a couple of strokes the shaman pronounced the drum spoiled, saying it would lead him astray when he moves along the path. Then Filipp confessed that one night, being drunk and in a somewhat elated mood, he had played the drum. Since the spoiled drum could no longer be used for shamanising, it was necessary to use the drum of another family.<sup>7</sup>

A strong cold wave had arrived on Friday night and according to the Khanties, *Torum* had turned the weather cold in order to prevent the filming of the sacrifice. The assembly of the Khanties had originally given permission to the representative of the local Lyantor municipal council to be present at the ceremony in return for his help in obtaining the horse and cow necessary for the sacrifice. Local television, having learned about the event, wanted to record it on video tape, but the Khanties refused permission to the TV-team. The TV people, however, were reluctant to give up and gave the camera to the representative of the municipal council, asking him to shoot the sacrifice. None of the Khanties interfered with the setting up and switching on of the camera, but as my informant triumphantly declared, the camera could not tolerate the cold and automatically switched off in four minutes. It was obvious that the Khanties attributed this course of events to the intrusion of the sky god.

A little way off from the site of sacrifice, a camp had been set up with three conical huts and a few tents intended to accommodate a couple of hundred people. Yegor Kanterov said that the year before, when a joint sacrifice was arranged by a different family, there had

not been so many people present. At the same time he expressed regret that many Khanties had refrained from coming because of rumours that Russians would be allowed to be present. The number of people present at the sacrifice reflects the position of the arranger on the ladder of social hierarchy (Barkalaja 1997: 63). Nevertheless, the arranging of a joint offering is a troublesome and expensive enterprise not very willingly undertaken. Since the gods had imposed it on the Kanterov family to organise three joint sacrifices, Yegor Kanterov decided to assume leadership and hold the second ceremony after so short an interval in order to have done with the obligation sooner. At the campsite, men assembled in Yegor Kanterov's hut where the shaman was to perform a séance in order to find out the gods' attitude towards the sacrifice and appoint a new keeper to the *hlunk* of the River Pim, since the former keeper had died (Barkalaja 1997: 65–66). Unfortunately the shamanic séance could not be held that night because the shaman had got drunk and was not able to perform. One of the informants commented that he had got drunk on purpose, because of the presence of a Russian – that is, the representative of the municipal council – whose proximity might have interfered with the performing of the ritual. Therefore it was decided to go to bed and put the performing of the séance off till next morning.

In the morning, the representative of the municipal council set about to leave, but before he went all the men participating in the ceremony assembled in the elder's tent. The elder of the sacrifice took out the money raised for the purpose (Barkalaja 1997: 60) and, with the help of his assistants, counted it into several piles of equal value. He then picked up one pile of bank notes and handed it on, clockwise, so that everybody present could hold it for a while. After that he handed the money to the representative of the municipality who was at first reluctant to accept it. Only after he was explained that it was ritual recompense for his trouble, he agreed to take the money. Next, money was distributed in like manner to the shaman, his assistants and the owners of the sacrificed reindeer.

After the representative of the Lyantor municipal council had departed, the shaman began his séance. Before he did so the elder of the sacrifice, Yegor Kanterov, asked the members of our expedition to

give a bottle of vodka for the prayer, which was to demonstrate our goodwill towards the success of the séance. The prayer was said by the elder of the sacrifice. For that purpose he poured out a glassful of vodka and set the glass on the corner of the table.<sup>8</sup> In the prayer that followed, he addressed *Torum* and offered him the vodka, mentioning also the guests from Estonia who joined in the prayer and had brought the vodka. While he was saying the prayer, all the participants turned, at short intervals, three times clockwise around the right shoulder. Finally a glassful of vodka was thrown into the fire; the high-flaring flame was interpreted as a sign that the god was pleased. Next the elder filled the glass with vodka again and gave it to the shaman who took a gulp and handed it back. In the same manner the elder offered vodka to all participants, moving around clockwise. Since the number of men was great, one bottle did not suffice and two more had to be opened. After that the elder picked up the drum and warmed it by the sheet-iron stove, turning it round clockwise and warming it from the edges. From time to time he beat the drum lightly, checking its sound. When the sound was considered right, he handed the drum to the shaman who began to beat it. He used different rhythms while doing so. After some time the shaman leapt up and began to move forward, jumping on two feet and beating time to his movements. The drum was held alternately up towards the sky and down towards the earth; while the drum-stick was held up, he beat free rhythm, whereas while it struck the drum from below, each third stroke was stressed. During the jumping, the men standing by shouted in chorus in exactly the same manner as during the sacrifice. Thus the shaman beat the drum, alternating different rhythms, until he began to sing, using free rhythm for accompaniment. The song sounded different from all previous ones I had heard. The shaman appeared to be using throat singing, yet the voice was rather high. In a short while it seemed that the song was sounding from all directions at once, the effect was particularly impressive when the eyes were closed. After about ten or eleven minutes the shaman grew calmer and sat down, the song also became calmer. Soon he stopped singing and drum-beating altogether and began to talk in the ordinary manner, handing the drum to the master who resumed warming the drum. An informant told me that the song had

been highly figurative and artistic, “like a poem”, and the appropriate words were “given” to the shaman. Even though the words of the song were intelligible, the informant was not able to make out its content and meaning. “Only shamans and a few old men can understand the songs,” he commented. The old men listened to the song with great concentration and asked the shaman to repeat certain parts of it. The song was discussed for about ten minutes, then the shaman resumed singing and drum-beating. In like manner, the cycle was repeated several times.

