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CONTENTS

Editorial

The *Pro Ethnologia* issues of the Estonian National Museum are dedicated to short topic-based research papers by ethnologists in Estonia and elsewhere. This 2nd volume of Arctic Studies is based on Ob-Ugrians and Samoyeds – Khanty, Mansi, Nenets and Selkup peoples.

In his article "The Yamal Nenets in a Changing World" Liivo Niglas discusses the current cultural situation of the Nenets living in the Yamal peninsula. His thorough and exciting approach to the subject is mostly based on the material of fieldwork by L. Niglas collected from 1991 through 1997.

Art Leete's article "Ethnopolitical Comments About the Sacrificial Ceremony At Lake Num-To" is considering again the sacrifice of reindeer in April 1996 at Lake Num-To (as was his subject in the previous volume "Arctic Studies"). This article highlights the social and political aspects of the sacrificial ceremony, while the previous paper touched on, first of all, the traditional and sacred details of the ritual.

The fieldwork diary by Heno Sarv is compiled in his fieldwork trip among the Khanty people living in an area around the river Kazym in 1975. The author provides an exciting survey of Siberian native peoples' village lifestyle during the Soviet period.

Eva Toulouze examines in her article "The Development of a Written Culture by the Indigenous Peoples of Western Siberia" the development of writing of Ob-Ugric and Samoyed peoples in the 19th and 20th century. The article gives a historical survey of the development of writing in small ethnic groups inhabiting in Western Siberia and European part of Northern Russia in the context of intensive social-political changes.

At the conclusion there is an overview of the grant project "Cultural Identity of Arctic Peoples" of the Estonian Science Foundation, carried out at the Estonian National Museum during 1998–2001.

The editorial board thanks all the authors who have contributed to this issue and the Estonian Science Foundation whose help has been used in carrying out fieldwork that acted as a base for the two articles of this issue. In addition, grateful thanks to the Open Estonia Foundation, whose help has been essential in preparing the articles for this issue and its publication.

January 1999

Art Leete

The Yamal Nenets in a Changing World[1]

Liivo Niglas

First time I stayed with Yamal Nenets in the winter of 1991 – i.e. at the time when intensive political and economic changes had come into being in many regions of the then Soviet Union. In the Yar-Sale reindeer herding state farm, situated in the Yamal peninsula, there was heated discussion as to how to make the farm work more efficiently and quickly earn foreign currency: they were trying to use the models and help both from Norwegian Samis and Alaskan caribou farmers. Though, the attitude of the people who directly dealt with reindeer herding seemed to be totally different. The Nenets in the seventh brigade where the plane had brought me were working peacefully and they did not think it necessary to say anything about the changes that were planned to take place in the state farm. They just shrugged their shoulders to my provocative questions. It seemed that they were satisfied with their current life and they could not see the need for changing it. My next chance to go to Yamal came five years later, in the summer of 1996. Although the reindeer state farm of Yar-Sale still existed, with the help of state grants, and its director who, like last time, made it possible for me to fly free to my familiar brigade, was still there, the atmosphere in the state farm centre had changed thoroughly. The euphoric eagerness of "Perestroika" was replaced by mourning mood. Despite state financial support, overwhelming poverty existed in the farm. The majority of the employees had not received their salary in cash for more than three years; all necessary purchases were carried out in shops where there were special credit books showing the wage rates of the state farm workers. Poverty revealed itself also in the work arrangements of the farm. Earlier, the connection between the farm

[1] This article has been prepared by support of the Estonian Science Foundation.

centre and the migrating brigades in the tundra had been pretty common thanks to cheap aviation transport, but in 1997, the brigades were left on their own – radio sets were broken and the state farm could afford to use an airplane or a helicopter only in occasions of utmost necessity.[2]

Naturally, I was afraid that poverty had reached the brigades. Above all, I was scared that it had left its impact on the thinking of the Nenets – as it has happened in most parts of Russia where people cannot adjust to abrupt social changes and the result has been embitterment and tangibility: all this can reveal itself in bemoaning for the good old Soviet times and also in accusing the socialist system for all personal problems.

To my great surprise, the Nenets of the seventh brigade were as joyful and practical as five years before. They worked and played jokes and enjoyed the pleasures of everyday life. It seemed that their attitude to broader social-economic questions had also not changed – as before, they were not eager to express their opinions about these. Only some hints revealed that they were worried about the welfare of the state farm. It was not fear for the future but a kind of sad statement that the farm did not function properly and because of that they had to rely on themselves.

Naturally, a question came up – what is it that enables the Nenets reindeer herders to stay so calm in the middle of economic chaos? I think that the answer to this question can be expressed with the one word – reindeer. The more I studied the lifestyle of the Nenets during my fieldwork, the more I understood that this animal has a special place in the life of these people. First, the reindeer enable the Nenets to stay physically alive, being both their main food source and supply of skins, needed for clothes and dwellings. Secondly, we are dealing with an animal, that has an important role in the mental world of the Nenets – the most important social contracts are made using the reindeer (friendship ties, marriage, work arrangements) and communication with supernatural forces (sacrifice, dedication).[3] It is probably the

[2] I managed to get to the seventh brigade's campsite in the middle of the Yamal peninsula only because the helicopter was taking boarding school students to visit their parents for the summer holidays.

[3] About reindeer in the Nenets worldview I have previously written (see Niglas 1997).

reindeer-centred lifestyle and thinking that has provided security for the Nenets up till now: as long as they have their reindeer, there is no reason to worry – these animals have always enabled the adjustment of people to a changing political and economic environment.

In the following text, I am trying to show how the Nenets have been able to adapt to the surrounding world, at the same time preserving their traditional lifestyle and social arrangement. I am not going to limit myself with the last social change – the break-up of the Soviet system – I am trying to present some important adaptional processes from earlier history. Hopefully, this will help the understanding of the present situation of the Nenets reindeer herders. I have based my work on the information collected during the fieldwork[4] on one hand and secondly, on the statistical and historical material. In the first case, I deal with data, concerning only one certain group of the Nenets – the reindeer herders in the seventh brigade of the Yar-Sale state farm, in the other case with all the information available about the Nenets region and the Yamal reindeer herding region.

History

Although the question about the origin of the Nenets is still a great topic of argument for scientists (see Golovnev, Zaytsev 1992: 14–15; Homich 1995: 36–41), they have come to more or less the same conclusion that the Nenets already lived in their present land before the beginning of this millennium (Kopytoff 1955: 6). Supposedly the Nenets had adopted reindeer herding by that time. According to one version, this type of living was brought here by the ancient nomading Samoyed herders (see Homich 1995: 51; Krupnik 1989: 146). The supporters of another version claim that the Nenets reindeer herding is of local origin and that it had developed gradually from the hunting of wild reindeer by the indigenous people (see Golovnev, Zaytsev 1992: 29–31). The first reindeer herds were probably quite small. For example, the first written sources (16th–17th century) about Nenets

[4] I have carried out fieldwork in the seventh brigade three times – in the winter of 1991, in the summer of 1996 and in the late winter – early spring of 1997, in total for a period of about 4 months.

reindeer herding show that together with reindeer, dogs were also used as transportation animals (Kartsov 1937: 14). The researchers also stress that formerly, regardless of the reindeer, the main occupation for earning a living for the Nenets was not nomadic herding but relatively local hunting and fishing. It is explained with the shortage of herd animals, which enabled the use of them only as transportation animals and did not demand the frequent changing of pasturelands. Meat for food and skins necessary for sewing clothes were obtained by hunting the wild reindeer, as before (Golovnev, Zaytsev 1992: 31; Homich 1995: 51; Krupnik 1976: 59). Turning away from the hunting and fishing oriented lifestyle took place probably only in the 18th–19th centuries when "classical big-herd reindeer herding" came into being in the tundra (Krupnik 1976: 58). Krupnik considers that the reasons for the new type of herding were the simultaneous influences of social-economic and ecological factors, due to these the numbers of the reindeer grew explosively in the whole of North-Eurasia. According to him these factors were the cooling of the climate, favourable for the reindeer (1720–1830) and the current strengthening of the Russian state power in the north (see Krupnik 1976; 1989). Golovnev believes that the use of firearms and the abrupt decrease of the wild reindeer population forced the Nenets to turn to new economic management. The hunter, being deprived of his main hunting animal, has to start herding the reindeer as a meat animal although he had formerly used it only as a transportation animal. As a result, the herds increased considerably and the Nenets had to adopt a more movable lifestyle in order to find new pasturelands (Golovnev, Zaytsev 1992: 32–33). Whatever the exact development of reindeer herding was like, by the end of the last century, the majority of the tundra Nenets had a nomadic lifestyle – nomadic reindeer herding (see Islavin 1847; Maksimov 1909). Fishing and hunting still remained vitally important for many of the Nenets, used for their own needs and for dealing with Russian merchants. Only the wealthiest herd owners could afford reindeer herding as the main source of food and merchandise. According to Yevladov, in 1928–1929, there were very few "rich" reindeer herders in Yamal – i.e. people who had more than 400 animals (1930: 42–45). The situation changed a lot after establishing Soviet power in the tundra.

In the beginning, the interference of Soviet power in the life of the Nenets and other northern people was quite moderate. After some experiments, the authorities decided to use the so-called "temporary situation" in the ruling of northern peoples which "in future had to enable the creation of Soviet state power" (Zibarev 1966: 40). It was a kind of intermediate stage where they tried to use the traditional structures (clan councils, courts of indigenous people) of northern tribes in order to build socialism (see Onishchuk 1986; Slezkine 1994: 158–159; Smidovich 1932: 14–15; Zibarev 1972: 82–84). At first, great changes were also avoided in economic life. On the basis of family ties, simple production units and co-operatives were formed where hunting territories and pasturelands were in public use but herd animals and tools still remained in private ownership (Budarin 1952: 132–133; Forsyth 1992: 295; Golovnev, Zaytsev 1992: 70–71).

The more serious and ruthless building of socialism in rural areas of Russia started in 1929–1930, but the big wave of collectivisation reached the North only after several years. The first state farm in Yamal was the predecessor of the present Yar-Sale state farm. A state farm named "*Harp*" ('polar lights' in the Nenets language) was formed in Yar-Sale already in 1929 but it remained the one and only state farm in the Yamal peninsula up to 1934 (Golovnev, Zaytsev 1992: 71). The mass introduction of collective farms came into full swing only after the repression of the late 1930s. For a long time the Soviet collective farm system operated with great difficulty and the result was real poverty. But after several serious crises (1934) and the restructuring of farms (1950–60s) (Gurvich 1971) it turned out that reindeer herding was "practically the only profitable production area in state farms" by 1989 (*Priroda...* 1995: 390). This change is well illustrated in the memory of the seventh brigade leader when he says that when getting married in 1974 he could give only seven reindeer as a bridal dowry and that bread shortage was an obstacle for the wedding party. By the beginning of 1990s, his private herd was as big as 600 animals and the state farm was called a millionaire's farm as a result of its good economic performance.

The Present day

This achieved level of reindeer herding has actually continued till now. There are probably more animals in the state farm and private herds than ever before so that the Nenets and scientists (see *Priroda*... 1995: 399–400) are complaining that the Yamal pasturelands cannot bear this burden any more and that the quality of pasturelands is worsening because of too much herding. From one point of view, one of the reasons is that the state farms do not know what to do with the animals. Because of the changed economic situation, the market has disappeared: there are no state orders any more and the local non-Nenets prefer to eat tinned pork, imported from Holland. From another point of view, the number of reindeer is increasing because more and more Nenets come to live in the tundra as it is very difficult to find a job in the villages and besides occupation as a herder has maintained its high status in the Nenets society. That is why it is not amazing that the majority of the 7701 Nenets in the Yamal peninsula (January 1991 51.7%) has maintained their traditional lifestyle and deals with nomadic herding, being one of the largest and most compact reindeer herding groups in Eurasia (Pika, Bogoyavlensky 1995: 64).

There are three collective farms dealing with reindeer herding in the Yamal peninsula. Yar-Sale state farm is the largest by the number of employees and reindeer (see *Priroda*... 1995: 391). Out of the vast land area used by the farm, the Yamal peninsula tundra makes up the greater part and the forest tundra in the south coast of the Ob bay makes up a considerably smaller part. Practically all this territory is used for herding the reindeer. The state farm is divided into 25 nomadic reindeer herding brigades; each of them has fixed pastures and moving schedules. The main task of the brigade is to take care of the reindeer herd belonging to the state farm. First and foremost, it means that people have to wander around the tundra with a herd consisting of several thousand animals throughout the year, because the landscape, covered with stunted vegetation (different mosses, lichens and dwarf bushes) on the permafrost enables only short-term grazing and forces the animals to move on continuously in search of fresh pastureland. In summer the animals are herded in the bare tundra of the north Yamal and in winter they leave the peninsula for the forest tundra lying south

of the polar circle, which has nourishing moss and shelter from the winds. The annual journey of some brigades may be as long as a couple of thousands of kilometres. The task of the brigade is to take care of the offspring and to take the planned number of animals to the slaughterhouse every autumn. The selling of reindeer meat and skin is the main income of the state farm.

The obligation of the state farm is to provide the brigades with everything necessary. Twice a year when the brigades go past the farm centre during their spring and autumn trips, they are equipped with food and other different goods in Yar-Sale. This is why the cash shortage does not concern the brigade members as painfully as the villagers – the brigades are provided with food. The state farm has to make sure that the brigade herds had different veterinarian resources – vaccine against Siberian plague, medicines to prevent foot and mouth disease and mosquito and gadfly prevention fluids. Earlier when the state farm was richer, they were able to avoid all kinds of epidemics: thanks to regular aviation and radio connection they were very quick in sending vets to the herds in trouble. At present there is a danger that illnesses decimating the reindeer herds will start spreading again, because of the isolation of the brigades and lack of medicines. Another big threat for the herds throughout time has been wolves. During the last decades, the brigades have been considerably successive here – thanks to the hunting from helicopters the number of wolves in Yamal has considerably decreased (*Priroda*... 1995: 238–241).

Traditions

Officially, the brigade is a group administering the property of the state – the cattle of the state farm. Actually, the brigade is a lot more than just a subunit of the state farm. The brigade is the result of adaptation brought into life after the forming of collective farms. Working in the brigade allowed the Nenets to follow their traditional lifestyle in a situation where the political environment made the private ownership of the means of production – the pastureland and the reindeer – impossible. The compulsory collectivisation only changed the form of nomadic animal herding but the content remained principally the

same. Although the herd was no longer the people's private property, groups of herders still wandered around in the tundra with their reindeer in search of fresh pastureland. As a matter of fact, the Nenets people have almost always had their private reindeer.[5]

There were certain limits on their number in Soviet times but, still, every family could have their own animals. In the changing political and economic situation, the restricted numbers given by the authorities have lost their validity and today private animals make up a considerable part of the brigade's cattle. For instance, more than one third of the 4000 reindeer of the seventh brigade belong to families.

Before compulsory collectivisation, the main autonomic economic units were patrilinear extended families, consisting of close relatives that were united into bigger groups in order to acquire better grazing conditions (Homich 1995: 157). Basically, the state farm brigade does not differ much from this former nomadic herders group in its make-up. If earlier it was the head of the patrilinear group of relatives who had the authority and right to make decisions, then nowadays the brigade leader[6], appointed by the managerial personnel of the state farm, plays the leading role. Still, kinship has an important function. As the nomadic lifestyle demands readiness for co-operation and an ability to live permanently together with other people, the core of the brigade very often consists of close relatives. The unity resulting from kinship helps to avoid conflict inside the group and enables more effective co-operation. For example most of the herders in the seventh brigade are related to the brigade leader either by blood or through marriage – in addition to the two sons of the team leader, his wife's three brothers and his brother-in-law also work as herdsmen.

Although it is the herders who directly take care of the herd – they drive the animals to new pasturelands at the right time and watch that the herd would not scatter because of the mosquitos and gadflies in summer and because of snowstorms in winter – the fulfilment of the task would be impossible without the help of their families. For

[5] The collective farmers were allowed to have private reindeer from the late 1930s (Kopytoff 1955: 80).

