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Thematic Issue:

Hungarian Sociocultural Anthropologists on Non-European Fields since 2000

Guest Editors: Gábor Vargyas and Mihály Sárkány

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The Acta Ethnographica Hungarica and the International Academic Community – Editorial

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Our journal, the *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica,* has been established 67 years ago, in 1950, by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences with the primary goal of creating an international 'interface' to represent and mediate the best results of Hungarian scholarship to foreign academic audiences. It was also intended to provide a forum for scholars with an interest not only in the region of Hungary and Central Europe but also in the larger Eurasian continent, as well as in the more distant terrains of ethnologic fieldwork. Only five years after the end of the Second World War and very soon after the Communist takeover, Hungary wished to put herself back onto the map of international scholarship. Although the founding editor, Gyula Ortutay, had an acknowledged career as a scholar, he became a politician in important positions and gained the necessary influence to shape academic life as well. The new journal, with a gesture to reference the classical roots of sciences, was named with a Latin title: *Acta Ethnographica Academiae Scientiarium Hungaricae*.[1] Contrary to the political pressure of the time, it was intended to address not only the Eastern bloc, but also the Western academic community with whom Hungarian scholars maintained vivid connections before the late 1940s takeover. The four languages of the journal (English, French, German and Russian) had clearly expressed the intent to reach and interact with the Western scholarly audience as well.

Altogether there have been 60 annual volumes published in quarterly and later in semi-annual issues, and there were some extra issues on special themes added to the

[1] The title of the journal was later simplified to *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* with the 1991/1992 volume.

list. The editors of the journal were leading scholars who had important contributions to various subfields of the discipline. The consecutive editors-in-chief obviously had a decisive role in shaping not only the character of the journal, but also the institutional background and the study directions of the discipline as well. Besides Gyula Ortutay, who in 1967 became the founder of the Institute of Ethnology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and whose most important contribution to folkloristics was the so-called Budapest school for the study of the role of personality in storytelling,[2] there were other editors whose names should be mentioned. Béla Gunda was an influential professor-pedagogue, ethnologist-linguist-geographer, the chair of the Ethnography Department of the University of Debrecen, who specialized in the comparative study of the peoples of the Carpathian and Balkan areas.[3] Tibor Bodrogi, also the director of the Institute of Ethnology at the Academy, was a well-known anthropologist studying the tribal art of the Pacific. The founding chair of the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Pécs, Professor Bertalan Andrásfalvy has provided important contributions in socio-historical and environmental studies.[4]

Gábor Barna, former head of the Department of Ethnography and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Szeged, whose main field of interest is the folklore and anthropology of religion, served first as executive editor (since 1991/1992) and later as editor-in-chief (since 2006) of the *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* for a decade. With Professor Barna, the editorial office of the journal moved from Budapest and found a new home at the University of Szeged. The journal and the Hungarian scientific community owe many thanks to Professor Barna for his 25 years of editorial work. He has taken the journal into his hand in a period when publishing lacked satisfactory financial backing. Professor Barna's perseverance, hard work, wide network of academic connections and resourcefulness helped the journal overcome the difficulties. It was also during the editorial era of Bertalan Andrásfalvy and Gábor Barna that an international advisory board of distinguished scholars was set up in 2000. The journal owes gratitude to each and every one of the members of the board for their valuable support and contribution.

We hope that it is not only our partial impression that the journal seems to have successfully fulfilled its mission. Over the 60 volumes, more than 732 research articles from Hungarian and 493 papers from foreign scholars were published in the wider field of ethnography, folklore, ethnology, social and cultural anthropology, ethno-musicology and ethno-choreology. An equal number of foreign authors came from Western and Eastern circles of scholarship. The geographic focus varied from Hungary to several European countries, from South America to Siberia, Central Asia or Oceania. The journal aptly represented the colorful traditions of the long-established discipline of Hungarian ethnographic and folklore studies.

Disciplined ethnographic investigations and interest in folklore studies reaches back to the first decades of the 19th century in Hungary. Institutionalization occurred early

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[2] Gyula Ortutay received, among others, the prestigious international acknowledgements of the Baumgarten (1942), Pitré (1962) and Herder (1972) prizes. He was also a deputy president of the *International Society for Folk Narrative Research*.

[3] Béla Gunda was an honorary member of the Swedish Royal Gustavus Adolphus Academy, member of several Finnish, Austrian and German scientific societies.

[4] Bertalan Andrásfalvy is the holder of the Swedish Sigurd Erixon Prize (1980).

on and in congruence with the main wave of the rise of European ethnography and anthropology. The *Hungarian Ethnographical Society* was established in 1889 and is one of the oldest continuously functioning scientific societies in Europe. The periodical of the association, the *Ethnographia,* has been published since 1890. Systematic ethnographic museology dates back to the 1890s, along with the birth of ethno-musicology of the grand generation of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály. The pre-World-War I Kingdom of Hungary had a multiethnic population with 50% Hungarian and 50% non-Hungarian inhabitants, among which at least 22 co-habiting ethnicities constituted various social, religious and regional sub-groups. From the very beginning, Hungarian scholarship, in line with the makeup of the country, developed a keen interest in inter-ethnic studies and avoided ethno-centric focus. Besides the Central-European (the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy before 1920) focus, Hungarian scholars were motivated to study the origins and migrations of the nomadic ancestors of the Hungarians, which from the last decades of the 18th century has led them to a wide range of research areas from the Volga region to Siberia, from the Urals to the Altai, from the Caucasus to Tibet or Mongolia. The ambition to trace the Hungarian language, culture and kin-folks cultivated an ethnology based on comparative methods and also enriched museum collections with invaluable objects and data, such as the unique shamanism collection. The more than 120 years of research brought together rich collections and archives. The Museum of Ethnography in Budapest owns the largest textile collection in Europe, the largest ceramics collection in Central Europe, and its Papua New Guinea, Congo and Oceania material competes with that of the most important British, French and German museums. The Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre is one of the leading skanzens of Europe, not only in its size and number of buildings but also in its fresh, flexible methodology and ambitious development plan. Generations of ethno-musicologists recorded nearly 300 thousand tunes and transcribed, analyzed and systematized half of it, resulting in an unbelievably rich collection of musical tradition. In the last 70 years, they worked hand-in-hand with ethno-choreologists and dance ethnologists, collecting the incomparably rich dance material of the Carpathian basin's multiethnic traditions. While the German-oriented climate during the Monarchy brought links to German, Austrian and Swiss academia, scholars of the interwar period maintained fruitful relations with Scandinavian scholars and frequented connections with French ethnologists and Anglo-Saxon anthropologists as well. The ideologically manipulated Soviet era mandated the strengthening of relations within the Eastern bloc, but from the 1960s Hungarian scholars started to re-build connections with Western European and American colleagues. The last quarter of a century brought new opportunities after the political democratization in 1990. A clear indication of the improvement of international networking was the 7th SIEF (Société Internationale d'Ethnologie et de Folklore) congress held in Budapest in 2001.

The repertory of the topics of published articles in the *Acta Ethnographica* expresses the above sketched richness of scholarly traditions. (In the 2005 50(4):379–537, a complete bibliography of the first 50 volumes was published.)

Throughout our journal's 67 years of existence, the publishing house of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Akadémiai Kiadó, took good care of and guaranteed the quality of printing. In 2013 the leadership of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences decided to regain a closer control over its periodicals and renewed the contract with the publishing house of Akadémiai Kiadó.

Starting with the recent issue of year 2016, volume 61, the editorial work is to be executed again at the Institute of Ethnology at the Research Centre for the Humanities (RCH) of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (HAS) in Budapest. The new editor-in-chief (Ágnes Fülemile) and the members of the editorial team (associate editor Éva Deák, review editors Csaba Mészáros and Katalin Vargha, copy editor Fruzsina Cseh, referee editor Ildikó Kristóf, layout editor Judit Komor, editorial assistants Ibolya Landgráf and Erika Illényi) are all research fellows or staff at the institute. Half of the members of the Editorial Board are on the board of directors of the same institute. Balázs Balogh, the director of the Institute of Ethnology, RCH, HAS, leads the Social Anthropology Department, Balázs Borsos is the deputy director whose main field is ecological anthropology, Ildikó Landgraf is the head of the Folklore and Ágnes Fülemile is that of the Historical Anthropology Department. Gábor Vargyas leads the Ethnology Department and as a professor represents the University of Pécs. Although the Academy's Institute of Ethnology is perhaps the most important research center of the discipline in Hungary, and with its 40 researchers is, in fact, the largest one as well, it does not mean that only the fellows of the institute receive an opportunity for publication. The editorial board of the journal is fully aware of the responsibility that they should represent the larger scientific community of ethnographers, anthropologists and folklorist in Hungary and the neighboring countries. Other members of the Editorial Board represent further important institutions of research, museology and education. Miklós Cseri, director of the Skanzen Hungarian Open Air Museum in Szentendre, Lajos Kemecsi, director of the Museum of Ethnography in Budapest, Tamás Mohay, head of the Ethnography Department of Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, as well as Vilmos Voigt professor emeritus of folklore have all accepted board membership. Elek Bartha professor and former dean and recent pro-rector represents the University of Debrecen. László Mód has been previously working with the journal as a review editor and continues to participate in the board from the University of Szeged. Professor emeritus Attila Paládi-Kovács and László Kósa are Ordinary Members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and we are honored to receive their continued support.

From now on, a renewed International Advisory Board will help the work of the journal. We are grateful for Ingrid Slavec Gradišnik (head of the ZRC SAZU Institute of Slovenian Ethnology, Ljubljana), Marta Botíková (professor at the Comenius University, Bratislava), Ferenc Pozsony (professor at the Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania), Dagnoslaw Demski (senior research fellow at the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw), Helena Ruotsala (professor at the University of Turku, Finland), Dmitriy A. Funk (chair of the Department of Ethnology at the Lomonosov Moscow State University), Daniel Drascek (professor of Comparative European Ethnology at the University of Regensburg), Chris Hann (director of Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle), András Zempléni (professor of the National Scientific Research Council at the Université Paris, Nanterre), Mary N. Taylor (assistant director of the Center for Place, Culture, and Politics at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York), Krista Harper (associate professor at University of Massachusetts, Amherst), and Anya Peterson Royce (chancellors' professor of Anthropology at Indiana University, Bloomington) for their willingness to participate in the work of the advisory board.

We will continue the practice of publishing two issues per year. According to our plans, out of the two issues one will be a more focused thematic issue, the other one will be a mixed issue on a variety of topics. Expert guest editors will be often invited to edit the special thematic issues. The articles are planned to give summaries of well-established research works, or analytical and methodological papers, presented with the foreign scholarly audience in mind.

The most important change from now on will be a linguistic one. In line with the increasing importance of English as the major 'lingua franca' of the international academic community, we have decided that from the previous use of four languages, *the journal shifts to be a solely English-language periodical.* Besides the increased accessibility for English readers, it also offers the benefit of ease of handling the translating and proofreading processes, and thus we hope to guarantee a stable linguistic quality of text. We wish to work together with three translators on a regular basis. The Australian-born Elayne Antalffy has a long-established work connection with Acta Ethnographica. Michael Kandó is a US-born Hungarian-American bi-lingual professional translator. Zsuzsanna Cselényi has moved to the US two decades ago, gained degrees at US universities, and defended her PhD at the Folklore Department of Indiana University in Bloomington. We are delighted that in her person we won not only an excellent translator but an expert colleague as well.

The very first issue edited by the new team will focus on ethnological studies based on fieldwork carried out in non-European areas in the last two decades by a newer generation of Hungarian scholars. The topic of ethnology was relatively underrepresented in the journal in the last two decades, and that is why it is high time to redeem our debt. Guest editors of the issue are leading scholars and professors Gábor Vargyas and Mihály Sárkány. In his introductory paper, Mihály Sárkány gives a very useful overview of the past and present of Hungarian ethnological studies and helps to contextualize the content of the present issue. More senior authors are Gábor Vargyas former and Zoltán Nagy recent head of the Ethnography and Anthropology Department of the University of Pécs. All the other authors in the present issue belong to younger generations and were students of professors Sárkány, Vargyas and Nagy in Budapest and Pécs.

Special thanks to Pál Fodor, director general of The Research Centre for the Humanities of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, for providing extra budget for the translation of the papers of the present issue.

Ágnes Fülemile, the new editor-in-chief of the Acta Ethnographica Hungarica is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Ethnology at the RCH of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest. She has MA degrees in ethnography, history and art history, MPhil in history of dress from the University of London, and a PhD in Ethnography from ELTE, Budapest. She was a Fulbright visiting scholar at the Anthropology Department of UC Berkeley (1992), the Costume Institute of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1993), and at Rutgers University (1999). In 2006–2009 she was the visiting Hungarian Chair of the Central Eurasian Studies Department at Indiana University, Bloomington. While working as the director of the Balassi Institute's Hungarian Cultural Center in New York (2012–2014), she curated the 2013 Smithsonian Folklife Festival's Hungarian Program in Washington, DC. Besides her research work, she regularly teaches American students in study abroad programs in Budapest.

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Hungarian Ethnographers in Non-European Territories – a Revival after 1990

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Abstract: Research in non-European territories became an essential component of scientific life in Hungary before the First World War. A search for relatives by language and culture was the main motivating force that led Hungarian ethnographers to the East to accumulate knowledge about cultures of Ob-Ugrians and peoples in Central Asia. Others travelled to the Far East, to South Asia or other continents with different goals, but also contributed to knowledge about distant lands and cultures. These efforts resulted in a great tradition of interest in cultures of the world, which survived eras when Hungarian ethnographers had a very limited chance to do fieldwork outside Hungary, and its revival is demonstrated by a large number of fieldwork after 1990, when Hungarians had once again more freedom and means to travel and formerly closed regions became accessible. This revival involved a shift from an ethnology focused on the past and ethnic traditions to a sociocultural anthropology focused on the present and current problems.
Keywords: political context, ethnography, sociocultural anthropology, fieldwork, Ob-Ugrians, Altaic peoples.

The authors of works covering the history of Hungarian ethnography devoted relatively little space to the collecting and fieldwork carried out in non-European territories (Sozan 1977; Kósa 1989), although as a result of that activity the Museum of Ethnography acquired non-European collections of outstanding significance in East-Central Europe; a thorough survey has been made of them (Gyarmati 2008b), moreover as we have seen for ourselves when compiling the selected bibliography of ethnology in Hungary with Gábor Vargyas (Kovács et al. 1991),[1] the research directed at non-European territories has led to the impressive accumulation of knowledge in a few areas. It cannot be the aim of my short paper to present a comprehensive history of research in this direction, but it is worth pointing out how the sociocultural anthropological investigations carried out in recent decades on other continents by Hungarian scholars – some of the results of which

[1] Tibor Bodrogi raised the idea and started to collect data for this bibliography. As he died unexpectedly in 1986 Mihály Sárkány and Gábor Vargyas continued the work with the help of Zoltán Kovács, who was librarian in the Museum of Ethnography, Budapest in the 1960s.

can be found in this volume – are linked to the work of predecessors, and the intellectual tradition in which they are embedded.

It is often said in connection with the origins of sociocultural anthropology that it is the child of the Enlightenment and colonialism (Firth 1975:44; Goody 1969:2; Lewis 2013:105),[2] or is a bastard of the latter (Asad 1973:16), but there are countries where the study of societies and cultures differing from their own was inspired by other considerations, even if the emergence of such interest cannot be separated from the general circumstances and course of the development of ethnography, ethnology and anthropology. This is especially true for Hungarian ethnography: one of its main driving forces was the study of the culture of peoples most closely related linguistically in the search for the origins of the Hungarian folk culture, even if the extra-European investigations were not limited to the regions inhabited by those peoples. But the chances of fieldwork both among peoples speaking Ural-Altaic languages and in other regions were dependent to a great extent on the place of the country in the world politically and as regards its economic possibilities.

Taking into account the main lines of enquiry, the following periods can be distinguished.

1. The period before the introduction of the ethno-sciences that in Hungary lasted up to the early 19th century.

2. Ethnological research from the early 19th century to the end of the First World War, the establishment of the great tradition.

3. The decline in ethnological research between the two world wars.

4. Ethnology and sociocultural anthropology after the Second World War and in the period of socialism – controlled possibilities.

5. After 1990 – a revival.

1. The period before the introduction of the ethno-sciences that in Hungary lasted up to the early 19th century.

In the first period a few individuals from the territory of Hungary, as from other European countries, reached distant lands and served with ethnographic details in their descriptions. Their numbers included diplomats, prisoners and churchmen (Kósa 1988:30–32). Especially rich in this respect are the 18th century communications of Jesuit missionaries setting out from the territory of the Kingdom of Hungary, no longer independently of European expansion in the world. One example is the letters from the Malabar Coast in Southern India written in Latin by Joseph Hausegger; extracts in German were published in the Jesuit series *Der neue Welt Bott* in issues 636 (1755) and 724–736 (1758); they became known in Hungarian in 1931 (Pinzger 1931). Even more important are the writings of men trained at the University of Nagyszombat (Tyrnava in Latin, Trnava in Slovak) and sent to South America as missionaries, among them, Xavér Ferenc Éder, whose activity was studied by Lajos Boglár (Boglár 1955); Ildikó Sz. Kristóf (2014) threw light on the background of their work in Nagyszombat. Although the content of these writings did not become generally known in Hungary, the desire for knowledge that lay behind them must also have played a part in the fact that the astronomer János Sajnovics, who was also

[2] Surprisingly, the expression "child of colonialism" is attributed to Kathleen Gough (for example Llobera 2003:169), although she wrote of "child of Western imperialism" (Gough 1968:12).

educated by the Jesuits, in 1770 became the first to demonstrate the relationship between the Hungarian and Lapp languages and he also reported on Lapp customs (Hám 1889:5–6). The 18th century adventurer Móric Benyovszky was a different case: his autobiographic writing on his travels (Benyovszky 1790) was reworked by one of the greatest Hungarian writers (Jókai 1888), he is remembered and still inspires today as the "king of Madagascar", but a researcher writing the history of Madagascar has also begun work on the source critical evaluation of his data (Lugosi 1984; Benyovszky conference 1987).

2. Ethnological research from the early 19th century to the end of the First World War, the establishment of the great tradition.

The ethno-sciences acquired an independent character in the last third of the 18th century in Göttingen, an important centre of the German Enlightenment, building on the achievements of the scholarly enquiry that accompanied Russian empire-building and similar aspirations in Vienna, but breaking away from their practical incentives. The more abstract scholarly attitude developed here pointed in two directions: one towards ethnic history that was linked and similar to language history in a paradigm elaborated by August Ludwig Schlözer, the other towards examination of the connection between geographical endowments, human races and types of ways of life, the general outline of which can be attributed to Johann Christoph Gatterer. Both of these trends adopted a world historical perspective. Ideas spread throughout Europe, but they did not all use the same name for the discipline (Vermeulen 2008:199–270).

The demand for separate ethnographic investigation was expressed in Hungary in the early 19th century, when the Kingdom of Hungary was still under direct Habsburg rule, then following the Compromise of 1867 it became part of the empire on an equal standing with Austria, in theory part of a great power but in practice of only a middle power that was of great significance from the viewpoint of field research.

The dates are important because by the early 19th century ethnographic enquiry was imbued with the ideas of Herder, who thought that a nation's gist is best preserved and expressed by the *Volk* in language, in folksongs and folk narratives, which are values, consequently collecting folk traditions served nation-building, especially in societies where the aristocratic elite and the townsfolk were in part ethnically distinct from the rural population, which did not exclude scientific accuracy (Barnard 2003:30–31, 38; Baycroft 2012:8). Most of the European peoples sought their traditions in earlier periods of European history; the work of the Grimm brothers provided an excellent example for this (Cocchiara 1962:236). But the Hungarians looked towards the East in search of their past.

The mediaeval chronicles discovered and printed in the 18th century (Macartney 1953) pointed in this direction, as did the discovery of linguistic affinities that also found speakers of Finno-Ugric languages beyond Europe, in the territory of Russia. Other kinship possibilities also arose, the Turkish-Ugric battle broke out and although it brought victory for Finno-Ugric linguistic kinship by the end of the 19th century (Sozan 1977:98–113), it also had the effect of encouraging extensive collection of ethnographic material besides the description of languages in various parts of Asia, and a study published in 1823 (Tálasi 1949:77–78) postulating Asian connections of certain Hungarian popular cultural features provided a similar stimulus.

Within Finno-Ugric ethnographic investigations, special mention must be made of the exceptionally outstanding fieldwork carried out among the Hungarian people's closest linguistic kin, the Ob-Ugrians (the Vogul or Mansi and the Ostyak or Khanty),[3] and the results obtained.

The foundations of this line of enquiry were laid by Antal Reguly (1819–1858), who travelled to Finland in 1839, then after collecting among the Finns and the Lapps, from 1841 he lived in Russia. From 1843 to 1846 he stayed mainly among Mansi and Khanty, but for a short while he also collected material among other Finno-Ugric peoples, the Udmurt, the Mordvin, the Cheremis, and the Turkic Bashkir and Chuvash. In 1847 he worked on mapping the northern part of the Urals, then returned to Hungary. His travels were made possible mainly by the support of Russian private individuals and modest financial support from the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. The first ethnographic exhibition in Pest was organised from the materials he collected, and these objects became the first collection of the Museum of Ethnography established in 1872 (Gyarmati 2008a:1–2). However, his declining health prevented him from publishing the greater part of the material he collected. It was with editing assistance from Pál Hunfalvy that his Mansi monograph (Reguly 1864) was published posthumously. His material has been studied by a number of researchers but some of his manuscripts remain unpublished. Some of those who worked on Reguly's material also did fieldwork in his footsteps, mainly among the Ob-Ugrians at the end of the 19th century, supplementing and enriching the information and also observing other phenomena. The fruit of this work includes the impressive Mansi folklore collection made by Bernát Munkácsy (Munkácsi 1892–1921; Munkácsi – Kálmán 1952–1963; Hoppál 2000; Kozmács 2010), and the Khanty folklore collection made by József Pápay (Pápay 1905); the authors noted in their subtitles that they had made use of Reguly's legacy. The results of their fieldwork subsequently appeared in the studies made by the next generations. Their travels, as well as the trips made by Károly Pápai and János Jankó that also produced significant results (Kodolányi 1963), were made with support from Hungary specifically for the purpose. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences set up a Reguly Fund to support such research, and after 1867 the Hungarian Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education awarded a grant, the Geographical Society assisted travellers (Pápai 1890:119), and wealthy aristocrats organised expeditions inviting researchers with specialised knowledge to participate; János Jankó and József Pápay for example were members of Jenő Zichy's third major expedition.

Researches in other regions of Asia also increased during the time of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but these were more scattered regionally and in their focus than the Ob-Ugrian investigations. They eventually led to the emergence of a many-coloured Oriental studies in Hungarian scholarly life in which studies on the history of the Altaic languages and their speakers became an especially strong component.

It was to clarify the origin of the Hungarians that Sándor Kőrösi Csoma set out on his journey in 1819 (Terjék 1976:16); its unexpected result was the Tibetan-English dictionary and the foundation of Tibetan studies with the publication of his works in 1834 (Terjék 1984). Ármin Vámbéry too declared in the foreword to his account rich in ethnographic experiences of his travels in Central Asia, Persia and Afghanistan from 1863 that discovering the languages to which Hungarian was related "was the moving cause

[3] The Vogul call themselves Mansi, the Ostyak call themselves Khanty. Sociocultural anthropologists prefer to use self-denominations, therefore I apply the latter ethnic names in this paper irrespective of the usage of the authors in their publications.

of my journey to the East" (Vámbéry 1964:viii). This was followed by further travels as a result of which he also undertook to trace the ethnological-ethnographic picture of the Turkic peoples (Vámbéry 1883; 1885). Considerations of prehistory also played a role in the choice of destinations for Count Jenő Zichy's three big interdisciplinary expeditions (1895–1898), the first of which was to the Caucasus, the second to Central Asia, and the third across the Gobi Desert to China, that is, towards the speakers of Altaic languages, until on the third expedition, as already mentioned, the count also supported Finno-Ugric research. Benedek Barátosi-Balogh too was inspired by the challenge of Hungarian prehistory to set out on his travels, and although the answers he gave proved untenable, the three journeys he made to the Far East between 1903 and 1914 produced much valuable information on the Ainu, the peoples along the Amur River and Manchu-Tungus shamanism (Hoppál 2007:48–59).

Naturally, individuals who gathered information on non-Eurasian continents were also moved by other reasons; their desire to share their discoveries and knowledge contributed to the progress of scholarship in the 19th century. They included Sándor Bölöni Farkas and Ágoston Haraszty who wrote about the conditions and institutions of the United States of America (Bölöni Farkas 1834; Haraszthy 1844). Another especially outstanding example was László Magyar who gathered information on the peoples of Angola and the lower reaches of the Congo River; he lived in the region from 1848 until his death in 1864, his descriptions mainly of the Mbundu society, way of life and customs were especially detailed and at times amazing due to his close coexistence with them, and considerably enriched knowledge of Africa (Magyar 1859; Sebestyén 2008).

However the question of the origin of the Hungarian people no longer played a role in all Asian travels during the period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including among the problems examined by the first major expedition to the Far East backed up by a warship; it brought back more than 2000 objects enabling János Xántus, who had travelled in the United States in the 1850s, to establish the Museum of Ethnography as a department of the National Museum in Pest in 1872; he also published numerous studies on regions and peoples of Southeast Asia and the Far East as far as the Philippines (Sándor 1953).

The same can be said of the important expeditions of the period driven mainly by geographical, geological and other natural scientific enquiry that also enriched Hungarian science with valuable ethnographic knowledge, such as Count Béla Széchenyi's big expedition that set out in 1877; its members reached India, Thailand, Western China, Indonesia and Japan and although Gábor Bálint famous for his earlier communications on Mongolian language and folklore joined them for a short while, it was not his writings but the reports of Lajos Lóczy that contained many ethnographic observations in the Chinese empire (Lóczy 1886), and even more the studies written by his student Jenő Cholnoky who spent close to two years in China from 1896 (Cholnoky 1900). The expedition led by Sámuel Teleki also set out to explore unknown regions in East Africa in 1887, and besides discovering Lake Turkana (Rudolf) and Lake Chew Bahir (Stephanie), also gave accounts of the unknown peoples encountered on the journey (Höhnel 1990; Borsos 1998:185). The expeditions of György Almásy into Central Asia as far as the Tien Shan Mountains collected a great deal of material of interest to the disciplines of geography and ethnography, which was analysed systematically; this was especially true of his second expedition in which Gyula Prinz participated (Almásy 1903; Prinz 1911), and while these significantly enriched knowledge of the Altaic peoples they were also indicators of the departure from ethnic preference. Typical of this attitude was the conclusion drawn by György Almásy that he saw a greater similarity between the behaviour and mentality of Hungarian and Russian peasants than between Hungarians and the representatives of the Turkic peoples he had observed (Almásy 1903:18).

The Museum of Ethnography owes its deservedly famous North-East New Guinea collection to natural scientists, the taxidermist Sámuel Fenichel and the naturalist, ornithologist and entomologist Lajos Bíró, who did their collecting in far more modest circumstances than those of the expeditions already mentioned, Fenichel in 1891–1893 and Bíró between 1896 and 1902. In addition to descriptive notes on the objects, Bíró also left very evocative pictures of life with his Papuan wives (Bíró 1899; 1901; 1987). Writing about their activity, Gábor Vargyas rightfully observed that "the history of ethnography in Hungary cannot be distinguished from that of the museum collections" (Vargyas 2008:207), and for some the objects they collected may have been more valuable than their travel reports based on fleeting impressions.

Naturally, the latter also contained information from distant regions even if we are unable to include them in this brief overview; the same applies to the translation of many works presenting remote worlds, such as the three-volume *The Earth and its Peoples* (Hellwald 1879–1881) that was followed by a strongly reworked version in five volumes edited by Aladár György (György 1894–1905).

The result of all these efforts was the emergence of a broad public interest in distant peoples and cultures that became an essential component of Hungarian intellectual life, inspiring many young people who set out and became influential figures in the scientific community of other countries, such as Charles Eugen Ujfalvy in France (Le Calloc'h 1986), who carried out research in Central Asia and the Hindu Kush and Emil Torday in the United Kingdom who after his travels in the Congo sent an important assemblage of objects to the Museum of Ethnography (Földessy 2015). And most importantly, the attitude briefly outlined here survived the First World War in Hungary and can be said to be still alive today.

3. The decline in ethnological research between the two world wars.

With the end of the First World War, from 1918 Hungary became de facto and from 1920 de jure an independent state, but it lost two-thirds of its previous territory, was economically weakened. The peoples of Western Siberia and Central Asia that were the focus of Hungarian ethnological interest lived in regions which became part of the Soviet Union and these regions became largely inaccessible for foreign fieldworkers, especially Hungarians in view of the sharply opposed political ideologies.