The audience felt relatively free during the séance: people were smoking, eating, drinking, walking in and out of the hut. During the intervals, while the songs were being discussed, jokes were cracked and gods’ will commented on, so that everybody was laughing out loud. All in all, the activity lasted till noon.

At noon everybody assembled and went together to the site of the sacrifice. Halfway to the river, a three-meter strip of cotton cloth was spread across the road and three bottles and some bank notes were set on it. Great care was taken to assure that nobody remained on the bank but moved on to the river ice. The end of the cloth was lifted up for the late arrivals, in order that they should not step onto or over the cloth. Then a bottle was opened and prayer made. Again the glass of vodka went round, clockwise, until everyone had sipped of it. Then everybody moved on to the place of sacrifice; the women stayed in the background while the men began to hang up the hides of the sacrificed animals onto the trees. The same broad strips of cloth that had been tied around the animals’ necks during the sacrifice were used for tying the hides to the tops of the trees. The hides of the animals offered to the sky gods, as well as the strips of cloth given to them, were tied to the trees. The bank notes scattered onto the ground the night before were picked up, portioned off and tied into the corners of the cloth. The hides of the animals offered to *Myg-imi* were left to lie on the ground; the reindeer hide and conical metal hats given to the “Lower One” remained in like manner on the river ice. The hide of the reindeer offered to *Choorys-nai* was dragged next to the spot where fire had blazed on the previous night. The message sticks (Barkalaja 1997: 59) were tied to the branches of a smaller

birch. The shaman pointed out which trees the hides were to be tied to. After the hides had all found their appropriate places, a common prayer was held at the end of which everybody started running clockwise on a course encompassing the whole sacrificial ground, including the reindeer hide lying on the river ice. When a full circle had been completed, the men sat into their snowmobiles and started a race, each straining to be the first one to cross the cloth halfway back to the campsite where sacrifice had been brought previously. In the course of the contest, the vodka bottles got smashed and the money and cloth torn to pieces. Women and children prudently kept out of the way. With the race, the joint offering was finished and people began to disassemble to their homes.

The joint offering of 1997 demonstrated once again that the influence of the Kanterov family among the Pim River Khanties is steadily increasing. In 1996, the sacrifice was arranged by another family and only about ten families, less than one third of the Pim River Khanties, attended it. Further proof of the Kanterovs' influence was furnished by the fact that the representative of the local administration was allowed to participate. Accepting assistance from the administration in obtaining the animals to be sacrificed, Yegor Kanterov was forced to oblige the representative and persuade his kinsfolk to do the same. Keeping in mind that for many years all information concerning joint sacrifices was jealously guarded from strangers, it is obvious that agreements of the kind can only be reached through an influential position in the social hierarchy. Reports of the ceremonies still being held by the Khanties came as a complete surprise to the authorities as well as other immigrants, arising at the same time considerable interest. This interest is partly caused by the changed relations between the colonial and indigenous cultures. After *perestroika*, the latter has risen to higher esteem both among the immigrants and among the younger generation of the Khanties themselves.



1 Here it should be noted that as to the person of the Mother of Fire, there are considerable differences of opinion among the Kvantians of different regions. On the River Vakh, Anki-Pugos is regarded as Mother of Fire (Kulemzin, Lukina 1977: 137–138). Sometimes a red cloth is thrown into the fire there, “in order that Anki-Pugos may have children”. Sometimes, again, the fire was covered with a red dress. It was said that Anki-Pugos would wear it. In order to placate Anki-Pugos, white reindeer with even the slightest red markings on their fur were sacrificed to her on the Vakh (Kulemzin, Lukina 1977: 144).

According to Kulemzin, the Eastern Kvantians believe that *Anki Pugos* lives somewhere towards the East, where the sun rises; the Kvantians of the Vakh, however, claim that her soul lives in the sky while she herself dwells on the Yaryugan (Kulemzin 1984: 54–55). According to a folk-tale, again, she used to live in the upper world with her husband Numi Torum but was cast down because of breaching a ban. On her way down she had time to give birth to a son who later on became the chief patron of the Ob-Ugrians (known under various names, basically as *Sorri-iki* among the Eastern Kvantians and as *Mir-susne-Xum* – “The Man Who Watches the People” among the Mansi. About the latter, see Lintrop 1997, 1998). *Pugos-imi* (a parallel name of *Anki-Pugos*) protects motherhood, birth-giving and children. If a woman has been unfaithful to her husband, *Anki-Pugos* may punish her with a difficult delivery (Kulemzin, Lukina 1977: 141). Obviously her own fate is tormenting her.