[6] One of the duties of the brigade-leader may even be arranging marriages of fellow brigade members (Kopytoff 1955: 80).

example, the core of the seventh brigade consists of six to eight herders, depending on the season and the number of people on vacation. Through the ages, the Nenets family has been a so-called extended family by nature, as three generations of close relatives live together. In addition to the parents and their children, the grandparents and spinster sisters and brothers (and sometimes married relations) of the husband also belong to the family. In summer holidays children studying in boarding schools join their parents. For most young couples it takes several years to obtain their own house and that is why they live together with the husband's family at least during the first years of their marriage – i.e. it is a father-dependent family. That is why the number of people belonging to one family is relatively large. Every year the parents of herders come to live together with their children for some time. Sometimes, due to economic reasons, a whole new family can join the brigade for short period of time. Consequently, the membership of the seventh brigade changes noticeably during the year. The total number of people living in the seventh brigade is between 20–30, among them there are about 16–17 adults (over 18).

Observing the Nenets in different everyday situations, it became clear to me that the large number of family members is necessary to cope with the tasks of reindeer herders. Taking care of the reindeer and constant migration is possible only if people co-operate with each other. Women have to perform household duties – supplying firewood and water, cooking, taking care of children, sowing – and help men in their work. The children and retired parents of the herders do not have specific tasks, but it is presumed that they help other members of the family according to their abilities, age and gender.

A couple of decades ago, during the campaign of localising the Siberian indigenous people, the attempt was made to create a job of a so-called *chumrabotnitsa* (*chum* worker). The goal was to keep the wives and children of herders in the villages. But after some unsuccessful attempts this idea was abandoned (Slezkine 1994).

So, up till now, the main character of the lifestyle of the Nenets living in brigades is constant migration. Another peculiar feature is that man and the reindeer are always together. It is in many ways natural because the life of the Nenets depends on the reindeer in the very sense of the word. Unlike many other groups dealing with reindeer

herding, for instance, their close neighbours – the forest Nenets (see Verbov 1936) and Selkups (see Gemuyev, Pelikh 1974), who are hunters – the most important or even the only source of livelihood for the Nenets living in the Yamal tundra is the reindeer. Although, if there is an opportunity, the Nenets also fish and hunt, it is the existence of reindeer that guarantees everyday food. During all the time I spent in my brigade there was not one day when I did not eat meat or some other product of the reindeer – blood, liver, brain, tongue, and bone marrow. It must be mentioned that other necessary food (bread, tea, sugar, salt and mustard) is also very important and it is obtained from the state farm centre where twice a year the brigades are supplied for a half-year migration cycle.

The dwelling of the Nenets people has also not changed throughout times. As the people have to be in constant movement because of the reindeer, the only possible dwelling has to be a portable and easily pitched tent. Although during the Soviet times the tundra Nenets were encouraged to dis-accustom themselves from their "non-hygienic" lifestyle (see Vinogradov 1932), they still live in their conical tents or *chums*[7]. The *chum* has a simple construction (more details see Chernetsov 1936) and it is easy to set up: reaching a new campsite the conical framework of long poles is put up quickly and on top of it goes the tarpaulin (in summer) or reindeer skin (in winter) cover. Usually it takes about 40 minutes. The number of the *chums* in the camp depends on several circumstances: the number of the families, the season, the size of the herd. Very often many families live together in one *chum* because the smaller the number of the *chums*, the easier it is to move the camp to a new place. To transport the camp, specially trained draught-reindeer are harnessed to wooden sledges, which have to hold all the lodgings: *chum*, dishes, tools, clothes, food and religious items.

The harness consisting of reindeer and narta is the most important instrument of the herdsman. It is used when looking after the herd and when visiting friends and relatives. The reindeer have remained the only means of transportation for the Nenets both in summer and in winter. Even the herdsmen, who have been able to obtain snowmobiles,

[7] Here and henceforce, the names of everyday items or events common among the peoples of Siberia and rooted in the Russian language, are given in italics.

do not use them very much in their everyday work. Obviously, the snowmobile revolution (see Pelto, Müller-Wille 1983) has not taken place in the Yamal tundra, partly because of their high price. But the bigger obstacle is the nomadic life itself: constant migration and isolation from the infrastructures make the usage of snowmobiles quite senseless. Under given circumstances, the best vehicle is the reindeer.

For the inhabitants of the tundra, reindeer skins are of vital necessity. They are used to make clothes suitable for severe weather conditions. The long hooded anoraks for men and fastening fur coats for women and high boots seem to be the only possible clothing for both their manufacture and warmth-keeping in the cold and windy tundra. The skin is also used to make winter covers for the *chum,* for the *arkans*[8] and harnesses for draught animals. The tendon fibres of the reindeer are used for sewing.

Conclusion

The Nenets living in the Yamal peninsula tundra have always relied on themselves and their reindeer. The more animals a man has, the more secure he feels in this inhospitable natural environment. Throughout history, the reindeer herds have increased considerably thanks to different changes in natural and political environments. The state farm system could be viewed as a certain result of adaptation.

Despite preliminary setbacks, the collective economy system has enabled the securing of the welfare of people up till now: herds that have become big because of the lack of wolves and epidemics and the provision of food by the state farm guarantees a relatively easy life for the Nenets. At the same time, it has not caused great changes in their traditional lifestyle. The social arrangement, based on kinship is maintained as before; dwelling and clothes have also remained the same. The isolation from the rest of the world, characteristic to the nomadic cattle-herders has not changed either. Although the reindeer herding brigades are officially the subunits of the state farm, subject to central

[8] *Arkan* is a 10 to 15 metre long braided reindeer-skin lasso-type rope with a noose for catching the reindeer.

direction, they have always been quite independent. Whether and how they can manage, depends totally on themselves.

In these conditions, the Nenets can only rely on his reindeer who provide him with food and clothing and means of transportation when going for the doctor. This close tie with this animal may be the reason why the Nenets have been able to cope pretty well so far with different environmental changes. It is no wonder that under the current economic crisis they have remained joyful and practical – the reindeer give them the security to face the future.

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Translated by Mall Leman

Ethnopolitical Comments About the Sacrificial Ceremony At Lake Num-To[1]

Art Leete

This paper is a sequel to the description of the sacrificial ceremony at Lake Num-To, published in the previous volume "Arctic Studies" (Leete 1997). Put briefly, on April 19, 1996, in a sacred place near Lake Num-To, Western Siberia, the Nenets from the tundra belt and forest areas and the Khants sacrificed three reindeer to heavenly gods. Among the main purposes of the ritual was to prevent oil industries from starting oil manufacturing near the sacred place at lake Num-To (thus cultural-ecological issues were involved). The sacrificial ceremony examined in my previous paper was also organised for this purpose (Leete 1997), as well as the interviews for the local television broadcasting company held before the ceremony. This paper concentrates upon publishing the texts of the interviews.

In ethnology, fundamental ethical problems have become increasingly acute during recent decades.

Firstly, in cognition, the main issue is as follows: how reasonable is the academic freedom assumed by researchers themselves, which allows us to reveal authoritative truth pertaining to the *ethnographic other*. Thomas Biolsi and Larry Zimmermann, in their foreword to the volume on the ethics of the study of cultures, have made the following claim, e.g.:

"Most "sources of information" and "anthros" no longer believe that what passes for scholarly knowledge is ever universal, value-neutral, or unconnected to profession, class, and other interests (although there are always "exceptions")" (Biolsi & Zimmermann 1997: 7).

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[1] This article is published with a permission of Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda) and has been prepared by support of the Estonian Science Foundation.

Also, Biolsi and Zimmermann report that, according to the logic of anthropologists, it is they themselves "... not Native Americans[2], become the curators – in fact, owners – of heritage" (1997: 8).

Besides, this is the question about the protection of local people's rights. Probably, researchers have got out of their "ivory tower" already. The aspect that a researcher should "profit" from their research is also generally acknowledged. What has the ethnologist to give in return? Does he/she have a monopoly of representing "his/her" people in a wider social dialogue? How about the voice of the native people? Or what should be the attitude towards the statements made by the locals to fight for their rights? To be more exact – towards the adequacy of these statements in the present sense: do they meet any research criteria?

I am not saying that the way researchers interpret the locals is adequate or not. Nor I am aware how they should do that. In this paper the locals themselves will speak up. On the other hand, I am responsible for mediating their ideas and creating the scientific quality of the text.

I am going to publish the texts of the interviews, as having been informed that Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda)[3], the main interviewee, was interested that the material should be presented on some of Russian television channels. Thus, people in local leading positions wished to communicate the issues of fighting for the native West-Siberians' rights and preservation of their environment to a wider audience, as well as a public response to cultural and ecological aspects regarding the expansion of the oil industry.

This paper would probably not contribute much to the aspect of communicating the issue to a wider audience. Yet the paper provides the aspect of inseparability of the "purely scientific" approach (description of a traditional ceremony) and ethnopolitical approach with some ethical pretension.

I will avoid commentary in large quantities, and only provide the most inevitable ones. The most topical issue on the part of the locals can be uderstood anyway: ecological and cultural protection of the region.

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[2] The volume examines the aspects of the study of American Indians, however, these statements hold more generally.

[3] Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda), a Nenets from the forest areas around the Varyugan River, President of the West-Siberian Reindeer Herders' Society.

Yet "purely scientific" commentaries to the subsequent interviews would be a matter of delicacy, and justification of them once again ethically questioned. As Biolsi and Zimmermann claim, an anthropologist is one of the "interested parties" when explaining his/her attitudes (1997: 14).

The Num-To interviews

Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda): *We arrived at Lake Num-To, a sacred lake near an oilfield. At the lake where many rivers start, with my relatives present, I would like to give a reindeer as a gift. Today I have already handed over the amount of money. I am going to buy a reindeer from a relative of mine for the President of Russia. Should Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin like to take his reindeer away, kill or give to someone else, I would do it at any time. Should Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin not take his reindeer away from my herd before the election*[4]*, the reindeer goes to the candidate who wins the election campaign.*

According to the beliefs of my tribe, this reindeer can live forever. How? When it becomes old, it becomes ill, and when I think it feels badly, I kill it for meat. I replace it by a young healthy reindeer from my herd.

At the same time the reindeer can also pass away. It may die in an accident, or from a illegal hunter's gun near the oilfield. Only then the President's reindeer can disappear.

Also, there is one more way for its passing away, namely when its pasture is destroyed by something or someone, and the reindeer has nothing to eat.

I give my word to the present and future president of Russia that I will make every effort to provide his reindeer with the longest possible life. I swear to make every effort and all the powers at my disposal, and to make every attempt to protect the pasture from any possible damaging activity. On this pasture, i.e. on the pasture of my tribe, also the President's reindeer will be grazed.

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[4] Yuri Vylla gave the interview on 19 April 1996. The Russian presidential election was held in June 1996, won by Boris Yeltsin.

That would be all I wanted to speak to you, inhabitants of our Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug, with my relatives present at this sacred lake.

Oleg Aivaseda[5]: *I come from the Varyugan Soviet, and I have come here to the sacred Lake Num-To to sacrifice together with my fellow countrymen at this sacred site. Also, I wish to dedicate a reindeer to Comrade Filipenko, the Governor of our Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug. For he paid more attention to people, just a basic interest.*

Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda): *Probably, you wish to turn to the Governor of the Okrug, for he helped to protect your pasture?*

Oleg Aivaseda: *Yes. I give it to him as gift, for he helped me to protect my pasture, my reindeer, and also his reindeer among them. And he can take the reindeer away from my herd at any time, and graze it wherever he wants.*

Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda): *And what does it look like?*

Oleg Aivaseda: *The reindeer is white.*

Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda): *Female?*

Oleg Aivaseda: *Yes, female that will produce offspring. And let Comrade Filipenko himself take care of them.*

Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda): *By the way, I forgot to tell that the reindeer I dedicated to the President of Russia was also female. And it can be that in some years the President may have some more reindeer.*

A small detail, namely that oil industrialists from Kogalym, to undo the damage, agreed to pay to our family an average monthly wage of the oil company worker. That makes about 3 millions[6].

But the day before yesterday I was given 1 million. I estimated that I can buy a team of reindeer, i.e. three reindeer. Unfortunately, I had enough money for only one. Thus, I dedicade only one reindeer to the Russian President.

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[5] Oleg Aivaseda, a Nenets from the forest areas around the Varyugan River, a relative of Yuri Vylla.

[6] In the April of 1996, 3 million roubles equaled to ab. 7200 Estonian kroons or 526 US dollars.

Maria Voldina[7]: *I would like to say that I was joyful when I came here. As my childhood passed here, there were reindeer here. Lots of, lots of reindeer.*

But now people are upset and issued a declaration. I think the demand and call that the sacred Lake Num-To and its lands should be left in peace, is justified. For as it turned out, derricks are already there. But we were in our okrug and thought that the lands around Num-To were intact. It turned out that here sorrow is as inexpressible as in Surgut, Nizhnevartovsk and Nefteyugansk regions.

Thank you all for your love for reindeer, as all people do. The President and Governor received the most exquisite presents. It is of course that if we do not go to church, nothing will happen there... For us, this is the only sacred site in the whole tundra belt. Therefore, I join those who issued the declaration to the governors of two okrugs[8].

And those who turn to Heaven today, those who have brought here the most expensive presents, a whole team of reindeer. I hope to God, we would not be deprived of that.

Yuri Vylla (Aivaseda): *We as if wish to confirm our deeds with a stamp in front of our Gods. The sacrificial ceremony that we are going to carry out today, the sacrifice of reindeer to the Gods, this is the case with the the act of giving reindeer to the Russian President and the Governor. And in our declaration to the Governor we claim that the lands should be maintained.*

In conclusion, all interviews were primarily concerned with the aspect of giving reindeer to the Russian President and the Governor of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug. The purpose of that was, in accordance with the Nenets tradition, to get the President and Governor involved among the victims of the environmental pollution in Western Siberia.

We are not informed of President Yeltsin's response to the gift. However, Governor Aleksandr Filipenko regarded it as an loyal impost

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[7] Maria Voldina, a Khanty, editor of the Khanty newspaper "*Hanty Yasang*" ('Khanty Language'), published in Khanty-Mansiysk, capital of the okrug.

[8] The Yamal-Nenets and Khanty-Mansiysk autonomous okrugs.

of ordinary people, rather than an indication of a social contract between equal parties. The Nenets consider their gifts to the President of Russia and Governor of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug as commitments. This can be regarded as mutual cultural misunderstanding.

Yet even Yuri Vylla was unable to foresee that things run smoothly in accordance with his and Oleg Aivaseda's words, and the President and the Governor join issue with them against the oil industry. However, in a situation of the boundless arbitrary and brutal action of oil companies towards native peoples, it is highly important to support any attempt of the locals to maintain their community lifestyle. This was also the main reason for the sacrificial ceremony at Lake Num-To, described in the previous paper by this author, as well as for the above interviews.

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Translated by Epp Uustalu

Expedition Diary. Khanty-Mansiysk–Yuilsk–Beryozovo (Khanty-Mansiysk autonomous okrug) 2nd – 17th August 1975

Heno Sarv

August 2nd

I would have slept more in the morning but Ets[1] woke me up. He must have wanted to get rid of me. I grasped the cassette from Tõnu[2] and the elastoplast from Ets and ran to the bus station. The bus didn't come at once, only after 15 minutes. Despite the fact, I reached the port in time. The ticket office did not sell the tickets any more, but it is possible to buy one on the hydrofoil.

One of the good things in the "*Meteor*" is that the one who comes at the last minute, gets the best place – in the fore saloon – which is usually kept empty. I would have wanted to fall asleep immediately, but I had to buy a ticket. I could have been a stowaway, nobody checked, but I had to spend my work trip money and how can you show in your report later that you had been a stowaway for 600 kilometres and covered the distance on a random motorboat and all this happens within 10 hours i.e. 60 km per hour on water.

I've got my ticket. But it turns out that "*Bufet zakryt. Net bufetchika*" ('The refreshment bar is closed. No barmaid' in Russian). OK. I can be without eating today, maybe I can save money. So, I fell asleep peacefully, hoping that I will oversleep my hunger. But how can you sleep when nature around you is so beautiful. After Urmanney, I could not resist any longer and started to take snapshots. In the meantime, I continued a letter home that I had already started yesterday.

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[1] Edgar Saar, a researcher of the Estonian National Museum.

[2] Tõnu Seilenthal, an aspirant of Budapest Lorand Eötvös University, now a docent of Uralic languages in Tartu University, PhD 1977.

Beryozovo: it's evening time, the airport is probably closed, the hotel is... under repair. Welcome! You can spend the night under a boat near the river. Still, I found my lodging for the night with a friendly Russian, who was suffering form slight hangover.