By the end of the 19th century ethnography had become a professional activity in Hungary. From 1870 there was an appointed professor of ethnology at the Pest university, the geographer János Hunfalvy. It is clear from the notes made by students attending the lectures he gave from 1873 that he transmitted the contemporary version of *Völkerkunde* that combined ethnography, geography, anthropology and regional linguistics (Sárkány – Vargyas 1995:VIII–IX), and encouraged work on comparative ethnology. However, what we would today call the social anthropological enquiry examining general questions of the formation and functioning of human society that also appeared in Hungary in that period showed scant interest in the achievements of Hungarian ethnography and had little influence on them (Zsigmond 1974:154–155).

It is the irony of fate that opportunities for anthropological interest and fieldwork producing excellent ethnographical results arose precisely in the interwar years when the possibilities for research outside Europe were greatly reduced.

We owe this change of intellectual direction to one person, Géza Róheim, who as far as we know never did ethnographic fieldwork in Hungary, but armed with extensive folkloristic knowledge and psychoanalytical experience, set out in 1928 with the aim of gathering material in the field to refute the claim made by Bronislaw Malinowski on the basis of information obtained among Trobriand Islanders that the existence of Oedipus complex depended on the type of the family and it was not a characteristic of a matrilineal society (Malinowski 1924:55–57). After a brief stay in French Somalia he spent an extended period on field research in Central Australia, and then on the Melanesian Normanby Island and on the way home among the Yuma Indians. He arrived back in 1931 and published his Central Australian research findings in Hungarian (Róheim 1932). However, his other fieldwork reports were not published in Hungarian until 1984 compiled by Kincső Verebélyi who also wrote the foreword (Róheim 1984). In keeping with the direction of his interest, he produced highly detailed analyses of the social structure, communication and exchange of gifts, concepts and myths, making him one of the founders of psychoanalytical anthropology (Róheim 1950) even if his conclusions in support of Freudian theory are debatable. He emigrated to the United States in 1938 and died there in 1953. He is the only Hungarian sociocultural anthropologist mentioned in big research history overviews (e.g. Harris 1968:427–430; Paluch 1990:214).

Apart from Róheim no other Hungarian researcher of note did long-standing fieldwork on other continents than Europe in that period although the Museum of Ethnography was enriched with material collected by Horst Bandat who worked on oil exploration in Celebes between 1933 and 1935 and from there also reached today's Irian Jaya (Hála – Vargyas 1992), and by Rudolf Fuszek, who was minister of health in Liberia (Borsányi 1986). Interest in distant cultures was kept up by Orientalist travellers such as Lajos Ligeti (1938, 1940), Gyula Germanus (Wojtilla 1981), Ervin Baktay (1938), or the writings of Pál Kelemen (1937) who travelled to Mexico to study the high cultures of Central America, but while they provided ethnographic details, their investigations were in the areas of linguistics, cultural history and art history and therefore fall outside the scope of our topic.

4. Ethnology and sociocultural anthropology after the Second World War and in the period of socialism – controlled possibilities.

After the Second World War Hungary remained a country almost unchanged in size and economic strength, and from 1949 was one of the socialist countries in a politically divided world. But this did not mean freedom of movement or greater opportunities for field research in the regions of the Soviet Union of special interest for Hungarian ethnology, especially not in Siberia, even though the struggle against colonialism and for recognition of the right to self-determination of the peoples was part of the declared socialist policy and ideology, and Hungarian students were able to study at universities in the Soviet Union.

One result of this was a situation where László Vajda, the powerful inspiration behind Hungarian ethnological education, who emigrated to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1957 and later became professor of Völkerkunde at Munich university, never did any fieldwork. And Tibor Bodrogi, who did a great deal to disseminate contemporary British and American anthropological thinking (Sárkány 2005:96–98), who gained wide international recognition right at the beginning of his career with his study on the cargo cult (Bodrogi 1951), with his publications of the Oceanic artefacts preserved in the Museum of Ethnography (Vargyas 2008:242–243), and in general became a recognised expert in tribal art (Bodrogi 1981), and as director of the Museum of Ethnography (1961–1968) travelled manytimes abroad, in fact was only able to produce an analytical study based on his own detailed fieldwork among the Sadang-Toraja in 1964. He visited them on a study tour to Indonesia and described their burial customs (Bodrogi 1970).

Tibor Bodrogi's Indonesian study trip was an exceptional opportunity supported by a UNESCO grant. Otherwise during the period of socialism travel abroad on ethnographic study tours was possible only within the frame of intergovernmental cultural agreements and arrangements between academies of sciences, and few people were given the chance.

One of those few was Vilmos Diószegi, who on several occasions in 1957, 1958 and 1964 spent a few months in Siberia, and studied the shamanism of various peoples (Diószegi 1998; Sántha 2003:313–314) that he hypothesised was the pre-Christian belief system of the Hungarians. It is an indication of the international recognition of his investigations that he wrote the entry on shamanism in the 1974 edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Just as his investigation was rooted in Hungarian research tradition both in choice of theme and in the approach to the examination of individual elements of the culture, the same can be said of András Róna-Tas who had a sound grounding in ethnology and Altaic studies; he visited Mongolia in 1957–58, and besides presenting his results in studies he also published travel writing that showed the changing way of life in Mongolia in the context of the socialist transformation of society (Róna–Tas 1961).

The case of Lajos Boglár was somewhat different: he arrived among the Nambikuara Indians for research on a UNESCO grant in 1959 with the intention of applying the 'Franglus' (Verdery 2007) approach to anthropology in which he was partially successful. In addition he gave an answer to the question of their place in cultural history (Boglár 1969; 1971). Later he was able to bring the same approach to fieldwork among the Piaroa of Venezuela in 1968-69 and in 1974, thanks to support from the Wenner-Gren Foundation (Boglár 1982). I make special mention of the grants that made these investigations possible because they were a rare exception at that time. Between 1979 and the year of his death (2004) Lajos Boglár made several more journeys in Brazil and French Guiana at his own expense. The result was an analysis of the difference between day and night culture among the Guarani (Boglár 1996), a study of Brazilian Indian feather art (Boglár 1998), and finally a study of the Hungarians who emigrated to Brazil in the 1890s, beginning with publication of the material his father collected in 1939–1943 on the Hungarian emigrants, that also provided the occasion for investigation among the neighbouring Botocudo Indians (Boglár id. 1966; Boglár 2000:154–171).

On his trip to Venezuela in 1968 Boglár was accompanied by ethnomusicologist István Halmos, who besides making a thorough study of the music also provided important information on the circumstances of the two men's research (Halmos 2012).

Through an intergovernmental exchange agreement the dance researcher Martin György and ethnomusicologist Sárosi Bálint spent two months travelling extensively in Ethiopia. The result was a typology of Ethiopian dances (Martin 1966) and a survey of the music of the peoples of Ethiopia (Sárosi 1967).

It was also thanks to intergovernmental agreements that Csaba Ecsedy carried out fieldwork based on principles of British social anthropology in Sudan among the Maiak of the Hill Burun tribe in 1972 (Ecsedy 1973) and Gábor Vargyas spent a year on a grant in Australia in 1981–1982, and during that time with the support of Australian institutions and private persons he was able to visit the area of New Guinea from where the Museum of Ethnography's big collection came and to gather supplementary data throwing light on the social background of the objects (Vargyas 1987).

Later, in the frame of cooperation between academies of sciences Gábor Vargyas was able to do fieldwork in Vietnam among the Bru. In both duration (18 months between 1985 and 1989, with interruptions), and the results obtained this fieldwork was the most significant that a Hungarian researcher has been able to carry out among a single ethnic group. Like Boglár, Vargyas follows the 'Franglus' approach and although the main focus of his attention was religion and rites, in order to understand them he examined all aspects of Bru life in the first comprehensive description of Bru culture (Vargyas 2000; 2008a).

Towards the end of the period the opportunity arose through Soviet scientific institutions for brief ethnographic fieldwork and was seized by Mihály Hoppál who visited the Kyrgyz (1975), and the Buryat (1986), thereby beginning his on-the-spot study of shamanism that subsequently developed into a research stream.

In 1986 two researchers travelled to different African countries as educators and were able to collect ethnological material during their stay: Géza Füssi Nagy among the Bondei in Tanzania, Éva Sebestyén in Angola where she found a written source of internal origin, documents of village chiefs that threw light on the organisation of society and land rights during the Portuguese colonial period (Füssi Nagy 1998; Sebestyén 2006).

A new feature of life during this period was that university students were able to carry out fieldwork in distant regions. Cuban religious communities organised around rites were studied by Mária Dornbach (1977) as a student of Spanish on language practice in Cuba, and by Irma Agüero (1983) who came to Hungary from Cuba as a wife and completed her studies at the ELTE Department of Ethnology. At the initiative of university students and with the help of grants, a three-month expedition to Mexico was organised in 1985–1986 for an interdisciplinary study of the Totonac culture. However, the anthropological analysis was carried out by Annamária Lammel who accompanied them and who had already spent time among the Totonac in 1982 (Lammel – Nemes 1988; Lammel 1991, 2001).

It was a sign of changing times that in 1987–88 the Hungarian Scientific Africa Expedition, a private initiative supported by sponsors, spent six months in East Africa; its members included Géza Füssi Nagy, and the present writer (Sárkány 2000, 2001).

Besides those already mentioned, there are many proofs of interest in non-European territories in this period not based on ethnographic fieldwork, as well as theoretical work on ethnography and ethnology, but they fall outside the scope of this survey. Nevertheless it is important to stress that general anthropological interest and the aim of the fieldwork coincided in the work of many researchers.

5. After 1990 – a revival

Like the third and fourth periods, the fifth can be distinguished in connection with world history. The "short twentieth century" (Hobsbawm 1994) came to an end with the disappearance of the European socialist states. In Hungary the transition was completed by 1990, a market economy and plural democratic political system replaced the socialist regime and extended individual freedoms. From the viewpoint of scholarship this meant that ties with the former socialist countries weakened while the possibilities of maintaining contacts with academic centres in other parts of the world expanded, and in Hungary the range and total amount of available state and other supports increased. Not incidentally, the way was opened for freer movement in the world, including also in changing Russia and China.

In this situation it was of significance for ethnographic-anthropological training that departments of cultural anthropology separate from ethnology and folklore departments were set up in Budapest (1990) and Miskolc (1993), and for a time were headed by researchers of non-European territories. In Budapest Lajos Boglár (1990–1995), who until his death (2004) was a figure who had a decisive influence on his students' field of interest, and Mihály Sárkány (1999–2000), in Miskolc László Borsányi (1995–2002). The department of ethnology and cultural anthropology at the University of Pécs was headed by Gábor Vargyas (2001–2006), who then directed the doctoral programme where a number of students earned their PhD with dissertations on non-European topics. His successor is Zoltán Nagy who has done fieldwork on numerous occasions among the Vasyugan Khanty and is also present with a study in this volume. The return of several Hungarian researchers also had an inspiring influence: András Zempléni, who did fieldwork as a CNRS researcher in Senegal, Chad and Ivory Coast and published in Hungarian his analytical study of the consequences of the Senufo visiting marriage (Zempléni 2004); Bea Vidacs, who began her career in Hungary, but examined the relationship between football and public thinking in Cameroon as part of her studies in the United States (Vidacs 2010); both researchers lectured in the frame of training in cultural anthropology in Budapest and Pécs; and Veronika Görög-Karády who collected material among the Bambara as a CNRS researcher in Mali and Senegal in the 1970s, from 1980 she was in regular contact with the MTA Institute of Ethnology, and with the ELTE Department of Folklore where she also gave lectures; she published her folkloristic analyses on social inequalities also in Hungarian (Görög-Karády 2006); Anna Losonczy, a professor at the University Libre of Bruxelles and director of research at l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, who did fieldwork in Columbia (Losonczy 2001), also lectured at the University of Pécs.

One of the positive effects of the new situation was that Hungarian researchers visited the Khanty again. In 1991 Éva Schmidt organized the Northern Khanty Folklore Archive and managed it until her death. The possibility was created on the Hungarian side at government level and on the Russian side through negotiations between the leaders of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region and the leaders of the Society for the Rescue of Yugria. The aim was to rescue the Khanty cultural heritage. The result was a vast body of material but under the conditions of Éva Schmidt's will it cannot be published until 2022. However the reports drawn up annually by the MTA Institute of Ethnology provide information on the collecting sites and the work done (Schmidt 2005). It is regrettable that it has not been worked up by Éva Schmidt because she was an excellent researcher as can be seen from her comprehensive study on the bear feasts written on the basis of communications from others (Schmidt 1989), moreover she was the person who spoke all five Khanty dialects.

As a result of the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Archive, Márta Csepregi, Ágnes Kerezsi and Katalin Lázár were also able to do research in the 1990s in the territory of the Surgut Khanty and published their findings in a special issue of the *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* (Csepregi 1997a; 1997b; Kerezsi 1997; Lázár 1997).

As in the case of Ob-Ugrian research, a major breakthrough linked to the forerunners was also achieved in Mongolian studies. Ágnes Birtalan, who had already visited Inner

Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan as a student, organised expeditions to Mongolia and Southern Siberia in 1991–1998, to collect material on languages and folk beliefs. The authors published these in the series titled *Őseink Nyomában Belső Ázsiában* [In the Footsteps of our Ancestors in Inner Asia]. They were followed by further expeditions; as the title indicates they are investigations directed towards the past and traditions (Birtalan 1996; 1998).

As already noted, after 1990 the brief but diverse researches on shamanism – among the Yakuts, the Tuva, the Ainu in Japan, in China (Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Yunnan) – by Mihály Hoppál became a stream recording the traditional features of shamanism and the forms of its contemporary presence (Hoppál 2002; 2007; 2015). Thanks to his organising energy, research on shamanism became the area that was greatly enriched in Hungary after 1990 as a result of fieldwork by many researchers. The diversity of Hungarian research is reflected in the volume *Sámánok és kultúrák* [Shamans and Cultures] (Hoppál et al. 2008) he edited containing studies from different parts of the world. Hoppál worked together with János Sipos on the analysis of shaman songs (Hoppál – Sipos 2010). János Sipos, the musicologist collected the folk music of Turkic peoples, starting in Anatolia in 1987 and continuing in Central Asia after 1990. He published the results in several volumes (e.g. Sipos 2014). The international journal *Shaman* is also published in Hungary and often includes studies by Hungarian researchers (e.g. Csepregi 2007; Somfai Kara 2006; 2007).

My intention with these few lines has simply been to indicate the direction of research; the investigations and publications are far too numerous to be included here.

Together with the research linked to already mentioned earlier initiatives, this period has been marked by a change of attitude regarding the Ob-Ugrians, the Altaic and other Siberian peoples. In place of research focused on the archaic, traditional and what is disappearing, efforts are now being made to place the phenomena in a social historical context, to examine them in the process of change, or to approach them with questions framed in sociocultural and anthropological terms.

Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián, a student of Éva Schmidt has drawn on close to twenty years of intimate local experience to analyse the system of family-kinship relations and behaviour norms of the Khanty (Ruttkay-Miklián 2012, 2014). Zoltán Nagy, already mentioned, showed how the religious concepts of the Vasyugan Khanty are changing (Nagy 2007). After several long periods of fieldwork since 1989 in Southern Siberia, mainly among the Buryat and Evenki, István Sántha in collaboration with his wife Tatiana Safonova has analysed such phenomena as pretence in behaviour, personal autonomy and the differentiation of genders, or the differing world-views of the Evenki and the Buryat in their book on social contacts among peoples in the region of Lake Baikal (Safonova – Sántha 2013). Csaba Mészáros has shown historical change in two Yakut village communities, analysing the differing outcomes and impacts of attempts made at social transformation in the 20th century in the two cases, and among others the way they are related to social capital and social relations (Mészáros 2013).

Opportunities have also been opened for other fieldwork.

Gábor Vargyas was able to continue his research among the Bru in 1996 in Laos, in 2007 in Vietnam, as well as other travels.

I myself was able to carry out economic anthropological analysis based on fieldwork in Kenya in 1993 and 1995 among Kikuju coffee-growers (Sárkány 2002; 2015).

The ethnographic fieldwork carried out in many places has enabled researchers of the HAS Research Centre for the Humanities, Institute of Ethnology to present answers given to the big challenges of our time, examining the ingrained cultural reflexes that the process of modernisation comes up against or the changes taking place in different societies in the world (Sárkány 2012).

It will already be clear from the above that not only did new opportunities open after 1990 for research in non-European territories, many researchers also took advantage of them immediately. However, the revival nature of the phenomenon is further supported by the figures in the accompanying table that do not even contain all the fieldwork done by university students.

	Africa	America	Australia and Oceania	Asia	Total
Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Department of Cultural Anthropology	9	19	2	35	65
University of Miskolc, Department of Cultural and Visual Anthropology	4	9		3	16
University of Pécs, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology		2		5	7
Total	13	30	2	43	88

*Figure 1.*Dissertations based on fieldwork carried out by Hungarian students in non-European territories at a few Hungarian universities, 1995–2016[4]

[4] The Asia column also includes dissertations based on research carried out among Finno-Ugrians living in the European part of Russia, but it does not include the results of fieldwork among non-Europeans carried out within Europe. The data does not contain the data of all departments at all Hungarian universities. A small number of dissertations that could be included were produced in Department of Ethnology and Folklore at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, in Department of Ethnology at University of Debrecen, in Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at University of Szeged. I wish to thank Veronika Murányi (Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest), József Kotics (University of Miskolc) Zoltán Nagy and Gábor Vargyas (University of Pécs), and András Simon (University of Szeged) for their assistance in compiling the data.

A further regional breakdown of the dissertations that can be classified under Asia gives surprising results. Only four were from the territory of Siberia, one from Central Asia, in contrast seven were from India, six from Indonesia and four from Israel of which one was a study on a Palestinian community.

If we look at the topics, the difference in turning away from the past oriented research is even more striking. The majority of the dissertations examined current social problems or living cultural phenomena, reflecting the sociocultural anthropological training of their authors. The revival is thus accompanied by a paradigm shift in the study of Non-European territories. This is evidenced by the studies in this volume, most of whose authors were among the student authors of the 88 dissertations listed in the table. Of those who were not, Zsolt Szilágyi was trained in fieldwork on Ágnes Birtalan's Mongolian expeditions, but as a historian he was easily able to place the local experiences in a wider frame. The other is Gábor Vargyas, who contributes to an international debate as a result of his research on the Bru.

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Variable Husbandry and Changing Climate

Cattle Breeding and Permafrost Soil in Yakutia

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Abstract: The author focuses on the changing perception and use of *alaases* (round shaped meadows in thermocarst depressions) in a Central-Yakutian village community under the effect of global climate change. Households of the local cattle-economy before the collectivisation used to be located at *alaases* and had used small and disperse hayfields. Subsequent economic reforms in the Soviet era, and the process of decollectivisation (in the 1990s) distanced villagers from *alaases*. Therefore knowledge on *alaas* ecotope in the village has radically diminished.

In the 21st century environmental changes have had negative effect on the local agriculture and economy. Increase in annual precipitation, and in mean annual temperature resulted in the rapid humidification of permafrost soil, and the degradation of hayfields. Three factors expose today agricultural production in the village to ongoing climatic changes: low level of self-dependency in agricultural production, undiversified production of unprocessed raw material, and the vanishing concepts of local spiritual ecology. The author argues that anthropological research can effectively contribute to the mitigation of losses in Sakha cattle economy by studying traditional methods of land use and the perception of environment.
Keywords: environmental anthropology, climate change, arctic region, sustainability

CULTURE AND NATURE

In the social sciences, the opposition of nature (the physical space and environment not created by man) and culture has been an essential element of the modernist episteme (Descola 2013:78 –83). The ethnographic and anthropological works influenced by this approach presumed that social and cultural processes that occur against the backdrop of the natural environment – which is static or changing imperceptibly – obey completely different rules (Degler 1989). Although the two spheres may come into contact with each other, they are essentially disparate and dissociable.

This approach has been widely criticized since the 1950s. The first approach to be distinctly formulated was the one representing the ecological determination of human cultures. The school of cultural ecology, hallmarked by Julian Steward, primarily debated the validity of studies fostered by the legacy of Franz Boas and Alfred Kroeber, arguing for the ecological determination of cultures instead of the notion of nature being in contrast and subordinated to human culture (Steward 1955). Culture and nature created two disparate spheres within this conceptual framework; the contact between them, their interface, is created by the totality of knowledge and practices, called the "cultural core" by Steward, and which in this model can be considered a set of techniques of adapting (primarily economically) to the natural environment (Steward 1955:37). The epistemological horizon of cultural ecology, as well as of ecological anthropology, which it inspired, is still determined by this approach: the separate spheres of natural environment and human culture are formed by acting upon each other and in conjunction with each other. It also follows that some areas of a community's culture will be more subject to the determination of environmental impact, while others less so. In the interaction between nature and culture, either one or the other sphere will get a more decisive role.

Providing a more radical critique is the approach which calls into question the separability of the natural world and the human culture that "emerges" from it. In anthropology, the foundations of this paradigm were set by Gregory Bateson (Bateson 2000:456–458), then developed by Tim Ingold. According to Ingold, who studied environmental awareness and human behavior within an environment, it cannot be determined where the human world ends and where nature, the physical space – which exists independently – begins, and therefore it is not appropriate to contrast natural and cultural spheres (Ingold 2000:16–19). Human communities perceive themselves as an integral (an inseparable) part of their environment; they do not accumulate scientific knowledge of plants and animals but rather practical knowledge and skills derived from repetition and experience.

Proponents of the method of perspectivism, based on the study of South American Indian animism, employ a similarly radical commentary in their interpretation of nature and society as separate spheres. Perspectivism questions who (what kind of entities) make up the whole of society (Viveiros de Castro 1998; Descola 2013). A multitude of examples demonstrates that not every community shares the idea that only people may be part of the society. In the Arawate Indians' view, for example, predatory animals see humans as prey, while game animals see them as spirits. Spirits and animals consider themselves human, their abode, meals and appearance as human (jaguars, for example, as they lap blood, drink cassava beer, wear their pelt as a decorative fur). In the diversity of spirit, animal and human points of view, there is no *single* privileged perspective, since it is possible to move from one role (social situation) to another (for example, through death, birth, or becoming prey).

In this system, it was not the people that emerged from the animal kingdom at one point (see Darwinism), but rather animals and spirits became peculiar parts of a single broad society in which people and animals are distinguished from each other by social rules. On the other hand, according to European modernist ontology, which represents the separation of nature and culture, it is only natural laws that distinguish people (and therefore society as well) from other living beings and from the spirit world. My study, ignoring the conceptual opposition of nature and culture, presents a Siberian community embedded in its environment that continues its cattle husbandry in the 21st century while adapting to the challenges of global climate change and Soviet-era state modernization efforts.[1] In this community, the boundary between the human and non-human spheres is far from clear, which also significantly influences how the locals perceive their environment. I demonstrate the changes caused by climate change in the husbandry system, while also addressing the general processes characteristic of Yakutia, primarily with the example of one village, Tobuluk, with a population of nearly 650, situated in Central Yakutia.[2]

In my paper, I argue that the environment is not just a passive sufferer of human intervention, but an active participant in the ecological processes that determine the long-term viability of human communities in certain regions.

In the subarctic and arctic regions of Yakutia, the speed and scale of climate change affecting the local economy and lifestyle forces the inhabitants of the region into a passive, adaptive position. In this situation, it makes a significant difference in the course of adaptation how a community views the animate environment. Is it the material reality and the ensuing biophysical laws that create the rules and inevitability of co-existence between man and his environment, or is it the spiritual community that unites all living things (people, animals, plants, mountains, fields, living waters) into one broad society and assigns obligations to all parties on ethical grounds?

A DIACHRONIC APPROACH TO ECOLOGICAL AND HUSBANDRY SYSTEMS

Treating nature and culture as different entities often resulted in researchers applying an anachronistic approach to these spheres, viewing the natural environment as constant, stable (and therefore negligible) when considering it within the study of a culture. One of the best examples of this is the Jesup Expedition, which covers a huge area (the entire northern edge of the Pacific Ocean) (Vakhtin 2001). Franz Boas, the main organizer and leader of the 1897–1902 expedition, considered a diachronic study important primarily if it examined cultural symbols that developed without regard to the geographical environment that was viewed as unchanging. In his response to Alfred Kroeber's criticism, Boas, who himself was looking to become a geographer in Germany in the 1880s, argued that the geographical determination of cultures is overrated (Boas 1936:137), and instead of the geographical and ecological changes, it is cultural interactions and borrowings that should be studied.

The separation of nature and culture can not only lead to the anachronistic view of the natural environment, but also indirectly contribute to the timeless approach to culture and the human sphere. Adapting to the modernist epistemological horizon, modernist ethnographic/anthropological studies tended to view cultures that were separated from the changing European culture, "stuck" in a point in history, in a sort of anachronistic "ethnographic time", ignoring historicity (Fabian 2002:25–35). Anthropological studies based on fieldwork often provided extensive depictions of the given cultures in the state in which the authors encountered them. The main reason for this was that in the case of societies without writing (and recorded history) (Wolf 1982), information about a given

[1] This paper was supported by *Symbolic Landscapes and Ethnic Relations in Russia,* a research program of the Hungarian State Research Fund, OTKA (project number K 81267).

[2] Instead of real place names and personal names, I use pseudonyms in the study.

group was limited primarily to the period when the researcher was present. In retrospect, the functionalist school, which played a decisive role in the history of anthropology, is often criticized for having paid little attention to the historical changes in societies (Wulf 2013:88–90).

Although the diachronic approach prevailed in both social and natural sciences, until the 1970s, only a small number of historical ethnographic works were published that examined the natural and social changes simultaneously and in conjunction with each other. Subsequently, however, the influence of environmental fixism (i.e., the theory that assumes the constancy of the physical environment) continuously declined within historiography and historical ethnography. The relationship between societies and the climate, as well as the natural environment, was initially considered to be unidirectional by historians presenting the long processes of history (Le Roy Ladurie 1972). According to this approach, climate change impacts environmental conditions, and thereby affects a given culture or society as well (the medieval European agricultural revolution or the Little Ice Age provide excellent examples of this).

Climate history studies have become an essential tool of historical analyses of changes in agricultural production, famines, and epidemics (Wigley – Ingram – Farmer 1981; Behringer 2010). The impact of human societies upon climate, by contrast, was regarded by historiography and ethnographic/anthropological research as insignificant and negligible until very recently; however, the challenges posed by global warming over the past two decades have garnered the attention of anthropologists, and today an increasing number of works addresses the problems caused by global climate change, as well as proposed local adaptation strategies.[3]

After recounting the geographical and climatic characteristics of Yakutia, my study presents the ever-changing husbandry that regulated the relationship between the Sakha communities and the subarctic landscape. The slow and collective changes in husbandry and climatic conditions have established a relative equilibrium in which no significant long-term fluctuations developed, placing the Sakha within and as part of the local ecotopes. This balance was first broken by the modernization efforts of the centrally planned Soviet economy, and global climate changes over the past two decades have also put a significant pressure on the relationship between the Sakha and their landscape. In my paper, I argue that the challenges caused by these rapid changes can be interpreted not only from ecological and economic perspectives, but also as a conflict that takes place in a community which is formed by the living environment and the Sakha together. This approach is what feeds the intimate view of the environment which can become a major resource for the successful response to contemporary challenges.

YAKUTIA AND PERMAFROST SOIL

Yakutia is characterized by the most extreme climatic conditions of the entire northern hemisphere. In the cold winter, the mercury often drops below -60°C, but summer temperatures reaching +40°C is not uncommon either. The vegetation period is very

[3] For a summary of these works: Hastrup – Skrydstrup 2013.

short; the snow begins to melt towards the end of April, while the first ground frost may be seen in late August. Thanks to this extremely cold climate, the vast majority of Yakutia's soil remains frozen in winter and summer, with only the top 1.5–2 meters of the surface soil thawing out in the summer. This eternally frozen ground is called permafrost soil. Such permafrost soils are found in the northern hemisphere mainly in Siberia, Alaska and the northern regions of Canada, while the entire region of Yakutia is essentially always frozen.