Another name – *Kalash-anki* (or *Kaltus imi*, see Martynova 1998: 45, 130), wife of *Numi-Torum* – is also associated with *Anki-Pugos*. On the Vakh, she is said to be the mother of *Torum* (Kulemzin, Lukina 1977: 137), but apparently the researchers have not specified which of the *torums* is kept in mind. Probably it would be *Kalash's* youngest son, *Sorri-iki*, one of the most popular *torums* of the region. According to B. Munkäesi, *Kalash-anki* is alternately the daughter, sister or wife of the main god (Karjalainen 1918: 248); another fact indicating that the researchers have not properly identified the personage the Ob-Ugrians keep in mind when speaking about *Torum*.

*Kalash* is also the foremother of the *Mos-phratry*, appearing in the corresponding story in the shape of a female hare (Sokolova 1971: 216). Another shape she can take, according to the Kvantians of Vakh, is that of an owl (Kulemzin 1984: 55). Amongst other names she is known as *Myy-imi* – Mother Earth. Karjalainen regards the different names as signifying different personages but the distinction seems to be erroneous, the more so that he himself records cases proving the identity of character and activity of the variously named goddess (Karjalainen 1918: 37–39). The plurality of names is certainly not to be wondered at, since the Kvantians of different regions are far from agreed on the different versions – a fact born out also by the following report from the Yugan: “The Salym people have a different language and different gods, too. The Pim River Kvantians speak a tongue closer to us than the Salym language” (Martynova 1998: 23).

A strong argument in support of the connection between *Myy-imi* and *Kalash-imi* is the above-mentioned story about how *Kalash-imi* was cast down from the heaven by *Numi-Torum* because of her misbehaviour. The misbehaviour consisted

in sexual intercourse with another man (Karjalainen 1918: 248) identified as “Lord of the lower world” (oral report from Semyon Pesikov). The lord of the lower world is known as *Myv-por-koon* among the Pim Khanties. He is said to dwell on the seventh floor of the lower world. Other names for the Lord of the Lower World are *Kul-Otar* (Hoppál 1975: 203) or *Kul-iki*. *Myg-imi* is said to protect people from diseases by keeping closed the hole in the earth which illnesses pass through. In order that she may do so, seven copper cauldrons are said to have been buried in the earth for her. These she is reported to use to cover up the holes. In the course of his field work, the Russian researcher Kulemzin received four copper cauldrons from the Khanties of Vasyugan. He was told that the cauldrons had been preserved on cape *Imi-nai* (Khanty for *Woman-Fire*) in Lake Tuh-ermtor where they had been taken “for reasons of health”. The remaining three cauldrons were said to have been lost. In her work she is assisted by a god called *Myg-junk*, associated by Karjalainen with the heavenly god *Torum-junk* (*ibid.*: 138). Some Pim River Khanties take *Myg-iki* to be *Myg-imi*'s husband (Yegor Kanterov, 1997). The Yugan Khanties connect *Myg-anki* or *Pugos anki* with childbirth. The latter is also the Mother of Fire, who according to some reports lives in the sky, according to others on the Little Yugan or perhaps the Vakh River (Martynova 1998: 158, 164).

*Kaltash-anki* or *Pugos-imi* can be identified with *Tshoorys-nai*, Mother of Fire. The River Ob is said to flow into a big sea, at the bottom of which there is hole where the water falls and burns in a big fire. The fire is called *Choorys-nai* and she is the wife of *Tshoor-skyyn*, king of the sea, and also the mother of all fires (Semyon Pesikov, 1993; Yegor Kanterov, 1995; see also Kerezsi 1997: 36). Another interesting report tells us that *As-to-imi*, wife of *As-iki* dwelling at the estuary of the Ob, gives children to women (Galina Kanterova, Pim, 1995). The American researcher M. Balzer also identifies the Mother of Fire with *Pugos* and the “Mother of All Beings” (Balzer 1978: 133–134). At the same time, there are reports stating that *Choorys-nai* and *Kaltash* are sisters: daughters of Mother Earth. The picture is further elaborated by a report saying that Mother Earth (*Meh anki*) has a mother called *Mih pugos anki* (Kerezsi 1997: 35). Generally, as I noticed at the joint sacrifice discussed in the present paper, the Pim River Khanties recognise a difference between *Choorys-nai* and *Myg-imi* and *Kaltash*, too, is represented at the offerings as a separate personage. Yet the coincidences cropping up in myths indicate that there must be some kind of link between these persons.