August 3rd

In the airport I noticed something from my homeland – a pricelist "*Kolbasa Estonskaya*" ('Estonian sausage' in Russian). Of course, they did not have the sausage in the refreshment bar. It became clear that there will be no planes at all to Num-To during the summer, only the post plane goes there about once a month, without any schedule. So I had to decide for Yuilsk. After the stopover in Kazym, I was the only non-Khanty on the plane.

Yuilsk. If you have just come down from the sky and landed in the middle of a Khanty village, you really feel as if you have fallen from the Moon. You have got everything, only you don't know what to start with. "Have you got vodka with you?" – "No, I haven't." The one who asked was not a Khanty and I really didn't have any. It turned out that alcohol was prohibited in the village. I stopped near some old men who were discussing something at a wire-work trap. I asked – "Are you Khantys?" – "Yes." – "*Wus'a* ('hello' in Khanty). I'm from Estonia, I've come to learn about your lifestyle." – "And so what?" – "Er... er..." – "So you need a lodging?" – "Yes, I think so." – "Let's go then."

I went into a hut with the youngest of the men. There were Khantys and Russian geologists sitting at the table, everybody had a glass of vodka in front of them. Although Khantys live in quite difficult circumstances, I got my lodging in a geologists' trailer where only one other man lived. He asked me to feel at home and rushed back to drink vodka.

In the evening, I went into the forest, knowing already where to go – east of the village. I found sites that could be suitable for sacrifice quite soon. Further on – a reindeer skull on top of a tree... – something like a well near a sacrificial site... a reindeer head skin and again a skull on top of a tree... a fireplace near a sacrificial site... a tree stump covered with a shawl. I took photographs of everything, not understanding all these things, or what was sacred and what wasn't, and whether these were sacrificial sites at all. At last the mosquitos forced me out of the

forest, attacking not only me any more (I didn't care much about that) but also my camera and notebook (this was more annoying). To finish my film, I also took a couple of photographs of the village.

In the meantime, the host of my trailer had become drunk and fallen asleep in the cot he had offered me. When he woke up, he asked me to make something to eat for him and myself and put a lot of onion in this food, he went for vodka himself. Luckily, he did not get any.

August 4th

The first pleasant surprise in the morning was that I found a man who was going to build a Khanty barn on ground-clearing supports. I offered to help him, saying that I had plenty of time and that I was interested in studying this type of building. He agreed first, but when I asked to take some photographs of the building process, he thought me to be a very important person all of a sudden and suggested not to waste my precious time and energy – he said he can cope with the work himself. Only later did he realise that the camera happened to be in my hands quite accidentally and that I am not an important person as such at all. So I could help here and there later on, although he usually asked his neighbour to come and help.

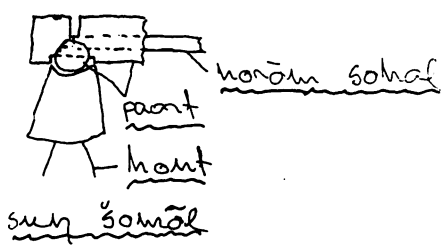


Figure 1. A barn post (EA 148: 23).

Taking advantage of the mosquito-free and hot lunch time, I made another trip into the forest, but I didn't find anything new apart from a lake in which there was a landing-place for hydroplanes. Later, I asked

what was the name of that lake and I was told *hlor* i.e. lake in Khanty language – such small lakes do not have their own names.

In the evening, one of the geologists showed me the way to the Khanty graveyard. I took as many photographs as I could but again, the mosquitos forced me out of the forest. I heard later that Khantys could not have come there together with me to explain things as they are not in the habit of going there without a reason.

The photographing of the barn was witnessed by the Khantys of the neighbouring hut and they asked me to take photographs of them, too. I did so and asked for their signature, as required for the museum: "Name? Surname? Date of birth?" – "Oh, but why do you need it?" – "I'm taking photographs for the museum." – "Oh, no, don't do this for the museum, just send this one to us, for the museum we'll put our national costumes on and take a decent photograph next time."[3]

I was wiser later on – I collected the necessary data during our conversation, asking questions at about 10 minutes intervals. For instance, I asked the name of the barn-builder (Georgi) on the 4th August,

Photograph 1. The Kaksins family. Fk 1766: 48.

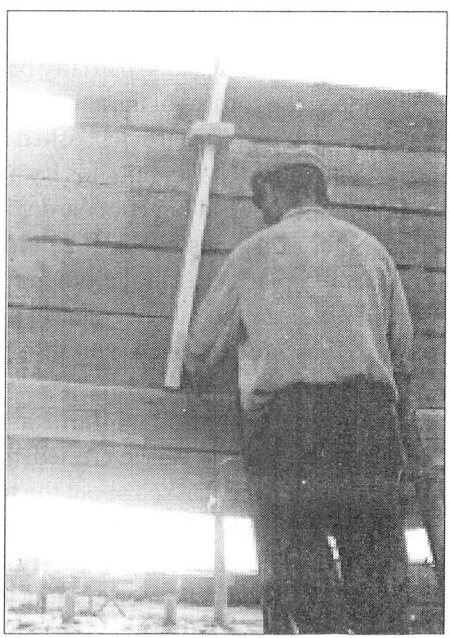
[3] This request was not fulfilled, the photo did not only reach the museum but it is also on the cover of my diploma paper.

his surname (Moldanov) on the 5th August, and the date of birth (1934) on the 7th August.

August 5th

The walls of the barn are up already, the door spaces have been sawn. In the meantime, a man from the neighbouring hut had completed a narta quite secretly – I hadn't noticed it at all, I could photograph the almost ready-made narta.

Figure 2. A leveller of barn wall boarding (EA 148: 24).



Photograph 2.
Fixing the leveller (*wasjuh*) of barn wall boarding. Georgi Moldanov (b. 1934). Fk 1766: 28.

I asked him to show some smaller craft things to me. I was shown bags for sewing materials, a box, a needle-holder. They could not give them away or sell them, they needed them for themselves. A year ago, people like us from the Khanty-Mansiysk museum had been here and taken the better things with them. I asked for the Khanty name of every thing. So they started to think that I wanted to learn the Khanty language and they told me other words, too – a boat – *hop*, an oar – *hlop*, a table – *pasan*, a spade – *sar*, etc.

I also took a photograph of Georgi's family – for myself, they promised to pose for the museum later. I used the heat of lunch time (when the Khantys did not work) for photographing the graveyard properly.

In the evening, one of the geologists showed me the way to the supervisor of the fur farm. We agreed to meet the next morning 9 o'clock, so that I could see the farm, too.

In the twilight, I took photographs of the bread oven which had just been heated. I couldn't watch the bread baking, it was too dark.

August 6th

I woke up only at nine o'clock in the morning, so that I reached the fox farm at half past nine. The fur farm looked the same as ours here. I took only a couple of snapshots, partially because of politeness. After a little excursion to the spheres of the newest field of production of the Khantys, the caretaker, Leonid Petrovich, asked me to have a cup of tea with him.

As with other Khanty huts, his home was not richly furnished either. Although there was a big cupboard with books in the corner (this was quite extraordinary as books are almost never seen among Khantys), the sleeping place was in the other corner of the room, on the floor. Actually we can talk about room in a Khanty hut only conditionally, because they are separated with thin partition walls that do not reach the ceiling.

Leonid had heard about Tartu and he also knew that there is a university there. As he was interested, he brought out the map and looked where I come from. I asked about the national activities of the Khantys – and there is only one – the bear funeral feast. The authorities had wanted to prohibit this feast some years ago, but he together with other Khantys had fought for permission to celebrate it. Of course, 'bad'

songs (which ones exactly, I never found out) were also sung at the bear funeral feast but it can't be possible to prohibit the culture of a whole nation because of that. So, the funeral feasts take place here every winter.

Last winter, Leonid's wife had passed away. I asked also about the commemoration of the dead and continued with asking about the sacrificial sites. I learnt one or two things about witches and musical instruments.

Photograph 3. Building a boat (*jurnhop*) made of one tree stem with a grooving axe (*wonghop*), Vasily Moldanov (b. 1931). Fk 1766: 93.

When I was walking back into the village, two Khantys drove past me, carrying a shell of a boat made of one tree stem. I talked to them and got some instructions as to how to make the boat (*jurnhop*). Unfortunately, Vasily Moldanov, the man who was building the boat, wasn't a very organised workman and I could follow the smoking breaks more than the real boat-making. In the meantime, I went to see how the roof

was put on the barn and took photographs of it, and then I photographed the boat-making again. During the next smoking break I was asked – "OK, you take photographs of us but do you have a photograph of yourself to give to us as a remembrance?" I said that it would have never crossed my mind that somebody would have wanted to see my face here after I had left. Funny or not but I think I have to send them the photograph from home. I managed to hear something about the history of the village during the smoking breaks. I also took photographs of a wicker-work trap and asked what materials are needed for it.

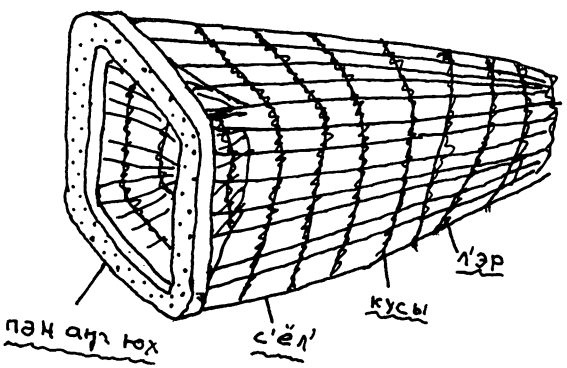


Figure 3. Basket trap (EA 148: 40).

I was looking for somebody who could sing Khanty songs but everybody said that they could sing for days when they were drunk and that nothing came out when they were sober. Still there was a man who promised to sing when he was sober but somehow he was always in a hurry when he heard that I had my tape-recorder in my bag and he could sing right away.

More men had arrived at the geologists' expedition during the day and also brought vodka with them. Following the tradition of Russian hospitality and the altruism of a drunk man, they offered their help.

They didn't have enough vodka to collect songs but they promised to obtain some exhibits if I had lent my mouth organ to them for a while. And so we went, the geologist blowing the mouth organ, and I quietly following him. Geologist went into Georgi Moldanov's place. I told him that I had already been there, asking for things. – "Oh, it's OK." He shouted at the man: "Pull your things out, we'll see what we need and take them!" I tried to drag the geologist away as quickly as possible. Georgi understood me, asked only whether I would come to take photographs tomorrow. – "Of course I will!" Later the geologists scolded me, saying that I would not get anything if I continued talking in a quiet way like that. We'll see.

August 7th

As I had promised, I went to take photographs at Georgi's place in the morning straight away. Unfortunately, I had put in a new black-and-white film only yesterday, but I would have liked to photograph the Khantys wearing their national costumes on a colour film. Luckily, the wide film has only 12 shots, and to finish my film more quickly I started taking photographs of the barn, then continued with Georgi's family from all perspectives, together and alone, till the film was finished. I also took some snapshots of his family on the colour film. But then Georgi's neighbours asked me to come and take photographs, they had relatives from Kazym visiting them. Here you are! I've got a slidefilm in the camera, how can you send them a photograph afterwards! Still, I did take photographs of them, I can tell them later that they didn't come out.

Then I went to see the boat-making. It started to rain pretty soon and I dropped in at Vasily's place. He lived in an old hut that had been brought into the village from the forest. It had a small entrance and only one room in which it was just high enough for me to stand. There was only a tools storage space with a table and a shelf, two benches and a sleeping place in this room. Clothes, the gun and other commodities were hanging on nails in the wall. All this did not give an impression of poor life, quite on the contrary – it contained everything necessary for life, there wasn't anything unnecessary. The latter saddened me as I was collecting exhibits. Anyway, I asked whether he had anything to give or

sell although it was clear without asking that he hadn't.

After the rain, I met the zootechnician (Pyotr Alikov) who said that if I were really quick I could go to the reindeer. At last – I had been begging this from the department head (Aleksandr Randymov) and him for days. The only obstacle was that I undoubtedly needed rubber boots to go there, I couldn't have made my way to there with my own boots on. When I told them my shoe number was 46 they became speechless, shook their heads and murmured: "Yeah, grown in a warm and humid place..." They haven't heard of that large shoe number in the geologists' storehouse either.

As I had nothing to do, I grasped my bottle of mosquito repellent and rushed to the river where a man who had to take me there was already waiting.

I sat in the boat and we sailed away. Although the river Kazym is quite wide, it is difficult to operate a motorboat there. The river has very many meanders and due to that there are a lot of shallow places. When we had covered exactly half the distance, the engine broke down. We didn't know whether to row back or forward, both ways it was at least 20 kilometres. Fortunately, the failure wasn't too bad – the sparkplug was a bit sooty, and after an half-hour of tinkering we could move on. Some metres before our destination we became stuck in shallow water but we managed to refloat.

On shore we were welcomed by the natives – mosquitos. In order to allay their cheerful storm, we rubbed our faces and hands with mosquito repellent. It helped indeed. I had a terrible problem with my boots in the fen area. Actually, bogs here are not exactly fens but something in-between. It is easy to go through our Estonian fen with dry boots if you know something about nature. But here, there were not only fen plants but also a lot of sedges. The low, watery, plantless patches were very large in some places, so that it wasn't possible to go around them. But the sedge-covered low places were even worse, water was about 30 cm deep in them. I couldn't hesitate, made my way through them, telling Stepan (my Khanty guide Stepan Alikov) that my nose had already been running before this trip. Drier mounds, yellow with bramble-berries, served as a prize. Naturally, it took a lot more time to cross them.

Stepan wasn't quite sure whether we were getting to the right place. We began to see reindeer traces here and there. Soon we reached a dry

forest patch. We saw some reindeer through the trees and heard dogs barking from a distance. Then, we reached the cattle. The shepherd Nikolai (Stepan's and Pyotr's brother Nikolai Alikov) was just driving the cattle to the campsite of the brigade.

The brigade consisted of four families, three of them lived in tents, Nikolai lived in a *chum* (conical tent). In the evening we sat down for tea around the table in his jurta. I was sitting cross-legged like everybody. They were looking at me with amazement. When I asked what was wrong they said that "Ours can't sit like that." I said "How, you are sitting like that just now." "No, we mean local Russians. We have never seen a non-Khanty before who could sit like that."

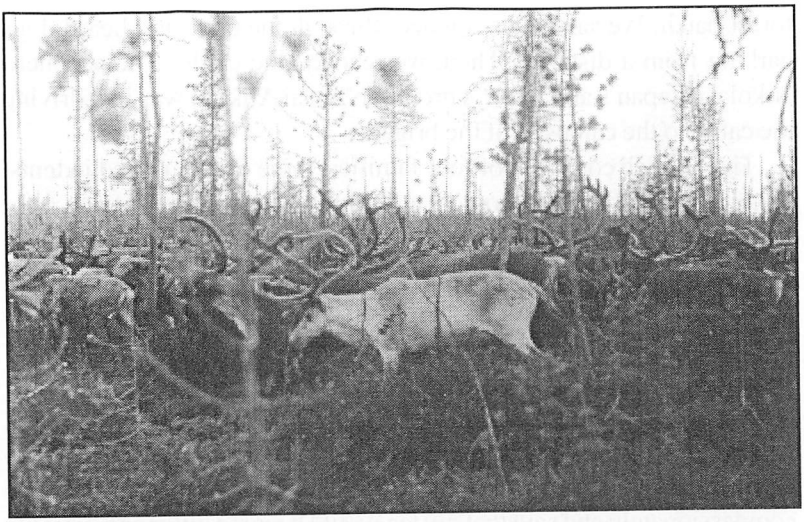
Tea is made right in the cup i.e. tea leaves are put in the cup and hot water is poured on them. Khantys drink their tea from a saucer. I tried to drink from a cup first, like a civilised person. But they looked at me compassionately and said that my tea would become bitter and gave me another cup of tea with no sediment. I realised that if I tried to show my civilised manners again I would become quite annoying for the hosts and I drank my tea from a saucer from then on like the Khantys. They ordered Khanty bread with tea. It is difficult to find proper words to praise the taste of the juicy and soft Khanty bread, baked in a clay oven.

In the evening Nikolai asked whether it was going to rain. I looked into the sky and thought that it was not. – "OK, let's sleep outside then." They pulled a mosquito-net between two trees, put some reindeer skins on the ground under it and the sleeping place was ready.

The reindeer rested at the lake. To protect them from mosquitos, three big piles of turf were set to smoke beside them.