Global warming affects the arctic regions in particular. The extent of warming and the climatic and environmental changes caused by it are especially significant in the arctic and subarctic regions (Goldstein 2009:41–43). One of the most significant effects of the warming is the thawing, increased erosion and the humidification of permafrost soil (Fedorov – Konstantinov 2009). This applies both to the meadows formed in thermokarst depressions (*alaas*),[4] as well as the forests. In Yakutia, the lentil-shaped marshy thermokarst depressions formed during the Pleistocene, are immensely important for the cattle-based economy of the Sakha. In the Sakha language, these depressions are called *alaas*. At the confluence of the Aldan and Lena rivers (in Central Yakutia), these *alaas*es (according to different estimates) cover 17–30% of the total surface area (Katamura et al. 2006; Telbisz – Nagy 2008). The size of each *alaas* varies. Occasionally they may be larger than 65 square kilometers (like *Toyon Mürü*), with several villages located in them; at other times, however, they are unnamed forest clearings with a radius of just 100 meters. *Alaases* are meadow grasslands in a boreal forest (taiga) dominated by larches, with a lake or a swampy, soggy bed of a dried-up lake at the center (Crate 2006:3). At the same time, this is a particular Yakutian ecotope, the creation and characteristics of which can at once be considered as natural and anthropogenic in origin. Although it is debated precisely which geographic processes were involved in the creation of *alaases*, it is commonly accepted that these big meadows can be found in the areas of pre-existing, expansive lakes created by the partial thawing of frozen ground (Desjatkin 2008). Upon the thawing of the ground, first forest swamps *(düöde)* were created whose water surface continued to grow. These lakes then dried up, or the Sakha communities living there drained them (Bosikov 1991:112). *Alaases* are today the most important scenes of Yakut hay farming and grazing.

The horse- and cattle-farming Sakha settled and still live today in the largest numbers mainly in the *alaas*-dotted Central Yakutian plains. Following their northern migration approximately 800 years ago,[5] the traditional horse and cattle breeding of the Sakha gradually adapted to the extreme climatic and geographic environment of Yakutia. Over the centuries, horses and cattle breeding took a shape specific for the area of Yakutia which is unique even in Siberia (Abramov – D'jakonov 1990; Vinokurov 2001; Granberg – Soini – Kantanen 2009).

Due to the long and cold winters, cattle have to be kept in barns in Yakutia for nine months (from September to May), and for this period, two tons of feed (particularly hay)

[4] The lentil-shaped thermokarst depressions formed by the ice melting under the surface of the permafrost soil is called in Sakha *alaas*.

[5] Several theories and data exist about when the Sakha appeared in the Lena River basin. According to Anatoly Ignat'evich Gogolev's data, which is regarded as the benchmark, Sakha settlement in the area of today's Yakutia began with the appearance of the *Kulun atakh* culture, i.e., in the 13th century (Alekseev – Romanova – Sokolova 2012:61–63).

per animal must be collected on average during the summer. Therefore, the meadows have an enormous importance in Sakha economy and environmental perception (Crate 2007:161). Although more than half of the hay collected in Yakutia comes from the *alaases* (Bosikov 1991:25–27), there are other ecotopes that provide suitable space for Sakha hay farming. The Sakha use as hayfields the floodplains of rivers *(khocho),* the drier areas of marshlands located on higher ground *(kyrdal),* as well as the grassy plains *(khonuu)*.

Global warming threatens this economic system based on meadow husbandry. In Central Yakutia, the annual average temperature rose 2–3°C since the 1970s, and the average temperature of the top layer of permafrost soil has increased nearly in the same proportion (Romanovsky et al. 2007). In addition, rainfall has increased (Ijima et al. 2012) and the snow-covered period has become shorter (Ijima et al. 2007). This complex change resulted in the degradation of permafrost soil, which led to Yakutian meadows becoming increasingly unfavorable in terms of agricultural production. Some of the meadows became marshy, the soil's moisture levels rose, and in some places lakes formed on the meadows (Crate 2008). These changes affect Sakha meadow farming acutely and urge the development of new ecological and agricultural adaptation strategies (Crate 2011; 2013).

THE BASIC FEATURES OF SAKHA MEADOW AND PASTURE HUSBANDRY

Sakha large cattle breeding has gone through several changes after Russian colonization (i.e., after the 1630s). Consequently, one cannot talk about any traditional mode of production or meadow husbandry. We have detailed and in-depth ethnographic descriptions of this changing agricultural system following the activities of political exiles in Yakutia from the end of the 19th century. An approximate picture of the production forms and operating units of the preceding period can be made solely on the basis of the economic and legal documents of the tsarist administration (Mészáros 2013:90–95). Ethnographic/anthropological works about the Sakha – adapted to the contemporary ethnographic information gathered by the exiled researchers – consider the period preceding the revolution and collectivization (turn of the 19–20th centuries) to be the "traditional" economic system (Alekseev – Romanova – Sokolova 2012:141). Accordingly, the following is an account of the basic features of the horse and cattle breeding, as well as meadow husbandry practices in the period before collectivization.

Sakha economy was based on horse and cattle husbandry, with fishing, hunting and agriculture being only complementary.[6] Among livestock animals, the horse was more important up until the beginning of the 19th century, with cattle gaining more and more importance gradually (Basharin 1956:19–20; Seroshevskij 1993:257). This change was accompanied by a proliferation of new forms of land use as well. While winter fodder for the horses, which roamed free, was only complementary, the Sakha kept their cattle in barns for nine months. Therefore, beginning in the 19th century, the importance and

[6] In 1901, livestock farming made up almost two-thirds of the total agricultural production (Alekseev – Romanova – Sokolova 2012:146).

proportion of meadows has significantly increased in Yakutia, to the detriment of pastures.[7] By the middle of the 20th century, this process gradually yielded an even ratio of hayfields and pastures in agriculturally utilized areas (Basharin 1956:5; Matveev 1989:54).

The intensive use of hayfields demanded that the winter settlement *(kystyk)* be located in the higher part of the *alaases* in Central Yakutia, so that the hay harvested in the summer did not have to be transported over long distances in the winter. Summer settlements *(sajylyk)* were usually located 10–20 kilometers away from the winter settlements, in areas where the cattle found good pastures in the summer but could not damage the hayfields that were only partially blocked by fences. The average distance between winter and summer settlements is also indicated by the fact that ten kilometers is what the Sakha call one *kös*, that is, the distance of one migration. Because of the proximity of the two (winter and summer) settlements, the men often did not move to the summer settlements, but instead stayed at the *alaas* of the winter settlements in order to collect the hay from the nearby hayfields. Sakha households stayed at the summer settlements from late May to early September. In the autumn (late September, early October), until the first major and non-melting snow *(kystyk khaar*) fell, the men even stayed at a third, autumn settlements *(otor)* as well. The cattle grazed around these settlements as long as they could, then the men collected the remaining, lower-quality hay after the first frost.

Households that used the nearby winter settlements (living either on the same *alaas* or on adjacent *alaases*) established cooperative groups, usually conjoining 2–4 households. Furthermore, given the geographical conditions in the area, there were larger cooperative groups *(tüölbe)* as well, which aligned their economic activities (Darbasov – Egorov – Solov'ev 2000:45). The size of the cooperative groups was determined not primarily by the number of households, but rather by the number of livestock they tended to. Usually one *tüölbe* held 100–150 dairy cows, because that's the number of dairy cows one bull is able to serve. A herd of this size was held in Tobuluk by 12–18 households, corresponding with the average size of a kolkhoz, established around the middle of the 1930s.[8]

One household had an average of 5–6 dairy cows before collectivization (Alekseev – Romanova – Sokolova 2012:146), but there were significant differences in the distribution of the stock. In Tobuluk, for instance, before collectivization, a third of the households only had one or two cows, as is clear from the distribution of the meadows.[9]

	0–5 tons of hay	*5–10 tons of hay*	*10–20 tons of hay*
Number of households	44	81	20
Number of hayfield plots	298	740	259
Average number of hayfield plots	6.7	9.1	12.95
Total land area (ha)	171.92	606.5	246
Average hayfield plot area (ha)	0.585	1.22	1.05

Figure 1. The annual amount of harvest in I. Bajagantaj nasleg in 1917[9]

[7] This process is closely related to the presence of the Russian state in Yakutia and its fiscal policies (Mészáros 2013:73-83).

[8] The natural basis of collective production was initially considered even by the Soviet leadership to be the units of cooperative households within a geographical unit *(urochishche)* (Darbasov – Egorov – Solov'ev 2000:102).

[9] This table is based on Gabyshev 1929:14.

Sakha cows were not only small in size (350–400 kg) and extremely low maintenance, they also survived the long winter fodder period with a relatively small amount (i.e., less than one ton) of feed. Similarly to Sakha horses, cows also dug up the grass under the snow, so they were able to graze partially even in the winter. The milk from dairy cows did not exceed 800 kilograms a year, but it had a very high (5–7%) fat content.

Figure 2. Sakha model cattle farm in Magharas, Yakutia, 2012. (Photo by Csaba Mészáros)

At the beginning of collectivization (in the 1930s), in order to increase milk production, the Soviet agricultural leadership replaced this low maintenance Sakha cattle variety first with the Russian Kholmogor breed, and starting in the 1960s, with the Austrian Simmental cows. Of the Sakha cattle fit for pre-collectivization farming practices, by 1990 only 900 remained in Yakutia, and today the vast majority of cattle in Yakutia are of the Simmental variety. The new European varieties require larger quantities (two or three times more) and better quality feed, therefore they are a lot more vulnerable vis-à-vis changes in the condition of the meadows. The Simmental cows' water needs are also greater than the Sakha cows', which creates further problems in their sustenance. Because of the change of breeds implemented in the 20th century, pre-collectivization Sakha husbandry is thus irrecoverable today.

THE JOINT EVOLUTION OF LANDSCAPE AND COMMUNITY

In pre-collectivization husbandry, the grasslands and the Sakha people formed an indivisible system in which both parties were able to transform and change the other. First I point out the material features of this complex relationship, and later its spiritual characteristics.

Elsewhere I have already reported how the Sakha subsist in and inhabit the meadows, the *alaases*, and I also alluded to why they consider the *alaases* their home (Mészáros 2012). However, the fact that the meadows provide a home for the Sakha did not prevent them from forming and transforming this ecotope in a variety of ways to adapt it to their farming objectives. For example, according to local memory in Tobuluk, before and after collectivization and all the way to the 1970s, there were three main methods of altering the landscape and the environment. Adapting to the features of the landscapes and ecotopes in the vicinity of the settlement, these methods allowed the locals to regulate the amount of hay harvestable from the meadows, fishing and water extraction opportunities, as well as the amount of gatherable firewood (Petrov – Petrov 2002:4–6).

1. The most common method was deforestation. Throughout Yakutia (especially in Central Yakutia), increasing the size of the *alaas* through deforestation was a common practice. Before the revolution and collectivization, the painstaking work of deforestation was undertaken because the people performing the clearing did not have to pay land tenure tax to the tsar for the meadows gained thus, and these areas were not included in the land fund of the local taxing units *(nasleg)* for a generation.[10] The meadows gained through deforestation were called cleared ground (*soloohun sir*). Locals (especially those who still go duck hunting in the spring and fall near the cleared lands) still remember which family's clearing was where.

The hay harvested from these cleared lands was of lower quality than those from the *alaases*, thus deforestation only spread in areas where there were no *alaases*, or only small ones. Accordingly, the areas northeast of Tobuluk were cleared by necessity, as continuous but moderate/poor quality hay meadows can be found only along the streams there.[11]

2. The other method was to drain the *alaas (khoruu)*. Until the 1970s, only the *alaases* along larger waterways were drained. The areas gained by draining lakes and marshlands were similarly not included in the local land fund. The biggest problem with the drained areas was that they yielded low quality hay (Abramov 2000:20–22), which is why these drained (but still soggy) areas were often used not as hayfields but as grazing pastures. The memories of the drainings are preserved not only in local memory – traces of the drain pipes from the 1950s are still visible south of Tobuluk.

A procedure connected to the draining was the removal of the tussocks (*dulgha*) as well. Harvesting hay with a scythe was much more difficult in boggy areas than on the flat meadows, and doing it with tractors was simply impossible. Whereas earlier the boggy areas were flattened by hand, in the era of sovkhozes the bogs were leveled by bulldozers.

3. The third way to change the local ecotopes was to flood the *alaas*, creating artificial lakes *(kupput küöl)*. In these cases, lakes were created primarily in places (mostly swampy, low-lying areas) where the water demand of those living in the area increased for some reason. In Yakutia, it is impossible to dig wells because of the ever-frozen ground.

[10] These areas are called *"sejmelek sir"*. No land tax *(ölbüge)* was paid in tsarist Russia after these lands (whether they were cleared or drained). They were not part of the local redistribution fund.

[11] The Sakha distinguish two types of hay. One is the so-called *alaas* grass (*alaas oto*), which grows slowly in dry areas and has a high nutrient and vitamin content. The best hay in the *alaas*, according to locals, comes from the flowering meadow grasses *(sibekki oto)*. At the same time, *alaas* grass does not grow reliably. In dry years, only a very small amount of hay can be harvested, and according to locals, it is mainly dry *alaases* that are harmed by locusts. The other type is the wetland grass *(uu oto*), which, unlike the *alaas* grasses, grows reliably and in large quantities every year, but is low in nutrient and vitamin content (Abramov 2000:20–22). Hay quality has a significant impact on the fat content and taste of milk, which is why dairy cows are fed in Tobuluk with hay harvested from *alaases* (if possible).

Figure 3. Simmentaler and Holstein Friesian cattle drink on the ice of an artificial lake in Tobuluk, Yakutia, 2011. (Photo by Csaba Mészáros)

The only way to obtain water is to collect the surface water. In October, the Sakha cut out the first crystallized ice from the lake's surface and store it outdoors in the winter, and in underground ice bunkers in the summer.

Locals do not worry about creating or filling lakes. The lakes were created primarily in sandy areas, as the water of a sandy lake *(kumakh küöl)* is cleaner and better tasting, according to locals, than that of a clayey, swampy soiled lake *(n'amakh küöl).* The fish living in filled ponds (mainly crucian carp) also taste different from the ones in naturally formed lakes. Because of this, the artificial ponds near the villages are popular locations for late-autumn under-ice trawling. Locals will go fishing even on the lake called "*Bie ölbüt*", situated 50 kilometers from the village, despite the fact that there are other (large) lakes near the village. Nothing demonstrates the popularity of these artificial ponds better than the fact that Tobuluk Lake, in the immediate vicinity of the village, has been so overfished by the locals that the crucian carp went practically extinct. When in 1999 a Sakha healer came to the village, he immediately banned fishing in the lake, referring to the lake as having become ill. Since then, the lake has not been fished or hunted by locals, thus today it has become one of the most popular resting places for migratory waterfowl.

LAND USE AND STATE MODERNIZATION

The relationship between the Sakha and their landscape was significantly altered by Soviet economic and social modernization efforts, which derived from the modernist perspective that not only contrasted nature and human society, but also set them in a hierarchical relationship (Richter 1997:73). According to Soviet economic policies, the environment is primarily a virgin area to be subjugated, conquered, its assets waiting to be exploited for the best economic advantage (Kula 1998:60). The institutionalized mediation of Soviet-era economic directives was an integral part of the *collectivization* process, thereby changing the local communities' attitudes toward the environment. At the beginning of collectivization, that is, in 1929, in the Tobuluk area, the winter settlements were converted into kolkhoz centers (*sugulaan*) in accordance with the central economic directives (Kolesov 1931). It is in these kolkhoz centers that the first buildings appeared (kolkhoz administration, school, club, etc.), which became the imprints of the state's modernization efforts upon the *alaases*.

World War II played a major role in the next step of collectivization. From the Tobuluk area, which had more than 800 inhabitants, 145 men were conscripted into the Soviet Army during the war. In this village, too, producing for the front was associated with hunger and increased labor, and so in 1945, due to the shortage of people and animals, the former kolkhozes were no longer reorganizable. The centralization of the dwindling population and livestock was seen by Yakut leadership as an opportunity to increase labor productivity and more effectively control the population. The Sakha, who first settled along the *alaases*, then later along the *sugulaan*s, now moved into the newly established villages throughout Yakutia. The former *sugulaan*s of the smaller kolkhozes (which were also the *tüölbe*, groups of former winter settlements) now became the summer settlements of the large and unified kolkhoz brigades. Due to the lack of workforce, a portion of the *alaases* previously intensively used as hayfields came to be utilized as pastures, while some of the more remote *sugulaan* centers were completely abandoned by the Tobulukians. From this time on, the *alaases* were no longer the scenes of everyday life, and only those who worked in the sovkhoz brigades visited the *alaases* regularly.

In the 1970s, with the formation of the sovkhoz, production became even more large-scale: manual mowing was replaced by tractors, the locals worked in brigades, and hay was collected from the fields all at once, not in the context of cooperation as family, relatives and friends. Although centralization resulted in a more effective work by the brigades and enabled the harvesting of a much larger amount of hay (which the new Simmentaler varieties needed), it adversely affected the biodiversity of the *alaas* ecotopes (Troeva et al. 2010:218). Increased herd sizes had a similarly adverse effect on the *alaases*. In addition, the larger herds appeared at the same time, and remained on a pasture longer, which also negatively impacted biodiversity (Troeva – Cherosov 2012). In years with extreme weather conditions (drought or too much humidity), meadows with limited species yield a hay harvest of significantly reduced quantity and quality. One of the most important negative impacts of global climate change and decreased biodiversity in the *alaases* in Yakutia is therefore uncertain crop yield.

The new cultivation systems and agronomic methods recommended by Soviet agricultural policy put a serious pressure on the permafrost soil. In accordance with the 1966 decision of the Communist Party of Yakutia, the agricultural use of the *alaases* intensified throughout Yakutia (Vinokurov 2001:7–8). Accordingly, more and more areas were used for growing grains (primarily barley and rye). Many of the fields formerly used for hay were drained, plowed and irrigated. There was very little arable land in the state-owned farms of Tobuluk, yet in 1970 9% of agricultural land in Yakutia was cultivated (Matveev 1989:54). Simultaneously, the volume of landscape modifications has significantly increased in the first decade of operation of these state farms. Within some state farms, the ratio of drained fields reached a settlement of the total of agriculturally utilized areas. Furthermore, between 1975 and 1985, the extent of arable land increased by approximately 50% (some of which were irrigated), and in order to make pastures more productive, some fields were flooded, and lakes were created in areas where water demand increased. The intensified land-use change put a considerable pressure on both the permafrost soil and the biodiversity of the vegetation.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, that is, during decollectivization and the disintegration of socialist types of agricultural production, the number of cattle in Tobuluk decreased by about 30% between 1992 and 1999, and the state-owned hayfields were allocated to local households. It was not only in Tobuluk that the decline of agricultural production was so dramatic. In Yakutia, there was a 40% decline in livestock between 1990 and 2012 (Vinokurov – Prokhorov 2013:6). The state farms no longer provided the locals' wages, and low market prices resulted in farming and livestock husbandry being unprofitable (Darbasov – Egorov – Solov'ev 2000:75). As a result of these processes, not only the volume of livestock husbandry but also the extent of areas used and visited by livestock farmers was radically reduced in Tobuluk. The size of abandoned and uncultivated areas increased, and the perceived environment shrunk to a much smaller world, limited to the village square and some intensively used hunting areas. The reduction in the intensively used grazing areas was accompanied by overgrazing in pastures suitable for more economical use, which also decreased the biodiversity of the flora of these meadows.

The effects of state modernization led to a temporary increase in the volume of agricultural production in Yakutia (especially in the early 1980s), which in turn exerted an anthropogenic pressure upon the particularly vulnerable subarctic environment and the permafrost soil, leading to a severe economic downturn and environmental degradation due to the economic crisis caused by decollectivization as well as the concurrently happening climate change discerned by the locals. These negative trends not only altered the physical parameters of the environment, but also affected the spiritual characteristics of the meadows, lakes and rivers considered to be animate.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND SPIRITUAL ECOLOGY

To the Sakha, *alaases* are not just homes and meadows that formed Sakha husbandry and were themselves transformed through such husbanding, but animate entities with which the locals may come into contact in many ways. In Tobuluk, as in other Sakha villages, the *alaases* were protected and respected.[12] In addition to offering different views to the individuals looking at them, the *alaases* also possess different spiritual aspects and personality traits – thus, according to the Sakha, one has to act appropriately towards them. So every *alaas* is unique from a spiritual point of view.

To the Sakha, meadows and *alaases* possess a soul, a personality, and are therefore considered less as a landscape and more as a partner, a companion. The phenomenon of animism, which was seen in the 19th century by scholars as a step in the development of religion (Kuper 1988:6–7), and in the 20th century was surrounded for a long time by a lack of interest, was only discovered in the 1990s by anthropologists studying hunter-gatherer communities (Bird – David 1999). Among the Sakha, however, the perception of the world as animate does not extend to the whole environment; it is primarily the meadows and major open waters (rivers and lakes) that have personality traits. The *alaases* can also have spirits who mediate between the *alaases* and the people, but in most cases it is the *alaas* that is the animate entity, and the locals turn to it rather than to its host spirit.

[12] This does not mean that the *alaas* is necessarily interpreted as a ritual space, a holy place. For holy places, see Nagy 2007.

The animate *alaases*, as any other living thing, are positioned in a certain direction. Thus, an *alaas* can be entered from the front and from the back, it has a head, and legs, too. The locals who are very familiar with the *alaases* can show one where the center of the *alaas* is and in which direction the "limbs" point. The circular fields are imagined as a kind of body. One does not step upon the body of the *alaas* without a reason. Traditionally, even the roads did not cross the *alaases*. Travelers not (or just slightly) associated with the area did not willingly enter the space of the *alaas* without a reason either.

Those who have specific capabilities are able to talk to the *alaases*. In Tobuluk, for example, Siider, who has healing powers (but is not practicing as a healer) has lived and worked on one *alaas* since 1999. According to the Tobulukians, Siider uses his special abilities for the propagation and care of livestock, making him the best dairy farmer in Yakutia whose cows produce three to four times more milk than the annual average. As a result of this, Siider has been awarded the Lenin Order of Merit and numerous other state accolades. The intimate relationship between him and the Tan'n'arang *alaas* is evident not only in the fact that it provides Siider with the strength for his work, the *alaas* also shelters and protects him.

In 1999, a female shaman *(udaghan)* once visited Tobuluk. Although Siider did not go into the village during the *udaghan*'s visit, she sent word that she will come to him. During the evening herding, Siider noticed that a bird of prey perched on a tall larch at the edge of the *alaas* was watching him, but he knew that the bird was not going to fly into the *alaas*. Only upon nightfall did the *udaghan* enter (this time in the guise of a woman, not a bird of prey), but Siider was able to throw her off. According to Siider, he could only protect himself from the female shaman on his own *alaas*, and when healers arrive in Tobuluk, he prefers to stay on his own *alaas*, because "it is dangerous for two people with shamanic powers *(d'oghurdaakh)* to meet."

One of the most common forms of communication between people and *alaases* is the sacrifice. It is the fire lit in an *alaas* and the sacrificial food cast into that fire that creates the connection between man and *alaas*. The connection through fire is clear even in the Sakha language. While the name of the environment inhabited by man is *sir-uot* (i.e., fire and earth), the name of the non-human nature *(ajylgha* - i.e., "created") does not indicate the presence of man. The sacrificial food cast into the fire in the *alaas* is not intended for a specific god or spirit, but rather for the ancestors who lived there, or the *alaas* itself. The *alaas* is not divided into two parts during the sacrifice. It does not have a spiritual part, a spirit or god of the place that keeps watch over the "body," or the spatial embodiment of the *alaas*. This is a big difference compared to how the Sakha sacrifice in the forest. Sacrifices in forests and wooded areas are always offered to a host spirit *(ichchi),* and not to the limitless (and thus bodyless) forest of an unspecified expanse. The Sakha treat lakes similarly to the *alaases*.

The power of the *alaas* (and not of the host spirit of the *alaas*) is recognized by the Sakha throughout Yakutia (Yamada 2004:224–225). In fact, one of the basic stereotypical traits *(bütej kihi)*[13] of the Sakha of Central Yakutia are also determined by the *alaases*. Namely, the Sakha believe that the circular *alaases* enclosed by the forests breed robust, tough, stubborn but reliable people.

13 In other words, "locked in, fenced in man".

According to Sakha viewpoint *alaases* and lakes are actively involved as spiritual forces in those climatic and ecological changes that are caused by global warming in Yakutia. According to Ed'ii Dora, one of the most important Sakha female shamans[14] the *alaases* and lakes are covered with veins, and communicate with each other through these blood vessels. These living organisms sense how people act towards them, and they tell each other (Protapopova 2002:60). As people's behaviors and activities no longer express respect for these landscapes, therefore the *alaases* and lakes punish the people with ecological and climatic anomalies (Protapopova 2002:63–64). According to Nikolaj Slepcov-Sylyk, another bioenergy healer, the "radiation" of the permafrost soil and its changes determine the health, traits and destiny of the Sakha living on it. Each *alaas* emits a different radiation, making the people who live there either happy and prosperous or unhappy and miserable (Slepcov-Sylyk 2013:34–38). Climatic changes have an overall negative impact on permafrost soil, so the eroding *alaases* found on permafrost ground also emit increasingly unfavorable radiation towards the Sakha living on them. The harmful responses of the animate *alaases* can only be mitigated by appropriate lifestyle choices and regular sacrifices (Slepcov-Sylyk 2013:24–25).

The examples of these two very popular and respected healers in Yakutia reveal the specific attitude with which Sakha spiritual ecology approaches the issues related to the phenomenon of global warming. The climate changes that are now causing major difficulties in Sakha economy are being interpreted by the locals not only as natural phenomena but also as a social problem. For many Sakha, lakes and *alaases* are not entities isolated from human culture, but parts of a larger community (society), which in Yakutia is formed by people, animals and landscapes. This approach establishes a personal relationship between man and landscape, which can become an important element of local adaptation strategies expedited by climate change.

CHANGES AND DIFFICULTIES: THE VULNERABILITY OF THE LOCAL FARMING SYSTEM

The intimate relationship that existed between the Sakha and the *alaases* was fundamentally changed not just by the rapid and radical reforms ushered in by the Soviet command economy, but also by the decollectivization and the economic depression that followed the fall of the Soviet Union. The impact of these factors are only further aggravated by climatic changes caused by global warming. While horse and cattle breeding among the Sakha has adapted to the challenges raised by the hopelessness of decollectivization and the fundamentally changed agricultural support system of federal Russia,[15] it has yet to provide responses to the difficulties caused by climate change.

Local changes caused by global warming are felt by the Tobulukians, but their positive and negative impacts are judged differently. In 2013 the general opinion was that winters have not become noticeably warmer in the past few years. "In Yakutsk, they always cheat a little with the temperatures and do not represent the true values, to avoid

[14] I.e., "Sister Dora."

[15] The horse population decrease in Yakutia stopped in 2007, the cattle population decrease in 2011 (Vinokurova – Prohorova 2013).

having to raise salaries.[16] Here it is always 2–3 degrees colder than in Yakutsk, nothing has changed about that." However, my interview subjects regularly noted that every year there are significant differences in the overall severity of winter frost.

In Sakha folk wisdom, weather predictions are given an important place. A cold winter is normally associated with a thin snow cover, followed by a long and hot summer, according to the Sakha. A rainy autumn brings a thick snow blanket and a milder winter, and a rainy May and a cool, wet summer. So temperatures and precipitation are usually related in Sakha weather predictions. Locals detect changes in the amount and distribution of rainfall. "I can't recall this much rain since my childhood. I can't even go to my meadow, the grass can't even be cut. By the time I make it there, all will have rotted." Summer rains hinder work. While the spring rain is considered and called prosperous and a blessing by the Sakha (*byjang*), the word "rain" *(ardakh)* means bad weather, and figuratively it also means sadness.

The general belief is that the year is delayed: "I don't even recognize the weather, the frost, the snow, the heat are arriving later and later. Nature falls asleep and wakes up later and later." The first frost now comes not at the beginning of September or end of August, but only at the end of September; the winter snow starts falling later and lakes freeze later. The same is true for the summer season. The bright sunshine and intense heat also comes later, only at the end instead of the beginning of June.

However, the biggest problem is the unpredictability of weather. In the summer of 2012, the brigades went for hay in Kebeeji county, 400 kilometers west of Tobuluk, because they did not find enough fodder locally due to the huge summer drought. In 2005, 2006 and 2013, it was the large-scale summer rains that hampered work. Although the grass grew well in those years, harvesting was delayed and thus the hay quality was very low. Although in Yakutia the increase in summer rainfall and thus the oversaturation of *alaas* soil cause general difficulties, this problem has not yet affected the Tobuluk area. Whereas locals do report that the meadows northeast of the village are becoming more boggy and marshy, these meadows are now not being used anyway.

The vulnerability of the livestock economy in Tobuluk, which is particularly exposed to climate changes, has multiple reasons.

1. In the era of soviet time planned economy and collective production, the knowledge through which the locals were able to benefit from the *alaases* in various ways has faded. Prior to collectivization, *alaases* were not used only as pastures or hayfields, but also for hunting and gathering. The locals were much more aware of the peculiarities of the flora and fauna of the *alaases*. On the one hand, people lived on the *alaases*, in scattered settlements, so the *alaas* ecotopes provided an everyday experiences for them; they not only carried out their work on the *alaases*, but also lived there. The second reason for the departure from the *alaases* was that labor was becoming ever more technologized. While earlier the grass was mowed by hand, from the 1970s onwards this work was rarely carried out by hand. Mowing with a tractor is faster than manual mowing, but those doing the mowing are less able to detect a difference in the quality and type of the grass. Today a good reaper is required to have good technical skills rather than botanical knowledge.