At this point I should like to leave further discussion of the problems centering around the Mother of Fire for a separate study. To some extent, the subject has been examined by Ágnes Kerezsi (1997: 35–38). To the author of the present paper it has sometimes occurred that the Khanties demonstrate a fluctuating use of gods' names and ambiguity in reporting their deeds which may be caused by a defensive attitude towards representatives of an alien culture. Yet the confusion may also indicate simply that the Khanties perceive reality and think in categories too different to be ordered according to Occidental thinking patterns.

Thus, the problems centering around female deities are intricate and extensive. Connections can be established between *Kaltash* – *Pugos* – *Myg-imi* – *As-to-imi* – *Choorys-nai*, but there are not enough data to give in to the temptation of drawing

far-reaching conclusions and postulating the existence of a single original goddess characterised, among other features, by the practise of polyandry.

2 The Khanties of the Surgut region regard *Heini-iki* (known also as *Kul-iki*) as the ruler of the lower world, inhabiting the bottom-most, seventh floor of it. His colour is black. Therefore the animals offered to him in sacrifice had to be black, too. No other god of the lower or middle world is given black animals (see also Gemyev, Sagalayev, Solovyov 1989: 69). The main aim of the sacrifices is to propitiate *Heini-iki* (concerning his other names see Martynova 1998: 123, 194) so he would not send sicknesses to people. Offerings of cloth were hung onto the branches of a fir, the sacrificial tree of *kyn'-lung* (Kulemzin, Lukina 1977: 147). Among the Khanties of Vasyugan, the same personage is known as *kyn-lunk* ("the spirit of sickness"). Furthermore he is called both there and on the Yakhs "the God of the Dead", "the Evil God" and so on. As to his nature, he is said to be the opposite of his brother *Torum*, the heavenly god (*ibid.*: 135–136). Unfortunately, Kulemzin had not specified who exactly is meant by *Torum*. In the Khanty language, *Torum* is a generic name for god, signifying also weather and the sky (Karjalainen 1983: 36). The text, however, allows to conclude that the person kept in mind here may be *Numi-Torum*'s youngest son, *Sorni-iki*. Kerezsi's data lead to the same conclusion (Kerezsi 1997: 35). According to some researchers, the Khanties of the Yakhs and the Vasyugan saw the relationship between those two as being far more sanguinary than conceived by the Khanties of the Surgut region. The ambiguity of the collected materials is proved even by the reports on the Mansi by Gemyev et al. In the stories they published, *Sorni-iki* has been replaced by *Numi-Torum* who is also at odds with *Kul-oyr*. At the same time, they also publish a myth according to which the great diver who brought forth the earth between its beak was actually *Kul-otar*, having taken the appropriate shape for the occasion (Gemyev, Sagalayev, Solovyov 1989: 155–156).

*Kul-iki* can appear in the shape of a dog or a cat. He can also assume the likeness of fog, hiding from people their guardian spirits, as a result of which people become his easy victims (Kulemzin 1984: 118). Kulemzin reports that in 1974 he succeeded in visiting the shrine of *Kul-iki* on the River Yugan, which holds the image not only of *Kul-iki* himself but also of his mother, *Euri-imi* (*ibid.*). As a rule, *Kul-iki*'s name was not mentioned, particularly in the presence of a sick person.

3 *Numi-Torum* has various parallel names: *Eri-Torum* (Great *Torum*), *Sanki* or *Sange Torum* (Bright *Torum*), *Jem-Sanki* (Good Light), *Alle-iki* (Great Old Man), *Nagi-iki* (White Old Man), *Ynyi Torum* (Great God), *Kansh iki*, *Torn Sanki*, and so on (Karjalainen 1918: 296; *Mfjy*... 1990: 14; Kerezsi 1997: 35; Martynova 1998: 45, 158–159). *Numi-Torum* dwells on the seventh floor of the upper world, too high to deal with the affairs of mortals. If a person desires to address *Numi-Torum*, he must do so through the mediation of some lower god. According to Semyon Pesikov, human beings can find assistance from the children of *Numi-Torum*: *Sorni-iki*, *Kzyrn-imi* and other minor gods. In order to appeal to them, one must give an offering to the addressee, too, and say an appropriate prayer asking to dispatch the soul of the sacrificed reindeer to the Highest One.

Karjalainen also writes that the Khanty *Turum* is inaccessible to common people and it is not possible to bring sacrifices to him directly (Karjalainen 1983: 35–36). According to Semyon Pesikov, even shamans are unable to converse with him: the best of them only reached as high as the fifth heaven in their journeys, whereas the All Powerful inhabits the seventh one. Karjalainen thinks that the figure of *Numi-Torum* originates from a foreign creed, and refers to the influences of Christianity (Karjalainen 1983: 37). Having a Christian background himself, Karjalainen seems to find the influence of Christianity everywhere that he notices any similarity, no matter how slight. Actually, the status of *Numi-Torum* is not very different from that of the supreme gods of other peoples. A characteristic feature of *Numi-Torum* is that after the completion of the acts of creation, he no longer meddles with further developments in the world. Relatively little is known about him, and it is virtually impossible to contact him directly. As such, he belongs to the long list of *dei otiosi* known all over the world (Eliade 1995: 99–104).