August 8th

In the morning, 'inventory' was carried out in the cattle herd. Big male reindeer were caught with snares, castrated and their horns were sawn off. The private reindeer in the cattle were marked with neck rings. In order to drive the reindeer the Khantys shouted "*Kyyyt, hey-hoo. Kyt-kyt-kyt-kyt*" in the forest. I would have liked to shout like that myself but I didn't dare to do so in the beginning, because I didn't know where to exactly drive them.



Photograph 4. Driving the reindeer in the forest. Fk 1766: 71.

"That's how we live here," said Nikolai when we were drinking tea, "I used to live in Pomut village before. Now the village is empty, some moved into Yuilsk, some into Kazym, but I have lived here with the reindeer for thirteen years already. Others live here in tents but I am not going to leave my *chum*." I asked him about the sacred trees. "Have you been to Beryozovo? How did you like the town?" I admitted honestly that I did not. "I don't like it either. Every time I go into the town during my holiday, the militiaman locks me up on the first or second day already. Although I explain to him that I have been living with reindeer for a year or two and have not drunk a drop of vodka or smoked a cigarette, he still thinks that when I'm drunk once, it is enough to lock me up for a couple of days. Did you also go to the larch grove near the fish factory?" "No." "It is an old and famous sacred grove of the Khantys. When Beryozovo town was built, they tried to cut it down, but the trees were as hard as iron and the axe broke. They took a newer and harder axe but with that they could only injure one tree a little. The tree started to bleed. That is why they still have a park in Beryozovo. Do you have trees like that in Estonia, too?" I answered yes, according to the old songs. "Also larches?" "No, we had oak-trees, we almost don't have larches at all." I asked what was Nikolai's surname – Alikov; it used to

be Allik earlier, but the Russians couldn't write a name like that. Stepan and the zootechnician Pyotr are Nikolai's brothers.

Nikolai shows me a local newspaper with an article "Following the footsteps of Antal Reguly" in it. A few weeks before there had been a Hungarian film group in Kazym who had shot a film about Antal Reguly and Khantys for the Fenno-Ugric conference in Budapest in 1975. Somehow I was sure that articles about Khantys are quite rare in this newspaper.

At the brigade leader Pavel Kaksin's place I took photographs of making of the wicker-work trap. Stepan told me the Khanty words for some details of the trap.

In the evening, Nikolai came from the swamp, carrying a dead reindeer calf. It had been alive yesterday, the body was still warm. Medicines do not arrive in time, animals die, and the plan is not fulfilled. The calf was dissected in the morass, hoofs were hung on a tree. I asked why were they put there. – "Oh, just like that, the zootechnician can see later why it had died." I doubt it very much that the zootechnician will go to the forest to look for them but it was pointless to ask any more. The dissected calf was put under a mound into a "fridge", where another calf was already waiting for it.

I also took some photographs of bread-baking, but the breadmaker's wife did not want to pose for the photograph and I wasn't quick enough. One of the herdsmen, Ossip, understood the joke, grabbed the pastry pan and posed, slowly moving the bread gradually towards the oven.

August 9th

When I woke up at 9 o'clock in the morning, Nikolai was out to mark the path for tomorrow's move. He had seen a bear on his road back, but he had not had his gun with him, otherwise I would have maybe seen the bear funeral feast.

My awakening was somewhat sad – it happened in a puddle. It had started to rain at night and it continued in the morning. I wrung my mosquito net and other clothes dry and bundled myself into the tent to warm up. I was treated with fresh, yesterday-baked meat-bread (meat was put into a bread loaf).

Photograph 5. Placing the breads in the oven.
Demonstrated by Yosif Tarlin (b. 1942). Fk 1766: 44.

It rained all day so that I couldn't take photographs of anything. The Khantys living in the campsite played cards to spend their time – a game called a 'Thousand' and 'Muggins'. It was more interesting to follow the first game – I could study the names of numbers in Khanty language.

In the evening, the first part of the migration went into the "stationary" living-place of the herdsmen. The bigger movement will be tomorrow. Stepan told me some terms about reindeer farming.

As the rain did not stop, we had to spend our night in the jurta. Nikolai kept a reindeer calf with injured legs there, too.

August 10th

This day was a big movement day. All the belongings were thrown on the nartas, in 15 minutes time the narta was changed into a narta full of poles, tarpaulins and skins. The Khantys had pulled on their *malets*is,[4]

[4] *Malets* – a long hooded anorak for men.

but, despite the fact that I had dressed myself quite warmly, I tried to get some heat at the fire. They would have given me a *malets* to put on but the problem with me is that I have grown up in a warm and humid place and don't look like proper Khanty because of that.

I studied how Nikolai harnesses the reindeer. But it happened so fast that it is very unlikely I could ever learn this art. I drew the harnessing on paper and wrote down Khanty names for different details.

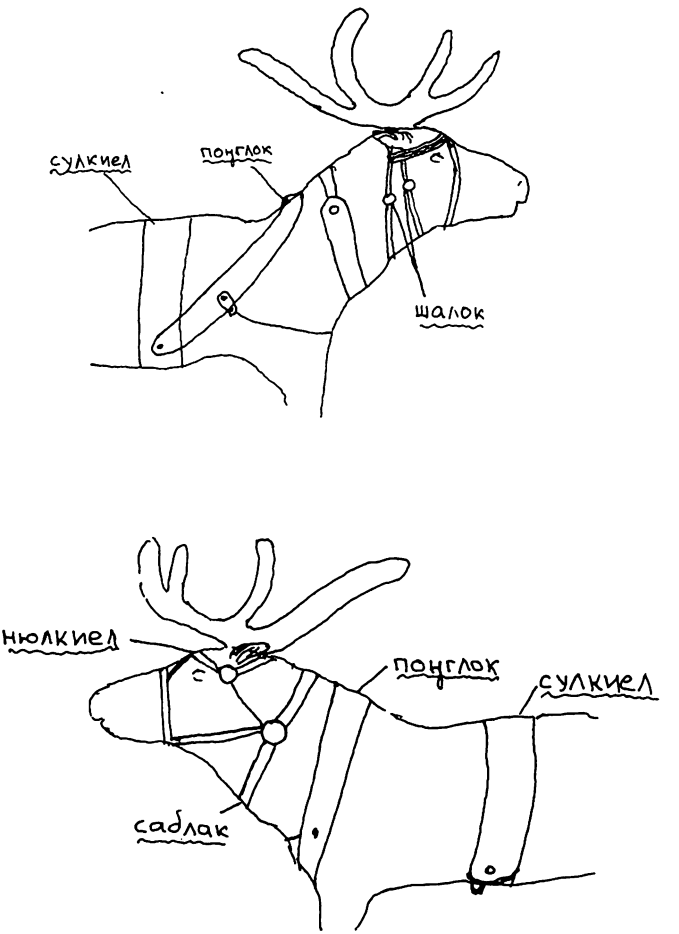


Figure 4. Harnessing the reindeer (EA 148: 36–37).

All the others were on nartas but I and Stepan slumped along on foot. Again, we were wet up to our knees and we stayed well behind the others at the bramble turfs. Just before leaving, we saw a helicopter flying towards Yuilsk, so at last the medicine is brought for the reindeer.

At the final destination of our moving, Pyotr, the zootechnician was already waiting for us, shouting "Welcome to the reindeer town!" Here was an enclosure for the reindeer and houses for the herdsmen – dug about 25–30 cm into the ground. *Chum* was set up almost at the same speed as it was pulled down. Now I took more detailed photographs of everything. A metal tent oven was put inside the *chum* (an open fire used to be inside the *chum* before).

In the evening Pyotr and other herdsmen went fishing. First I looked at Nikolai's things, unfortunately it was too dark to take photographs of them. Then I went for a walk in the forest. The forest was quite similar to our Estonian forest but somehow it seemed powerful and awe-inspiring. This forest seemed to demand a song, but not like Estonian songs. As I had not heard the Khanty songs yet, I started to hum some Lapp mouth music songs that came to my mind. It helped – the forest as if melted into the song and it seemed as if I was welcomed by the forest together with my song. I would have never believed that I could sing a song in a Lappish way, but here it seemed that I murmured properly.

When we had finished our evening tea, hearty shouts came from outside and Pyotr and other fishermen stepped into the *chum* with a big bag full of fish. The females began to gut the fish immediately. Pyotr asked me to come and have some raw fish. Although my stomach was full of the delicious Khanty bread, I still sat down at the table and cut a piece of fish, put salt on it and ate it. It was really good. Soon the boiled fish was ready, too. But as I wasn't used to eating it without a fork, I couldn't separate the bones. Pyotr thought I didn't like it but I admitted that I couldn't eat it. Fish bouillon was given together with the fish, and tea was ordered finally.

August 11th

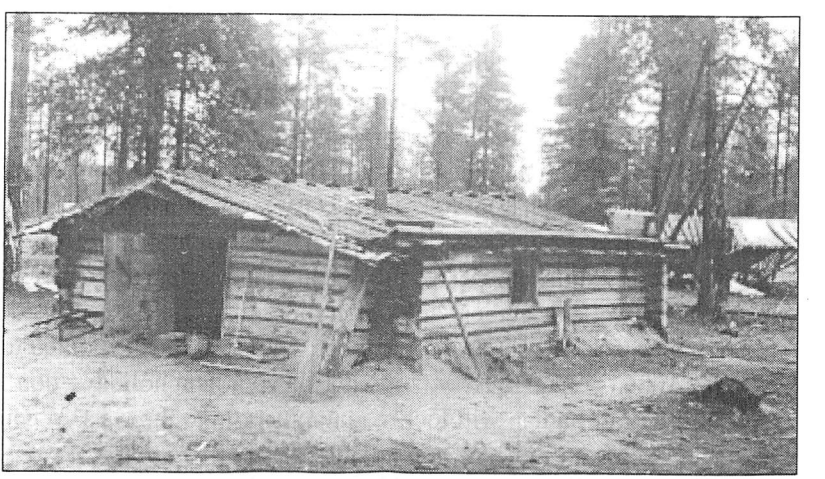
In the morning, they began to cure the reindeer. As much as the rain and my clothes with limited protection against rain allowed, I followed the process. Unlike other reindeer, one didn't run away, although an old

Khanty was standing only a metre away from it. I asked the old man whether that one was sick, too. Semyon (it was his name) answered: "It is mine. Don't you understand, it's mine." I said that it did not have a ring around its neck. "I know it by its ears, and as you can see it knows me as well."

Near the fence, there was a reindeer calf with bound legs lying on the ground. Semyon asked me to take it out on the moss. First I dragged it by its horns as Semyon had suggested. Then I realised that it was hard for the calf, so I picked it up and carried it. There were two calves already standing under the pine-trees. These three were for slaughter.

The calves were slaughtered with measured axe blows, a knife was thrust into their heart. I helped Semyon to dissect a calf. Two calves were cut, the third one was left in one piece and hung on a tree. Here at last my height was a bonus, although it is interesting how they can get the calf down later.

After dissecting the calves, I went to Nikolai's *chum* but Pyotr sent me back, saying that once I had had helped with dissecting, I have the right to some raw meat. So I went back to this partly ground-built hut but I did not want to go in without being asked. To spend my time, I started to take photographs of the house but at this moment I was asked to come in (in Khanty language). It seemed that they couldn't ask me in in Russian.



Photograph 6. A partly ground-built hut (*hot*), built by Yegor Vogatov (b. 1936) in 1971. Fk 1766: 14.

To enter this partly ground-built hut, I had to bend down deeply – the door was only 80 cm high.

There were two huge bowls full of steaming, freshly-slaughtered meat. Everybody was given a knife and a soft sponge made of thin fibres of cut pine to wipe the blood from their hands. To start with, the host Yegor poured everyone half a glass of vodka. It had to be the last bottle, kept since spring – here you are! and it is said that Khantys and other small nations are mad drunkards who can't keep vodka at all. The liver and brain were very tasty, and also the tender muscles around the neck. I realised that the meat is so good only when slaughter-warm. I asked whether the eye is also eaten. The answer was yes, here you are, it is very good. But when I asked them to show me how it was eaten, they did not want to do it (maybe because of full stomachs). So I ate it the only way I could – I cut a hole above the pupil and squeezed the contents into my mouth (as far as I know this is the way the Inuits eat an eye in Greenland). It was really delicious.

After raw meat (i.e. "starters"), boiled meat was ordered. It was eaten without any cutlery at all. Boiled meat was also good (Estonians generally like it), but freshly slaughtered warm meat was definitely better.

After the meal, they lit their Russian cigarettes or had some chewing tobacco. The latter is made of the mixture of makhorka and clincer polypore (*Inonotus obliquus*). I tried it – it seemed a cigarette without smoke.

I took photographs of Nikolai's skis and of Pyotr processing cedar roots (cedar roots often replace string here). Then it was time to go back. We went through the same forest that I had admired yesterday. Nikolai asked – "Aren't the pines gorgeous?" "Yes, they are," I confirmed. "You don't have as high trees in Estonia?" I answered that our trees are even higher. "It can't be possible! I have never seen higher pine-trees than these here!" Truly, how can a European 'toff' explain to an ancient Asian forest dweller that there are higher pines than he has seen.

On our way back I sat in Pyotr's boat. As a farewell, I shouted to Nikolai: "When you go to Beryozovo during your next holidays, don't wait until the militiaman will lock you up, just run to the west. When you reach big water, it means you are at my place."

In Yuilsk Vassili had completed his boat and Georgi his barn in the meantime.

August 12th

Because of splashing in morass water and constant rain, I had a running nose and a cough. That is why I decided to do 'camera work' today – I tried to make my notes and drawings a little bit more readable in my shabby notebook.

The geologists thought that I had gone missing. If I hadn't come back yesterday, they would have sent for a helicopter today to look for my mortal remains.

August 13th

In the morning, I met Semyon in the village street. He asked me in, just for a chat. Semyon's hut was as small as other huts brought into the village from the forest, although it was built only 13 years ago. Right at the door in the corner there was a clay stove with a cooker and a dish-shelf. Furniture was placed in the same way like in *chums*: there were beds on the left and right walls, opposite the entrance, under the window there was a table. For drinking tea, a low *chum*-table was placed in the middle of the floor, the table was decorated with some flower ornaments (evidently it wasn't craft but made from an industrially produced table), and people sat around the table on low benches, cross-legged. It was done so only while drinking tea or eating, when smoking or chatting, people sat on chairs or beds.

Semyon showed me his new boots and an almost completed female *malets*. I said that maybe when the new one would be ready he could give the old one to the museum. But he didn't have an old one at all. It was true, Semyon wore a felt cape at the reindeer work. Still, he gave as much as he could for the museum – some bone ornaments from his belt and also a piece of timber to push knifeblade. I said that in the reindeer town I had forgotten to ask for spiny wiping fibres – and luckily he could give it to me, too. I also got a little box of chewing tobacco – and I gave a pack of snuff in return. When I went out, Semyon's wife run up to me and asked if I had some more snuff.

A plane came from Khanty-Mansiysk for the geologists. The head of the expedition wanted to see their next year's campsite about 100 kilometres north. The geologists asked me to go with them. I rushed and took my camera and films.

Suddenly somebody bumped my back – "*Wus 'a*!" What do I see – "*Wus 'a, wus 'a*" – Nikolai had come for a visit from his reindeer. Now I could give him half a pack of "*Ekstra*" cigarettes and a box of Estonian matches – when I had hurried to the reindeer, I had left everything behind.

I asked the pilots to show me the map. "What do you need it for?" – "I would like to look at the placenames." – "Ah, you want to fly to Canada?" – "Yes, I would, although I have to admit with embarrassment that I have left a hand-grenade and a small-calibre cannon at home. You aren't much afraid of the whistle, are you?" I take my instrument and play a little. "Yes, your situation is complicated, you can go only a hundred kilometres north and back on board this plane." I answer: "It is good enough!" and get on board. Still, I had a chance to have a look at the map a little.

In the evening, there has been some vodka in the village so that I managed to tape one bear song and one drinking song.

August 14th

The sun came out for some hours in between the rain. Trying to take advantage of these moments, I went to see Pyotr because I had promised to photograph him. I hoped to get some horn carvings of the reindeer harness from him.

Pyotr did give me some rings and other small carvings made from horns. While we were drinking tea, he said: "You can't be a bad person because you have eaten raw meat and fish with us without hesitation and when drinking tea you sat the same way we did."

I complained to him that I had not got almost nothing suitable for museum exhibits. Pyotr consulted his wife and then gave me a sewing box, made of peeled birch bark. After a little bit of thinking, he also gave me a needle cushion. I promised to send him a gas lighter from Estonia.