[16] In Yakutia, state employees in certain professions that require working outdoors in extreme cold temperatures receive extra remuneration.

Figure 4. Winter settlement in an *alaas*, Yakutia 2012. (Photo by Csaba Mészáros)

In Tobuluk, young people can no longer distinguish between the different species, and they do not accrue much botanical knowledge outside of school biology classes.

The loss of local plant knowledge also means that the plants growing on the *alaases* or in the ponds are no longer collected. Plants widely consumed prior to collectivization, like the great burnet (*ymyjakh*, Sanguisorba officinalis), the grass rush (*unnula*, Butomus umbellatus), or the bulrush (*kuba ahylyga*, Typha latifolia) are now rarely found among the edible plants. Thanks to schooling, young people are now more familiar with the Russian name of many of these. The Yakut wormwood (*üöre oto*, Artemisia jacutica) that grows on drier *alaases* or close to old, abandoned settlements, as well as the tansy (*timekh ot*, Tanacetum vulgare), which prefers a more humid habitat, are still used today as medicinal herbs and seasonings (Tokumova – Tokumov 2011).

Knowledge on the flora of the *alaases* prior to the wide-range mechanization extended to also knowing which *alaas* was to be mowed when. The system of meadows that needed to be mowed sooner or later, as well as pastures that could be used for shorter or longer periods, determined the locations of the summer *(sajylyk)* and autumn *(otor)* settlements. However, after the 1970s in the era of state farms (sovkhozes), the order of mowing was regulated more by the ability to deliver the machinery to the meadows than by the condition of the grass grasslands. The lack of *alaas*-related botanical and ecological knowledge available to young farmers resulted in reapers becoming less and less able to respond on site to the challenges caused by climate change. Consequently, lower quality (acidic, low-nutrient) or less hay can be harvested each year.

2. Sovkhozes essentially produced for the state in the era of centrally planned collective production. Milkers and tractor operators of the sovkhozes received wages for their labor (they did not receive shares of crops or labor). Meat and milk produced by the sovkhozes were collected and processed by the state. When the sovkhozes disintegrated and state buy-ups gradually stopped, the livestock in Tobuluk decreased by nearly a third. However, switching to self-sufficiency was not possible, so the local cattle industry that has been gaining strength since 2011 is still primarily dependent upon state aid. That means, currently the local economy is not self-sustaining without state support. Although there are attempts in Yakutia to make the markedly disappearing Sakha cattle popular

Figure 5. Farmers are heading to *alaas* in order to transport hay in the village Yakutia, 2011. (Photo by Csaba Mészáros)

again, and there are a few model farms in the republic, but there are no large-scale state programs supporting the breed change.

The transition to self-sufficiency was hampered by several factors, first of all the settlement structure. Following centralization, the Tobulukians left the *alaases* and moved into the villages. As a result, the utilization of pastures and hayfields reached very different levels. The common pastures near the village are overgrazed, the western and southern areas with a good network of roads are used extensively by locals, while the eastern and north-eastern areas less so (MÉSZÁROS 2013:142–144; 156–158). As some *alaases* and meadows are far from the village and no good roads lead there, today it seems nonsensical to use them, even if the pastures and meadows that are being used intensively produce insufficiently.

Further difficulties are posed by the composition of the cattle stock. Because of the state aid provided for each dairy cow, in Tobuluk today the proportion of cows in the herd is 40%. Thus, the stock may become especially vulnerable if a sufficient amount of feed collected locally is not available to the locals. Unfavorable years (i.e., those in which they were not able to secure the right amount of fodder for the cattle) are called in Sakha *et d'yl,* or meat year. Namely, this is when the young animals that could not be out-wintered were slaughtered. The name of the year rich in fodder is *üüt d'yl*, or milk year. In these years, fewer cattle are slaughtered, and the bulk of the diet consists of dairy products. The consequence of the high proportion of dairy cows today is that farmers are forced to slaughter reproductive animals, which could lead to a significant volatility in the stock. So year after year, the villagers are compelled to import cattle feed produced in the central parts of Russia. Because of the village's dependence upon cattle feed, cattle breeding within the current economic framework cannot be considered self-sufficient and sustainable without external help.

Finally, another concern is that the village is now producing almost exclusively unprocessed raw materials (milk and meat). It is particularly striking that only a couple of families produce cottage cheese and butter locally. Villagers buy most dairy products in the local shops; some of these (such as condensed milk) come from Central Russia, while others come from Europe (such as the Swiss powdered milk used in tea). Although a variety of dairy products prepared in various ways were popular in Sakha diet, now almost no one prepares these in the village. The names of some dairy products mixed with fish, such as the *barcha* (dried crucian carp fermented in milk) and the *agharan* (the same made of other small fish) are now barely known. The milk produced in the village is delivered frozen to the county milk buyer, or the cream skimmed with a milk separator is sold to the same. The limited production of dairy products and their sale to a single buyer makes the village's cattle farming vulnerable and rigid.

3. Another reason for the vulnerability of the local husbandry is that young people are less concerned with the knowledge relating to the local spiritual ecology outlined earlier. The spirituality and interrelatedness that connects the older villagers to the *alaases* and forges them into a community is now becoming less intrinsic among young people who typically experience their environment through the opposition of the village and the "wild" nature surrounding the village (Mészáros 2012: 24–25). Their encounters with the changes involving the *alaases* are lesser, and this also influences how the degradation of the *alaases* affects them. Research to date makes it clear that spirituality-laden and thereby protected areas are usually preserved in a better condition, and display more biodiversity (Dudley et al. 2005) as compared to those that are considered by a community to be wild, opposing the cultural sphere, and unmanageable.

CONCLUSIONS

Arctic and subarctic areas experience one of the most severe ecological and climatic changes caused by global warming. At the same time, climatic changes in the Arctic also have an enormous influence on the climate of the entire northern hemisphere. Therefore, exploring ecological changes observable on the local level in Siberia (and within that, in Yakutia) can significantly contribute to a clearer understanding of the global warming process and its impact. The Yakutian landscape cannot be viewed as a wild, unspoiled natural resource, because the Sakha and their husbanding, having lived there for centuries, left a definitive trace on the *alaases*, and the forests and lakes surrounding them (Morgenstern et al. 2013).

Husbanding has become particularly intense during the Soviet era. The centralization caused by collectivization, and the agronomic innovations introduced by state agricultural policy put considerable pressure upon the very fragile permafrost soil. Having had plowed, drained, irrigated and flooded the permafrost soil – which temporarily increased the volume of agricultural production during the time when state-owned farms were operated and generous government subsidies were distributed – has had the effect that today the challenges posed by soil degradation due to global warming are very difficult to meet. The problem lies not only in the humidification of previously cultivated soil which is now abandoned because of inefficient production, but also in the pastures and meadows that are still used being overgrazed and used too extensively. On the one hand, this reduces biodiversity, while on the other hand, it exposes the local economy to more and more unpredictable weather anomalies. Finally, it is important to mention the human factor. Working in and receiving wages from a centrally planned economic system, Sakha ecological and spiritual knowledge of the surrounding environment is incomplete. Observing the environment and experiencing its changes is now not even possible, because the areas used by village communities and available for everyday interactions have shrunk, and the number of people familiar with the more remote areas has also been reduced drastically. The intensive farming that resulted from collectivization, the economic depression associated with decollectivization, together with global warming, today represent a significant challenge for Sakha subarctic livestock husbandry, which must be responded to as soon as possible.

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New Technologies among Evenki Hunter-Gatherers in East Siberia

A Photographic Analysis

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Abstract: This article presents some results of the photographic analysis project, that we accomplish on the basis of 17,000 photos shot during the anthropological fieldwork between October 2008 and November 2009 among Evenki living in East Buryatia, in the Eastern part of Siberia. The aim of the project is to study the non-verbal patterns of culture. Some activities are significant due to the natural environment and the peripheral position of the Evenki land. Modern and old instruments can be seen together in the taiga, they relate to each other and form pairs. The existence of these pairs show the necessity of the co-presence of modern and old technologies and the importance of the categories – activities – tasks connected with them. An old instrument can remain among the Evenki only if an adaptable new instrument can find its place in the everyday life. Sometimes old practical skills also need to be reinvented for the accomplishment of a particular task. The things which have no modern existing pair, step by step lose their place and extinguish.
Keywords: technology, photographies, hunter-gatherers, social anthropology, modernity, Russia

This paper is an image-article about the atmosphere of life in the taiga. It is an anthropological account created in the tradition initiated by Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead with their seminal work *Balinese Character* (Bateson – Mead 1942), which was an important source of inspiration for other famous co-authors; namely Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari during writing of their influential *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleauze – Guattari 1987). With these two books in mind, we delved into the world of the modern Siberian taiga, where Evenki hunters live. In the course of fieldwork conducted in 2008–2009, we amassed more than 17,000 photos, all of them visual documents reflecting the atmosphere of Evenki life. Although most anthropologists have ignored the genre of *Balinese Character*, we argue that the form of photographic analysis it offered deserves to become an independent methodological approach. In this article, and through photographic analysis, we serendipitously rediscover traditional anthropological themes, such as hunter-gatherers, while reflecting on the way these practices fit with the designs of new technological devices and global infrastructures.

Multiplicity and anarchic uncertainty are the prevailing characteristics of the Evenki environment. Bipolar contrasts do not dominate the Evenki land. In modern Russia, enormous multiple opportunities in conjunction with the development of resource-based capitalism generate unpredictability and uncertainty. Here, it is not possible to distinguish between tradition and modernity; a caustic climate is no longer an obstacle. On the contrary, it presents an opportunity for invasion and the colonization of resources. The future is capricious, not because of the complexity of external influences (global market fluctuations, for example), but due to seemingly inadequate local reactions to external complexities. Initially, the porous nature of the infrastructure becomes apparent: wherever one goes, gaps and distortions are visible – roads do not complement bridges, fences have holes, satellite telephones that connect villages operate only for a few hours a day, when a settlement has electricity. These gaps in the networks of infrastructure create the unique atmosphere of a given location, the main paradox being that gaps and absences become the building blocks for local infrastructure. They are visible, albeit containing voids, which is why the visual methodology of *Balinese Character* is the most suitable approach to studying the Evenki land.

In this paper, we propose to contemplate technologies as framed by an ecology of practice in which new and old technologies are in a symbiotic relationship. We also elucidate why the life of the Evenki appears to be both deeply conservative and progressive simultaneously. The theoretical rhizomes of the research spread out across the cybernetic approach initially developed by Gregory Bateson, a theory of effect (in its Deleuzian form), in approaches to infrastructure Michel Serres' concept of parasite and noise: (Serres 2007), as well as anthropological research on infrastructure conducted by Julia Elyachar (Elyachar 2010), Brian Larkin (Larkin 2008), Bill Maurer (Maurer 2005) and Paul Kockelman (Kockelman 2013), the philosophy of science (Isabelle Stengers' ecology of practice; Stengers 2013), new materialism (Jane Bennett's vibrant matter: Bennett 2010) and autopoiesis (Luhmann 1996).

The paper is of interest to specialists in visual anthropology, researchers of hunter-gathering peoples and scholars in Siberian studies as well as all who are interested in the cybernetic approach and its current transformations. This article may also prove useful in courses for students studying the history of visual anthropology and anthropological research methods.

In the course of our fieldwork among the Evenki, we have observed that Evenki people are not conservative with respect to preserving their traditions, at least not in terms of clinging to their old physical possessions at all costs. They show an enthusiastic interest in all new devices that can be utilised in their lives. They are keen to try them, and if their attempts prove useful, they seek them in the future as well. Regarding the issue of modernity, we believe that the basic contours of Evenki culture can be more effectively depicted through the analysis of problem-solving activities rather than by examining the use of everyday tools and objects, and not by describing an equality-based social organisation or some kind of modern hunter-gatherer ethos. The result of modernity is that the Evenki are able to make use of certain tools and opportunities while not being able to do so with others. The taiga provides a very limited range of goods suitable for long-term consumption and that can actually be obtained. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that the logic of consumer culture is not valid here because the Evenki society is adjusted to poverty.

When analysing our Evenki materials, it is necessary to consider various approaches to the concept of "modernity", firstly with regards to the term "modern hunter-gatherer", which began to appear in professional literature during the 1980s in connection with present day hunter-gatherers as opposed to pre-historic peoples. It should be noted here that it is impossible to find any group of hunter-gatherers today where the issue of modernity cannot or should not be examined. In keeping with this approach, every aspect in connection with Evenki life today can be discussed within the scope of modernity. Using another opportunity to approach the issue of modernisation, which we will attempt to apply later in this study, and rather than examining the interests of the state and the role of globalisation, we shall focus on how the Evenki utilise the tools and devices they encounter in their lives. Finally, the most frequent interpretation of the term focuses on efforts made by the state in connection with minorities, in this case the Evenki. On the basis of his anthropological field studies conducted in Zambia, James Ferguson concluded that modernisation is nothing more than a myth (in this regard no different from other myths) which facilitates understanding of and orientation within the world, making available basic categories and guidelines that enable people to discuss and interpret their life experiences (Ferguson 1999:4). In this sense, Evenki people could indeed be considered an exception since neither myth-oriented thinking nor verbal expression hold any practical significance for them. Even so, using Russia in general as a basis, this approach can be effectively applied when presenting accounts that have already become stereotypical.

THE EVENKI AND THE STATE

The confines of the taiga, to which the Evenki are today considered indigenous, comprise an extremely closed environment requiring special solutions from those who wish to live here successfully in the long-term. Moreover, since the Evenki are a minority society with very little impact on representatives of majority societies in the outside world, modernisation can only come to them via the latter. For this reason, we shall begin the following study by attempting to describe the relationship between Evenki people and the state, which is quite ambivalent. This is perhaps also indicated by the fact that in certain places "Evenki had no knowledge of any Soviet power until as late as the 1950s" (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003). During the Tsarist period, the state attempted to exercise control over the peripheral territories in the form of a fur tax. This taxation also constituted a law, but the approach could not have been entirely successful since the Evenki have maintained *andaki*, commercial ties with state officials as well as trade-oriented families of other ethnicities for centuries, a practice which continued throughout the Soviet system and still survives today. Another form of state control (Soviet) was to create and seek enemies in the region, searching everywhere for kulaks, shamans and early communist activists (who believed that Soviet power would make it possible for small ethnic groups to take control of their own fates). In the Soviet system, fear, terror and the division of local communities became the chosen instruments for asserting the power of the state.

During the early Soviet regime, nomadic Evenki were settled in villages under the heading of "Soviet culture". Children were obliged to attend school and forced to live in boarding schools while their parents worked. At the same time, the Evenki were provided with medical care; medical stations were established and pharmaceutical products were dispensed. Literacy programs and libraries were developed for them, and young people chosen as potential intellectuals could study at the Herzen College for Northern Peoples in Leningrad. Following the Second World War, during the early 1960s, a new age of "technical civilisation" began. Roads were built and electricity was installed wherever possible while the more remote regions of the inner taiga could be accessed by airplane or *vezdehod* (tracked vehicles). In these locations, diesel motors provided electricity for a few hours a day. Contact with the outside world could be established via hand-cranked or battery-powered portable radios (*ratsio* – in local Russian). The 1990s opened the world and brought along certain benefits of globalisation, such as Chinese lorries, Japanese excavators and Swedish drill bits, which, among others, can now be found in the Evenki land as well.

Tsarist Russia regarded the Evenki as being "outside of the state", which can also mean "outlaw". Even today, members of the majority society refer to them with expressions like "children of nature" or "last of the Evenki". In the course of her research in Indonesia, Anna Tsing reached the conclusion that everything outside of the state is also part of the state (Tsing 1993). Defining the Evenki as those without statehood implies a process of "nationalisation", and it is through the use of these terms that Evenki people became part of the Russian state. Soviet modernisation meant categories and privileges. The Evenki were shaped between the concepts of modernisation and tradition. They did not become big bosses or good citizens, and they did not regard all that was taking place in their lands as modernisation, but as the periphery of non-modernisation.

Hunter-gatherer Evenki have always maintained contact with the Russian (and later Soviet) state that wished to civilise them, settle them and connect them with the institutional system. The processes of decay that could be observed in post-Soviet territories when the state withdrew from the region during the 1990s brought both poverty and a temporary freedom in the life of Evenki people, some of whom enthusiastically began to engage in illegal activities, such as poaching or gold panning. Now, as we witness the return of the state, their anti-state practices have come into conflict with state attempts to control them through bureaucratic procedures.

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE STATE

The works of Slavoj Žižek (among others Žižek 1989), who in his turn referred to Jacques Lacan, inspired anthropologists such as Yael Navaro-Yashin to look at the attitudes of Turkish citizens to their state and analyse how fantasies about the reality of the state and cynical attitudes to its existence are interwoven in the everyday life of common people, who do not trust the state and simultaneously make no practical attempts to change it (Navaro-Yashin 2002). This cynical distancing from private activities as state citizens is one of the main instruments used by the state to maintain its powerful authority.

There are now two basic lines of argument developing with regards to the structure of state power and its distribution between its political centre and periphery. Some scholars, like Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov argue that the centre/periphery dichotomy is itself a technology of state power and that concepts like stateless societies and tribalism are the results of exoticism (Ssorin-Chaikov 2003). David Sneath shows that the opposition between kinship-based orders and the state's organization of power relationships are misleading and are in themselves products of state political power (Sneath 2007).

Other researchers suppose that the centre/periphery dichotomy and opposition are analytically significant. James Scott, for example, sees the state centre and its periphery as dialectical partners – opposite, but mutually related to one another. Anarchism is an inevitable part of life on the periphery, as is multiculturalism, in contrast to subordination and cultural unification. Historically, differences in landscape presupposed the distinction between easily controllable valleys, where it was easy to impose tax on rice and grain crops, and hills dependent on foraging, hunting and slash-and-burn farming, as in the case of South Asia (Scott 2009). Scott underlines that for hill dwellers resistance to the state was part of a continuous and conscious effort and that their anarchistic cultures were devoted to keeping the state at a distance, for example by the rejection of writing and through a disregard for histories and genealogies.

The assumption that all periphery dwellers consciously and intentionally resist the state or take refuge from it like guerrilla warriors, however, seems to be overly simplistic. It latently presupposes that any social organization, even one not integrated within the state, must inevitably be developed in relation to it, for example in opposition to it. As several anthropologists have shown, there are people who can live without the state, and even when the latter appears, their social organization continues to exist in kind of a parallel world. These are egalitarian societies of hunter-gatherers, who, according to Hugh Brody, are more connected with their place of habitat than any agriculturalist, even when leading a nomadic way of life. Moreover, this relationship to place (with its climate, annual cycle and ever-present changes and uncertainties) could not be mediated through the bureaucratic procedures of management by the central state (Brody 2001). The egalitarian social organization of hunter-gatherers does not contain the pattern of subordination – obedience basic to the routine measures of state order. As shown in ethnographic work by Pierre Clastres (Clastres 1989), this difference between egalitarian social organization and state institutions is frequently interpreted by representatives of the state as a form of resistance).

The case of post-Soviet Russia is especially interesting in this debate because it has inherited the colonial structuration of territory in its central and peripheral zones, presenting the classic example of a state that is particularly dependent on resources (gas, oil, timber, minerals) which it cannot thoroughly control due to the sparse population and poor infrastructure in these territories. Being the main products for export, these natural resources became the basis for enormous fortunes amassed by new Russian elites, who launched their businesses in 1990s, when state control over the previously nationalised sphere of international trade weakened. These times were frequently described by anthropologists and sociologists as times of disorder and anarchy, when various forms of violent entrepreneurship developed both in the centre (Volkov 2002) and on the periphery (for example, Siberian province, Humphrey 2002). A new need for resistance to the state emerged after 2000, when representatives of this elite strata entered the peripheral zones of the Russian state with the aim of legalising their position (as when Abramovich became governor of Chukotka or to control local enterprises exporting natural resources abroad (as in the case of the nephrite business in Buriatia, which we will study in the framework of this project). All such movement from the centre to the periphery is seen as a return by the state because new authorities frequently try to obtain support from locals by rebuilding Soviet-style state institutions and programs, such as the distribution of cheap accommodation and the organization of summer vacations in camps for children (Thompson 2008).

There are two distinct things that could be called anarchy: stateless social organization not built on coercive central power and strategies for resistance to state authority. The former is applicable to egalitarian societies, such as hunter-gatherers, while the latter describes the actions of people who live in hierarchical societies but feel oppressed and unsatisfied with the proposed state order. Anarchism as an ideological movement was born in the framework of this latter endeavour, but very often uses the observations made in stateless societies as inspiration and in support of its arguments. Here we see two forms of anarchy which frequently overlap, but this does not mean that they are the same or even related to close phenomena: living without the state and living in opposition to the state.

As we have described elsewhere (Safonova–Sántha 2007) Evenki egalitarian social organization is also expressed in the socialization process. Children learn not to be afraid of aggression and violence. At the same time, there is no systematic punishment for misbehaviour, much less a clear idea of what misbehaviour is per se. As a result, when seven-year-old children leave their families and enter boarding school, they are already socialized individuals who do not fear the authoritative power of teachers, although they can pretend to be obedient in the event of any specific advantages arising from such a situation. In their villages, they are called hooligans, after which they start an independent life, no longer bound to their families to any great extent. Throughout their entire life, they carry a desire and inclination to be *manakan* (which in Evenki language means to be on your own path, autonomous and independent). While it is not possible for them to avoid all dependencies on other people, they prefer to establish various relationships at a time so as to avoid being tied to or concentrated on one particular person. The exception from this tendency is the establishment of conjugal units, spousal relationships, which are also very vulnerable and need to be destroyed and renewed from time to time in order to refresh them with passion and emotional tension. Aggression and drinking play important roles in this process. As a result of socialization in the frames of an egalitarian social order, an individual feels no inclination to behave according to commitments, obligations, roles and plans, but prefers to take spontaneous decisions, finding pre-planned activities boring and unpleasant. This prevents the Evenki to fully integrate into state institutions. Moreover, exceptions such as the careers of schoolteachers and representatives of Evenki culture, who are integrated within organizations supported by state, usually entail unique biographical trajectories or even breaking off contacts with other Evenki people. From this perspective, it cannot be said that Evenki people consciously and intentionally resist the state, but their ethos simply does not fit into state institutions without disintegrating. Data from fieldwork shows that the Evenki very rarely criticize any local authority. On the contrary, they support state policies and try their best to integrate within them, but something always goes wrong. As a result, however beneficial any state initiative might be to the Evenki, even if it is seemingly unplanned and the Evenki themselves appear to like it, in practice they always appear to be excluded from the scope of such reforms and measures. Collaboration with state representatives never turns out to be profitable for the Evenki, in contrast to their short term companionships with those who were involved in illegal and anti-state activities.

Evenki people are living on the periphery of the Russian state with other people who have escaped there from state policies, were sent there by the state in frames of prosecution or who moved there in search of profits from illegal activities (poaching, illegal gold and nephrite mining). These people represent various cultures and therefore no abstract or unifying code of conduct and meaning can be used to coordinate their actions. Consequently, short term relationships devoted to the implementation of concrete projects frame most of the interactions among people who live in this territory. Evenki social organization provides a useful matrix for them to collaborate with various neighbours and establish short term contacts, and these are especially important in emergency situations, which are rather frequent in the taiga environment. Contacts and interaction in the taiga are situational because in cases of crisis there are no other possible partners available for hundreds of kilometres. No outside expectations, social distinctions or superstitions are important when there is imminent risk of freezing to death or drowning while attempting to cross a mountain river. Everybody who appears in the taiga must display egalitarian character to some extent, otherwise they will be in trouble. The introduction of new technologies here does not help one to obtain a superior position, because no technology is secured by accident or as a result of malfunction. The taiga as a place which attracts various people with its resources (herbs, wild meat, antlers and skins, fur, timber, gold, nephrite and so on) forms a special interactional environment in which even the representatives of hierarchical societies have to behave according to patterns of equality.

METHODOLOGY

This study is devoted to a detailed analysis of patterns of interaction in the everyday life of Evenki people, with particular focus on nonverbal forms of communication. Due to this focus, the research methods of anthropology, such as participant observation and interviewing, are supplied through the collection of visual materials, such as photos and film records, which will form the main data within framework of this research project. These materials will be used for analysis and coding, which will help to formulate categories that describe the main forms of non-verbal communication and the coordination of actions in everyday life. Ethnographic methods based on observations and fieldwork notes usually leave such information off the record. Systematic filming and photographic recording help to document instances and moments of interaction which are impossible to describe in the framework of verbal ethnographic accounts (reports based on field notes).

In 1942 the world anthropological community was provided with one of the most outstanding results of anthropological fieldwork – the book presented by well-known anthropologists Gregory Bateson and Margaret Mead about Balinese character (Bateson – Mead 1942). The book contained 100 charts and more than 700 photos selected from 25,000 Leica negatives made in the course of their collaborative fieldwork in Bali. Photos played the main role in the book and were organized according to categories, which anthropologists elaborated during the coding and analysis of their visual data and ethnographic field notes. The book became a classic handbook for visual anthropologists (such as Pink 2007), but also raised reflexive feedback both from anthropologists

(Grimshaw 2001) and researchers from other social sciences (Silverman 1993). The attempt was a success according to most reviewers and was then repeated by Mead in collaboration with Macgregor (Mead – Macgregor 1951), although this was more an illustrative work in which the authors described the pre-existing categories that were used in psychological theory with photos taken by Bateson. Later, Gordon Jensen and Luh Ketut Suryani repeated the project, retaining the structure of the book that Mead and Bateson used in 1942, but they used other categories and even tried to re-examine and criticize the earlier interpretation of Balinese culture (Jensen – Suryani 1991). Critical and supportive discussions very often are supplied by materials collected from fieldwork in the same areas, where the authors of classical manuscripts worked.

The most famous examples include the refutation of Mead's work on Samoa (Mead 1928) by Derek Freeman (Freeman 1983) and a less scandalous study of Naven rituals among the Iatmul, conducted by Michael Houseman and Carlo Severi (Houseman – Severi 1998) after Bateson (Bateson 1958 [1936]). Attempts to conduct similar research with explicit associations in methodology and theoretical background, but in other areas, are much rarer. In our research, we have conducted photographic analysis according to the logic and scheme employed by Bateson and Mead in 1942, but based on materials collected in the present day among Evenki people, modern hunter gatherers living in Siberia. The research methodology proposed by Mead and Bateson seems to be very effective for the study of the Evenki because it provides the opportunity to include non-verbal elements basic to this egalitarian society, both at the stage of analysis and in the representation of the results.

From September 2008 to November 2009, we worked among Evenki people at three different field sites in Baunt in East Buriatia. We spent the autumn of 2008 and the first half of that winter in the Evenki village of Ust'-Jilinda. In the middle of the winter, we moved to Ilakachon and stayed there until the spring to study the life of an isolated reindeer-herding Evenki community. During the following summer and autumn, we moved to another Evenki group living near the Taloi and Kudur rivers. These Evenki people were maintaining contact with nephrite miners for the majority of the year. István Sántha had visited this region and conducted two months of fieldwork there for the first time in 2004. When we started our fieldwork, the aim was to write a book about the situated non-verbal aspects of Evenki culture, which would be based on an analysis of video and photographic materials. Tatiana Safonova worked with a simple Konica-Minolta DiMAGE 23 digital camera in the autumn of 2008 and the spring of 2009. Then she changed to a Pentax K1 mirror reflex camera, equipped with a normal 2/35 millimetre Pentax digital objective. She shot black and white photos with the Konica-Minolta and then made colour pictures with the Pentax. István worked with a Nikon-FM2a, using a normal 1.4/50 millimetre Nikkor manual objective and Kodak Elitechrome slide-positives. Tania mostly shot photos around campsites while István Sántha worked more in the taiga. Altogether, they took around 14,000 negatives and 3,000 slides, respectively, during this period. Besides taking photos, we also wrote diaries and created videos (almost 100 hours in total). We tried to shoot photos randomly in order to collect a wide spectrum of materials not restricted by strong preconceptions and so as to analyse them afterwards, providing a chance to recognize things that were not noticed in the field.

The total of 17,000 photos were analysed via selection and categorisation. The possible situations that occur in Evenki land have a so-called emic (Evenki) logic of development. These logical serials as reconstructed through photos were significant in examining the flexible (and situated) culture of modern Evenki hunter-gatherers in terms of new technologies.

Before presenting the charts with selected photos explicating particular categories, we would like to discuss a character of scientific investigation first mentioned in anthropological studies by Gregory Bateson (Bateson 1979:210). The analysis moves forward on a zippered path between data and abstract interpretation. In our case, as in the case of Bateson and Mead (Bateson – Mead 1942), photos were the starting point, after which the titles of plates appeared, which in turn practically became main categories. Later, we wrote about the relationships between photos and the details in each photo, and finally we gave descriptions of the relations between plates, the latter of which could also be accepted as summaries.

A PHOTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

New means of transport

Being nomads, the Evenki are very interested in every possible means of movement and travel. New transportation creates an opportunity to move faster and to carry larger loads. These new capacities change the world of the Evenki because, as they are able to carry more with them, they can possess more in general, and if they have more things, it makes their life more stable, localized and less nomadic. New types of transport bring new kinds of dependencies upon the outside world. The other aspect of this dependency is the fact that new transportation is neither capable of crossing great distances in the taiga, nor cheap to exploit independently, so the most expensive means of transport are controlled by outsiders and the Evenki cannot use them in their own interests. Older forms of transportation, such as reindeer and horses, are still kept by the Evenki, although they are not used as extensively as they were prior to the integration of cars, all-terrain vehicles and tractors. Even so, until such times as these new means of transport are totally controlled by the Evenki, their life in the taiga remains impossible without horses and reindeer.

Figure 1. Chinese wheeled tractors, specialized in nephrite mining, have been bought by the local Evenki community and given to several Evenki families. These are mainly used to carry tree trunks from the forest to the camp. Winter is the only season when these machines do not stick in the mud.

Figure 2–3. Old all-terrain vehicles are bought from military camps by the same Evenki community and are mainly used to transport nephrite from the mine to the city. The Evenki travel with these tracked vehicles when they go deep into the taiga to work there as hunters for the community. Every week, several such vehicles stop at the Evenki reindeer camp situated halfway between the nephrite mine and the last village. Here the drivers and the security have a short rest. The majority of the food supply of the reindeer camp is also transported by these all-terrain vehicles.

Figure 4. It is only possible to use vehicles such as the jeeps in winter, and only along the frozen rivers, which in winter look like polished highways.

Figure 5. Horses are still the most popular form of transport. They are even preferred by the reindeer herders, who use them to transport things between their summer and winter camps. However, they need all-terrain vehicles for the main seasonal removal, because horses cannot carry all of their bulky and heavy possessions. Horses are nevertheless indispensable in hunting.

Figure 6. Reindeer are now very rarely used, but there are still places where they are the only form of transport for the Evenki. People do not ride them anymore, which makes traveling with them less convenient. People have become taller and the reindeer have become smaller.

Figure 7. Aeroplanes still fly to the isolated villages of the region, but the tickets are too expensive. Ordinary flights are rare because there are seldom enough passengers willing to buy tickets, but medical emergency flights take place and local residents always try to take advantage of the opportunity to fly with these aeroplanes for free.


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Combining new technologies

The introduction of any new technology brings about such changes in the amounts and quality of task accomplishment that it is impossible to combine such technology with older technologies with lower capacities. Usually, new devices are connected to each other, so one thing changes the entire spectrum of various tasks and creates a need to introduce other new technical equipment. Unless they are combined with other new equipment, these innovations are excluded from the existing web of older technologies, and cannot be integrated into everyday life at all.

Figure 8–9. The use of petrol-powered saws makes no sense without a tractor due to the number of trees that can be cut down and then need to be transported to camp. Such saws usually enable people to cut more than they did before and, as a result, they need to go deeper into the forest for new trees of the required quality. Longer distances and greater amounts of lumber determine the need for tractors.

Figure 10–11. All-terrain vehicles have brought with them the possibility of various new forms of hunting. For example, the hunter can travel at night and use lights to find wild animals. Paralyzed by the light beams the night, animals are not able to run away. They run along the track of the beam because they can see only parts of the terrain that are lit. It is very easy to kill such helpless creatures. But the use of lights at night is impossible to combine with traditional hunting transport such as horses. Horses do not work well at night and there is no transportable power supply for the lamps. Even in the event of success, the hunter will not be able to transport all the meat because hunting with lights usually provides the opportunity to kill several animals during one night. In *Figure 10* the hunters are constructing a lamp that can be operated manually. *Figure 11* shows a hatch in the roof of the vehicle, through which the standing hunter can use the lamp and then shoot the animals that are caught in its beam.

12–14. Binoculars are not an absolutely new thing for the Evenki. They have been used ever since the Evenki acquired guns with a longer shooting range. New guns have an even longer range, and they are supplied with telescopic sights. This is important because animals that are seen from a longer distance need less time to escape, and the hunter has less time to switch from the binoculars to the gun sight in which he needs to find the animal once again. These two technologies, connected with sight and shooting, always predetermine each other.

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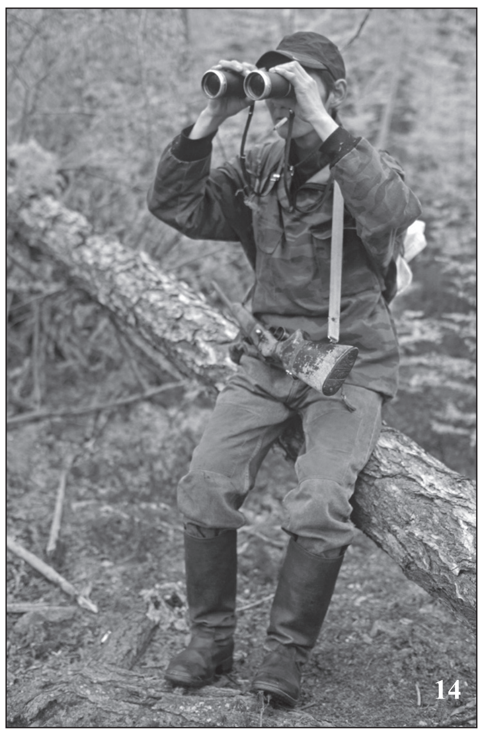

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Parallel old and new technologies I

Although new technical devices are generally not compatible with old ones, they do not supplant old technologies at all. Old technologies may be less productive, but they are much more reliable, and so they continue to be maintained as reserve options, which are important in the frequent cases of emergency, when new devices break down or there is no petrol to run them. Life in the taiga and isolated villages predetermines such episodes of crisis for new technologies, which can only be repaired or supplied through contact with the outside world, and such contact is not possible for extended periods of time. Simultaneously, the introduction of new technologies presupposes the support of older parallel ones, even if these older ones were already out of practice and nearly forgotten. In this process, the progress of technology goes hand-in-hand with the reminiscence of older, more conservative elements of culture. As a result, the only new technologies that persist are the ones which have parallel options from the traditional repertoire of Evenki culture. Even though the practical accomplishment of everyday tasks changes and develops, the general cultural matrix of everyday tasks remain the same.

Figure 15–18. Evenings allow time for leisure and relaxation. Watching films has become an ordinary evening practice, which can be replaced by reading books and journals in the event that a diesel generator fails. And here the oil lamp helps to resolve the problem of lighting. *Figure 17* shows one of three diesel generators that belong to an Evenki family living at a reindeer camp. Sometimes, even all three of them are out of commission, or there is not enough fuel to start them up. The Evenki sometimes travel to nearby winter huts for hunting and are not able to take diesel generators with them. In both cases, oil lamps are used in the evenings.

Figure 19–20. At the reindeer camp, the Evenki use a water pump installed in an adjacent river and supplied with energy by a diesel generator. However, in an isolated village the Evenki need to carry water themselves, in buckets and other containers because the river is too far away from the house. At a reindeer camp deep in taiga, the Evenki even keep a small garden, which they water using these tools. But the products from this garden do not play a crucial role in their diet, and so the Evenki do not depend upon or care too much about it. The pump makes their life easier, but they always maintain the possibility of carrying water themselves.

Figure 21–22. In an isolated village, the only way to be connected with people from other villages is to use a satellite phone, which is installed in the local administration building. This telephone uses Russian satellites, which are not very reliable, so the signal is frequently too weak to establish a connection. The telephone needs electricity, which is supplied only during certain hours when the village diesel generator is working. People are accustomed to this instability of phone connection and use it more as a form of entertainment than as a regular communication facility. In a distant reindeer camp, where there is no satellite phone and people live for more than half the year without any news from their relatives, they use alternative ways of connecting with them, such as divination and the reading of cards.


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4. Parallel old and new technologies II

All old technologies once were new. Over time, as they become more inevitably embedded in everyday practice, the coordination of activities among different parties involved in them slowly changes from a complementary to a symmetrical mode. This means that all people gradually learn how to use the technology and the position of a specialist and introductory sponsor is eliminated. At the same time, the growing dependency on the products of the technology requires the equal mobilization of all members of the community. The parallel coexistence of new and old technologies also plays a role in maintaining the balance between complementary and symmetrical relationships between people. Situations of affluence and comfort associated with a complementary mode of action are counterbalanced by emergencies, when symmetry is the only way to mobilize all members in order to overcome difficulties.

Figure 23–24. One person is operating a petrol-powered saw, while the other person is directing the fall of the tree. The new technology has predetermined such a complementary distinction between the roles of the involved actors. The two-handed manual saw needs the equal force and involvement of two persons, and the cutting is not so fast that people cannot at the same time direct the fall of the tree. Their involvement in the task is symmetrical.

Figure 25–28. Tractors or all-terrain vehicles are driven by one person, while the other acts as navigator, steering a safe passage between the trees, or checking that the trunks are stoutly bound together. Transportation of the trunks without vehicles requires the work of all members, both men and women. In *Figure 26* the figure of a woman stands slightly aside, watching as men drag the sledge laden with trunks out of a gully in the snow, but in the next moment she seizes one trunk, puts it on her shoulders, and carries it the whole way home like the others. She also carries an axe.


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Repairing technical devices

Repair work is a task in its own right, more frequently connected with just passing the time or simple curiosity than with the practical installation of a device. If something is easily broken and too complex to be repaired over the course of an evening, it is usually dropped from the set of equipment in active regular use within the household and for years can become a focus of the owner's curiosity and attempts to repair it, without any apparent regret that it is not working anymore. This practice becomes part of a special kind of leisure. Repair is also a step in the process of sorting out, when unreliable and fragile new technologies are rejected. The Evenki rarely discard things. They prefer to combine them, exploring all new and possible options. From this point of view, repairing an item is one way to not openly exclude it by throwing it away, but to find a new function for it within the household, at the very least to make it a toy to be played with in leisure time. For this reason, the Evenki do not try to systematically understand a given device and its workings, but simply attempt various combinations of actions, hoping for the chance that somehow it will work. As a result, these manipulations more often than not lead to the definitive destruction of a mechanism. Knowing this, certain persons in the household, for whom the function of the device is somehow important, prevent all attempts by others to repair it, trying to save it in its original form before seeking external assistance from the outside world.

Figure 29–30. Whenever Semka was free, in the evening or daytime, he would try to repair a radio that originally would have been powered by a compact solar battery. As the wires were so mixed up and cut at several places, it was obvious that Semka was clearly not the first person to have attempted to repair it. Yet Semka persisted and did not abandon the task, returning to the radio from time to time.

Figure 31. In this picture, Nikolai Stepanovich is trying to fix a car, which he managed to doom on this occasion. It later broke down while being driven far from home and had to be left where it was. The fate of the car is unknown to us.

Figure 32. Sometimes assembling something from various parts, its maintenance and repair are all part of the same process, endless and embedded into the practice of usage. This is especially true for illegal devices, such as uncertified guns, which it is not possible to obtain and repair openly. In practice, these semi-broken items are usually deployed as alternatives to normal mainstream things, but they take a lot of time and attention from their owners.

Figure 33–34. Machines that need starting up (such as tractors or generators) are always at risk, because any unsuccessful attempt to start them can initiate a consequent attempt to repair them.

Figure 35–36. If a device is not easily repaired and the possible various combinations of obvious actions have been tried without success, then the Evenki usually try to resolve the problem by force. This usually leads to additional breakdowns.

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New visual technologies

Leisure as a sphere that is not connected with survival and its production contains less risky situations and fewer potential emergencies; consequently, it provides more options for the integration of new and experimental technologies. Modern leisure technologies are mainly represented by various visual devices, such as televisions, computers and cameras. This sphere is dominated by play as a mode of action; and it attracts children in particular. Although these technologies do not depend so much on parallel old technologies to find a place in the Evenki ecology of tasks, their position is also unstable. This is largely because all new modern visual technologies presuppose intense and constant connection with the internet, or with television frequencies, or with mobile telephone frequencies, or with program upgrades. The isolated Evenki life, with its incidental contacts with outsiders, does not provide such stable interconnections. Hence, the only new visual technologies associated with leisure which find their place in Evenki life are those which presuppose only accidental contacts with the outside world. Very few modern visual technologies meet such criteria.

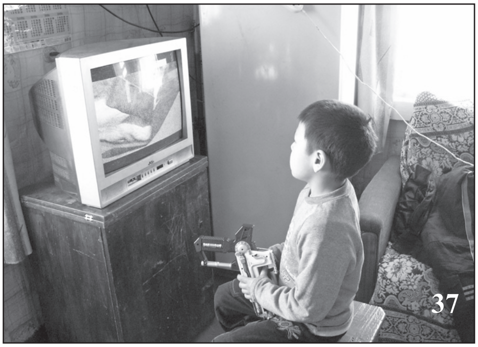
Figure 37. Children combine their playing with toys and watching television like adults combine various technologies and tasks with each other.

Figure 38. A lively party is frequently accompanied by a switched-on TV, which is usually watched by children who are excluded from the adults' feasts. At the same time, its noise creates an atmosphere of revelry.

Figure 39. In the computer games that Maxim is playing he is firing in virtual reality. In his real life at reindeer camp he has his own gun and is learning to shoot at targets. He is preparing to become a hunter like his father. The computer that he plays with in the village is at risk because it can easily be infiltrated by viruses. Anti-viruses programs do not help much because there is no connection to the internet to upgrade their databases.

Figure 40. The Evenki have to repeatedly watch the same films in their DVD collection because they cannot install a satellite antenna. Even if they had one, they have no access to a specialist with the expertise to be able to properly orient it to work at their distant reindeer camp.

Figure 41–42. Showing photos is a common practice when receiving guests, but the Evenki also like to privately view them from time to time. The photos they collect mainly represent the history of their contacts with other people. They cannot print the photos they would like to and are restricted to only those that are given to them by visiting outsiders.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Integration of new technologies

The Evenki are simultaneously curious and very pragmatic. They are interested in how new things can be used and are open to all the new possibilities that new technologies bring. When a new technical device appears, they first try to integrate it into existing schemes of technology. If the device fits into the pre-existing niche, it frequently maintains this concrete function in the Evenki household. Consequently, new technologies are adjusted to the Evenki way of life and change it more on a quantitative rather than a qualitative scale.

Figure 43–44. Andrei is playing with our video camera. He has accommodated it very quickly to the habitual practice of seeing through binoculars.

Figure 45. Binoculars are a common instrument, which Andrei uses when searching for reindeer.

Figure 46. Maxim also found the same function for the camera without our assistance. He also liked the zoom function, which resembled the telescopic sight of the gun used by his father.

Figure 47–48. Looking at the world through an artificial sight is a common experience shared both by women and men. The adjustment of a gun also presupposes several attempts at searching through a sight before firing.


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MODERNITY AND EVENKI CULTURE

In conclusion, we will attempt to systemise our experiences in connection with our photographic analysis. Firstly, we have found that there are certain decisive activities among the Evenki peoples of East Buryatia that can be considered tasks in light of their peripheral circumstances and their natural environment. Such activities include, for example, transportation. This already reveals that modern and traditional technologies exist together in the taiga. Such tools comprise pairs. New and old technologies are connected to one another. In the course of our analysis, we reached the conclusion that modern technologies which survive are the ones that can be coupled with traditional counterparts. In Evenki lands, there is never a guarantee that a (modern) technology will be continuously and regularly used, and for this reason it is not possible to ignore the use of older tools as alternatives. When a new tool appears among the Evenki, it gives rise to a category which includes an older technology. Such pairings reinforce the necessity of the old-new dichotomy and the importance of the categories – activities – tasks associated with it. We believe that the survival of certain elements of Evenki culture are primarily served by the appearance of a new technology in keeping with this dichotomy in the daily life of Evenki people. As István Sántha has also experienced with the Evenki in Tutur, a practical revival of old solutions is required from time to time. When a young hunter started the hunting season in the autumn and discovered that the cabin in his territory had collapsed, he spent no time lamenting and immediately set about constructing a shelter made from bark, where he lived for the rest of the season. He was even able to do this with no previous experience of how to construct a birch-bark tent. The existence of tools such as wooden hunting cabins, which have been common to the region for more than 30 years, does not completely omit the possibility of using an older alternative like a birch-bark shelter. Items that have no modern counterpart, such as the *kumalan*, rugs made from reindeer fur that are used to hold saddles in place, thus become decorative objects or gifts and are slowly disappearing from Evenki culture.

In addition to the above, I should also point out that the majority of modern technologies can only be used by a single person rather than by several individuals simultaneously, and since the Evenki society is adjusted to poverty, it is no surprise that only one of a given item exists within a community, which in turn requires specialisation and a division of labour. Of course certain devices eventually become commonplace, with more and more people using them in their daily lives. Tools once considered modern do not always remain new either – after a time, several of them may be in use, just as old devices used today were once regarded as new. For the Evenki, old technologies (which used to be new) provide a comfortable opportunity for symmetrical activity (wood-cutting with handsaws, or the transport of logs with small sleds). In analysing data referring to the 18th century, Shirokogoroff already concluded in the early 20th century that Evenki culture would disappear within a short space of time (Shirokogoroff 1929). How then has it been possible for Evenki culture to survive for centuries? Evenki culture is protected from the impact of modernity by the fact that its practice requires symmetry in the context of activity in order to survive, which means that Evenki society does not accept all complementary technologies from the outside world without reservation. On the other hand, after a time it is also capable of turning the complimentary approach required by the usage of modern tools into symmetrical activity. It should be noted here that without the complementary impact of the outside world, Evenki culture based on symmetry (equal relations) would disintegrate. The balance existing between the complementarity and symmetry (Bateson 1958:289–291) suggests that Evenki culture is able to survive in spite of the impacts of modernisation (Safonova – Sántha 2013:26–27). This leads us to the concept of a self-regulating system. Our conclusions below call attention to the detailed operation of this system.

Various combinations appear either among new technologies or among old ones. We found no photographs suggesting a combination of an old tool with a new one. The matches reinforce one another. In the case of new tools, for example, this takes place when one element in a given pair fails, after which the Evenki gradually search for a new item to ensure that the given combination continues to function successfully. New pairs are matched with old pairs designed to fulfill the same task, the elements of each pair being in a complementary relationship. This gives rise to the question of whether original new combinations can be adapted successfully among the Evenki without replacing an older (alternative) pair. There are no real examples of this – if the diesel motor stops functioning, the tea-maker will also become useless.

Devices continue to function until the Evenki become interested in their principles of operation. Experienced, older Evenki do not allow curious children or adults near a highly revered new technological device. The disassembly and reassembly of things demands consistency (a logical approach), which does not appear as an interesting task for the Evenki. This makes it easier to understand why the repair of devices can be regarded as an everyday leisure activity rather than a task requiring strict focus. The aim is not to repair something; we have seen many instances which reveal a lack of understanding with regards to the operating principles of a given device. Instead, the Evenki try to examine how a faulty instrument can be combined with another tool so that both can be used for something together. The Evenki have experienced that all things go wrong sooner or later. For them, trying to identify how and for what purpose a faulty device can be used again is a process of creativity. Practice has shown that the tools of modernity that appear from the outside world can only be repaired in the outside world. In this way, the Evenki see modern tools as a means to make contact with strangers, other people and the outside world.

Some tools of modernity (new visual devices) – in addition to the need for transportation, firewood, water, food and contact with strangers – serve to provide a solution for another, non-active task: spending leisure time and resting. The use of such devices is not rooted in the practice of using older tools and only works through the combination of many new elements. There is no need to understand how they operate in order to use them, and as the above has shown, Evenki creativity may even prove to be extremely dangerous in some cases. While children are enthusiastic about such devices, adults appear quite passive in the course of using them, and since their usage does not have to be integrated with the taiga, they demand the creation of a modern environment in which to operate. As such, it is difficult to regard these tools as part of the Evenki sphere, belonging rather to a sphere in which strangers feel at home and hence providing a field of cultural contact within the taiga. They are used in the context of temporary episodes and their periodical absence does not endanger Evenki culture.

As the Evenki become familiar with new technologies appearing in their environment, they attempt to use these tools in ways that fulfill familiar (old) tasks. They try to understand what the tools are designed for and the situations in which they can be used successfully in accordance with their own categories (traditional ones) rather than those of the outside world. A video-camera can be a weapon as well as an optical device (telescope). At first, there is a tendency to move in the direction of complementarity, but use of a given technology only survives among the Evenki if the temporary phase (visual devices) can also be followed by the application of symmetric contacts. It is for this reason that Evenki society, organised on the ethos of equality, needs to find a balance between complementary relations and the hierarchical outside world based on specialisation. This is both a fundamental requirement for survival as well as for the successful integration of modern technology in Evenki society. A clear sign of the latter is when usage of a given technology becomes common and the technology becomes widely available. This is an especially crucial point among certain Evenki groups, for example those in Ilakachon, who have lived in total isolation for six months out of the year since the economic crisis forced the withdrawal of foreigners from their region. Their life is characterised by a lack of complementary relations. The same is even true in the case of Evenki in Kudur, who are in regular contact with nephrite miners for the majority of the year (Sántha 2011), and through whom they are able to gradually incorporate modern tools in their everyday lives – certain intervals notwithstanding (late October to early April), when they remain isolated in the taiga and practice Evenki-style symmetric relations with one another.

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"Flying half a metre above the ground"

Vodka in the Culture of Vasyugan Khanty People

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Abstract Zoltan Nagy's paper about the Vasyugan Khanty people is based on empirical data from the 1990s. It interprets the culture of the Vasyugan Khanty as an alcohol culture – a culture in which vodka and the consumption of vodka permeates and determines daily life. The paper is a micro-focus analysis from the Khanty viewpoint. Alcohol is interpreted as the force that constitutes society, and alcohol consumption as a social act. It has an important economic significance with a strong impact on Khanty customs, which it regulates and by which it is regulated, with remarkable moral implications that significantly influence their daily routines and way of life. The paper surveys the role of alcohol in customs, the ritualistic elements and rules of drinking, the drink types consumed, the relation between alcohol and mortality, as well as the Khanty's concept of drunkenness and how it influences their interpretation of crime. In reviewing the relation between alcohol consumption and economy/work activities, the author also examines the role of vodka in the everyday exchange of goods, the strategies of acquiring alcohol, and the role it plays in determining the scheduling of worktime. Finally, he offers two examples that illustrate how the consumption of vodka influences the fate of individual families.
Keywords: Khanty people, Siberia, economy, culture of drinking, way of life

In memory of Sashka

"It is indeed interesting... that opinions regarding inebriation are tinged with a certain indulgent humour, as if drunkenness were merely a form of male mischief rather than a manifestation of misery, anxiety and fear. The strangest aspect of this convivial attitude is that it is promoted and cultivated by alcoholics themselves, who gain some sort of odd gratification from a detailed recollection of their sufferings after those have – fortunately – ended." (Hajnóczy 1993:11–12)

This study intends to focus on Vasyugan Khanty people[1] and alcohol. The latter has been a frequent topic in professional literature concerning Ob-Ugric peoples. These texts generally emphasise that the spread of alcohol consumption was a tool of Russian/Soviet colonisation, a weapon used by Tsarist merchants to exploit the Khanty.[2] Such studies have also tried to define possible paths away from alcoholism – sometimes on the basis of practical considerations and sometimes on moral grounds.

The production of alcohol in various forms is a classic theme of ethnographic science and economic history. Having therefore gained the attention of sociologists and cultural anthropologists as well as historians, the socio-cultural aspects of alcohol consumption are also by their very nature fundamental topics of literature in the field of addictology. It is important to emphasise here that the present study will discuss alcohol consumption as a cultural phenomenon using an ethnographic approach. I do not wish to analyse alcoholism as a disease. In other words, like Mary Douglas, I regard drinking as a social act, the examination of which primarily focuses on the system of social rules that determine where, when, what and with whom members of a given community can drink (Douglas 1987:4). In this sense, alcohol as a central phenomenon in the culture of Vasyugan Khanty people bears an important economic significance and has a strong impact on their customs, which regulate it and are regulated by it. Alcohol is a regular topic of discussion among the Khanty, with remarkable moral implications that significantly influence their daily routines and way of life. This text was written on the basis of research I conducted in 1992, 1993 and from 1998–1999, which at the time totalled one year of fieldwork.[3]

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[1] My study primarily focuses on the temporary population in a settlement (*юрт*) in the taiga and a bigger adjacent village, where their relatives and acquaintances lived. Vasyugan Khanty people live in Siberia along a western tributary of the Ob River known as Vasyugan. Due to their constant proximity to Russian culture, the resettlement policy of the Stalinist regime and the impact of economic migration in the wake of oil extraction, they have become the most acculturated Khanty group, which means that use of the Khanty language can also be regarded as having ceased to exist.

[2] This is also apparent in earlier professional literature and in the contemporary handbook, including, among others: Zsirai 1994:177; Hajdú – Domokos 1980:151; Mikesy 1996:28; and Csepregi 1997:67, who supplements earlier works with important observations in connection with the Soviet system.

[3] This study is an abridged and slightly modified English language version of my text which appeared in Tabula in 2000 (Nagy 2000). At the time that it was re-published, I decided that re-writing the text would be more damaging than useful. Due to the impact of significant changes that have taken place in the given environment since then, a new analysis of the data would yield different results. Therefore, my data and my claims reflect conditions as they existed at the end of the 1990s and do not include the changes that have occurred since that time, which I have reflected on elsewhere (Nagy 2014). In light of the time that has passed, the text is written in the past tense. Naturally, I do not think that the general assertions included here are valid only for the given time period.
Wishing to avoid completely distorting the structure of the study, I am also unable here to reflect on tendencies that have been discussed in professional literature dealing with alcohol consumption since then e.g. studies based on new statistics (Pivnyeva 2005) or post-colonialist critiques on the role of alcohol in professional literature (Leete 2005). Neither do I utilise the results of two conferences held in Tartu since then (unfortunately unpublished), in which issues in connection with alcohol consumption in Siberia were analysed. In addition, I hardly reflect on the debate which has taken place regarding the overconsumption of alcohol presented as a psychological fact and as a cultural construction (for example, Heath 1987; Douglas 1987; Mandelbaum 1965; Room 1984; Szeljak 2001). This would require significantly expanding the present text to comprise a study of much greater length – which I do in fact attend to achieve.

THE DICHOTOMIES OF JUDGEMENT

Attitudes towards drinking, participation in drinking and exclusion from the activity continually form and reform (reflect) social reality, meaning social categories that the given society wishes to separate and define. At the same time, the quantity and quality of alcohol consumption also divide various prestige groups from one another. The aspect of quality in this context denotes the role that different types of alcohol play in group-building while quantity reflects the opposition of the given society to norms-deviance. In the following, I will analyse the quantitative aspect.[4]

Certain *dichotomies* could be observed among the Vasyugan Khanty with regards to drinking and their relationship to alcohol. There were significant differences in alcohol consumption among those who lived in villages in comparison to those who lived in the taiga. In villages, vodka could easily be acquired practically anytime, provided that some form of payment was involved. Nevertheless, barring exceptions, the majority of Khanty villagers were unemployed, supporting themselves through various benefits, which meant that the continuous acquisition of alcohol became a decisive issue and problem in their daily lives. In contrast, the taiga primarily served as a model for traditional ways of making a living i.e. fishing and hunting, but also as a natural regulator of alcohol consumption. It was impossible to transport an infinite supply of vodka to remote areas, which meant that for the Khanty the taiga was directly and indirectly synonymous with "dryness", sobriety and work while the village represented alcohol, seeking alcohol and laxity.[5]

A dichotomy was also apparent in judgements regarding alcohol, which Khanty society basically rejected in spite of its presence in their daily life – "We live like pigs." The term *drunkard* carried a negative connotation in characterisations of absent locals, even in the words of those who drank a similar amount. In other cases, however, being able to hold one's drink was considered a virtue.

This duplicity can be traced to special issues of male identity. On one hand, the male was seen as the provider, his primary task being to acquire the goods necessary to support members of his family, and thus male attitudes towards work were a dominant element of male identity: diligence, cleverness, and endurance were considered male virtues. Coming of age was also equated with a man's ability to work, his first successful hunt and his first participation in a collective fishing excursion. In this context, alcohol was seen as destructive and unacceptable, making it difficult, if not impossible, for a man to fulfill his tasks. On the other hand, alcohol also constituted an integral part of male identity: carousal, revelry, and "hardiness" were also important male attributes. Boys on the path to manhood were characterised as "already drinking vodka too". It is no accident that besides hunting, drunkenness was the main topic of male conversation among the Khanty.