*Numi-Torum* created the world and also, according to some traditions, the man (Karjalainen 1918: 19). In the Surgut region, nothing is known about his sisters or brothers; yet among the Mansi, Chernetsov reportedly heard a story about how *Numi-Torum* fashioned the figure of a human being out of clay but could not give it the breath of life. It was only his sister *Kaltash* who could give the soul to humans (Sokolova 1971: 212). The rest of the data I have been able to collect, however, identify *Kaltash-anki* as the wife of *Numi-Torum*. Naturally one role does not exclude the other. In Greek mythology, for instance, Hera was simultaneously sister and wife of the supreme god, Zeus. The name of *Numi-Torum* occurs in the old myths, but rather less frequently than those of the gods inhabiting the lower floors of the upper world and consequently standing closer to humans. According to Lukina, the Lord of the Lower World, *Kul-otyur*, is also *Numi-Torum*'s brother (*Mify...* 1990: 16). From Semyon Pesikov I learned that the Highest One also had a father and even grandfather, but when asked where they might dwell, Semyon confessed ignorance. At any rate the place could not be in our world. Repeating my question a year later, I got quite a surprising answer. I was told that *Num-Torum*'s father was called *Shtlaap-Torum* (or *Pytto-Torum-iki*) and inhabited the seventh floor of the upper world, whereas *Num-Torum*, his son, lived on the sixth floor. Nevertheless, it remains unclear who should in that case be *Num-iki* (Khanty for *The Higher Old Man*) or *Buus-iki*, because according to the data gathered from the upper course of the Ai-Pim River it is that god who inhabits the seventh floor of the sky.

Literature presents data confirming the existence of *Numi-Torum*'s father and grandfather. The Mansi know his father under the name of *Kors-Torum* and grandfather as *Kosjar-Torum*; among the Northern Khanties, the corresponding names are *Num-Kuryts* and *Num-Sives* (*Mify...* 1990: 16). According to Karjalainen, *Num-Kuryts* and *Num-Sivys* are, together with *Num-Torum*, three different spirits of the upper world, fathered by *Kors-Torum*. In the texts collected by Munkacsi on the Sosva River, *Numi-Kworyts* occurs as the supreme god who lowered *Numi-Toorym*, *Saghl-Toorym* and *T'apyl-iki* together with their sister *Kaltash-ekwa* between heaven and earth (Karjalainen 1918: 296–297). Karjalainen consoles us, saying that the same kind of confusion is known also among other peoples and probably, in the

case of Ob-Ugrians, it is caused by foreign, e.g. Tatar and Russian influences (*ibid.*: 297). A similar situation can be found, for example, among the Saami, where it is very hard to specify the exact number of deities because many of them have had different names at different times. Earlier information on deities must be taken critically since on several occasions the gods of some people are known to have been forcefully fit into the framework of a currently valid world outlook and conception (Pentikäinen 1995: 232–233).

The Khanty word *Torum* signifies not only god, but also sky – that means it is a generic name. Therefore, when the name *Torum* is mentioned without epithets, it is sometimes difficult to decide which deity is referred to. The context must always be kept in mind upon making such decisions. Very often, for instance, the name is used to refer to the “Khanty God”, *Sorni-iki*, the youngest son of *Numi-Torum*.

An interesting parallel has been drawn between *Numi-Torum* and *Sorni-iki*, on the one hand, and the old Iranian *Mithra*, on the other. There are data indicating that the lineage *Kors-Torum* – *Numi-Torum* – *Sorni-iki* is associated with the Iranian sun god; the argument takes support from the coincidences between the name *Kors* and the Iranian word *xurōēt*, “bright sun”, as well as from several analogous traits in the mythological themes of the two peoples, treating on *Mir-susne-Xum* and *Mithra*, respectively (Toporov 1989: 170–174). In his article, Toporov brings further examples supporting his theory of strong mutual connections between the Uralic and old Iranian peoples (*ibid.*).

4 Depending on the region, that deity is known under different names (see Martynova 1998: 45, 74, 158). A well-known name is *Sorni-iki*, “the Golden Old Man”. Another name is *Postojank-iki*, “the Fast Old Man”. Thus he is called on the rivers Pim and Lyamin, the same names are used on the Tromagan. Kulemzin believes that these names signify different deities acting as assistants to *Torum* (Kulemzin 1984: 114), but the Khanties of the Pim and Lyamin rivers insist they are merely different names of one and the same god. They say that if he is invoked by the name of *Postojank-iki*, he gives a start and leaps high into the air, rushing off to see who was calling to him so urgently. Woe be him who did it just for fun! Therefore he also has another name, *Yi-shlapt-lah-hlioty-iki*, to be used when people do not want to startle him. This is the name often used to address him during sacrifices. *Sorni-iki* rides around on a white horse. Whoever sees him flying past on that white mount may expect to become very lucky. On the Tromagan, he is described in the same manner but under the name of *Sorni kan iki* (Kerezsi 1997: 38).