When going past Semyon's yard, I noticed his son doing something near a building that resembled an Estonian conical tent. I had asked what were those buildings for earlier, and always got the same answer that they did not have any other place to put the poles. Maybe they did not understand my question. Now I was told that it is just a tool-shed (*sul'ihot*), where they keep things that are rodent-proof (the things that

Photograph 7. Sewing bags (*kerwul*), a sewing box (*jõnel*) and a needle cushion (*namat*), made by Tanya Moldanova (b. 1929) about in 1960. Fk 1766: 67.

can be damaged by the rodents i.e. clothes and skinwear are kept in the barn (*lopas*). Again I went into Semyon's place.

Semyon asked whether I had been to his neighbour. No, I hadn't. He was said to be the only participant of the Kazym revolt who had come back home after imprisonment. He was said to be blind now. I was interested whether he could speak Russian. Semyon said that he couldn't, Semyon had forgotten that I don't speak the Khanty language yet.

I heard a lot about the life of the Khantys from Semyon. Gradually we came upon the system of chronology. Semyon's wife tried to remember the old Khanty names of months. One month still remained missing. I promised to ask again tomorrow.

August 15th

I went into the households where I had not been before to ask for some things for the museum, but they had things for their own needs only, couldn't give them away. They suggested to come in winter – they have more time to do crafts then.

I dropped in at Semyon's neighbour. Neither the man nor his wife could speak Russian. Their daughter understood, but talked with difficulties. I asked to see some Khanty things. From that time on, it was easier for us both to use our own languages – I asked – what is it? The hostess answered *tutkiev* – understandable, flint. What is this? *Tutkaarti* – fire steel. This is – *l'ei* – a spoon etc. I drew Khanty patterns in my notebook and wrote down their names. Younger females did not know them.

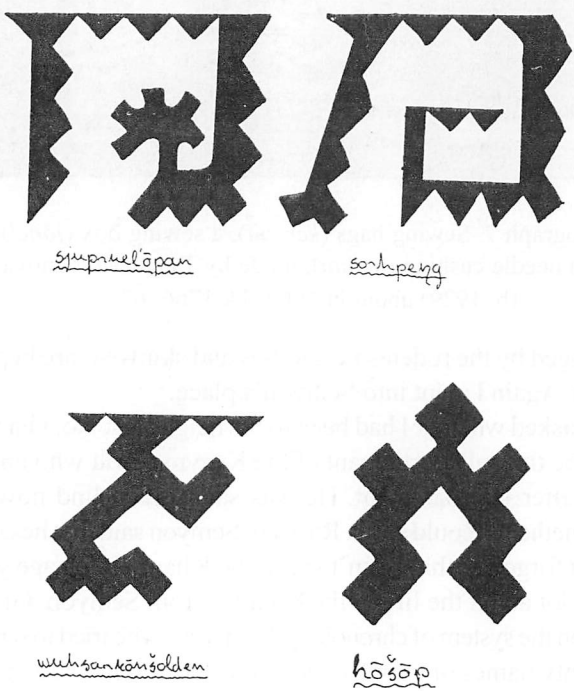


Figure 5. Khanty ornaments (a female oar handle, a pike tooth, a fox heel, a half-man) (EA 148: 29, 28).

In the village, I met the department head, Aleksandr. I asked things from him, too. He asked back whether he could get some money for it – the people from Khanty-Mansiysk museum had done so. I said he could

get a little. Then he promised to find something when he had more time, he hurried to go hunting. I took a couple of shots of hunt-going.

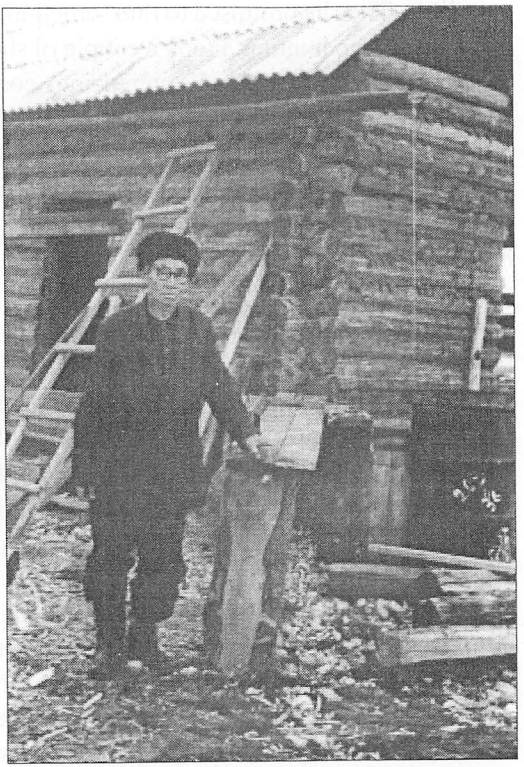
Later in the afternoon I entered into conversation with a young shepherd who had come about 200 kilometres from the east to see his relatives. Just for something to say, I asked him whether he knew any songs. Again I got the classical response that he hums a little when he's drunk. Just in case, I argued with him, saying that according to his voice he could be regarded a relatively good singer, and then I went on to Semyon's place.

I never got the name of the missing month. But I did get the Russian terms for ornaments. Evidently, I had written them down precisely, as my pronunciation was understood immediately. Semyon's wife drew me an ornament of a sable with a cross. In the meantime, the young shepherd to whom I had been talking to earlier, had dropped in. He asked me to come to his place, they had promised to sing there.

Naturally, I did go. To start with, he sang a nature song himself, then a visitor from Kazym, a Komi woman sang a Komi song about the bride of the Sun. Aleksey (this was the name of the young shepherd) promised to make a little model of narta for me tomorrow if his sore hand enabled it, and then he sang another bear song (approximately 13 minutes). At that time 'his highness technics' (i.e. tape-recorder "*Legenda* 401") started to express its superpower. I wasn't too upset when I had to keep the cassette in the right place so that the sound head could find the tape. But when the soundhead taped the sound strip wherever possible, regardless of the fact which way the cassette was put into the recorder, i.e. sometimes on the opposite row of the tape and it did not delete the sound strip when it was taping a new thing, then things went really bad. Obviously we have to wait for local tape-recorders of satisfactory quality for a long while. But we don't know whether there will be any young folk-singers left by the time they start producing proper tape-recorders.

August 16th

Near the shop I met Leonid, the head of the fox farm. He responded my *wus'a* like this "*Tere* ('hello' in Estonian) – isn't it like that in your language?"



Photograph 8.
Leonid Zakharov
(b. 1927).

Local schoolteacher Roman asked me to go fishing with him and he promised to show his grandfather's dilapidated house. I could photograph the fish-blocker and the building of it. The catch was quite poor – there was only one pike in the fishing net and five in the wicker-work trap. The fish probably think more highly of the local hand-made traps than the factory production. The roof of Roman's father's house had fallen in, the forest was growing in the yard. The barn on two ground-clearing supports had crumbled into pieces so badly that it was impossible to understand the original shape and construction. The house seemed to be similar to the houses dug into the ground that I had seen at the reindeer rearers. This house had been used for living in summer (the herdsmen used them mostly in winter, they lived in tents in summer), the winter house was further away from the river, Roman didn't have time to go there.

On our way back, we stopped to find some berries. There weren't many, and the ones we found were small lingonberries and bog whortleberries. We found a couple of edible *boletus* – they had white receptacles and clean scaled legs. Roman did not know this mushroom, he asked me what it was. I knew only three Russian names for mushroom – *muhomor, belyi grib* and *podosinovnik.*

So I said that it is almost like an orange-cap *boletus*, although not exactly, but probably from the same family. I smiled smugly and thought that it would have been a lot easier for a mycologist to answer: as far as I know, it is the representative of the family *Leccinum*, to some extent, some samples have a resemblance to *L. aurantiaca* and *L. scabrum*, which are common in Estonia; this particular species is not found in Estonia. You explain everything in Russian without knowing any mushroom names in Russian and without anybody understanding anything, but you leave an impression that you are very clever.

In the village, the geologists were tidying a neglected Khanty house for living. The drunk owner had killed his wife in winter, suffocated the child with smoke and went to prison himself for it. Knocking about the house I found about ten things I could take for the museum. So, I almost don't have to worry about the exhibits any more. Aleksey has started to build a model of narta but it demanded more time than he had thought so that for my sake, he has postponed his departure for one day.

August 17th

My narta is taking shape already. Aleksey sang some more songs to me, including the Surgut Khanty songs. He knew three Khanty dialects (that differ from each other almost like different languages) and Nenets language. When the narta was ready, I took a photograph of the master, too. He put his mosquito-net on for that reason – in order to have a more etnographic photograph.

We went to an old man with Roman to get a bow drill. Roman was the interpreter, the old man (the same one whom I had taped), did not understand Russian. Besides the drill I also got two spoons with grouse and duck-shaped shanks. I paid five roubles for them but we had difficulties in writing out the bill – the old man couldn't write his signature as he was illiterate. With difficulty, he could only write his initials. I

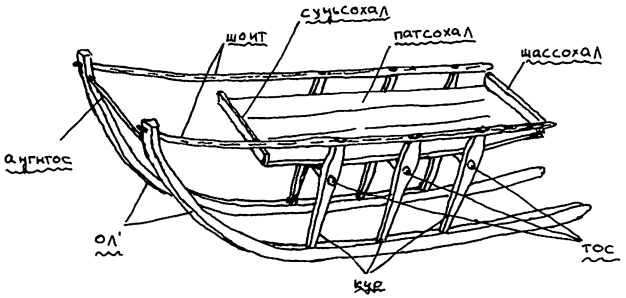


Figure 6. Narta (EA 148: 37).

gave him a pack of snuff as a favour – he was really pleased about that. They sat cross-legged on the floor together with his wife and began to sniff the tobacco. I could see from their eyes that I had given them a precious gift.

At last the department head, Aleksandr, had come back from his hunting. I asked him whether he had found something for the museum. He didn't have anything to give away but said that might be he could make something. My plane had to be here in two hours. He said he could make a self-shooting bow within that time. He managed to make it and could also show how it worked when the plane landed. I couldn't pay him any more as there was no time left for the writing of a bill.

I could hardly grab my rucksack, narta and the self-shooting bow and rushed to the plane. "*Pa jam wõl'h*" (a lot of good life) – Leonid had taught me this Khanty farewell expression. I told him the Estonian *hüvasti* (farewell).

Back in Beryozovo I sought out the sacred larch grove that Nikolai had told me about. I could really see the traces of axe on a couple of trees.

Sources

Text: TAp 678 – diary by Heno Sarv in Topographical Archives of the Estonian National Museum

Figures: EA 148: 6–42 – Heno Sarv "About Khantys of Yuilsk Village" in Ethnographical Archives of the Estonian National Museum

Photographs: Fk 1766 – Photographs by Heno Sarv in collections of the Estonian National Museum

Translated by Mall Leman

The Development of a Written Culture by the Indigenous Peoples of Western Siberia

Eva Toulouze

With the development of a new form of culture based on written language, the indigenous peoples of Western Siberia (Khanty, Mansi and Nenets), as well as the other so-called small peoples of the North, underwent a very significant cultural change. The purpose of this paper is to analyse how this transition occurred, because the emergence of a written culture in the 1930s was not a natural process stemming from internal needs and evolution: it has been imported and even imposed, first as a consequence of contact with Russian colonists, then later as an objective of Soviet cultural policy. The development of literacy in the indigenous culture is therefore closely linked to external influences.

It is important not to forget that these people are the first people who were on the Russians' way eastwards. As early as the twelfth century there was fierce opposition to the penetration of merchants from Novgorod by the so-called Samoyeds[1] (Nenets). During the Yermak's campaign against Khan Kuchum the Cossacks had to fight not only Turkic but also Ob-Ugric troops. But conflicts were not the only forms of contact with the newcomers: some Khanty and Mansi princes are said to have made alliances with the Russians, even assisting them in their efforts to conquer other groups. Bardak, a Khanty prince, is known to have helped the Russians build the fortress of Surgut (*Istoriya...* II 1968: 34), and the Khanty prince of Kod, Igichei Alychev, helped the Russians defeat the Pelym Mansi on the Tavda in 1594

[1] For example in 1187, indigenous groups killed the Novgorod merchants who came to extort tribute. Similar events are recorded up until the 16th century (Forsyth 1992: 3).

(Skachko 1931: 67).[2] It is clear that relationships with the Russians are old and diverse; however, the area was unequally covered: until this century some regions remained more or less isolated from Western influences, such as the peninsula of Yamal or the Eastern Khanty region.

1. An aborted attempt: the christianisation of the peoples of the North

It has been often emphasised that certain peoples of the North had their own writing and used some written signs. Some (mainly in Eastern areas) used pictographic systems (Alkor 1934: 84); others had just signs whose function was either to identify the clan or to communicate some basic message, e.g., numerals, distances, etc. (Sergeyev 1956: 142). Some of the more Eastern peoples also had more developed forms of pictographic writing.

But the first attempts to codify the language spoken by the indigenous peoples of the North and to create literal languages in Siberia and in the European part of Russia are directly connected with the christianisation policy which accompanied Russian colonisation.

a) Expansion and christianisation

What did the missionary work represent in the Russian expansion towards the East? These military campaigns were not Crusades: converting people to Christianity was not their primary goal, but Christianity arrived in a very natural way with military and civil penetration. The first fortified cities were founded by the end of the 16th century; the first churches were built at the same time and then monasteries followed. For example, the Konda church was built in 1600 (Makarova 1995: 24) and the Kod monastery, officially founded in 1653 (Shashkov 1996: 26), was built in 1657 (Kuzmin 1995: 16).

[2] These examples are taken from Russian sources, and could therefore be construed as biased, for Russian historiography has always tried to picture newcomers as being welcomed by local peoples. In this case, nevertheless, I think there is no reason to doubt the veracity of these reports: to use one group against another has always been an efficient conquest strategy, and it is very probable that the Russians used it widely in Siberia.

In the first stage missionary work was not especially active. The native was seen primarily as a source of plenty: the men had to pay a capital tax, called by its Turkish name *iasak*; their importance was as fur suppliers, not as souls to be saved. After being baptised, *iasak* men ceased to pay tribute; traders and officials as well as the government in Moscow therefore did not urge missionary work among them (Slezkine 1994: 43). The monasteries worked more for the Russian inhabitants of the cities and for themselves than for the groups living far off in the taiga or in the tundra.

A new period began in the early 18th century, when Peter the Great became tsar of Russia. When speaking about Peter's religious policy, historians often emphasise his reforms inside the Church and his religious tolerance (Marshall 1966: 56–57; Mazaryk 1992: 53–55), but his tolerance was only concerned with other Christian sects existing among the Empire's Western populations (Catholicism, Protestantism). It is often overlooked that Peter (for strictly political reasons) launched large-scale missionary work against the so-called pagan religions (the religions of Russia's indigenous peoples) during his integration of alien populations into the Empire. Two *ukaz*'es, delivered in 1706 and 1710 (*Istoriya...* II 1968: 324), stressed the necessity of conversion and recommended the use of force and severe punishment, even capital punishment, if neccessary. Thus supported by the state, missionary work became particularly active, even aggressive. The first and most noteworthy missionary of Western Siberia was Father Filofei Leshchinsky, who was sent to Tobolsk as the Siberian Metropolitan in 1702. Father Leshchinsky organised the massive christening of "pagans" (mostly Khanty and Mansi) during his tenure; he is said to have baptised 40,000 pagans in Western Siberia (Vanuyto 1994: 105). These conversions (the act of which seems to have been particularly violent) were based more on one act – the christening – than on an actual religious transformation. The direct religious impact of these conversions was therefore marginal.[3] The conquest of the native

[3] There is of course abundant evidence of syncretism in Western Siberia, so that Christian influence cannot be considered non-existent, as Soviet scholars claim. But it is true that no deep christianisation took place among Western Siberian indigenous peoples.

people's spirit and soul at the time was still not an objective. This question only emerges, unrelentingly, at the end of the 18th century.