In the meantime, Khanty women also consumed significant amounts of alcohol, even though social norms dictated that women could not drink alcohol at all, or only on rare occasions. Conservative Khanty women living in accordance with these norms were

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[4] Regarding the quantitative factor, see: Thornton 1987; Mars 1987; Nagy 2014; Sárkány 1997.

[5] In contrast, local Russians go to the forest to drink, precisely because it provides refuge from control by the family and the village.

not to drink in the presence of men, which is why older women humbly rejected offers of alcohol at first, but no longer considered the norm to be a problem as they became more inebriated. Norms regarding female behaviour allowed no space for alcohol consumption. In fact, women were expected to reject alcohol as an obstacle to their womanhood, one that impaired their ability to care for their family and children: and it did so on more than one occasion. Thus, alcohol consumption by women was a crisis of self-definition. Gender norms in connection with vodka were clearly apparent in the words of one pregnant woman, who was always saying: "I hope to God it's not a boy. They're all criminals and alcoholics."[6]

Frequently, the *aim* of drinking was "to forget everything and fly half a metre above the ground." Even so, different answers are available as to who wished to forget and what. Some answers are related to individual life trajectories: personal sorrows, the anniversaries of deaths, illness. As one acquaintance suffering from tuberculosis said: "When I drink, I'm not ill. When I don't drink, I immediately start coughing and gasping for breath." Another possible answer could be found in the circumstances of the country and its politics. Some people regarded the collapse of the Soviet system as a deep personal loss and saw it as the cause of their alcoholism: "In the old times, in the old system, everything was alright because it was possible to live a normal life."

It may not even be necessary to search for causes as drinking and inebriation in Khanty society required no explanation. It was so natural and inevitable that the question of who was drinking and why never even arose. On the contrary, the fact that someone was not drinking – usually a man – was a source of amazement and confusion. If the abstinent individual was even a bit of an outsider, the only response deemed possible was contempt and scorn. If the individual was a part of the community, there was no explanation and he was considered an oddball. One man who had quit drinking was described as follows: "He used to be such a good person. Even if he drank, he was cheerful, always joking and peaceful. Now…well, he's been ruined."

VODKA CULTURE: DRINKING IN CUSTOMS AND THE CUSTOM OF DRINKING

Vodka – alcohol – also played a role in the sacral culture of the Khanty. Attitudes towards alcohol served to separate the world of the sacred from that of the profane and influenced the relationship between the two as well. On one hand, alcohol was excluded from certain religious situations (for example, a drunk person could not foretell the future),[7] but it also helped separate the two spheres and regulated people's behaviour: under

[6] I shall address the relationship between crime and alcohol in more detail later. Suffice it to say for now that while inebriation among men frequently led to incidents of crime, the same could not be said of women. Statistics available to me – covering cases of crime over the course of four years – indicate an insignificant ratio of Khanty women in comparison to that of men.

[7] At the same time, there are omens associated with vodka: if someone's nose itches, someone will be bringing vodka.

normal circumstances, toasting took place on every occasion, and yet it was forbidden in customs associated with commemorating the dead.[8]

The consumption of vodka played an extremely important role in the sacred culture of the Khanty, alcohol being a necessity in the transcendent world perceived as analogous to the human one. In keeping with this perception, it played a crucial role in practically every sacrificial ritual. The gods received vodka directly via glasses placed in front of idols, but also indirectly through the consumption of alcohol during rituals and in the form of libation.[9] The sacred consumption of alcohol often turned into profane drunkenness, with the revelry lasting several days.[10]

Vodka was also a familiar element in death cults, among the fundamental needs of the dead as well. It was frequently an accessory at gravesites, in some cases specifically at the request of the dying individual. Food was set aside at burial-feasts along with a large glass of vodka with a slice of bread and a crepe placed on top. This could only be removed from its place after the fortieth daily burial-feast, after which it could be poured out or fed to the dogs.

The dead also request any vodka accidentally sloshed on the table, along with any fallen table-scraps, which could not be consumed by humans and also had to be given to the dogs. Spilled vodka was also said to have healing properties; rubbing the hands with it helped cure frostbite and also prevented the hands from freezing. Drinks poured backhanded were also the property of the dead.

Vigils were kept next to the dead every night until the burial, and alcohol was always consumed during these watches. Three topics of conversation dominated one vigil that was observed: previous cases of death and acquaintances long passed, the future of the widow, and alcohol. True enough, the topic of alcohol gained more importance in this case because vodka had played a significant role in the death of the person in question. Moreover, the grave-diggers at the funeral for the same person were compensated with vodka instead of money and were clearly drunk by the time of the burial itself, chuckling beside the deceased and trying to make jokes with the widow.

Naturally, burial-feasts were also accompanied by abundant vodka consumption, to the extent that some alcoholics made a point of visiting every house where vigils were being held – sometimes several times a night – in the hope of acquiring free vodka. Quite frequently, burial-feasts turned into huge drinking binges, which ended in physical fights on more than one occasion. The burial-feast mentioned above also ended in an argument when the drunken relative hosting the feast on behalf of the widow not only sent the grave-diggers packing, but the relatives as well. The hosts for this particular feast ordered two cases of vodka, totalling 30 bottles, whereas the number of guests only comprised a total of 27, including children. During the vigil on the ninth day, the widow got drunk as well and got into a fight with the husband of her niece. The vigil

[8] Toasts can only be made using a glass, never with a bottle – nor is it permitted to drink directly from the bottle. In no cases have I ever seen a Vasyugan Khanty person drink from a bottle. This is facilitated by the fact that those who traverse the forest always carry mugs, which can also be used for tea. I have, however, observed cases in which people did not drink the vodka they had bought with them because they had forgotten to bring glasses.

[9] For detailed information on alcohol sacrifices, see: Munkácsi 1892–1921:II/1.

[10] For data on the relationship between alcohol and sacrificial rites, see: Mészáros 2012.

on the fortieth day also descended into scandal when the drunken hosts locked the food away from the guests, after which the widow slapped and then beat up the niece she had previously been hugging, in response to which the guests became outraged and quarrelled with the hosts. All three burial-feasts led to personal offenses and greatly wounded solidarity between members of the family.

Vodka was also a vital part of every other celebration, all of which involved drinking to intoxication: New Year (January 1), the “old New Year” (January 13), “Defender of the Fatherland Day”, which served as a holiday for men (February 23), Women’s Day (March 8), Easter and all birthdays. This was so predictable that one man left for the forest on the day before the New Year’s celebration because he wanted to avoid getting drunk in the village.

Not only did vodka influence Khanty customs, but vodka drinking itself had its own set of rules and customs as well. Alcohol consumption can also be characterised by its time frame. An individual drinking “party” (*para* in the Khanty language, *гулянка* in Russian) almost never lasted only for one day, but much longer. The key word in drinking binges lasting several days was the hangover. The Russian expression *похмелье* could be translated as *hangover* or *the morning after*, but there is no exact translation for the verb form *опохмельяться*, which was adopted unchanged in the Khanty language. A night of drunken revelry was followed by extreme suffering the following day, and this illness could only be cured by drinking again. At first, the aim was only to get rid of the torturous hangover, but after the first few “medicinal drinks” the euphoria would set in and the cycle would begin again. According to the exact description given by one Khanty: “I’ve only got drunk once over the last two weeks, but it’s taken me 14 days to get cured.”

Hangovers and the healing “hangover drinks” were a highly respected and integral part of Khanty culture. This was also respected by the wives of drunken men, who would usually hide some money or a bit of vodka so as to cure their spouses. If both the money and the vodka ran out, they would collect the drops remaining at the bottom of the bottles and visit neighbours, who would usually take pity on the suffering. Drunken individuals would rarely be served, but it was considered impolite to refuse those with a hangover.

Hangovers were perceived as an illness which could also be fatal. One example involves the case of a man during the second half of the 1980s, when shops only served alcohol after 11 am. The man in question attempted to beg a shopkeeper to give him a bottle before the designated time, but was refused. He then settled on the stoop in front of the shop, but did not survive until 11 o’clock: he died of a hangover. According to the Khanty, death from a hangover is caused by heart stoppage.

Drinking binges lasting several days or weeks usually came to a stop when the vodka, the money for its acquisition or other means of purchase ran out. In the worst cases, they ended in a major fight or as the result of an accident or serious tragedy. During the seven months that I spent there from 1998–99, I observed no cases in which the participants stopped drinking of their own accord.

The Khanty were aware that their alcohol consumption[11] differed radically from the European norm, but they were also convinced that their own customs were healthier:

[11] This was practically the same as the drinking habits of local Russians, which, according to Elvin Morton Jellinek – as quoted by Keller 1981:96 – can be defined as gamma-alcoholism.

"The Hungarians drink more than we do, a little at a time, regularly. I rarely drink, but when I do, it's a lot."

In addition to the timeframe, the issue of quantity was also important. The Khanty apply a unique system of unit measurement with regards to vodka. The smallest unit – obviously in keeping with the Russian model – was "100 grams", meaning one decilitre. As such, shot glasses were not used; the portions were poured in water glasses.

The smallest unit available in shops was half a litre, which is why one Khanty reacted in terror when saw two-decilitre bottles of liquor in Hungary: "My God! We're not going to be drinking cologne again, are we?" As invited guests, or for simple visits to relatives, it was considered polite etiquette to bring one bottle, but if the occasion was a dinner celebration, then guests arrived with two bottles. Usually, drinking occasions involved having to acquire more vodka, after which the guests returned with two more bottles. They only returned with one bottle if they could not afford a second.

Another essential question is the kind of alcohol being consumed.[12] It can be said that the Khanty almost exclusively drank vodka, or its home-made version, *samogon*. Vodka could be purchased in shops or from those travelling to larger towns. The quality was uneven, but became relatively reliable after the introduction of tax stamps. I use the word relatively here because the tax stamps were often faked and the vodka substituted with industrial alcohol. Counterfeit vodka was attributed to several individual cases of death in 1999. The most serious case of poisoning took place during the late 1980s in the village, where forty people died.

Samogon was pure for the most part, although it was also subject to counterfeiting. It could be acquired from home distilleries, unlicensed dealers and illicit pubs. Some of these establishments were also open for business during the night, signalled by lamps placed in windows: the owners were awakened by customers wishing to be served. So many illicit distilleries were in operation that on weekend nights the electric grid was often overloaded (due to stills running on electricity), sometimes to the point where the television broadcasting station became inoperable. The quality of *samogon* was unpredictable. Dealers gave sober customers the newest and purest goods while inebriated buyers were served lesser quality: the drunker the customer, the weaker the quality of the alcohol sold.

In times of scarcity and in places where vodka was unavailable, a vodka-substitute called *braga*, or *braska* was often produced. The recipe was quite simple: add one cup of yeast powder to a bucket of boiled water (10 litres), mix in three kilograms of sugar, place a slice of bread on top, seal the bucket and leave to ferment. If the maker was impatient, the drink could already be consumed within 3–5 days, but it could also be fermented for up to 2–4 weeks. If it was sour, more sugar could be added, which was usually necessary when the concoction fermented over a long period of time, because yeast "eats" sugar. Potatoes, potato peels and berries were added for flavouring, and sometimes birch juice was used instead of water. The final product was whitish in colour and sported a foam, not unlike beer and with a similar alcohol content.

The Khanty sometimes drank beer as well, but primarily as a chaser in conjunction with vodka and *samogon*. Besides the drinks listed, all other alcoholic beverages (wine,

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[12] This was be discussed later and in greater detail elsewhere: Nagy 2011.

liqueur, cognac) were referred to collectively as "wine". The reasons for this were obvious. Such drinks were rarely available, and so experience with them was limited. Moreover, they were characterised by a sweet taste and were weaker than vodka. They were regarded as products with a high level of prestige and thus foreign to Khanty culture.

In connection with various types of drink, it is also important to mentions "dry laws" during the period of prohibition (*сухой закон*) under Gorbachov. Even during this time, everyone brave or clever enough to do so managed to acquire the alcohol they needed. A great deal of aftershave lotion and cologne was consumed and a multitude of techniques were employed to produce drinks with alcohol content.[13] One method involved diluting glass cleaner with water, which was then fermented in 3-litre bottles and consumed shortly thereafter. Glass cleaner was regarded as extremely dangerous – people easily "lost their wits" from it – and general gossip mentioned several cases of delirium caused by drinking it. Some people made and drank alcohol produced from glue: much stirring was required to make it drinkable. One Khanty hunter, a master in the art of producing fake alcohol, died a sudden and inexplicable death, which everyone attributed to his drinking glue and window cleaner. There was also an insecticide spray called "Diklafos", which people simply drank or sprayed onto scarves and inhaled.[14]

Some Vasyugan Khanty people drank *chifir*, an exceptionally thick, refreshing tea, which also acts as a hallucinogen when brewed to the appropriate strength. This was achieved by filling half a mug of boiled water with large amounts of tea (the contents of 3–4 tea filters) and then continuing to boil it for another 3–4 minutes. Regular *chifir* users drank the tea 2–3 times a day. *Chifir* was the drink of choice among members of the Russian prison population, and my Khanty acquaintances who favoured it had all spent time in prison.

The rules of etiquette associated with alcohol consumption should be mentioned as well. A drink could not be poured by anyone: either the host poured or someone who had been delegated by the host for this task; but the right to do so could also be exercised by the individual who provided the alcohol. For all intents and purposes, offers to drink could not be refused. Long toasts were only said prior to drinking the first glass, but further toasts were then made with every glass thereafter, accompanied by a brief acknowledgement of who or what was being toasted. Drinks taken later on were accompanied by funny toasts, which were frequent and variable.[15] Since very few people living along the Vasyugan River spoke the Khanty language, toasts were made in Russian. To my knowledge, the

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[13] It is worth comparing these "recipes" with content from Venedikt Erofeev's work *Moscow to the End of the Line* (Erofeev 1992).

[14] In the course of my fieldwork in 1993, I succeeded in obtaining several recipes from Selkup people for producing vodka substitutes: window cleaner is poured into a large pickle jar, salted and stirred for half an hour with a wooden spoon so that the dry part of the mass sticks to the spoon, after which the remaining liquid can be consumed; shoe-paste is spread on a slice of bread and left to stand for several hours, after which the moulded bread is squeezed to drain the liquid that can be consumed; cologne is mixed with '*zavarka*', a thick tea base, heated and drunk hot.

[15] A few examples of funny toasts: "This won't be the last", followed frequently by others; "So the last one won't be bored", "So the previous ones don't argue", "So I can tell what the previous ones are doing." There is also a well-known verse among the Khanty, also familiar to Russians, which basically sounds good only in Russian, usually preceded by knocking on the table: "*Кто там, сто грамм, заходи, хамм.*" – "Who's there? 100 grams. Come in! Yum!"

Khanty language contained no polite formula specifically for the purpose of making toasts. In light of this, the term *jimeki* – alright, fine – was used, but the expression also fulfilled several other functions: it was used to say thank you, but also served as a farewell greeting.

VODKA AND THE ECONOMY: BARTER, ACQUISITION, WORK

After the Ruble failed in 1998, financial traffic along the Vasyugan collapsed as well. Pension payments were late by 2–4 months and salaries were sometimes delayed for up to six months. Under such economic circumstances, money only remained functional as a measure of value and commercial transactions were temporarily replaced by bartering, in which alcohol played an important role.

Vodka was high on the list of valuable barter items, evident in the fact that almost anything from furs to collectible items and fish could be traded for alcohol, and in many cases clothes and personal articles as well. Moreover, certain products could only be sold in exchange for either money or vodka, for example used household appliances and furniture, but also fur. I know of no cases in which any of these items were traded for food, flour or sugar.

In addition to its exchange value, vodka held a prestigious rank in the order of necessities and played a major role in the planned spending of income. One Khanty hunter used to plan a strict budget for all income, and whenever money came in his first trip was to the store, where he purchased everything that he absolutely needed – food and other goods – and immediately spent the remainder on vodka. In the summer of 1998, for example, he built two logboats, sold one for a sack of flour and a sack of sugar, and then drank away the other one with an acquaintance. In local terms, this hunter was regarded as clever and thrifty, whereas others proved to be less practical and spent their entire income on vodka. Another hunter used to exchange every prize for alcohol and, distrustful of himself, had his Russian neighbour take responsibility for handling his pension. He would then regularly borrow his own money from the neighbour. The neighbour’s task was to withhold the money on some occasions, encouraging him to buy goods or food that he might be in need of. This particular hunter often drank his entire monthly pension within 1–2 days, after which he would sober up, cursing himself, and return to the taiga without supplies – where he was forced either to rely on others for help or to do without. On one occasion, his money handlers purchased flour, sugar and yeast for him (all of the basic necessities). This led to a serious argument in which the hunter prohibited them from spending his money without his consent. On another occasion, the same individual made *braska* from leftover bread (substituting the bread for yeast) because he could no longer go without alcohol, and then he waited for days until he could obtain yeast so that he could bake bread. Vodka was the item that people were always able to purchase, even in times when they were practically starving. As the local saying went: “We can always afford vodka.”

Naturally, there were differences in terms of the percentage of income that individual families spent on alcohol.[16] One family of three in which both parents received pensions

[16] The exact ratio of pure income to the amount spent of vodka is difficult to calculate without revulsion. For this reason, the examples given here should suffice. Unfortunately, it is equally impossible to calculate the exact quantity of alcohol consumed by one individual over a given period of time – although this would be interesting in itself.

used the pension money to cover all necessary food expenses, but they still paid a huge amount (nearly 75%) for vodka. The hunter mentioned above, however, spent none of his income making a living from the sale of the 30 sables he had bagged that year. In another family, the aging father complained that he would have to go fishing again because his sons and grandchildren would often sell their catch for vodka before they even arrived home.

As we have seen, vodka held a prestigious rank in the system of bartering, but of course this did not mean that its exchange value was exceedingly high. One bottle of vodka was worth a bucket of potatoes (8–10kg), or two boxes of tea (200–250g), or 400g of butter, 2l bottles of cooking oil, 3kg of biscuits or ten packs of Prima cigarettes. On the street, six bottles of vodka were worth one sack of top quality flour (50kg) or one sack of animal feed (25kg, конбинкорм – for dogs and pigs), sold from lorries by travelling merchants from Omsk. The fur of one sable was worth five bottles of vodka while two squirrel skins could be exchanged for one bottle.[17]

The alcohol prices listed above reflect what could be planned and estimated on a realistic scale, but there were also unpredictable and unrealistic vodka prices. The reason for the difference between the two price ranges could be found in the given customer's level of sobriety. A drunken individual was willing to pay practically any price in order to obtain the next bottle of alcohol. In the winter of 1998–1999, the following barters represented the most unrealistic differences in value: one sable fur for one bottle of vodka (a realistic price was five bottles), one colour TV for four bottles of vodka (the profit for the exchanger being approximately 20 times higher). The most scandalous case of bartering involved a buyer who exchanged two sable furs and one fox skin for three litres of *braska* (his gain being difficult to calculate as *braska* was a weak, home-brewed drink which had no specified monetary exchange value and was not even among the list of goods that could be bartered). Naturally, the two possible exchange rates for vodka were a source of much conflict. Buyers would regret their transactions after they became sober, and on several occasions demanded the return of their furs – all in vain. The individual who sold the *braska* in the case mentioned above actually inspired locals to file a police report, but nothing could be done against him because, as cited by another man who sold 36 sacks of fish for ten bottles of vodka: "What's to be done? People are weak."

These price conditions recall the words of contemporary travellers in connection with the relationship between merchants, dealers and the Khanty during the tsarist period: unfair bartering practices, the exploitation of drunken Khanty, the advance purchase of spoils from their next hunting season. The so-called "new Russians" who were beginning to represent local capital at the time used the techniques of their predecessors from the previous century with great success and with similar impunity. This meant that fishermen and hunters forced to rely on local mediators and their own bartering opportunities experienced the collapse of central economic control as an unequivocal loss. Hunting collectives in the Soviet system had fixed transfer prices (and defined a much wider range of transferable goods), which provided a stable and reliable means of making a living, and this was completely lacking after the political transition. The cessation of compulsory delivery was what made it possible to waste entire incomes on

[17] Data was analysed on 14 January 1999 in the village.

vodka. Within the collective framework, guns, ammunition, health care packages, certain essential clothing and free permits were issued automatically, but after the Soviet system people had to purchase these items from their own exploited – and wasted – income.

As I have already mentioned, it was possible to acquire vodka or *samogon* practically anytime through local shops and illicit dealers. At the turn of the last century, however, the system in operation was more complex: vodka could either be obtained via dealers from Tara who travelled along the river in winter[18] or by taking a long trip to the market in Kargasok, or by taking even longer six-month journeys to obtain alcohol from the direction of Tara itself. It was around this time that the Khanty began distilling *samogon* and *braska* for themselves. According to Orlov, Khanty people living along the Vasyugan – by their own admission – used half of their bread allotment to produce grain alcohol (Orlov 1926:79–80). In comparison with the circumstances that regulated the acquisition of alcohol at the turn of the previous century, the conditions prevalent in the 1990s meant no obstacle whatsoever, the only uncertain factor being whether an individual had enough money or a suitable means of barter. In light of these conditions, occasions for the acquisition of vodka largely depended on how money for this purpose was acquired.

It has already been stated earlier that almost anything could be exchanged for vodka, and if someone lacked resources, they tried to obtain them in other ways, one of which was through the institution of credit. The Khanty drank in advance when dealing with merchants and then had to pay off their debt from the spoils that they acquired during their hunting expeditions, which constituted practically the same system of obligation as the one typical of their transactions with dealers at the turn of the last century. Even so, the creditors were also undertaking a significant risk, unlike their counterparts a century earlier, who had enjoyed a monopoly and could therefore levy their demands by taking advantage of their situation. In the 1990s, no-one held a monopoly and so the power to collect debts was also gone. From time to time, Khanty who had accumulated debt refused to pay it on the grounds that they could not remember when they had taken the vodka and did not trust the seller, or they simply stopped dealing with the given merchant and thus managed to avoid contact. Within families, a limited amount of responsibility for one another also remained valid – including financial help. There were several examples involving the payment of debt by close relatives, which kept the reputation of the given family intact, but there were also cases in which even the widow of a deceased man refused to pay off his debts in spite of the fact that she had been his regular drinking companion. It was not cultural norms that determined how people behaved in such situations (the norm clearly favoured taking responsibility), but rather the personal morals of the individuals in question.

Another similarly accepted way of obtaining financial resources were loans, which could be requested from anyone. If the parties involved had a close relationship, the conditions of the loan were clear and both parties were aware of the risk, but it was precisely the nature of their relationship that also provided a certain guarantee that the loan would be repaid. With regards to strangers and distant acquaintances, however, all sorts of excuses were employed: ill family members, an urgent trip, a lack of food. It was

[18] The Tara is a Russian river which flows into the Irtis River in the territory what is now Omsk County. It originates in present day Novosibirsk County, and the city at the mouth of the Irtis carries the same name.

no surprise, therefore, that when one Khanty man found out about his brother-in-law's death, his first inclination was to think that the news was actually false, a way of tricking him into lending money. Many people became so indebted that they could no longer keep track of their loans. I personally witnessed a case in which a woman attempted to pay back a significant sum to someone who she actually owed no money to at all.

Money could also be obtained via theft. Sometimes people simply stole vodka, but anything else of value could also be stolen e.g. furs, household items etc. This and other methods existed in spite of the fact that society (including the micro society of the Khanty) clearly judged them negatively. Those who failed to pay back debts or loans became the subject of scandal, and people who stole developed equally bad reputations.[19]

Vodka, therefore, contributed greatly to the indebtedness and impoverishment of the Khanty, which was especially true given the fact that any accumulated income could be spent or wasted at any time as a result of one or two lengthy periods of inebriation. One man purchased a snowmobile from the money he had saved and was even able to take it home before the transaction was actually made. He then began to drink in joyful celebration of his acquisition and proceeded to drink away the money he had saved. It took him two years to pay off the debt, and in the meantime he lost the snowmobile in the course of another drinking binge.

Alcohol also had an influence on the amount of time devoted to work.[20] The fact that the taiga was regarded as a "dry", alcohol-free zone compared to the village did not prevent people from getting drunk there from time to time, but there was no opportunity to engage in binge drinking as it was not possible to transport the necessary quantities of alcohol. Locals tried to compensate for this, either by having helicopter pilots still active in the area transport alcohol form time to time in exchange for fish, or by making the journey to the village themselves. The trip was long (34 km) and required almost an entire day, which meant that people only chose this alternative on rare occasions. They were aware that time spent in the village would entail drunkenness and no work, and so visits were selectively postponed as way of self-regulating their alcohol consumption. As one local expressed it: "Time's moving on and health is deteriorating."

Due to these circumstances, those who spent time doing important seasonal work in the taiga (the winter hunting season, fishing in the spring, which coincided with spawning time, berry-picking and pine collection) lost relatively few workdays. During the 1998–1999 hunting season, which lasted from December to March, the hunter quoted above lost approximately 15–20 days because of drinking.[21] He spent a total of eleven days on three occasions in the village and also spent three days drinking in the "yurt". The number of days varies depending on whether we add a minimum of one inactive day after each drinking binge for the purpose of regaining sobriety.

As the Khanty generally had no means of transportation, trips to the village constituted a part of their bartering system in addition to being an inhibitor of alcohol

[19] See below for a more detailed account of judgements regarding crime.

[20] Since it is frequently impossible to determine exactly what constitutes work and what does not in the eyes of the Khanty, the ratios are expressed here in work days rather than work hours.

[21] This figure seems low in comparison to other intervals when he spent approximately twice as much time drinking.

consumption. Transportation services had to be paid for, usually in the form of fish and furs, but compensation could also be provided by granting the vehicle owner the right to hunt in the given territory while the hunter was present. Young people had no difficulty making the journey between the two villages on foot, but older individuals were forced to rely on vehicles and their drivers. Since the "non-Khanty" residents of the village drank in similar amounts, their inebriation also had an impact on the work time of their Khanty acquaintances. During the aforementioned 1998–1999 winter hunting season, one Khanty man – who happened to be abstinent – lost 20 work days because his potential drivers were drunk.

Alcohol also had a major influence on the work life of villagers. One man from the "yurt", who also worked in the village, only managed to complete less than one third of his delegated tasks during the first four months of 1999, and so it was no surprise when he "resigned" in May at the request of his supervisor. If he had not done so, he would have been fired, which would have decreased his chances of finding more work.

In consideration of the above, alcohol significantly inhibited performance as well, especially when certain types of work were compensated in vodka. In such cases, either a specified amount of alcohol was offered in exchange for the work or an unlimited amount of alcohol was provided by the employer during work time and afterwards when the workers were invited for dinner. If employers failed to provide a sufficient quantity of alcohol, they were branded by public opinion: for example, gossip would spread through the village that the six gravediggers working at a burial only received three bottles of vodka.

Vodka also affected performance in other ways. The idea of collecting and accumulating goods was foreign to Khanty hunters, who also had limited demands, which means the less they drank, the less game they needed to hunt for. One Khanty hunter had previously been a severe alcoholic, but he had also worked hard, constantly traversing the forest and laying a huge number of traps. As soon as he became abstinent, however, he only continued to produce the goods that he directly needed to live on. Among all the residents of the "yurt", he was the one who spent the least amount of time in the taiga, and by 1998 the number of traps he set steadily dwindled to none. Hunting became useless to him as he was able to cover essential food purchases from his pension. Fishing provided a sufficient amount of meat, and he was even able to give away or barter some of this. One of his friends commented thus: "He doesn't need to run around anymore. He gets a pension, which is enough, and if he needs fish, he goes out once a month and comes back with two sacks. When he was drinking, he was out and about because he needed the furs. Now he doesn't drink anymore, thanks to his wife."

FATES: DEATH, CRIME, PATHS IN LIFE

"We're a fucked-up lot. Everybody dies because of vodka. They choke to death, burn to death, get run over, or freeze to death. We can't live normally." This is how a Khanty woman and her husband reacted upon hearing about a new case of death related to vodka. "Alcohol, alcohol, alcohol. It's our biggest problem, you know." In reality, she was right. Witnessing the lives of individual families, one saw tragedy after tragedy caused by alcohol and inebriation. In the five years preceding 1999, for example, one woman lost her husband to an alcohol-related illness, her son-in-law drove his tractor into a lake, her brother was killed brutally by a group of men who were hunting while drunk, and not long after I left, her other son fell in the water while drunk and drowned.[22]

Alcohol ranked high among the causes of death within the Khanty community and the general population of the village.[23] In the first two month of 1999, there were eleven cases of death in the community, only one of which was not directly or indirectly attributed to alcohol consumption. It was also a cause of crime. Various fights, stabbings and murders were all linked to inebriation as well cases of robbery and theft in the pursuit of alcohol. Non-Khanty locals typically associated these crimes with the Khanty population in keeping with the stereotype that Khanty people were prone to aggression as a result of alcohol consumption: they became drunk faster and raged more frequently, and the many tragedies among them were exacerbated by the fact that they were hunters, which meant that knives and guns were always close at hand.