Sometimes he is heard just galloping past in the sky. *Sorni-Torum* does not like anybody to fly faster than himself. I even heard Semyon Pesikov claim that *Sorni-iki* determines the speed of jet planes which are not to fly faster than he has allowed. Judging by how he has manifested himself at very short intervals to people living at great distances from each other, Semyon believes that his speed must at least equal that of light. Once he is said to have run around the world quicker than it took a bit of birch-bark to burn up. Nevertheless he found time to help people, on his way (Semyon Pesikov, Lyamin, 1995).

Among the Mansi, kindred people of the Khanties, the heavenly horseman is known under the name of *Mir-susne-Xum*, "The Man Who Looks on the World" (Gemuyev, Sagalayev, Solovyov 1989: 102; Lintrop 1997; 1998). For several reasons, he is one of the favourite gods of the Mansi. First and foremost, he is considered to be the forefather of the Mos tribe (Sokolova 1971: 216). He was born during the fall *Kaltash-imi* took upon being cast down from the sky by *Numi-Torum* because of her misbehaviour. Having obtained the miraculous steed, *Mir-susne-Xum* or *Sorni-iki* was able to ride around the whole world. The Mansi see him as the main mediator between *Numi-Torum* and humans (Gemuyev, Sagalayev, Solovyov 1989: 157–158).

5 *As-iki* is the god and "master" of the greatest river of Western Siberia, the Ob. According to the informants, he actually rules not only over the river but also over all the land which sends its waters into the Ob. The hierarchy of the gods of different rivers is determined by the relations between the rivers of the region. The god whose river spills into the river of some other god is subordinate to the latter. Often the relation is expressed in terms of age, so that the gods of tributaries are younger than the god of the main river, often his children or grandchildren. The world outlook involving such interrelatedness finds expression also in the behaviour of the Khanties. Thus, for example, when the son of a family has grown up and married, he moves with his family upstream, often to the bank of some tributary (Barkalaja 1996: 128).

Accordingly, *As-iki* is the most important of the "masters" of the region. That, however, is no guarantee that the others should obey him without dispute. Relationships of subordination are very vague among the Khanties. In support of this, I should like to quote the following story:

"*As-iki* is the master of fish. He makes fish and sends them into the nets of the fishermen. He also decides how many fish must go into each river. Once it so happened that the god of Salym (a tributary of Ob. The god of Salym is the master of Thunder and notorious for his bellicose disposition – *author's note*) thought he was getting too few fish from *As-iki*. So up he goes to *As-iki* and demands: 'Listen, why do you give me so few fish, give me more.' But *As-iki* was in a defiant mood, did not give him fish. So the god of Salym went away and began to prepare for war. He picked up an arrow-shaft and began to whittle away on it. Whittled one chip off it – the chip turned into a stickle-back. Whittled another chip – that, too, turned into a stickle-back. Thus the stickle-backs became many. They swam downstream into the river Ob. *As-iki* looks – a stickle-back. Looks again – *nu, holera*, (emotional interjection in Russian, translates as "Oh, cholera!") another stickle-back! So he went upstream along the Ob until he could see – the Old Man of Salym is whittling away at arrow-shafts, chips are falling down and turning into stickle-backs. *As-iki* got a terrible fright, began to call from afar: 'What are you doing there, planning to wage war? Against whom?' *Salym-iki* called back: 'Against you, of course, why don't you give me fish?!' So *As-iki* reckoned the matter was grave and sent lots of fish into the Salym, many large pikes. Mhmh." (Semyon Pesikov, Lyamin 1993).

Thus *As-iki* was the giver of fish (Karjalainen 1918: 260). He also had assistants. On the Yugan these were local water spirits; according to the reports from the Agan, however, the fish-giving water spirits were independent (Kulemzin 1984: 48). The notions about spirits in general, not only water spirits, seem to be rather confused. This has also been noted by other researchers with field experience among the Khanties (Kulemzin 1984: 47–48). A common name for a water spirit is *Jyngk-hlunk*. Some of the Pim River Khanties thought that *Jyngk-iki* and *As-iki* stood for the same personage, others again thought they were different beings. I got the impression the names were not of the same level – in the light of such data, *Jyngk* appears more like a generic name. By way of comparison it could be pointed out that on the Irtysh, *As-iki* is known under the name of *Jyngk-tonk-iki* (Karjalainen 1918: 261). Another report must be made mention of, according to which the most important giver of fish is none else but the king of the sea, *Choor-skyyn*. The latter view is certainly logical, since the Ob flows into the sea exactly like the other rivers flow into the Ob.