Being that the need for education was a direct consequence of missionary work, the "enlightenment" of indigenous peoples was mostly entrusted to the church. During the 19th century an attempt at the integration of indigenous peoples into Russian Christianity was made. This was done through direct contact with the population in their own tongue, ideally through two mechanisms: schools, and written texts and translations into the vernacular.

b) School in the 19th century

As a rule, education in Russia was not popular. It was not any easier in the North. In spite of permanent opposition to this programme during that century (for it was often assumed that indigenous peoples were "naturally" unable to assimilate academic culture (Komanovsky 1977: 102)) various forms were tried, but the results were not satisfactory. As for the structure in which the education was to be given, the choices were limited. There are only isolated examples of migrating schools (*школы передвижки*) accompanying the children of the families following reindeer herds (Bazanov 1936: 82–83). Most of the institutions were founded in cities or villages and they were boarding schools, where elementary skills were taught in Russian. By the middle of the 19th century certain state and church officials had already understood that positive results could only be obtained by introducing the children's mother tongue into the curriculum: in 1869 the governor of Arkhangelsk asked for such permission, but in vain; Moscow did not accept the scheme (Belenkin 1973: 35). In 1915 in the North of Western Siberia only four schools had indigenous children (Shumikhin, Borisova 1975: 45) and only 15 Khanty and Nenets children attended them (Budarin 1952: 155). Only by the end of the century were native languages introduced into some schools; alphabet books as well as textbooks were published in church editions (Bazanov 1936: 84–94).

How were the children recruited?

Several forms of recruitment targeting different categories of children were tried if the school's forms could not be diversified:

- The russified indigenous. The first recruits were logically children, who were already familiar with Russian culture and already lived somewhat closer to the Russian way of life; as a result, they were more receptive to alien models. For them education was an opportunity to rise in society and they were more willing to accept it than groups living outside the Russian realm. It is therefore not surprising to find Mansi children at Konda's monastery school. Konda Mansis were soon established and lived, as Russian newcomers, on agriculture. Statistics from 1897 show the existence of 453 literate Mansis, among whom four went beyond elementary education (Mozharsky 1959: 456).
- The children of the indigenous princes. Russian colonists did not substitute local indigenous power by state centralised structures: they integrated the actual indigenous framework into their governing system. In 1822 Minister Speransky launched a statute for indigenous peoples which recognised indigenous elders by the Empire. They were entrusted the collection and delivery of tribute and the gathering of taxes along with ensuring internal order among their populations. An example of such authority is in the 19th century, the rule of Khanty prince Taishyn in Obdorsk. Prince Taishyn is well-known for having contributed to the quelling of the Vauli Neniang uprising in 1852. These families were closer to the Russian world and were the first asked to give their children to the schools of the priest, as it is clearly mentioned in an instruction delivered in July 1856 by the Holy Synod (Bazanov 1936: 40).
- Recruitment in villages. Since the second half of the 19th century, school leaders have tried to recruit children connected with the traditional life permanently, being that they could better penetrate this unreachable world. Priests organised recruitment "expeditions". Everywhere, they had to face indigenous peoples' reluctance to "bestow" them their children. They paid special attention to specific groups: occasionally they looked for orphans, whom nobody wanted to feed; at other times they stressed the recruitment of girls, who

were presumed to guarantee a better transmission of ideological models to their children and to their families. Coercion was also used (Bazanov 1936: 43).

- Life in school. According to witnesses, life in the schools was by no means suitable for children. Instruction was not the only segment that was severe and austere; basic conditions appeared to have been wretched: lack of proper rooms, of food, of hygiene. In addition, the children were submitted to iron discipline including the use of corporal punishment (Bazanov, Kazansky 1939: 47). The use of one's mother tongue was strictly prohibited (ibidem, 46). Statistics show that the mortality rate was in general fairly high, so that even priests were reluctant to put their own children into the schools. But fatalities were especially high for indigenous children[4]; many of them died due to malnutrition and disease before the end of their studies. The contrast between their natural way of life and the conditions in the boarding schools was too deep.

c) Work on texts and languages

The principles concerning the education of indigenous peoples proposed by Father Ilminsky of Kazan was approved by the minister of education in 1870. According to his technique, indigenous languages had to be introduced into missionary and educational work. His intention was to give the conversion and faith of the indigenous a real meaning and to build a solid base for further russification. This method was used mainly in the Volga region and it obtained some results. There were also attempts to apply it in Siberia, but it must be stressed they were due to personal initiative rather than a wide-spread government or church policy.

The first landmarks concerning written language in Western Siberia date back to the end of the 19th century:

In 1868 the Gospel of Matthew was translated into Khanty by Priest Vologodsky into a mixture of Beryozovo and Obdorsk dialects (Northern Khanty). The first edition used the Cyrillic alphabet, but it

[4] This fact does not concern only Northerners: there is evidence of it also in the Volga region (Trefilova 1957: 15–17).

also includes some Latin letters, which in the second edition (1880) completely dissappeared (Mozharsky 1959: 460). (The first edition was published in London by the British Bible Society and the second in Saint Petersburg.) Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century an increase in missionary activity seems to have taken place: in 1900 a Holy History appeared in the Obdorsk dialect (Steinitz 1950: 23) and a Cyrillic alphabet book was published, first in the Obdorsk dialect by Father Yegorov (1897–1898) and then later translated into the the Vakh and Vasyugan dialects by Father Tveritin in 1903 (Steinitz 1950: 15–16; Steinitz emphasises that none of these attempts showed any results and that the Khanty population remained illiterate).

There are also some publications in Mansi by missionaries such as Father G. Popov, who translated and published in London "*Das Evangelium Matthäi in den Dialekt der Kondischen Wogulen*" in 1878 (second edition Helsingfors 1882). As for schoolbooks, Bishop Nikanor wrote a Cyrillic alphabet book for the Ural Mansi, published in Moscow in 1908. He was assisted by N. Bakhtyarov, a Mansi. All of these works were written in the Konda dialect (Kɨlmɨn 1962: 128).

Attempts to write and publish in Nenets have also been tried. One division of Nenets (who are spread over a huge territory, from the Kola peninsula up to the Siberian Taimyr) lived in Russia's European regions, thus coming into contact with their Western neighbours sooner. As early as the 1830s there was a Nenets alphabet based on Greek and Cyrillic letters. The creator Archimandrite Venyamin, leader of the mission of Arkhangelsk, used this in his translation of the Gospels into Nenets. (After a period of roughly twenty years, the Holy Synod finally rejected it (Levin, Potapov 1964: 570).) Venyamin is also the author of a Nenets grammar (1842) and of the Vocabulary of Samoyed; both manuscripts were submitted to the Russian Academy which recognised the value of the work but demanded an entire reworking. Because of this, none of them was ever published (Tereshchenko 1959: 390). The first schoolbook for Nenets children was published in the Arkhangelsk region half a century later, in 1895, under the influence of Kazan missionaries (Hajdś 1973: V).

As far as Samoyed languages are concerned, the most valuable documents on the Selkup dialect by a civil servant must be mentioned.

One Grigorovsky, who had been sent to the Narym region in 1868, was soon asked to teach the children of a local Selkup elder. Even before he had learnt the language he started to translate prayers and stories from the Bible for them. In 1879 he simultaneously published a schoolbook, a book of grammar and translations of religious and folkloric texts. (A dictionary is known to have been completed, but its manuscript, unfortunately, has not been found.) All of the texts were published in Kazan the same year. The scholars who have analysed Grigorovsky's texts are very sceptical about the accuracy of the language he used; he did not know it very well and he did not always have access to native assistants who could check his forms (Helimski 1983: 10–15). Nevertheless they are rare and precious material about Southern Selkup, a dialect not very well known.

The impact of such works was certainly very limited, as virtually the entire population was illiterate and they could not be directly used by natives. It was possible they were of some help for priests and missionaries, but they could only be used in the area in which the dialect was written. But the Northern languages have a vast number of dialects, and often they are quite distant from one another. As the first attempts to compose these languages in written form originated outside the native world, their empirical and improvisational features condemned them to sterility.

Consequently, neither the school system nor most of the missionary work on languages spoken in the North had any significant outcome. Only some indigenous individuals succeeded in learning the foundations of literacy.

2. A new policy towards the peoples of the North

a) The peoples of the North and tsarism

At the end of the 19th century, observers in Russia noticed that the peoples of the North were fading away: they were the victims of substantial spoliation. As a result of extremely heavy taxes on the native population, the fur game of the Siberian forests had been systematically destroyed by massive hunting. Unable to pay, the natives

went deeply into debt with Russian merchants. Even the physical health of the indigenous peoples was threatened, due to massive consumption and abuse of spirits. (Alcohol was also used by the above-mentioned merchants to obtain fur at the cheapest price.) The policy of tsarist Russia towards the northern peoples was without any structure. The state had given them a status, taken its part of the benefit, made them dependent, then abandoned them to their fate. At the end of the 19th century this fact was often italicised by Russian opponents, either intellectuals exiled in Western Siberia (e.g., Shvetsov 1998: 74–79, 86–89; Bartenev 1998 (1896): 149–155) or Siberian regionalists, called *oblastniki*, whose leaders were concerned with the place of Siberia as a whole in the Russian empire and did not omit the deplorable condition of the indigenous peoples in their analyses (Yadrintsev 1996).

b) The Bolsheviks and the peoples of the North

The ascendant political force in Russia had no specific program on so marginal an issue, being so fully unconnected with the subject of power. Urban Bolsheviks had no particular awareness of issues concerning nationality and they had insufficient experience with remote populations who lived in such a "primitive way". At first they just ignored the problem; between 1918 and 1919 the Soviets used any means necessary for the struggle for survival. As for the rural population as a whole, natives were treated with no consideration, and often with genuine brutality. Moreover, one part of the civil war did concern indigenous territory, as Kolchak's capital was for some time Omsk, where he was arrested in 1919. The natives were certainly lost and could hardly understand the meaning of what was happening around them. This perplexity is well illustrated by the Nenets poet Yuri Vylla in his family remembrances: "My grandfather, in his youth, because of his ignorance and his lack of political training, ran away both from Whites and from Reds" (Vylla 1991: 53). Regardless, during the first years of Soviet rule, state structures were not functional, the economic system was completely chaotic, the populations were inhumanely pressured and their situation became catastrophic.

After the end of the civil war Soviet leadership began to solve the problems that had accumulated. Nationality and minority issues were

subordinated to a special judicial authority, the *Narkomnats* (The People's Commissariat for Nationalities). As far as the Northern area was concerned, there was a void: there were no competent Bolsheviks with experience on interaction with natives, and officials in general usually had no idea and no knowledge on this issue. On the other hand, there were no possible mediators among the natives to assist the policy-makers. Moreover, the classics of Marxism had no prescriptions for constructing socialism with these kind of peoples... But the vacuum had to be filled. Soviet leaders turned to the only people well-versed on the Northern area: scholars, ethnologists, researchers, populist opponents exiled into Siberia by the tsarist power – persons who had learnt the local languages and studied the native peoples. These men were sincerely devoted to the people they had been living with and whose fate they were to influence. In slightly less than a decade, they were at liberty to choose the best method of development according to their understanding[5].

c) The Committee of the North

After the previous temporary authorities had secured measures of urgency (food provision and tax remittance[6]), a special authority was created to assume the tasks of the *Narkomnats* in the Northern area: the Committee of the North. From 1924 to 1934 it was responsible for Soviet policy regarding Arctic populations, and acted primarily on two issues: the judicial and the cultural.

The statute question

With the Revolution and the civil war all previous legislation (including the statute enacted one century earlier by Speransky) had disappeared.

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[5] This liberty was nevertheless regulated: in 1922–1923, V. Bogoraz-Tan proposed a system inspired by reservations, and aimed to protect native peoples from Western intrusions. But this proposal was categorically rejected by the officials (Onishchuk 1986: 82).

[6] Usually, Soviet writings on the history of the region emphasise these measures as the first steps of Soviet power in regard to the Northern natives and discreetly omit the Bolsheviks' brutal behaviour during the civil war.

No rules existed anymore to regulate the relations between the state and the Northern populations. The first responsibility of the Committee of the North was to fill this gap and to prepare a new statute suitable for the Soviet system. A so-called "Provisional Statute" was ready in 1926. This name was significant, as it was meant to be a statute of transition which took into account the present condition of the Northern peoples and afforded a compromise between tradition and socialist structures. Traditional structures such as clans were then used as a foundation to build upon by the new ruling members, the Soviets. Some privileges of the native peoples were preserved, such as military exemption[7]. This statute was founded upon a fleeting, ideological basis suggested by the ethnographers: class struggle was not a relevant concept in these societies, where social differences were not supposed to be considerable. Changes in the Provisional Statute were introduced very swiftly in some regions: in the European North and Narym area clan soviets were replaced by national and territorial ones as early as 1927, and by November 1930 the entire territory was completely subdued (Zibarev 1972: 84).

The "cultural construction"

The main problem the new administrators had to face was the lack of cadres. In 1923 the *Narkomnats* asked the party leadership in Tobolsk for a literate Khanty, and it was answered that "there was one, but he died in the civil war"[8] (Skachko 1935: 32). According to central statistics, between 1926 and 1927 5.2% of Khants, 5.6% of Mansi and 0.6% of Nenets were literate, and the overall literacy rate for the peoples of the North was 7.2% (Alkor 1934: 84). The Committee of the North was conscious that as long as there were not any native intermediaries, the Northern peoples would be mere objects and would therefore be deprived of the opportunity to shape their own destiny; consequently, its priority was to train mediators. This new division was supposed to transmit sound information to the state about the real

[7] This privilege lasted until 1939, when the first northern natives were drafted into the army (Slezkine 1994: 303).

[8] This example has been much quoted by Soviet authors to illustrate the situation with literacy in the early 1930s.

conditions of the peoples, and to promote the values of progress and socialism in their society. Later on they would assume the role of the Committee itself and deal directly with the management of Northern areas. The only way to achieve these objectives was to develop education.

In the very beginning management authorities (even before the foundation of the Committee of the North) turned to their own human resources, mainly students and ethnology graduates from Leningrad University. These schoolteacher/missionaries were sent on the spot to represent progress in general, and more precisely, Soviet power. Their task was extremely difficult: they had to face the lack of material facilities, school stationery and indifference from local Russians as well as natives. The local Russians did not easily accept the enthusiastic newcomers: some, even party bosses, could not understand why so much attention was paid to savages[9]. Defamation campaigns were organised against both teachers and physicians (Marin 1931: 59). The local population, bearing in mind previous experiences, were no less distrustful. A good illustration of this is a speech by a Khanty elder near Obdorsk in 1921, recorded by the teacher V. Novitsky: "We know fairly well that there are less and less of us. You, the Russians, are called to live, we are condemned to death. To you, literacy is useful, to us, it is damageable: it turns us into thieves, drunkards, it arises our literate's hate and hostility towards us, we have already experienced it. [...] Leave us in peace, don't disturb us! If you open here a school, although we have been living here for a long time... we will immediately leave this place and go elsewhere..." (Belenkin 1973: 14–15).

Most of these teachers did not speak the local languages (Gorodenko 1995: 171) and very few of them were of indigenous origin; the Nenets Petr Hatanzeyev, was an exception. In 1920 he opened a school in a Khanty village which was the first to use the student's mother tongue

[9] A very interesting dialogue with an Obdorsk official in 1928 is reported by V. Yevladov, announcing further developments: "We have enough to do and we have no need to study Nenets. The most important is the reindeer, how they can serve the construction of socialism, we will deal with Nenets later. Your 'Samoyed' are leading our economics back, to the primitive society. [...] The Nenets think about their reindeers, not about us. So we will think about the reindeer, not about them" (Yevladov 1992: 23).

in its lessons (*Ocherki...* 1965: 138–139). Teachers usually kept close contact with Leningrad, and most soon discovered how difficult it was to teach using a language unknown by the pupils. They relayed the message on to Leningrad: the languages of the indigenous peoples of Siberia must be quickly codified so that there would be a basis for the teaching of literacy. In addition, necessities of modern life spoke in favour of the development of writing in the area: in the 1920's, a Nenets called Yadno presented his application to the collective farm in pictographic form (Sergeyev 1956a: 143)... The idea of giving Northern languages a literal form had already been conceived in the *Narkomnats* in August 1922 (Vdovin 1959: 287), and it received official confirmation in 1926 (Tsintsius 1958: 78). But the situation was not mature, and such a system could not be standardised, although in some instances there was success where teachers learnt their pupils' languages and wrote and copied schoolbooks in order to teach them Russian. This was also done by Georgi Prokofyev (1897–1942) who was sent in 1925 to the boarding school of Yanov-Stan, deep in Selkup territory. He introduced Selkup as a subject in his school, and his experience served as starting point for future programs in schools using native languages (Chernyakov 1975: 187–188).