Accusation was of great significance in explaining cases of death among the Khanty. Practically every case that could be attributed to vodka as a possible cause gave rise to numerous stories in which specific individuals were named as the obvious murderers of the deceased. On one hand, such gossip provided plausible explanations for "accidental" deaths that were otherwise inexplicable. On the other hand, they specifically named and defined conflicts that existed between the deceased and the accused (as well as the accuser). Accusations were not only directed at those with whom alleged conflicts existed, but also at individuals with a reputation for violence as well as those who had already participated in other murders.

According to the Khanty, the concepts of tragedy and crime could not always be separated from one another. Serious crimes, murders, attempted murders and fights that lived in their memories were always associated with vodka and intoxication. Even so, drunkenness was seen as a passive condition that was suffered, along with the acts of inebriated individuals, who were also sufferers rather than being the causes. Consequently, they were able to remove the blame from themselves. Crimes became inevitable accidents in which both the perpetrators as well as those who actually suffered or died as a result were victims.[24] For this reason, there were virtually no unforgivable crimes. Fratricide, matricide and other forms of murder did not result in rejection or exile from the community. Such crimes were condemned as inadmissible, but since the perpetrators themselves were also seen as being victims, they clearly had an opportunity to re-assimilate within the community once they had completed their prison sentences. There social status was clearly harmed as they had been confronted with their crimes more than once, but Khanty micro-society tended to be more forgiving than the non-Khanty community in the village.

Surprising as it may be, the social consequences of crimes against property were far more severe. Those who were caught stealing lost social prestige to a greater degree than those who were sentenced for murder. All early written sources describe the Khanty as a

[22] Her third son was killed by his brother during the time of my next field trip (2001), the boy who is mentioned in the text as having been released from prison.

[23] Exact data is unavailable since the cause of death cannot be determined in every case and there are no written sources.

[24] Regarding the case of A.V. I. – who murdered his wife, but was acquitted in public opinion – see below.

people unfamiliar with the phenomenon of theft – where stealing occurred, a significant Russian influence could be observed. The reason for this is that care and responsibility for others – including strangers – was a fundamental norm among the Khanty. A society of hunters in the taiga could not function without manifestations of solidarity. Vacated hunting cabins had to be left behind at minimum with a supply of dry firewood, matches, salt, sugar and a filled petroleum lamp. These could be vital in times of crisis, even life-saving, but under normal circumstances they at least facilitated the comfort of subsequent dwellers. In keeping with the above, cabins were not locked and it was perfectly acceptable to enter any of them, eat from the provisions stored there and use the available supplies, but failing to replenish those supplies was regarded as a crime. By the end of the 1990s, this norm was no longer valid in all cases and theft became more and more frequent. These instances were nevertheless strongly condemned, regardless of whether they were related to alcohol or not.

As such, alcohol turned certain crimes into tragedy while lending a comical element to other cases. Some incidents resulting from drunkenness became the subject of jokes for years to come, like the case of a hunter from the “yurt” who once came to the village while drunk. Upon arriving, his need to answer nature’s call became so urgent that he began urinating across from the dance hall when a representative from the county seat happened to be visiting. This resulted in a scandal and the hunter was sentenced to 15 days in prison, which was in Kargasok. His story was always recounted with the following anecdote: “He pissed in the village, but he shat in Kargasok.” More serious incidents of fighting and drunken rambunctiousness were also described in a humorous way. The main theme of these stories was usually a comical event e.g. someone falling into a campfire face first, singing his hair and beard, someone swinging a wooden stick back and forth before passing out on a table, or the man who was almost stung to death by a swarm of mosquitos while sleeping in the street. The following is a specific case: a man got drunk and became wild, just as he had many times before. He chased his children out of the house and almost beat his dog to death. Later, he also beat up his wife, who had been arguing with him. He then picked up a log and began chasing his sister-in-law around the house with it before using it to hit his neighbour in the head. After this, he exchanged the slab of wood for an axe, causing everyone to run away from the house. While searching for his sister-in-law, axe in hand, he bumped into a barrel, staggered and slammed the axe into the barrel, shouting: “Halt!” When he realised that no-one was there, he moved on. By the next day, everyone in the village was telling the tale, especially the victims – the sister-in-law and the neighbour – but the “hero” of the story himself was laughing right along with them.

Taking into consideration all that has been said about the Vasyugan Khanty in connection with alcohol and alcoholism, the following two examples should serve as a graphic illustration of the above. I have included two charts comprising the family trees of two men. The charts indicate those whose deaths can be attributed to alcohol as well as those who were known or used to be known as regular vodka drinkers, prone to “drunkenness”. These figures are followed by a description of everything related to the subjects’ relationship with alcohol, including the topics of conversation that arose in their families.

A total of three generations are represented in each family tree: the subjects observed, their parents and their children. As this provides a comprehensive illustration in itself; any attempt to expand the framework of the investigation would only distort the results since information in connection with other generations was lacking. Naturally, additional data was also not available, partly due to the limited knowledge and memory of the human "sources" and partly because the available written sources were far from complete.[25] In spite of this, the two examples help to ascertain the rate of alcohol consumption, its impact on life trajectories and its role in death statistics.

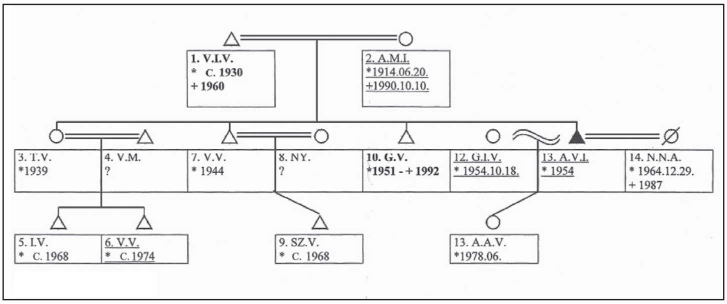

Figure 1. The family tree of A.V.I.

The first male subject is A.V.I. – whose family tree can be seen above.[26] A.V.I. was a Khanty hunter with a troubled life. He had been in prison twice, and had escaped by accident on several occasions. Many claimed that he had received his initial three-year sentence for breaching the peace, but his own interpretation was that he had failed to provide his partner with child support. After spending time imprisoned in several cities, he ended up as a construction worker on the BAM (Baikal – Amur Mainline) project, in which prison inmates with records of good behaviour were also allowed to participate. In the end, he escaped from the construction site – by simply boarding a plane and flying home. The subsequent lengthy search for him failed to reveal his location: he had disappeared into the woods. He acquired part of his food supply himself, the rest being sent to him or delivered to him by his mother on rare visits. It was during one of these that he was re-captured, nine months later. Even so, his punishment was not prolonged and he only had to complete the original prison sentence.

Following his imprisonment, he married N.N.A. (14), but he killed her after four years of marriage. A.V.I. was ten years older than his wife, who was an exceptionally attractive woman. He provided her with everything and "dressed her like a doll", but she always wanted more and more, forcing him to increase his expenses. He then caught her with other men on two or three occasions. She threatened him, saying that he could do nothing against her; he had a criminal record and so she could have him locked up whenever she wanted. In the end, A.V.I. got drunk one night, shot his wife to death, lay down beside her and went to sleep. In the morning, with no memory of the night before, he was attempting to wake her up when he was told to leave her alone because she was already dead. There were various explanations regarding N.N.A.'s death. The only

[25] Written sources included documents from the diocese of Srednij Vasyugan up to 1922 and housekeeping records from 1920–1960 regarding the "yurt".

[26] I have underlined individuals who had, or used to have reputations as alcoholics; bold letters indicate those whose deaths could be attributed to alcohol. Serial numbers are referred to in the text so as to make it easier to identify each individual.

certainty was that the couple had been partying together with others in the "yurt", where they had done a lot of drinking. When A.V.I. got out of bed the following day, he found his wife next to him with a gunshot through the shoulder, having bled to death. Some claimed that he had been cleaning the gun when it went off and hit his wife. Others said that he had shot her accidentally through the door. In front of the jury, A.V.I. claimed that in his drunken stupor he had mistaken her for a bear, but he also frequently mentioned that he might not even have been the actual perpetrator.

A.V.I. was sentenced to seven years in prison, most of which he spent under psychiatric treatment. After all, he had killed the person he loved the most. Eventually, he was pronounced cured. Following his release, he went straight for the harbour and travelled to Kargasok. He became hungry on the ship and went to the snack shop. In the meantime, however, everything had changed; the currency was different, the prices were different and he could not understand anything. Recognising the situation, the shopkeeper explained everything to him. Upon his arrival in Kargasok, he purchased bread, fish and vodka on the street – he had a strong yearning for fish. As he had no more money, he requested help, after which the local council assisted him by paying for his accommodation and tickets. He spent the remaining week in Kargasok. Returning to Vasyugan, he found himself standing at the airport wondering what to do. He had no idea where to go since his mother and brother had both died while he was in prison. The man who had been asked to care for the empty house had neglected his responsibility, and so all of his possessions had been scattered: his clothes, photo albums and his traps, and even his hunting territory had been taken by others.

At first, he lived with acquaintances, one of whom helped him to get accommodation at a bunkhouse and a job as a guard at the oil mines. There he entered into conflict with his supervisor over the issue of unpaid wages, among others. Two months after his release from prison, his backpack disappeared from the bunkhouse together with all of his remaining supplies, after which he decided to take justice into his own hands. Using an axe, he chased everyone away and then entered the offices in search of his supervisor, who only managed to escape by going through a window. For unknown reasons, the police were not contacted. Naturally, the incident was reported later, but no charges were pressed, allegedly because nobody liked the supervisor in question anyway. Of course, A.V.I. was fired the next day, after which he began hunting and fishing in Ajpalovo and then in the village before finally settling in the "yurt". Officially, he was not permitted to engage in other kinds of work as he had contracted tuberculosis while still in prison.

He ran into trouble with the police on several occasions thereafter. Once, he was imprisoned for a night along with a friend for drunken rowdiness. The next time he visited the municipal government offices half-naked in a drunken stupor and demanded accommodation, and then he received a six-month suspended sentence for "illegal" possession of a hunting knife. This was when he realised that he had little chance of remaining free if he continued to have conflicts with the police. From then on, he continued living in the "yurt" and only visited the village for the expressed purpose of acquiring supplies, and to get drunk.[27]

[27] Two years after the first publication of this study, A.V.I. died a tragic death at the end of a long fight when his travelling companion shot him on the way from the village to the "yurt". The circumstances of the murder, its consequences and the related gossip cannot be analysed here.

His family statistics can be observed in the chart below:

TOTAL	14 persons
Deceased	**4**
death attributed to alcohol	3
death not attributed to alcohol	1
Living	**10**
alcoholic	2
adult, abstinent	1
adult, drinking habits unknown	7

Figure 2. The family of A.V.I. – statistics concerning alcohol consumption[28]

Father: V.I.V. (1): hunter, lived separately, drowned in 1960 while drunk; hardly any information available.

Mother: A.M.I. (2): consumed large amounts of alcohol in old age, primarily after her son's first imprisonment. In spite of this, her death cannot be clearly attributed to alcoholism.

V.V. (6): was spending time in prison for drunken violence and breaches of peace.

G.V. (10): died while drunk on the street in the village; fell on the way home and froze to death.

G.I. (12): ex-partner of A.V.I. – two years older. They were constant drinking companions; alcohol brought them together and destroyed their relationship as well. At the time of my research, they were no longer in contact with one another and her actual whereabouts were unknown.

N.N.A. (14): younger sister of G.I., shot V.P.K. (see: next family, 26); officially wife of A.V.I. at the time of my research, shot by A.V.I. after four years of marriage.

The second male subject is P.M.M., who – by his own admission – had been a heavy drinker during his youth. When proposing to his future wife, he had informed her that he would cooperate with her in everything, that he would work hard and bring all of his earnings home, but also that he would continue drinking just as he had before. He did as promised: in spite of his constant work, the couple was always experiencing financial trouble because P.M.M. spent a significant portion of his income on alcohol.

Changes came to his life in April of 1994, when his brother died. This was the sibling with whom he had had the closest relationship. They had been intimately connected economically and helped each other a great deal. His brother's death came in the form of a lethal accident in the wake of a drunken binge which almost killed P.M.M. as well (see: below). The person who broke the news claimed he saw P.M.M. "grow old" right before his eyes. For a long period of time, P.M.M. even avoided the hunting territory

[28] The figures indicated here reflect conditions in 1999. I have not continued to track the lives of these individuals in the time since then.

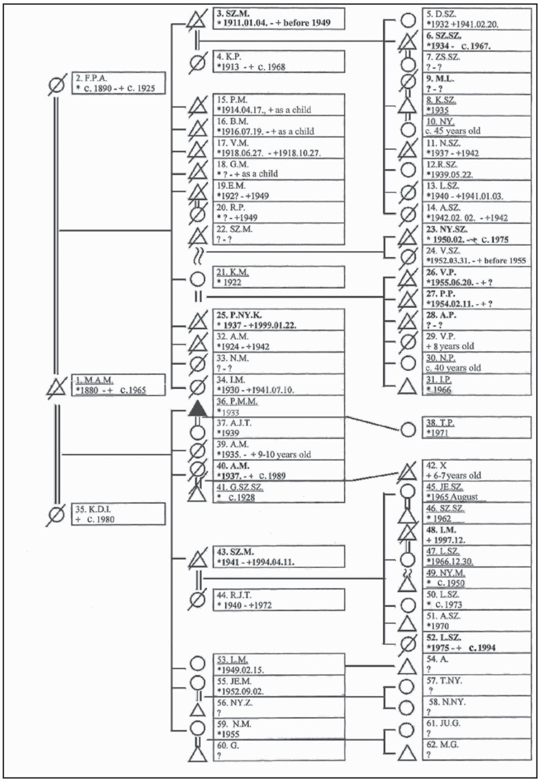

Figure 3. The family tree of P.M.M.

where he and his brother had hunted together, and he also began drinking less and less vodka.

The final push came when a certain “professor” from Moscow was invited to the village. This individual was supposedly capable of curing heavy drinkers by using hypnosis and a few drops of poison on the tongue. He was said to have “de-coded” many other alcoholics prior to his visit. According to P.M.M.’s wife, the “poison” was actually pure alcohol, and the professor assigned a treatment interval of two years, during which any consumption of alcohol could prove lethal. It was his wife who convinced P.M.M. to take part in the treatment and persuaded the “professor” to lengthen the treatment for her husband to five years. The appearance of the man from Moscow had a tremendous impact on P.M.M., being a manifestation of the authority he had always feared and shunned. An important contributing factor may also have been that P.M.M. was very familiar with his own Khanty religion. He still practiced certain rituals, knew of sacred legends, kept religious rules and believed in them. Therefore, it is easy to understand why the orders of a “holy man” were to be obeyed without question. For P.M.M., prohibition and the related punishment seemed completely believable and real. As a consequence of this quasi-religious regulation, and through the effective assistance of his wife, he managed to remain abstinent throughout the time of my research, even though the delegated time frame had already expired.[29]

It should be mentioned that at the time I was writing this study, P.M.M. was the only one among thirty people involved in the treatment who actually did not drink at all. There was also a mining engineer, who only continued drinking moderately, but all of the others relapsed.

Despite the explanations above, the question of why someone becomes abstinent in Khanty culture still requires an answer. In the case of P.M.M., the reason cannot be traced to his personality, but to that of his wife, A.J.T. (37), and to her life story and her attitude. A.J.T. was born in a now uninhabited area along the Chertala, a tributary of the Vasyugan River. Her family constantly starved during the war, and following her mother’s death

[29] Following the first publication of my research, P.M.M. lived for an additional 15 years and maintained his abstinence.

she was taken to a foster home. During her youth, she resided at foster homes in the area of Tomsk and was thus raised in an urban environment. Eventually, she obtained three secondary diplomas in economics, health care and typing. She lived and worked for a long time in Tomsk and then in Krasnoyarsk. It was from this environment that she entered life in the "yurt" and the village, keenly aware of the prevalent circumstances. She precisely observed and defined the consequences of her husband's alcoholism – and that of the Khanty in general – and when she saw a chance to take advantage of the opportunities dictated by the circumstances, she used every bit of the authority and cunning she had at her disposal to help him stop drinking and remain abstinent.

P.M.M. continued to derive pleasure from participating in drinking sessions, but only as quiet observer. He greatly enjoyed watching the antics of drunken revellers, but never drank a drop of alcohol. At first, people had tremendous difficulty accepting his abstinence, but later he was simply offered drinks out of politeness and was never forced. P.M.M. himself strongly condemned drunkenness, but he was happy to recount the drunken adventures of his youth. Three generations of his family are included below. Heavy drinking, alcoholism and alcohol related death are clearly evident in the case of 23 family members over three generations.

TOTAL	62 persons
Deceased	**36**
Death attributed to alcohol	10
Death not attributed to alcohol	16
No precise information regarding cause of death or history of alcohol consumption	10
Living	**26**
Alcoholic	13
Former alcoholic	1
Children	4
Adult, abstinent	4
Adult, drinking habits unknown	4

Figure 4. The family of P.M.M. – statistics concerning alcohol consumption

Father: M.A.M. (1), also a well-known heavy drinker; went on year-long acquisition trips during his youth and requested that a bottle of vodka be placed in his grave. It is unknown whether alcohol was directly responsible for his death or not.

Son: S.M. (3), also known to be a rambunctious drinker; his first partner, a 16-year-old girl, escaped home to her parents after living with him for two weeks. The cause of his death is unknown, except for the fact that he died while drunk.

S.S. (6) died at the age of 33 when he burned to death while inebriated in the oil mine.

K.S. (8) was a family member in the "yurt", possibly the one who was most dependent on alcohol. I have mentioned above that he did not even handle his own pension, but regularly drank away all of his income. He had already suffered several accidents: almost dying of delirium tremens, burning down his house while drunk, and shooting his own mouth with a shotgun, obviously an attempted suicide (although not admitted).

Wife of K.S.: M.L. (9), also a victim of alcohol. The exact circumstances of her death are unknown. The official version stated that she went outside to the street during the winter in the nude, fell asleep and froze to death. Her husband, who had been drinking with her, did not discover that she had died until the following morning. Other accounts suggest that she was murdered by the drunken husband and his aunt.

Partner of K.S.: N.Y. (10), a Russian woman who lived in the village with her children. Their relationship was mainly characterised by the fact that they were "drinking buddies". Their drinking was usually financed by K.S. This fact, and their relationship in general, was the subject of many jokes among their relatives and acquaintances.

K.M. (21) was already 80 years old and her health was deteriorating, which meant that she had to leave her cabin and settlement in the taiga in order to move into the village. After this, she was left with practically nothing to do, and by her own admission the only goal of her daily life was to end the day. She lived in constant lack of money, which was only alleviated somewhat by the sporadic arrival of her pension. When this money arrived, she would get drunk with her family for days at a time, after which the moneyless cycle would begin again. The only changes in her life had come during her periods of "dryness": she had been a heavy drinker previously as well, drinking similar quantities with similar intensity, but she had also worked very hard. Even at the age of 72, she had still gone hunting and fishing.

Son: N.S. (23), died before the age of 30 as the result of a typical and frequent accident; he fell into the Vasyugan River and drowned in the icy spring water.

Husband: P.N.K. (25), died during the time of my fieldwork; the circumstances of his death were not clear. The only certainty was that his death was preceded by a drinking binge which lasted several days. His son had acquired a large sum of money from hunting, which they drank away quickly thereafter. On the day of his death, he had also picked up his pension, after which he purchased some bottles of vodka and drank them with his wife, his son and a friend. After four bottles of vodka, his son went out for more and returned with four newer bottles. They became progressively drunker, drinking larger and larger glasses of vodka until – according to the accepted version – P.N.K. stood up, asked his wife if there was water in the wash basin, washed his hands, lay down on the floor and stayed that way. His heart could not take the strain. His death went unnoticed by his completely drunk fallen asleep on the kitchen floor. It also seems certain that he was already dead by the time the police who visited the house that evening arrived (for reasons undisclosed here). Among those present at the time, the friend was escorted to the police station and was only released the following day. When he returned to the house, he found P.H.K. lying on the floor next to his son. At first – not remembering anything – he wanted to help the older man get up and noticed that his hands were cold. He woke the drunken boy up and notified P.N.K.'s brother-in-law, who then finally began to organise the burial of the corpse, which by then had been on the floor for almost a day. The funeral itself had to be organised practically from beginning to end by distant relatives since the drunken wife was incapable of doing anything. She continuously begged for more vodka, and her son was not capable of much either due to his hangover. Having lost all self-control, he went out to the street in freezing temperatures in a hat without earmuffs and contracted frost-bite. This was the most accepted version of P.N.K.'s death. The varying accounts may also have been due to the fact that no-one involved could remember exactly what happened because they were all drunk, or – according to public opinion in the village – they actually did not want to remember. It is not precisely known who was actually present or whether anyone else had been at the scene in addition to the three people mentioned. There was also no acceptable explanation for the spots of haematoma that covered the corpse, the existence of which the woman who washed the body did not keep secret. Many considered it likely that the victim was killed in the course of a fight, and there was much gossip asserting that P.N.K. was poisoned by drinking poor quality vodka with a high acetone content – which was not confirmed by the police investigation.

P.N.K.'s sons were well-known bachelors in the area of the village. They were exceptionally handsome, excellent hunters, and they had a reputation for rowdiness. Their deaths were all directly attributed to vodka, one exception being the result of a fight. V.P. (26) got into a quarrel and a fight with his younger brother during a family vodka binge and killed him by stabbing him several times. V.P. died in a similar way: during a drinking spree, an old schoolmate recalled the time V.P. had reported him to a teacher on duty in the dormitory for stealing a cassette-player, after which the schoolmate murdered him with a shotgun. P.P. (27) suffered from epilepsy and died when he rolled into a lake during a seizure. Some claimed that he was also drunk before his death.

Among siblings who were still alive, N.P. (30) had completed college and was living in the Ukraine with her husband and two children. Family members knew little about her standard of living or about how she financed it since her own account was different from that of her children. Even so, it was clear that when she visited the village, her lifestyle was similar to that of her family, with equally intensive alcohol consumption.

I.P. (31) was the only surviving male child and was unmarried: his partner was a married woman who he often drank together with. In keeping with the alcohol, their relationship was stormy and also embellished by incidents of stabbing. He was the one who relatives unanimously condemned for his wasteful negligence of the family hunting territory and their cabins in the taiga.

T.P. (38) was P.M.M.'s only daughter, who lived for a long time in Tomsk, after which she made a living as a huckster. She lived in a bunkhouse for a considerable length of time and then with her fiancé's parents until he died in a workplace accident. She then began living in bunkhouses again, drinking more and more until her mother convinced her to return to the village. The only work she could find was a job as a maid at the nearby oil-extracting town, where shifts changed once a month. This existence exacerbated her drinking until she finally lost her reputation and was branded in the village as a derelict alcoholic. The final push, however, was when her parents also witnessed her lifestyle first-hand after a lonely drinking binge. She tried to change her situation by committing suicide, but she recovered from the trauma, everything carried on as it had before.

A.M. (40) died while she was ill. She was unable to walk and lived alone after her husband had abandoned her, under the care of relatives. She was also taken care of by one of her girlfriends, until they had a mutual drinking binge during which the electric hotplate was knocked over and the house caught fire. Drunken as well as disabled, she burned to death in the house. Many claimed that it was not an accident, suggesting wilful intent.

A.M.’s ex-husband, G.S.S. (41), was an old man who regularly kept his house locked and only made contact with his acquaintances during his frequent and lengthy drinking sprees. In spite of this, he was preparing for his second wedding in 1999 and many people in the village expected that marriage would give him less opportunity to drink.

S.M. (43) was P.M.M.’s closest sibling in terms of age, lifestyle, work habits and moral views. They helped one another regularly. They were also drinking together with S.M. and his brother-in-law, I.M. (48), on April 11, 1994 – but as I have already mentioned, P.M.M. parted ways with them. On the aforementioned occasion, S.M. and the brother-in-law intended to visit an oil-well by snowmobile. Being drunk, S.M. fell off the vehicle (unnoticed by his brother-in-law) and presumably fell asleep on the road. He died violently when a lorry carrying pipes ran over his prone body. His remains were found scattered over a large area and the driver of the lorry was never identified. Wilful intent was also suspected in this case, and some people accused his brother-in-law of being responsible for his death. S.M. had also planned to attend the sobriety séance that had made his brother abstinent, but it was held three months after his death.

S.M.’s oldest daughter was J.S. (45), the wife of S.S. (46), who was a Cossack. Her husband was a heavy drinker, which led to many workplace conflicts. J.S., however, drank far less at the time since she could hardly afford to leave the house while raising her two children. On the other hand, she participated in her husband’s drinking binges at home and regularly became drunk as well.

L.S. (47) had an Udmurtian husband, I.M. (48), who played a role in the death of his father-in-law. In the beginning, I.M. proved to be an extremely diligent man, and his wife’s relatives had positive memories of him throughout the time of my research. He had great difficulty coping with his wife’s alcoholism, and when it turned out that she was cheating on him regularly, he wanted to divorce her and move back to Udmurtia. The economic recession at the time made this impossible and he also began to drink more and more. He continuously drank away the valuables they had accumulated: the television, the washing machine, food supplies. Two years after an unsuccessful suicide attempt, when he shot himself in the neck, his wife’s lover killed him by pressing a pillow over his mouth and strangling him. After her husband’s death, his wife continued to drink non-stop, regularly wasting her widow pension and her family allowance. Her two children were often starving and were provided for by relatives. Due to her lifestyle, she was penalised by the local government, which threatened to take her children away from her. Other members of her family, including her brother and her aunt, also supported the idea of placing the children in a foster home. The first child was born with a spinal injury, which proved fatal within a month. His mother was unwilling to care for him and drank away the money that had been saved for his care. She did not even bury the child. Her lover was L.S. (47), a Russian, who remained with her until he was imprisoned, which scandalised many people since everyone already held him responsible for her husband’s death before the police investigation was even closed. He beat her regularly, and she was even hospitalised with a broken jaw as a result. In the end, L.S. was found guilty of four murders. In spite of this, both his partner and his children sent him home since his presence at least meant some form of security. If he was home, their mother stayed home as well and there was food on the table regularly. After he was imprisoned, the children were afraid to go home because they never knew who would be there and when, so they moved in with their aunt.

L.Z. (52) worked in Tomsk, where she married a Russian boy. After their wedding, the boy was killed by his former lover, who poisoned him out of jealousy. He was 19 years old.

L.M. (53) was the black sheep of the family, regarded by everyone as a derelict alcoholic. He did not live in the village, but in the county seat, Kargasok. He maintained no contact with the family. His alcoholism was often the subject of conversation, however, and he was constantly mentioned with scorn and irony, frequently in comparison to his two sons, who led exemplary lives away from him. These harsh opinions were no doubt rooted in the fact that he had torn away from the family and was inhospitable to relatives who occasionally visited him.

SUMMARY

As we have seen, alcohol plays an undeniable role in the culture of the Khanty. It is present in every aspect of their lives: in the self-definition and identity of individuals, in sacred rituals, in the behavioural norms of profane culture, in folklore, in housekeeping preferences, in the dominance and organisation of values, in divisions of labour, in perceptions of crime, as a leading principle of fate, and as a frequent cause of death. The situation of the Khanty cannot be regarded as unique, however. Similar phenomena can be observed in all cultures where alcohol consumption is not limited by society. In these environments, alcohol becomes both the aim and the meaning of acts, socially legitimised in the same way and losing its criminal character. Where strong systems of prohibition are lacking, alcohol becomes absolute and leads to an alcohol-centred system of values in which there is always a reason to drink and individuals are always forgiven: an alcohol culture.

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Gift-Giving and Hospitality in Eritrean Tigrinya Society

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Abstract: In the present study, with the help of Eritrean examples, the author discusses how objects and visits become a means of expression for relationships and social connections. In Tigrinya society, kinship and friendly relationships have great significance, their preservation is secured by frequent visits, meetings and phone calls. They are completed by gifts, the sharing of food, contributions and loans, which move between the individuals within society, in the form of objects and money. Every transaction and exchange signifies the quality of a relationship and an event.

Starting with a summary of theories that has influenced her ideas of gift-giving, the author continues with a discussion of the types of gifts she has seen in her Eritrean field, and presents the argument that the movement of objects in society signifies the intensity and quality of social bonds and the relationship between the specific individuals involved. She also attempts to map patterns of commonality. This is followed by a discussion, in which – through interpreting objects, individuals, and occasions as signifiers –, she endeavours to outline some general characteristics of Tigrinya society.