In the Pim river basin, one likeness that *As-iki* may assume is that of a gadfly. When a Khanties notices a gadfly struggling in the water, he is certain to pick it out since according to tradition, the gadfly helps men to escape the danger of drownings.

6 I do not the permission of some Khanties to publish their names.

7 The drum is the basic means of shamanising among the Khanties. In earlier times, each Khanty family used to have its own drum. When a shaman was called in to resolve some crisis, he commonly made use of the family drum. As a result of the repression campaigns of shamanism during the communist regime (Leete 1996), the number of drums preserved in households has fallen considerably. The guardian spirit of the family dwelt within the drum. If the drum broke up while it was beaten, an ill fate was in store for the owner. In such a case it was usually presumed that the owner's family would die out. The outcome, of course, depended also on the importance of the shamanic séance during which the accident happened, sometimes the breaking of the drum portended doom to the whole extended family (Tatyana Moldanova, 1993).

8 According to the informant, the spirits find it easier to receive the "spirit" or "energy" of the offered food and drink from the corner of the table or generally from corners.

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## **The Continuity Which Persists: The Finno-Ugric Belief**

Art Leete

**On the Work of the 5<sup>th</sup> Workgroup of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress of  
Finno-Ugrians' History (*Congressus Secundus Historiae  
Fenno-Ugricae*), held in October 1998 in Tallinn**

The workgroup "Religions, Confessions and Finno-Ugric Peoples" worked during two days, on 15 and 16 October, 1998. Within the group, 11 reports were delivered (including 5 speeches on the first and 6 speeches on the second day), and the audience of 17 and 26 people listened them respectively.

The reports held in this workgroup involve different aspects of the beliefs of Finno-Ugric peoples (ethnic religions) and their relationship to Christianity, Buddhism and Islam. The group examined the following Finno-Ugric peoples, e.g. Karelian, Vepsian, Udmurt, Mordvian, Mari, Komi, Khanty, Mansi and Estonian peoples. It is important to note that the subject areas of this workgroup are highly sensitive and therefore they should be treated with extreme respect. The speakers displayed the following approaches, e.g.: historical, geographical, psychological, analytical and comparative.

The speeches held in this workgroup can be divided into the following subgroups.

Firstly, speeches by Nikolai Fyodorovich Mokshin and Yelena Nikolayevna Mokshina formed an interesting symbiosis. In his work "Religion and Ethnic Relations in Volga-Kamyë (the period before the October Revolution)", N. F. Mokshin examined ethnic and religious movements in Mordovia before the year 1917. He regarded the

areas around the river Volga as the contact area of the three high religions – Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of the coexistence of high religions and traditional beliefs of different ethnic groups, a relatively complicated situation developed in the above areas, especially considering ideological aspects. N. F. Mokshin examines different aspects of the 19<sup>th</sup> century developments within Christian sects and the renaissance (legitimisation) of folk belief. He also discusses the attitudes of the authorities and church towards these developments.

In her speech “The Religious Situation in the Republic of Mordovia”, Yelena Nikolayevna Mokshina dealt with the contemporary religious movements in Mordovia. According to her, very different religious movements, basically similar in most East-European countries, can be found in Mordovia, e.g.: Krishnaism, Bahaism, Baptism. One can find members of five different religions or faiths within a single village. Y. N. Mokshina stresses that nowadays there is no administrative pressure on religious matters any longer. As compared with the Soviet period, religious matters have become more important. The renaissance of Islam can be seen among Tatars. Lutheran propaganda that started at the beginning of the 1990s, has disappeared by now. Y. N. Mokshina also examined the discussion of religious issues featuring in the media of Mordovia.

In the article “Parishes of Russian Orthodox Church in the Komi Region in the 19<sup>th</sup> – Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”, Mikhail Rogachev raised a highly interesting question about the development of Russian Orthodox congregations during this period. The spread of the Russian Orthodox Church to the northern areas of the European part of Russia took on some distinctive qualities. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were 60 churches. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there was the most extensive period of building new churches when 161 new churches were constructed. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, 50 per cent of the churches were destroyed and all churches were closed before World War II. After the war, there were only three active church parishes. Now the number of churches, as well as parishes and congregations, are regaining their initial level again.

The aspects of Mari traditional belief were discussed by Vladimir Kudryavtsev in “Paganism of the Mari People and the Problems of

Architecture” and by Valeri Nikolayevich Petrov in his paper “Ancestors Cult among the Uralic Peoples”. They provided a very systematic treatment of the cult buildings of Maris and aspects of their ancestor worship.

V. Petrov applied a unique psychological approach. He emphasised the psychologically distinctive characteristics of Uralic peoples, e.g. susceptibility to depression and other signs of high sensitivity. He related the ancestor cults of Uralic peoples to the evolutionary theory of human thought. According to V. Petrov, thought has developed from physical parameter based thought towards abstract thought. The generalisations and comparisons made by V. Petrov are highly inclusive and thus objectionable to the audience, especially considering such a systemic, retrospective survey of human (Uralic peoples’) thought.