Much was done to involve native peoples in the educational programs. In the first half of the 1920's even mobile schools are known to have been in use, but in spite of their name they did not really accompany nomads on their migrations: they were light structures (often *chum*s) and were only situated on the route of the nomads (Gorodenko 1995: 16). They merely prepared a model which was to become the main one used in the North, the boarding school. This form brought about very hostile feelings in the native population, and there is abundant evidence of vigorous resistance: the most radical act was the Kazym uprising in 1933, but other cases are also known, such as the opposition of Mansi families in Lombuozhi (Bazanov, Kazansky 1939: 98, 100). Even Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar for Culture, was compelled to recognise the inconvenience of separating children from families (1927: 18), although its dramatic consequences would not be analysed by Soviet authors until the end of the nineties... Education did not only affect children; courses for adults were organised and the Committee of the North's cultural policy found its best

expression in so-called "cultural bases" and other institutions (such as red *chums*). These establishments were where all the services meant for the local population (medical and veterinary services, agricultural counsel, native's houses, etc.) met at one point. These centres were supposed to allow contact between the two worlds and to propagate the new Soviet values. Political education was therefore not forgotten.

In 1926, five schools were boarding-schools. At the end of the 1920s there were 32 national schools in the okrug of Tobolsk (between 1925 and 1926 there were 20): 22 were Khanty (280 students), 7 were Mansi (180 students) and one was Nenets (20 students) (Obdorsky 1995: 27). Statistics show that the desired results were not entirely satisfactory: while 40.2% of the Mansis were integrated into the educational system, only 8.7% of Khanty and 1% of Nenets were integrated (*Ocherki*... 1965: 139–140; *Sovetskaya*... 1931: 46). As far as secondary schools were concerned, none of the four functioning between 1930 and 1931 was national; in 1939 native languages were taught in only five secondary schools (Zibarev, Pastushenko 1980: 352).

Work on the spot was necessary but not sufficient. The need of cadres was urgent; it was not possible to wait until the children educated in the new schools became adults. The Committee of the North wanted to immediately train native leaders. Work on the language problem began in Leningrad in 1926 (Vasilyevich 1958: 228), but the first group of 30 students coming from Northern and Eastern Russia had already arrived at the workers' organisation in 1925[10]. There were adults and children, some did not speak Russian at all and some were not literate (Bogoraz-Tan 1927: 52, 62). This experience continued regularly, and every year with new groups. In 1932 a specific unit, the Institute of the Peoples of the North (INS) was founded; its goal was to prepare specialists in humanities, economics and political management[11]. The creation of literal languages was achieved in this setting.

[10] In fact, only 21 of them were representatives of the so called "small" peoples of the North, the others were Yakuts, Komis or Russians.

[11] This institution has undergone some changes but it still exists today at the Herzen Pedagogical Institute, as the Faculty of the Peoples of the North.

3. The conditions for the creation of literal languages

The decision did not meet unanimous approval: in the Western regions (Arkhangelsk and the Urals) the issue was actively discussed, for many opposed the creation of literal languages for such small populations and recommended special efforts be made to develop their knowledge of Russian (Alkor 1931: 108). Nevertheless, the supporters of native languages were victorious.

The reactions to this policy have been analysed in divergent ways. Soviet authors have stressed, mechanically and without evidence, that education in the mother tongue provoked enthusiastic reactions. Many authors quote a comment by Stebnitsky, a specialist in Koriak: "Literacy is spreading like epidemics, children educate their parents, husbands their spouses. The students at the school of the Party receive letters only in their languages. The collective farms' presidents and secretaries have the reports and requests made by their brigadiers written only in Koriak..."[12] But it can be doubted whether enthusiasm was so universal. The analyses of contemporary reports give the impression that journalists and witnesses emphasised every "positive" example and attempted to present it as the general sentiment. But when attentively reading the reports, scepticism and reluctance still seemed dominant in the natives' attitude towards education. The school system was not imposed on the peoples of the North without obstinate resistance. The children's adaptation to the boarding-school system involved a terrible break with the traditional, unconfined life in nature they were used to, so it remained – and remains – one of the most painful moments in the life of tundra or taiga inhabitants. Possibly some have been satisfied with the new opportunities opened by education, but many have only been shocked by its acculturative effect. Finally, there has also been open scepticism towards an education that seemed to isolate indigenous peoples in a ghetto: if children must be educated, it must be useful to them, so let it be in Russian, is one opinion (Slezkine 1994: 243).

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[12] Quoted in: Языки и письменность палеоазиатских народов. – *Языки и письменность народов Севера.* III. Москва, 1934, с. 48.

Regardless, to introduce native languages into the schools some of the previously mentioned conditions had to be met. First of all, these languages had to be better known than they were: it was impossible to stipulate orthographic and grammatical rules without identifying their phonemic, morphologic and syntactic structures. A graphical system and a basic dialect also had to be chosen.

a) Research on languages

Before the 20th century, the languages spoken in the North had not raised any systematic interest. In Western Siberia, Finnish and Hungarian explorers Matias Aleksanteri Castrén and Antal Reguly studied them. They were not only explorers but universal scholars with a strong linguistic background. Their research was valuable but not adequate for an undertaking whose goals were now practical. Most of this work rested on the INS staff; students and native speakers were also competent advisors with whom the Russian scholars (who often learnt these languages during their exile or their field work) could profitably collaborate. Before World War II, obtaining deep knowledge of these languages was a clearly stated goal in Soviet linguistics. The results of these studies were systematically published in the 1930s as articles in collections such as "Languages and Writings of the People of the North" (*Языки и письменность народов Севера*), dedicated in 1934 to the Paleosiberian and in 1937 to the Uralic languages.

b) The choice of a graphical system[13]

The literation of Northern languages was not a unique enterprise: on the contrary, the whole USSR was working on languages. Most of the languages spoken by its peoples either were not written at all or had an extremely elitarian writing system. The same kind of work was taking place in remote regions, under various political motives and usually with the very active involvement of the local intelligentsia. Some languages, such as the Finno-Ugric family members spoken in the Volga region, already had a tradition in Cyrillic letters.

[13] For more details, see Toulouze 1997.

Among the most significant nationalities, Turkic peoples had a special place in terms of their political influence as well as the number of speakers. A particular cultural movement for latinisation was launched in the early 1920s in Turkic areas, and this later spread over the whole of Russia, parallel to Atatürk's post-1928 reforms in Turkey. Left-wing forces and intellectuals were opposed categorically to the old Arabic alphabet, and their arguments were serious ones: it was not adapted to the phonetics of Turkic languages; it did not allow for the development of mass literacy; its origins were religious; and it represented a very good medium for pan-Islamism. On the other hand, the Cyrillic alphabet was just as unacceptable, for it was reminiscent of the tsarist regime's and the Orthodox Church's attempts to convert Muslims to Christianity. The Latin alphabet seemed both practical and politically correct, as it promoted another kind of internationalism, dear to the Soviet power, facing the Islamic "internationalism". The latinisation movement was launched in 1922 in Azerbaijan; other regions followed in the next years. The supporters of the Arabic alphabet were particularly strong in Tataria, but they submitted after 1928. In 1929, Turkic languages not only began to officially use Latin letters, but were codified according to an alphabet unique for all of them, the so-called New Turkic Alphabet (NTA). The basic principle is that one single letter must correspond to one and to no more than one phoneme. The NTA is thus a kind of grapheme-phoneme bank, where each language finds the letters it needs.

This experience of a rational construction in setting writing rules raised a real enthusiasm among linguists and inspired other "language-makers". Latin letters seemed to be most appropriate for the languages of the North; besides their practical fitness, they were supposed to facilitate contacts with groups living abroad – for some of the peoples, as the Sami, the Eskimos and the Tungus, did not exist only inside the USSR. Specialists of different languages proposed their versions for a Northern Unified Alphabet: K. M. Mylnokova and S. Forstein presented the so-called Khabarovsk version, which did not take into account Uralic languages. The specialist Y. Alkor had his own proposal. In November 1929 the Northern Alphabet is adopted by a special commission (the Commission for Language and National Cultures

for the Small People of the North), and it became official on February 23, 1931 (Vdovin 1959: 290).

The final version was aimed at simplification: diacritical signs that complicated typography as well as teaching had mostly been eliminated. The Northern Unified Alphabet contains 39 letters – 29 consonants and 10 vowels (Tsintsius 1958: 81). For the languages we are dealing with, the authors of the project are V. I. Chernetsov for Mansi, N. K. Karger and the native speaker Alachev for Khanty as well as G. N. Prokofyev for Samoyed languages.

c) The choice of a dialect

This was the main problem for the language-makers. The fact is that all the languages are subdivided in many dialects, often substantially different from one another; sometimes they even did not allow mutual comprehension. The creation of literal languages required a choice of a reference dialect. How was this choice to be made? It was necessary to check exactly the situation for each language and to undertake dialect-related research immediately. How many literal languages were to be created considering the multiplicity of the dialects? There were two kinds of dangers: one had been experienced by missionaries, whose texts had been written in a style corresponding very strictly to the local way of speaking; even if they could be understood by the local population, they remained unintelligible for others. Incorporating facets of each dialect into one literal language seemed reasonable, but this could easily be seen as artificial by most of its speakers. This question was relevant for all languages, but it was crucial for idioms spread on a huge territory and spoken in many different ways, as Evenk or Khanty.

4. The creation of literal Khanty, Mansi and Nenets

A conference on the development of languages and literacy of the peoples of the North was held in January 1932 and was attended by higher representatives of central political institutions, research centres, universities, publishing houses as well as by delegates coming from the different regions (Isayev 1979: 222); it decided to create fourteen

literal languages: Sami, Mansi, Khanty, Nenets, Selkup, Evenk, Even, Nanai, Udege, Chukchi, Koriak, Nivkh, Ket and Eskimo. It decided also to begin work on Itelmen and Aleut. Two years later, another conference took notice of the fact that among Kets and Itelmens Russian was developed enough to permit education without the use of native language. Some years later the same decision was taken regarding Sami and Udege. The creation of literal Aleut was finally discontinued (Vdovin 1959: 290–291).

In this paper, three different peoples are examined. How did each of them go about creating literal languages?

The Khanty

A first manual is known to have been prepared and copied manually in 1926 by a certain Afanasyev (Obdorsky 1995: 27). The author of the first published schoolbook is the above mentioned P. E. Hatanzeyev[14]: it was written in 1930, before the official adoption of rules for the literal language, with Latin letters in the Obdorsk dialect (Karshakova 1996: 44). The content of the book is said to have been interesting and lively; its texts dealt with Khanty traditions and everyday life, but it was written in complicated language (Nyomysova 1994: 21). It seems to have been inspired by V. Bogoraz-Tan's Russian-language schoolbook for Northern schools, which was published in 1927 before the teaching in native languages was standardised (Shirshova 1976: 65). But according to Steinitz, "this manual has practically not been in use in Khanty schools, because it was written in a mixture of Obdorsk dialect and southern forms. Another manual was soon needed" (1937: 15–16). Therefore it was soon "translated" and published in Kazym dialect (Mozharsky 1959: 460). In 1933 a Russian, N. Karger, proposed an alphabet book (Domokos 1985: 70) and in 1934, a textbook and a manual of arithmetic were published for the first form (Steinitz 1937: 15–16).

The contradiction is striking: the Northern dialects, fairly different from the languages spoken both by Central and Eastern Khantys, were used by a community still very close to tradition and not deeply touched

[14] P. Y. Hatanzeyev. *Hanti knjiga.* Moskva, 1931.

by progress. It was a matter of urgency for the regime to include them in the new processes through education. But most of the "evolved" Khantys lived in Central regions and pressed the authorities to move the basis for literal languages southwards. This was done in 1940 (Avrorin 1953: 24). But new problems emerged: as the Medium Ob dialect was mostly spoken by russified Khantys, it was not so urgently needed or used, as Russian was fairly adequate for communication purposes. The natives who communicated mainly in their own language spoke other dialects (Avrorin 1952: 428).

Both scholars who participated actively in the creation or the teaching of Khanty literal language, the Nenets P. Y. Hatanzeyev and the German Steinitz were well acquainted with the Northern and Central forms of Khanty. Therefore in the first stage the Eastern Khantys, whose dialects present very specific features, were neglected. Khanty literal language fixation was characterised by permanent hesitations: this is well illustrated by a small reform of Latin alphabet that took place in 1936 and was inspired by Steinitz: new letters were introduced and others eliminated (Steinitz 1950: 25). It is clear that no satisfactory solution could be found in creating one Khanty literal language: at the linguistic conference held in 1952, the Khanty scholar N. Tereshkin denounced the errors made until then and the absurd situation they had led to. The conference decided to create four literal languages (Komanovsky 1977: 35): "To create a written language for Eastern Khantys in Vakh dialect based on the idiom spoken in Bolshoi Laryak. To create a written language in Surgut dialect according to the spoken idiom in Higher Surgut. For Northern Khantys: pass from the Medium Ob to the Kazym dialect. To prepare as an experience an alphabet book in Shuryshkar dialect taking into account its differences with the Kazym dialect and the basic need for this group for education in the mother tongue because of the limited extent of Russian among them."

Nowadays, there are six Khanty languages, based on the following dialects: Obdorsk (1930), Kazym (1933), Medium-Ob (1940), Shuryshkar (1953), Vakh (1958) and Surgut (1959) (Domokos 1985: 70). Nevertheless, no schoolbooks for Khanty schools were published from the beginning of the 1960s up to the middle of the 1970s (Nyomysova 1994: 22). The work started again at the end of the 1970s. Today schoolbooks from the first up to the fourth class are available in the

Kazym and Shuryshkar dialects; an alphabet book and some schoolbooks exist in the Surgut dialect, as well as an alphabet book in Vakh dialect, a course on literature in the Kazym dialect for the 5th and 6th grades and other pedagogical tools (Nyomysova 1994: 22).

These circumstances explain, at least partially, why it took so long for a true Khanty literature to develop. The first Khanty books contain texts of folklore, as for example poems and epic songs in "*Ine-Hon*" (Sverdlovsk 1935), presented by I. Yelantsev (*Slovo*... 1996: 3). True, as early as 1934, students in Khanty-Mansiysk Pedagogical Institute are known to have put on a Khanty-language play called "The Soviet Nest Egg" (*Советская кубышка*) (Komanovsky 1977: 68), but no such text has yet been found. Some poems have been written by Grigori Lazarev (1917–1979) as early as 1935, as he was a student in the same institute. His first poems are adaptations from folklore (Sergeyev 1955: 177); soon he started translating, first the "International" (Nyomysova 1996: 9) and, later, such Russian authors as Nekrasov (Sergeyev 1952: 159). Soviet literary critics find even in his first poems "Soviet-patriotic" overtones (Polonsky 1996:152). But the main part of Lazarev's literary career fell into the post-World War II period, when he was a journalist, writer and a playwright working both in Russian and Khanty. He is the author of the first play written and published in Khanty, "Disguised as a Farm Worker"[15] (*Slovo*... 1996: 3). Most of his activity was dedicated to the Party. We also know of the existence of another poet, called Dmitri Tebetev, but have little knowledge about his life and poems. His name appears at the bottom of poems published in the local newspaper in 1934. We also know that he was a hunter, that he was born in 1905, and that his dream was to study in Leningrad. At the beginning of the war he wrote a few anti-German poems. He died in 1942 (Severtsev 1997: 14).

1930 is the year the Khanty regional paper "*Lenin naty huwat*" ('On the way shown by Lenin') was established. In 1931 "*Hanty-Mansi shop*" was launched (Belenkin 1971: 130). These papers included articles in Khanty. Between 1945 and the end of the 1950s, about ten were published in the Medium-Ob dialect (Mozharsky 1959: 460).

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[15] Unfortunately I could not find the year the play was staged or published.

Mansi

The missionaries had translated into the Konda dialect. But literal Mansi is based on the Sosva Dialect, for it was the most widely-spoken dialect, and it was the main communication means in its milieu, which was known for a strong cultural identity (Rombandeyeva 1973: 9). Its alphabet and rules were designed at the Institute of the Peoples of the North in 1930–31 by V. Chernetsov and reaffirmed in 1932 by a schoolbook he also wrote. Before 1941, four schoolbooks were published in Mansi: the language books for preparatory (1932), first (1933) and second grades (1934), as well as an arithmetic book for the first grade (1933); all of them had been written by Chernetsov (Kẗlmẗn 1962: 131).

In this first period, three story books will be published in Mansi, one by Chernetsova (1934) and two by Balandin (1938 and 1939) (Kẗlmẗn 1962: 132).