V. Kudryavtsev relates the continuity of ethnic beliefs to the exceptional ethnic architecture of Mari people. He emphasises the importance of researching different aspects of both material and immaterial cultural heritage, especially nowadays, when pagan attitudes are being developed.

The reports on Karelian and Vepsian subjects were also distinctive. In her paper “Karelia Between the East and West: From Late Medieval to Early Modern Times – Looking for the Promised Land...” Irina Chernyakova discusses the fading away of the Karelian settlement around Lake Ladoga in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, using a completely original approach (by 1585, only seven households were settled, while 3000 were empty). Until now, this was thought of as a result of the persecution of the Orthodox by Lutherans during Swedish occupation after the Livonian War. The offspring of the Karelians who moved to Russia have been thought to be the people who became later known as Tver Karelians. I. Chernyakova relates this phenomenon to the tax collecting system and serfdom policy of Ivan the Terrible, as well as non-human action of Ivan the Terrible’s bodyguards’ army (known as *oprichnina*) in tax-collecting. According to I. Chernyakova, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Karelians left the region for the areas by the White Sea, not inland Russia.

Irina Semakova gives a novel interpretation in her paper “Traditional Children’s Games of Finno-Ugrians (Karelians and Vepsians)

as an Expressive Means of Reflecting Everyday Life and Beliefs” of the traditional children’s games of Karelians and Vepsians. She highlights the subject of death in them. According to I. Semakova, death is regarded there as a biological phenomenon, and also a part of lifestyle. She views children’s folklore as a system for the absorption and conservation of the aspects of traditional culture.

Mare Kõiva discussed the changes in religious attitudes of Estonians in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries. This period can be distinguished by conflicts between different religious movements, the persecution and destruction of earlier tenets and sacrificial sites, but also by evidence of their ongoing use. By providing unique written evidence, she examines the psychological and ethical aspects for the destruction of Estonians’ traditional sacred sites in the historical context. The destruction of sacrificial sites caused remorse and religious experiences among devastators as well as native people who did not in fact take part in it. All this refers to the existence of a strong ethnic belief.

Art Leete presented in his article “The Concepts of Ob-Ugrians and Nenets About Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, the notions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century ethnographic literature about West-Siberian native peoples’ attitudes towards Christianity. He emphasises the schematic and stereotyped approach of these descriptions. The 19<sup>th</sup> century authors regarded Ob-Ugrians as formally christened, while actually pagan. Relatively little attention has been paid to syncretistic phenomena, which are referred to as curiosities. Therefore, it is difficult to estimate the basic attitude of West-Siberian small ethnic groups to Christianity in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Two speeches examined the perception and nature of the worldview of Finno-Ugrians. Svetlana Chervonnaya and Mikhail Jordan from Moscow discussed in their joint paper “Conceptual Bases of Neo-paganism among Finno-Ugrians” (presented by M. Jordan) the methodological framework of understanding contemporary religious beliefs and practices. Renaissance of traditional belief among the Finno-Ugrians living in the Volga-Ural areas is closely related to a conception developed by the intelligentsia and young ethnic elite. According to this, the rudiments of ancient paganism have never been lost from folk culture. Nowadays, they transform into a new socio-cultural, as well as philosophical-religious phenomenon

known as neo-paganism. This is also an important means of ethnic self-defence and also a factor stimulating ethno-cultural revival. The attitude of Mikhail Jordan (being the speaker), however, was critical towards possible misinterpretations of Finno-Ugrians' traditional worldview.

In her article "Traditional Beliefs: Philosophical or Exotic Experience for Strangers?", Tatyana Minniyahmetova, an Udmurt researcher, gave a thorough survey of the role of ethnic religious traditions today. Through the analysis of the demonstration, the involvement of local politicians' election campaign and advertisement elements in the sacrificial ceremonies of Kama Udmurts today, she concludes that traditional beliefs of Finno-Ugrians (if any has come down to us) should develop under natural conditions. Yet socio-political and other external aspects should also be considered.

In conclusion, this workgroup achieved its goals successfully. Discussions after the reports were concise and interesting. Once again, the relevance of a cautious and sensitive approach for researching the lifestyle of Finno-Ugrians should be highlighted. This approach was also successfully applied by the workgroup participants.

Most important topics discussed in this workgroup involved historical aspects of beliefs and recent developments of traditional and new religions.

Yet the examined topics did not cover the overall range of Finno-Ugric belief research. Most reports involved specific topics rather than wide-range comparative studies of belief developments of different Finno-Ugrians (except for the joint report by T. Chervonnaya and M. Jordan about the present-day situation of the traditional beliefs and new religious movements of Finno-Ugrians).

The fragmentary set of topics might also be a result of the small number of reports held within the workgroup. This was partly because fewer than half of the 25 registered reports were delivered (because of the situation in Russia). The reason that the congress preparations were pressed for time might also have some impact on the work of the congress.

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