The dialect was chosen on scientific criteria by a respected expert. Southern dialects had been excluded since they were spoken actively by only a few families. Nevertheless, the first literary texts published in Mansi are written in the Konda dialect, for this Russified region was traditionally more open to education. The most important of these texts is "Two Hunters" by Panteley Yevrin (Cheymatov was his real name), published in 1940.

Almost fifteen years later, the same can be said about a short novel written by Matra[16] Vakhrusheva in Konda Mansi and translated into Russian under the title "On the shores of the Small Yukonda". Although she started writing later, Matra Vakhrusheva had been noticed in INS in the 1930s as an active literatus. Yevrin's novel is surely one of the most interesting examples of these nascent literatures. Mansi and Russian texts are both presented in the same volume. It relates the events of one week between two characters on a hunting trip, an old Mansi and a young Russian. At first, the two men are unable to com-

[16] I use her first name in its original form. I have been personally told by M. Vakhrusheva in Saint Petersburg in May 1997 that her teachers considered that Matra was no name at all and compelled her to be called Matryona.

municate; during that week, they learn to understand each other. They go together through more or less tragic events and become friends. The novel lacks a schematic approach typical for the period; remarks on national psychology are relevant and precise. Little is known about Yevrin himself, not even the years of his birth or of his death. We know that he studied in Leningrad and was almost expelled, because his relatives were considered *kulak*s and persecuted. Nevertheless he supported the Soviet regime and volunteered for service at the front, where he was wounded twice. Some time after having returned home, he is known to have provoked a quarrel with tragic consequences, killing his wife's lover. His suicide attempt was unsuccessful. After that, nothing was heard of him (Kalmykov 1997: 14).

The Nenets

The dialect chosen for Nenets was the one spoken in the Tundra of the Big Land, Northeast of European Russia, close to the Yamal dialect and in between the two extremes of the huge territory covered by the Nenets, from the Kola peninsula up to the Taimyr in Siberia. Even when speaking in different dialects, the Nenets understand each other[17] (Tereshchenko 1990: 6); on the other hand, as the main language developer emphasised, this dialect was the form spoken by the most evolved groups of Nenets (Prokofyev 1936: 6), by those who occupied a key position because of transport facilities. Some years later, Yamal Nenets will obtain some changes in literal language in the sense of their own way of speaking (Tereshchenko 1990: 6–7). The first Nenets schoolbook "New Word"[18] was published in 1932. The author was G. N. Prokofyev, who also published in 1936 a teach-yourself-Nenets manual for adults. He was assisted in his task by two of his students, N. I. Tereshchenko and the Nenets Anton P. Pyrerka (1905–1941). The latter was the first true Nenets intellectual: he was a linguist

[17] Concerning Tundra Nenets: the language spoken by Forest Nenets is very different and cannot be simply understood by Tundra Nenets.

[18] *Jadžj wada*. Moscow, 1932.

[19] His doctoral theses on the Nenets' oral culture was almost ready at the beginning of the war, but as most of his manuscripts, it disappeared during the blockade of Leningrad.

(specialising in lexicography), folklorist[19] and writer. He was the vice-president of the Committee for the New Alphabet of the North (Tereshchenko 1982: 293–295). He died on the front in 1941. He had explored most of the Nenets areas, the Little Land, the Big Land tundras and the Taimyr areas when working on the constitution of the literal language (Lebedeva 1958: 237).

The Nenets were spread over a very wide area. In some regions, they had been mostly isolated from contacts with Russians and with European civilisation – as in the Yamal and the Taimyr. But in the European part of Russia, the Nenets had already been submitted for a long time to cultural shocks. It is not surprising therefore that the first attempts to use literal language came from the European Nenets and were published in Naryan Mar. In 1935, the local Russian journalists and writers published a collection of texts, including several short stories by Nenets newcomers S. Nogo and E. Taleyev, whose texts were translated into Russian: the 70-page book called "*Zapolyarye*" was greeted by "*Pravda*" as a real event, though it was clear to the critics that Nenets writers used a language "they still know badly..." (Popov 1936: 27–28). In 1936, the second "*Zapolyarye*" presented five Nenets writers, and added to the former the names of G. Sufkin, S. Ardeyeva and E. Sobolev (Sergeyev 1956: 141). This group, including local Russian writers, functioned in close contact with the local paper, "*Naryan Vynder*" (Popov 1936: 27). Nothing is unfortunately known about these five young authors, who did not go on to write anything else noteworthy.

The first important Nenets writer came from a well-known family in Novaya Zemlya: the Vylkas. Tyko Vylka the elder is an extraordinary personality. As a young man, he had been noticed by Russian explorers for his qualities as a guide on his island and as a gifted artist. Thanks to the initiative of one of them, Vladimir Rusanov, Tyko was given the opportunity of spending one year in Moscow in 1910, studying language, literature, mathematics, natural sciences and art under private instructors. He went back home to marry his widowed sister-in-law as custom required, and had to hide from tsarist police until 1917. Afterwards, until the 1960s, he was president of the Soviet of Novaya Zemlya in an uninterrupted stretch. He painted, wrote and collected folklore. Although his own texts were published only in the 1960s, his

influence on his nephew Nikolai (1911–1942) led the latter to go to Leningrad and get educated. Like his uncle, Nikolai Vylka was a writer as well as an artist (he sculpted and painted). He was still a student when he published, both in Nenets and in Russian, his first story, "Vylka on the island" (later published also with the title "On the island"). This text was awarded a prize by the publishing house and gave the author official recognition as a writer by becoming member of the Writers' Union – being the second writer from the small peoples of the North to get into this organisation[20] (Sergeyev 1955: 178). In 1938, his most popular story, "Maria", was published. At the same time, Anton Pyrerka received a publisher's prize for his short novel "The younger Vedo" (*Slovo...* 1996: 5).

In more remote areas the evolution was slower but no less real. In the Yamal a student of the local Pedagogical Institute, Ivan Nogo (1891–1947), a very active Party member and a political journalist, contributed to the foundation of the journal "*Iskra Yamala*" ('Yamal Spark' in Russian) (Sergeyev 1956: 142); he is the first Nenets playwright, with at least two of his dramas staged and published (in Nenets as well as in Russian): "*The Shaman*", based on the experience of a students' play, published in Salehard in 1937 and staged in January 1938, and "*Vauli Nenyang*", played in 1940 (Komanovsky 1977: 71–72). Some war prose is also mentioned by scholars (ibidem: 89–91). In every respect, the Pedagogical Institute of Salehard played an important role in the development of a local intelligentsia with its literary circles where young people such as Ivan Istomin, one of the main names in later Nenets literature, wrote poems, short stories, and translated Pushkin and other Russian authors (Istomin 1958: 144–145).

The local press developed too, initially in Russian: for example, "*Naryan Wu*" ('Red Tundra' in Nenets), the organ of the cultural base of Yamal (Belenkin 1968: 137). Later pages in Nenets were added. In the Western areas, besides the already mentioned "*Naryan Vynder*" ('Red Inhabitant of Tundra' in Nenets) (1930–34) and "*Yugorsky Shar*" published regularly in Naryan Mar, an entire journal, "*Yasovey*" ('The Accompanist' in Nenets), was published entirely in Nenets in 1933–

[20] The first was a Yukagir, Teki Odulok (Ogryzko 1998: 161).

34 (Komanovsky 1977: 26). It was meant mainly for the reindeer-herder members of the first collective reindeer-herding farm, and the staff living in the tundra with them (Belenkin 1971: 123). In spite of its Nenets name, "*Naryan Vynder*" was written mainly in Russian: the first materials in Nenets were published on April 17, 1930. Monthly publication ensued. In the Yamal "*Naryan Ngerm*"('Red North' in Nenets) began life in April 1930, and the first pages in Nenets were published from November 1932 on (Naumov 1969: 8).

The Selkup

There was also an attempt to write in Selkup. The first group to get a literal language was the Northern Selkup, reindeer-herders in a fairly compact area on the Eastern part of Yamal-Nenets region and on the Turukhansk River. Concretely, the literal language was based on the Taz dialect (Künnap 1992: 142). But this literal language is said to have been poorly used, because of the small number of speakers and of the dialectal differences (Musayev 1965: 48). Some schoolbooks were published nevertheless in Selkup until 1960. Afterwards not only publishing but also teaching in Selkup was halted (Künnap 1992: 142). In 1985, Selkup was presented as a idiom, the literal language of which was created "in the last few years" (Gurvich and Taksami 1985: 63). The southern dialects, spoken in the Tomsk area, in which Grigorovsky wrote his translations, are only now being codified by Tomsk scholars, according to whom it is not realistic to have one single Selkup literal language (Morev 1995: 156). It is interesting to note that a conversation book in Southern Selkup was published in Szombathely (Hungary) in 1993, the acknowledged aim of which is "to attempt to activate the knowledge of Selkup among the middle generation, even before its introduction in school programmes" (Kuper, Pusztay 1993: 2).

It is not possible to speak about Selkup literature. In the 1960s a Selkup name – Taisya Pyrshina – appears in a prose collection (*Ot Moskvy*... 1961: 478), for the first and the last time. Later, Valentina Kudryavtseva published poetry and one short novel (*Slovo*... 1996: 3), but mainly Selkup writing seems to still be at the stage of transcribing folk tales.

Conclusion

In 1937 all the literal languages of the North went under serious reconstruction: the Latin alphabet, which was used in creating them, was over a very short time replaced by the Cyrillic alphabet. This change is due to several reasons, on different levels.

Specific reasons

From the theoretical and technical point of view, the Latin alphabet was ideal. It marked strictly all the phonemes at least for the languages best known. It presented nevertheless some practical disadvantages:

- For children who were not used to scholastic activities and who had to learn literacy simultaneously in two languages, the use of two different alphabets, with similar letters marking different sounds, presented a distracting inconvenience and a cumbersome burden.
- There were not enough teachers ready to take on the task. Though some enthusiastic teachers considered themselves missionaries and, having been trained as ethnographers, had a large general knowledge, most of them had no special education at all. They did not know their pupils' languages and were not accustomed to Latin letters. They had to teach an unknown subject with an unknown alphabet – and were not ready to face both the discontent of local Russians and of indigenous families, who felt lost in front of unintelligible signs.

There was therefore locally a real hostility to Latin letters. Soviet historians have no qualms about insisting that if the choice of the Latin alphabet was a decision of a few intellectuals, the wish for change came from the people. While this argument is clearly influenced by propagandistic aims, it is not entirely false. Then again, it does not explain all.

General reasons

The fact is that this process coincides with a general trend in the whole USSR. In about two years all the languages that were formerly written

in Latin alphabets went over to Cyrillic. Besides local and specific motives, more general ones must be looked for on the political level. For central authorities, the choice of Latin letters corresponded to a precise goal: neutralising Turkic "internationalism" by isolating Turkic languages in Russia from the Muslim world, exterior to the Soviet Union. The local intelligentsia had their own reasons: developing mass literacy with a technically appropriated tool. The central power took advantage of this objective alliance. But in the midst of the 1930s, the context had changed. As the danger of "Turkic internationalism" waned, the languages written with Latin letters were considered artificially isolated from Russian and were suspected to be a secret base for a new form of pan-Turkism. The stress was more and more clearly put on the need for all languages to get nearer to Russian, as all peoples were supposed to get closer and closer to their great neighbour. During the 1930s, the fear of any kind of nationalism increased: at the beginning of the decade, the national intelligentsias fell victims to a ruthless repression that became more and more ferocious after December 1, 1934, and culminated in 1937. During this period, the Russian language is admired and praised with hyperbole; the flood of loan-words in all the languages are evidence of its expansion, and the use of its alphabet confirms this symbolically. It is interesting to notice that in Soviet sources the expression *Cyrillic* alphabet is nowhere to be found: what is mentioned is the Russian alphabet, the letters of "Lenin's language", "sign of friendship toward the Russian people"... Uniformity had started.

Western Siberian intellectuals did not suffer directly. When the whole country was shocked by forced collectivisation, when every kind of individualism was punished by cruel repression, they were carrying through a fantastic task, which corresponded to the goals of the regime: to build a new life, create a written language and a contemporary culture, develop education and win the right of existing as equals among the other peoples of the Union. The victims are to be found around them: their masters (fortunately the great names involved with the former policy towards the people of the North died before) and people with simple lifestyles, hunters, fishers, reindeer-herders, shamans, who defended their traditions and refused to accept Soviet-imposed

modernity. The intellectuals' position is a tragic one: they had the illusion they could bring together two worlds exceedingly far from one another.

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Cultural Identity of Arctic Peoples

Art Leete

Duration of the project: 1998–2000

A theoretical background for the project

In the beginning of the 20th century, based on A. Kroeber's conception of cultural circles, V. N. Chernetsov, Russian archaeologist and ethnologist has written about "the Arctic Cultural Circle" that comprised similar cultures in the Arctic and subarctic zones of Eurasia, extending from present Scandinavia to Western Siberia and Taimyr Peninsula.

The applicants of this project do not aim at automatically implementing Kroeber's or Chernetsov's ideas. Nowadays the conception of anthropological cultural identity based on the similarity of climatic conditions, e.g. "culture of North-Russian zone", cannot be uncritically relied upon. However, there are some common features between the cultures of this region.

The cultures at issue in this project (e.g. the Khantys, Mansi, Nenets, Komi) can be related to one another through the contacts between them. For example, an area settled by the Nenets spreads from Western Siberia to the Northern European areas of Russia, whereas the Komi settlements spread from Western Siberia to the Kola Peninsula.

This project can be considered as a sequel to research done within the previous grant by Estonian Science Foundation held by this applicant ("Examining Cultural Changes in Western Siberia"). Also, outside the project, the research done by these applicants has been related to the peoples living in Western Siberia (e.g. the Khantys, Mansi, Nenets, Komi), and in Northern European parts of Russia (e.g. the Nenets, Komi).

Thus, the present project, together with the previous grant, would extend to the peoples that so far have been examined quite accidentally (e.g. the Komi). Also, more attention will be paid to the Russians living

in relevant areas, as they have had close cultural contacts with all these peoples.

Main purposes of the project

The main purpose of the project is a comparative study of the indigenous cultures living in Western Siberia and Northern European parts of Russia (e.g. the Khantys, Mansi, Nenets, Komi). Beliefs and worldviews of these peoples, as well as their ability to deal with the rapid changes taking place in society will be among the main issues addressed in this project.

Another important concern would be making fieldwork trips, so as to gather material for research. Within this project, fieldwork trips will be made to all these peoples. A wide field of research has been chosen for to get information about the peoples that so far have been visited by researchers of the Estonian National Museum only sporadically (e.g. the Komi, Nenets).

Also, this project makes an attempt to synthesize the data collected from these regions by ethnologists and folklorists according to different cultures.

Important concerns of the project will be to communicate these cultures to a wider audience through articles, exhibitions and television broadcasts, as well as informing people in Estonia and elsewhere about threats to the native cultures of Western Siberia and Northern and North-Eastern European areas of Russia.

Working hypotheses

One of the hypotheses proposed for completing this project is that differences in identities of these peoples are caused by the variety of cultural contacts and consequently different processes of cultural changes in different peoples. Also, there have been different processes of cultural change within one ethnic group. Through time the peoples at issue have been influenced by various social and cultural factors. Or else they have taken on new qualities from outside. The influences are also different in

traditionally nomadic (the Nenets, and the Komi) and more settled societies (e.g. the Khantys, and Mansi). Accordingly, there are considerable differences in their cultural identities.

Another hypothesis is that view of life of the Nenets (as being the most active reindeer herders of the peoples at issue) is largely based on close contacts between humans and reindeer: as being nomadic people, the Nenets are economically and psychologically dependent on their herds, and reindeer are the main source of food, clothing, transport, and mental security for them. However, for the Komi reindeer herding does not involve close contacts between humans and reindeer, and thus their food, transport and mental security are not directly dependent on their animals.

Institutions and persons participating in the project

The project "Cultural Identity of Arctic Peoples" will be carried out under the Estonian National Museum.

Participants:

Art Leete, research director, Estonian National Museum, MA,
Anzori Barkalaja, doctoral student, Professorship of Folkloristics, Tartu University, MA,
Liivo Niglas, post-graduate student, Professorship of Ethnology, Tartu University.

A part of the project related to the Komi will be carried out in collaboration with the National Museum of the Komi Republic, as is stipulated in the contract between the National Museum of the Komi Republic and the Estonian National Museum signed in 1991, and in the contract between the Komi Ministry of Culture and Education and the Estonian Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Education signed in 1996.

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