Keywords: Eritrea, Tigrinya, gift-giving, hospitality, economic anthropology, migration

In this paper, I show through Eritrean examples how objects and visiting become markers expressing social conditions and relations. Circulating gift items and visitations make interpersonal relations closer, that is, they integrate society while also demarcating boundaries – admitting some, excluding others – so their function is “to create order in an otherwise chaotic social world”.[1]

I find that in Eritrea[2] as well as among Eritrean expatriates, the concepts of kinship and friendship are non-contractual principles which set out the obligations of individuals. The terms of kinship and friendship require that in times of need, financial or other

1 Eriksen 2001:118 makes this apt conclusion about kinship.
2 I have been conducting research in the Eritrean highlands since 2004, having spent a total of one and a half years in the field.

assistance should be provided. In these relationships, such a code is ensured by keeping in contact, which also foreshadows that telephone conversations and in-person visits with Eritreans living abroad and with relatives living in cities are accorded just as great a significance as gifts.

In the first part of the paper, after a brief presentation of the theoretical background, I present the characteristic types of gifting I experienced in my fieldwork, and argue that the movement of objects in society indicates the intensity and quality of social relations as well as the relationship between the people involved. I seek to find out what characterizes these types of gifting. In the second part of the paper, I attempt to provide the general characteristics of Tigrinya society by interpreting objects, people and occasions as indicators.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Below, I summarize the ideas about gifting in anthropological literature that have had an impact on my interpretation of the field data collected. The main points of the theoretical background are the following: a.) the concept of inalienability; b.) a demonstration of status differences; c.) the gift as a "marking service"(Douglas – Isherwood 1996:50–52).

During the processing of the data, I examined the relationship between goods and persons as defined by society by building on the foundations laid by Mauss (Mauss 1997:20–33). Mauss' analysis posits that gifting is an integrating force in society. The triad of giving, accepting and reciprocating is mandatory between linked individuals and groups, therefore these acts are culturally defined and regulated by moral codes. To Mauss, the gift is at once the antithesis of war: "To refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war" (Mauss 1997:13).

Godelier then eventually significantly diverges from them and augments his analysis when he addresses the issue of inalienable property based on his own research among the Baruya (Godelier 1999) embraces and further considers Mauss' findings. Following Weiner, Godelier believes that there is no society in which everything can be the object of exchange, and without the presence of sacred objects, the preservation of society would not be possible either.

So, on the one hand, objects are capable of contributing to the reproduction of society through these exchanges, a feature emphasized by Lévi-Strauss (Lévi-Strauss, 1969:52–68). On the other hand, they also play a role in the preservation of identity, which in turn was underscored by Weiner (Weiner 1992:6–11). The reality of socialized objects expresses this duality. One can choose who to give to or who not to give to, but if one wants to maintain relations, i.e., to remain a social actor in society, it cannot cease to give and receive (Godelier 1999:67). Godelier shows that valuable items "are given while being kept" (Godelier 1999:100), thus inalienability contains the potential joint legitimacy of these two aspects.

In my analysis, I used Weiner's and Godelier's concept of inalienability, applicable in the Eritrean examples to collective ownership, the object of which is land.

In Godelier's analysis, inalienability is inseparable from power as the inalienable objects define the political relations of the groups due to the fact that their value is not in the everyday practice of social existence, but rather stem from the imaginary sphere. This is just as valid among the Baruya as in Western societies (Godelier 1999:171–200).[3]

The object or gift can be a means of demonstrating, marking, recording, and even altering power relations. The fact that status differences must be considered when analyzing gifting was made clear by Mauss' concept of "total services of an agonistic type" (Mauss 1997:7), an issue to which Godelier devotes considerable space, and he stresses the dual nature of the act, since solidarity is associated with superiority (Godelier 1999:12).

Firth also addresses the gifting obligations stemming from the status differences between researcher and researched community, and declares that the a priori status differences between the anthropologist and the members of the community are determinant (Firth 1967:11–13).

These writings determined how I would analyze the requirements for gifting between Eritreans living abroad and those at home. Through these types of exchanges, the expectations of those back home towards the emigrants are formulated, and so is their own national identity in light of the information obtained about other countries through acquaintances and relatives. The exchanges are non-verbal expressions of the relationship between the homeland and the diaspora.

I also rely heavily on the concepts of "marking service" and "consumption ritual" by Douglas and Isherwood (Douglas – Isherwood 1996:xxii), which I find pertinent because they provide a single theory that can describe the movement of gifts and objects, as well as visits and courtesy formulas. The authors demonstrate how goods form an information system, how their use and ownership supplies information about social groups, their relationships, their members and their affiliations (Douglas – Isherwood 1996:xxii). How people and objects are used as markers, and thus ensure the interpretation of social processes.

A brief description of the theoretical background has served to show which factors were taken into account in my analysis of the Eritrean data. Now I will turn to the processing and interpretation of the experiences I gained in the field.

While describing the data, I try to show that in cases where the donor is an individual, the object is typically intertwined with the original owner and can replace him. The idea that an object is able to replace a person arises in Mauss' and Godelier's work. On the other hand, in my interpretation of community ownership, I found that Weiner's approach proved to be more apt, which is that land, along with other non-material values, is able to mark the continuity of the kinship group.

WEDDING GIFTS

My eldest paternal aunt, Ilen, got married in a village. Her future husband's father was no longer alive, so her future mother-in-law asked her late husband's brother to inquire after a marriageable girl at his friend's house. Ilen's father first rejected the request, arguing that even his eldest daughter was only seven years old. She [the mother of the

[3] Since it diverges from the subject of this study, I will not address Godelier's concept of the twin foundations of society.

prospective husband] did not leave it at that, and insisted that some kind of an agreement be reached between the two families. To seal this agreement, the prospective mother-in-law placed a necklace around Ilen's neck. For three years they remained on good terms, and the girl was ten years old when she got engaged. The boy brought a gift to the engagement party: a gold cross, clothes, and shoes. They agreed that the wedding would take place in a year and a half.

When the prospective mother-in-law placed the necklace around Ilen's neck, this indicated to everyone that the girl had been betrothed. The gift imposed an obligation upon the family and ensured that the promise was not broken. Following Mauss' train of thought, the girl's family became indebted to the boy's family (Mauss 1997:39–43). The debt started a series of exchanges, at the end of which the girl moved in with the boy's family. The gifts exchanged at the engagement party, and later during the wedding, far exceeded the value of the first necklace, hence the commitment of the two parties increased significantly. According to Sahlins, gifting following weddings is not seen as perfectly balanced among well-balanced reciprocities, because the gifts are not fully equivalent. In his opinion, if it were otherwise, any party could easily cancel the agreement, making their relationship fragile (Sahlins 2004:223). We cannot speak of perfect symmetry in Tigrinya society even despite the fact that they continuously strive for an immediate requiting of gifts received. Frequent gift exchanges, due to the movement of objects, entails sharing of material goods, which is a basic characteristic of the family. As the transactions exceed the limits of the family, so the intimate medium becomes more extensive.

The girl puts on the clothes and jewelry received as engagement gifts with the help of her prospective mother-in-law, and sports them at the event. This is part of the gesture of accepting. The gifts are usually immediately requited by the girl's family. The counter-gift is known as "*menlesi igre*" (to be able to go home), and while in the past, or in villages even today, it consisted mainly of cattle, in cities it is now paid in cash. The girl's family always tries to reciprocate the gift received with something equal in value to the value it represents. The purpose of the counter-gift, therefore, is not to make the boy's family indebted, or to lay down a hierarchy between them, but to express the girl's family's consent and dedication to the wedding, while at the same time committing the boy's family to continuing their proposal. And the exchanges are designed to ensure each other of their generosity, which is the basis of kinship relationships.

The most precious gifts are usually exchanged by the parties on their wedding day. This is when the boy presents the gold and silver jewelry intended for the girl, the approximate value of which will be reimbursed by the girl's family. Elsewhere I presented that the amount paid, or the value of the gifts given to the bride, has increased so much that today marriage is a serious burden on both families (Tesfay 2013:14–16).

For the purpose of this paper, however, it is more interesting to examine how the gifts before and after marriage illustrate changes in relationships. Through the engagement and the wedding, an indirect acquaintance or even friendship becomes affinal kinship. This qualitative shift, by which we mean the shift from balanced reciprocity to generalized reciprocity (Sahlins 2004:185–277), is followed by frequent gift exchanges and visits. These acts are given particular emphasis in the period when the girl and the boy are merely betrothed to each other, i.e., during the most transitional period. This is when the two families are generous with each other within their capabilities, and mutually invite each other to every family event. These include baptisms, family memorials, and the *ngdet* (feast of the church's patron saint, when every household in the area expects friends and relatives to visit).

I pointed out above that for Mauss the gift is the antithesis to war. Financial transactions before and after the wedding combine the economic interests of the two groups of concerned relatives, since with the expansion of relationships comes, to some extent, the assumption of common financial responsibility. The intertwining of interests also means that conflicts between the two families shall be prevented. This is also important because feuds between cognates are common, whereas relationships with affines are lighter, less conflict-laden – perhaps due to the fact that they do not usually come into contact on a daily basis. In Sárkány's comparative work on the exchange circumstances of four societies, the more a need-based exchange characterizes the relationship between the groups involved in marriage, the more significance is assigned to the economic aspects of marriage (Sárkány 1998:36,48,83). My understanding is that in marriage exchanges in Tigrinya society, the primary focus is on goodwill and reciprocity, as is the case among the Lovedu people that Sárkány studied (Sárkány 1998:83).

The case of my grandmother, which indicates considerable movement of goods, also illustrates the social merger of the two families through economic involvement:

When she gave birth to her seventh child, her second eldest daughter was already engaged. Upon the birth of the baby, her daughter's future father-in-law slaughtered a sheep, and brought its meat, along with sweet leavened bread, clothes, and gold, to her as gifts. In return, my grandparents gave him a big bowl of grain and a donkey. In my father's recollections, from that moment on he was free to go in and out of the future father-in-law's house. The economic side is thus inseparable from the social side, the two serving to explain each other.

The gifts are remembered clearly even after decades, and are often recounted. The gifts and their corresponding names are a basic "marking service". Marriage agreements are highly valued "low frequency" events (Douglas – Isherwood 1996:82–84) during which gifts are exchanged in the presence of all those gathered. The number of gathered guests, as well as the value of the gift items, indicates the prestige of the event. Items handed over in the presence of witnesses become a representation of the joining of the young couple and their families, thus becoming inalienable from their original owners. Even decades later, the act of the gift transfer ultimately recalls the giver's identity, thereby authenticating the marriage, legitimizing the present.

The financial implications of marriage agreements, on the one hand, make the relationship between the two families tighter, while, on the other hand, they create communities on both sides.[4] The symbolic expression of this is seen in the temporary wedding tent, when the bride's and groom's relatives are seated facing each other and negotiate who should bring what into the new household. The event may often seem like haggling, even though today the final outcome is agreed upon in advance.

Pre-wedding gift exchanges strengthen the solidarity of both kinship groups: At my grandmother's wedding, at the bride's family alone a quintal of *suwa* (home-made

[4] The exchange of highly valuable items is significant not only for strengthening solidarity within and between the groups but also for ensuring a lasting marriage. Driberg mentions this when describing the socially disruptive impact the British colonial administration's efforts to limit the maximum value of the bride price had had (Driberg 1927:167–169).

millet beer), a half quintal of *gaat* (polenta with spiced clarified butter), one and a half quintal of *taita* (bread made of teff) one and a half quintal of *dagusha* (a type of millet), and half a cow was consumed, the price of which, in my grandmother's determination, was a total of 500 lira. On top of this came the dowry. She claimed, furthermore, that her husband's family spent slightly more on the goods consumed at the wedding as there were more guests there. At the same time, on the revenue side for both families is the *ödme*, which is made up of contributions by wedding guests. On Sunday, they surveyed the gifts from the groom's family, and offered up the amount collected on Saturday. In her case, it was 1,000 liras, which was about 100 liras more than what the groom's family spent on the jewelry and clothes given to her. Back then, they could only speculate how big a gift the boy's family would bring. Everything was verified on Sunday, and if they did not come to a satisfying agreement, it could then, according to my grandmother, lead to conflicts later.

Hence, a significant part of these wedding expenses were put together by relatives and friends. Today, in the communities I have researched – in a town and in a village close to a town – a couple and their families cannot count on similar financial support; nonetheless, associations known as *mahber* do help their members in organizing high-cost events. *Mahbers* can be found in urban and rural communities alike, organized partly on a religious basis and partly on a shared workplace, or a common descent, sector, or the residency of its members. Weddings and funerals are mentioned most often as events for which an individual can expect help from the *mahber*. In such cases, the association can lend money or tents and dishes if it has some. In the village I researched, there are several sectors which own dishes and tents; in this context, it is not insignificant, then, that these kinship units previously owned land, but now it is only the tents and dishes that are the common property of its members.

Guests contribute to the wedding of their own relatives, neighbors, and fellow villagers (*ödme*). These monetary or material donations occur as a function of the variables of social relations and prosperity. The mapping of the gifting, therefore, carries information related to these two variables.

Urbanization, in this regard, brought on changes that narrowed the circle of relatives who may be interested in a marriage and therefore not feel obliged to support it. Instead of donations, it is now loans that help families to marry their children. This, however, will in many cases be repaid by the young husband. So while his coming of age used to be assisted considerably by community contributions, today a young man is often connected to other members of the society through his debts. The repayment of loans is often a lengthy process and connotes a lasting bond. The movement of goods and objects – whether in the form of contributions or loans – leads to the flexibility of the social fabric: the relationships between individuals are strengthened by it. According to Sahlins, the gift creates something between the two parties: it eventuates in continuity and solidarity until it is repaid (Sahlins 2004:208). Thus, it is obvious why socially important events involve substantial financial flows; namely, through the creation of solidary relations, the transactions ensure the reproduction of society.

According to Bourdieu, "the institutionally organised and guaranteed misrecognition,

"which is essentially the idea that both the giver and the receiver of the gift try to make the impression that they do not expect the gift to be repaid, "is the basis of gift-exchange and,

> perhaps, of all the symbolic labor intended to transmute, by the sincere fiction of a disinterested exchange, the inevitable, and inevitably interested relations imposed by kinship, neighborhood, or work, into elective relations of reciprocity: in the work of reproducing established relations – through feasts, ceremonies, exchanges of gifts, visits or courtesies, and, above all, marriages." (Bourdieu 1995:171)

In the context of the newly formed relationships, this has particular significance. While the Nuer were capable of expressing affinal relations through the transfer of cattle (Evans-Pritchard 1940:16–17), the most important source of livelihood for the Tigrinya was arable land, which, being communal property, played a role in marriage transactions only in exceptional cases. So neither communal land, nor animals played a role in the exchanges accompanying marriage. Instead of this, holidays, exchanged gifts, visits, and mutual displays of respect form the basis of reproducing already established relationships, "which is no less vital to the existence of the group than the reproduction of the economic bases of its existence" (Bourdieu 1995:171).

CHRISTMAS GIFTING AND KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH EXPATRIATES

One Christmas, my grandmother, who lives in a village, received a plastic Christmas tree as a gift from her daughter living in Germany. Every year around December, they set up the tree and place under it the postcards and photos received from relatives in previous years.

Among the locals, gift-giving around this time is not typical; instead, they visit each other, and may bring along some pastries or coffee, which they consume together. Relatives living abroad would call their closest family members and ask about everyone back home.

The holiday thus offers them the opportunity to express their solidarity on the basis of kinship or friendship. In this case, postcards or phone calls substitute individuals. Sometimes festively wrapped boxes are also placed under the tree, but they do not contain gifts.

How can a kinship-based society deal with the continuous emigration of its members, where one's place in the village is still determined by kinship affiliation and the group is an individual's mainstay? Neighbors, friends, acquaintances often visit each other. Presence is a visible sign of fostering a relationship. Within the village, children are often sent to others with messages, and they often bring something along, as well as get a bite to eat. Sometimes they even carry the wedding contribution when the invitee is not available in person. One is thus substitutable by a postcard, a family photograph, or a child. (It is not insignificant, however, that these substitutes carry less prestige than the invitee showing up at the event.) All these carry something personal, though, and are therefore inalienable from their original owner: the child is directly linked to the parents through blood; monetary gifts are registered in the wedding tent with the donor's name; the photos show the donor and his/her family; and the postcard was sent and written personally by the donor.

When the holiday dictates that family and friends gather together, expatriate family members substitute their presence with objects (postcards, photos, phone calls). In reference to the use of mobile phones, Smith notes that in addition to the spread of mobile phones in Nigerian society as status indicators, their role in distribution and reciprocity should also be emphasized. Those who can afford to charge their phones are sometimes obligated, other times free to decide whether to share it with others by calling them back or contacting them. The proper use of mobile phones fits into the existing social order while complementing the established forms of social contact. The phone is often used as if to pop in on someone, ask about their well-being, and therefore its social value is high (Smith 2007:245–248). Possession of the device not only saves time but also makes the individual available to friends and relatives. According to Douglas and Isherwood, these two factors lead to social differences (Douglas – Isherwood 1996:90–92). Everyone wants to be a mobile phone owner. Those who cannot afford one use their friends' phones to call their friends when necessary. Although there is no transfer of property, someone must assume the costs and, as Smith noted with regard to the Nigerian scenario, airtime credits are not considered to be loan debts among the Tigrinya either. Instead, the phone provides the opportunity to accumulate symbolic capital, thus giving it the ability to create social differences. "Once one realises that symbolic capital is always credit, in the widest sense of the word, i.e., the line of advance which the group alone can grant those who give it the best material and symbolic guarantees, it can be seen that the exhibition of symbolic capital (which is always very expensive in economic terms) is one of the mechanisms which (no doubt universally) make capital go to capital." (Bourdieu 1995:181) However, the relationship between the symbolic capital and the financial capital is generally not revealed. The used credits are not reimbursed by anyone, but the owner's symbolic capital increases.

Bourdieu's thoughts help us understand how a relationship can survive even if the gift remains unrequited. The concept of symbolic capital provides an explanation for this. Mauss describes the giving, receiving and requiting of the gift as binding, and attributes the initiative to the fact that giving creates an obligation (Mauss 1997:10–14). Among competing types of total services, the lack of recompense could mean that the person failing to meet his or her obligation falls behind (Cronk 1997:157). In essence, this can happen if the parties involved are compeers and might be engaged in a status competition. At the same time, there are many different examples in anthropological literature of cultural practices that prevent the formation of status differences arising from distribution (Lee 1997:26–33).[5] In the following, I address the status differences gifting creates in Tigrinya society.

THE STATUS OF EXPATRIATES AND THEIR GIFTS

Mobile phone ownership conveys a certain financial position, as does living abroad and coming home for a visit. Thus, possession of certain objects and one's residence creates status differences, often becoming expressions of unequal social relationships.

Following in Mauss' footsteps, Godelier emphasizes that during gifting a double-edged relationship is established: on the one hand, a sign of solidarity, as one shares their possessions with the other person; on the other hand, a sign of superiority, as by their acceptance the other person acknowledges their debt and subordination (Godelier 1999:12). I pointed out earlier that Bourdieu resolves the same situation through the notion of symbolic capital, in which, instead of subordination, a credit redeemable for

[5] Richard Borshay Lee's classic case study shows which cultural practices the !Kung Bushmen employ to prevent the formation of status differences. Contrary to the author's expectations, the friends of the !Kung Bushmen did not praise but rather decried the gifts they received.

material things emerges. According to Godelier, however, because of this dual role, gifting can be defined by both generosity and violence.

Considering that diaspora Eritreans come home for a visit packed with gifts for loved ones, firmly unequal relations are safe to assume. (It is typically upon departure that residents provide their emigrant relatives with domestic foods and grains, i.e., goods which could not be purchased abroad.) This is due to both financial reasons as well as a notion of the world outside of Eritrea. Gifts can only confirm this world, and the more objects indicating the presence of foreign visitors, the richer the picture of the "foreign land" that emerges among the locals. Each family strives to help one or more of its members go abroad. Taking someone home in a suitcase is the eternal object of jokes. Among locals, living abroad is the same as having the opportunity to get rich. This, too, is confirmed by the gifts that are sent home. Therefore, the superiority latent in gifting ranks the members of society, and Eritreans living abroad become the privileged group. Gifting of this nature, like donation, helps preserve influence and status hierarchy.

The Eritrean government recognized the integrative role of such transactions when it decreed that Eritreans living abroad should pay 2% of their salary to the state in order to keep their citizenship and be able to purchase realty. Otherwise they lose the benefits of citizenship. This concept, however, also entails the notion that the land, the native land is in the hands of the government empowered by the "nation", Previously, administration of the lands providing their livelihood was handled by sectors, just as land was owned by kinship groups. Individuals could receive arable land through their sectoral affiliation. The Ethiopian Dergue[6] land law of 1975, and later the independent Eritrean government, identified the state as the owner of the land in 1994. At the same time, entitlement was tied to service in the interest of the nation. In this Tronvoll sees the state's efforts to fracture the corporate cohesion of close-knit rural communities and confining the individual directly to the state apparatus (Tronvoll 1998:277).

Neither today, nor in the past was land ever the subject of bargaining and exchange – except in some special cases. Land has always been possessed by a kinship group, and it has secured the financial basis of the group; the group's reproduction depended on it, as did its ability to maintain continuity independent of individuals. Hence the unity of the land and the people living on it. Just as kinship – and its structural units, the sectors – ensures the continuity of the group and links those living now to the past and the present alike, land does the same by being community property (Lévi-Strauss 1969:46).[7]

The kinship map reflects the real geographical terrain (Bohannan 1963:105).[8] The houses and plots of agnatic relatives are located adjacent to each other (land reform makes this impossible today, but it can still be clearly seen in village housing). Apart from Muslims, over time all settlers became members of one of the sectors, and in such a way so as not to contradict the structural principle of kinship and land. In other words, an individual's admission first happened within the family, and if they managed to get access to land (through the influence of the head of the family), their sectoral affiliation

[6] Derg or Dergue is the name of the military regime in Ethiopia between 1974 and 1987.

[7] Lévi-Strauss makes a similar observation about yam in Dobu, stressing that the production and distribution of yam ensures the continuity of groups, i.e., yam reproduces similarly to human groups.

[8] Paul Bohannan makes a similar observation about the Tiv in Nigeria.

was then also resolved. The numerous confusing genealogies were then soon forgotten by the group (Tesfay 2014).

Kinship therefore means an inalienable status while land is an inalienable property. The intertwining and inalienability of the two made it possible for individuals to share their wealth with each other because, on the one hand, these two secured the assets that were included in the exchange, and, on the other hand, they meant financial security.

This principle was recognized by the government when it made the state the owner of lands, and by which it partly took over the role of the sectors. Since it became owner of the land, the state seized a function that previously belonged to a kinship group.

However, this also needs a cultural justification. In his conclusions, Sárkány points out that culture is the determinant of the exchanges. He calls this social background and notes that in different societies different factors may predominate (Sárkány 1998:106). In Tigrinya society, these factors are kinship, marriage relations, and their associated customs and traditions (*bahli*). It is no coincidence either that the events vital to the group's reproduction – births, weddings and deaths[9] – are accompanied by customs during which the home and the cultural roots are given great importance. Each transition is accompanied by rituals in which we encounter the exact terminology of home and descent.

It seems as if the living were tied to their original home by an invisible thread. Heads of families living in Asmara build a house in Adi,[10] while the emigrants build them in the capital. Many people retain their influence in their native village and participate in committees managing the political life of the village. Upon the initiative of men living in the capital, in 2006 a dispute between Adi and a neighboring village was resolved that reached back to the time of Italian control. The village expects help from its expatriates in exchange for influence, status and prestige. Those who donate to the local church on the occasion of religious and family celebrations are highly esteemed. They also remember if someone lends a car to carry the bier of a deceased relative or to transport a wedding party. This system is based on the structural relationship between the village and the city.

[9] Childbirth: Usually the young, married woman has been living in her new home with her husband, but in the weeks leading up to the birth, she goes home to her mother and stays there until the child is born. Women who marry abroad and cannot return home will summon their mother for the birth, if possible.
Wedding: The home also plays an important role during the wedding: the two main venues of the two-day-long festivities are usually the tents set up at the groom' and bride's houses, each filled with relatives and friends of either party. On the second afternoon, they carry around the gifts bought for the bride, calling out loud what each receives and brings into the marriage, and then the wedding concludes at the groom's tent. By now the bride belongs to her husband's group. The biggest weddings are held by diaspora Eritreans or are financed with their help. Many of them choose an Eritrean mate in their new home, or they select a suitable partner from the wider circle of family acquaintances through the mediation of relatives back home. There are some who marry abroad but years later renew their vows in the circle of their family at home. In their case, the wedding is of particular importance. For them, this occasion is an expression of the link between the family left at home and the emigrant offspring, the validation of the marriage among those at home, the confirmation of the respect and bond among relatives, and an event in which the emigrants provide a compact display of everything that their Eritrean home, their family means to them.
Funeral: Lastly, the home plays a role even during the funeral and the vigil. Wherever a man lived, he will be buried in his native village, and his wife is going to rest in the same place. The 12-day vigil (*hazen*) takes place in a tent set up next to the house in which the deceased's closest relatives live, that is, at the home of the husband/wife or the eldest male descendant.

[10] My field is a village near a major city, which appears in the paper as Adi.

We can see, therefore, that kinship, culture, the symbolic substance of home, the relationship to the land – all of it supported by religion – make an ensemble in which the individual is connected to the group through invisible fibers. These latent relationships become visible during certain occasions, events that are important to the community, such as weddings or funerals. But since they are latent, their survival must be ensured occasionally, especially if an individual is unable to attend the celebrations reinforcing these relationships. In such cases, phone calls or gifts from the expatriates may serve to reinforce the intent.

As in many other societies, rites of passage provide opportunities for gifting and significant financial transactions. In reference to Somalis, Rousseau et al. emphasize the role of gift-giving in riding out the hazardous period brought on by social and personal transitions and changes (Rousseau et al. 1998:404). The gift links those who will be parted, and the object can be taken or sent from the known to the unknown, and "gifts fill the gaps of empty liminal spaces with additional meaning" (Rousseau et al. 1998:404). Thus, objects and transactions are capable of holding together split families as long as both sides feel the need to do so.

Cliggett argues that Zambian migrants send home gifts of lesser value as a way to try to ensure their own future well-being in this troubled world. Although most of them have to make great sacrifices to send home even the smallest gift, yet they still do, otherwise their relatives may turn away from them in their old age, when they will need support upon their return. In lieu of something else, they may even send home their wives to assist their mother in her home (Cliggett 2003:543,547). In the communities Cliggett studied, it was mainly those who lived in poverty that tried to maintain contacts, as their future was not secured in the city. The situation is different among emigrant and city-dwelling Eritreans. Many of those living in the diaspora plan to return home in their old age. To this end, it is necessary to create financial security. Diaspora Eritreans typically preserve their customs, try to create conditions reminiscent of their home, with special emphasis on meals. The hope of returning home, the cost of phone calls and visits home are sustained particularly by Eritreans with a strong livelihood.

The authors summarizing the results of research conducted among Somali refugees show that it is unimaginable – stemming from a basically nomadic livestock-raising past – that a man should return to his family empty-handed from a trip or overseas endeavor due to failure. Learning or financial gain is necessary to confirm the traveler's fortitude (Rousseau et al. 1998:390). The community's expectations, like those in the Somali example, can also be observed in Eritrean society.

Ultimately – as in Cliggett's Zambian example, and as a fulfillment of community expectations – migration creates unequal parties. The emigrant that expects to retain the attention of those left at home needs to invest in the relationship. While emigrant Eritreans represent the upper crust, we have seen that those at home can have command of the value constituting the group's essential property. This includes land and kinship. This is what constitutes inalienable property among the Tigrinya (Weiner 1992:150; Godelier 1999:111–121). Based on this, we have to agree with Godelier who, departing from Maussian tradition, ascribes inalienability mainly to social causes (Godelier 1999:45).

Figure 1. Young girls from the countryside often travel on foot from village to town to supplement their supplies with the products available there. Eritrea, Zoba Maekel, 2008. (Photo by Sába Tesfay)

VISITATIONS AND THE SHARING OF FOOD

It is befitting to reciprocate the visits, just the same as the gifts. Mutual visitations are actually about the distribution of food, and as such, discussing it within the context of reciprocity may be promising (Lévi-Strauss 1969:55). "Primitive thought unanimously proclaims that: 'food ... is something that has to be shared'" (Lévi-Strauss 1969:33). Sahlins believes that food represents a unique social value ("Socially they are not quite anything else"), and, stemming from this, its distribution within the community must take the form of generalized reciprocity (Sahlins 2004:215). Sárkány does not agree; in the cases of the groups he studied, he blames the lack of food items in the exchanges on the methods of food acquisition and the low quality of preservation activities. He does not rule out that there may be places where social mores prohibit the sale of food, but it can by no means be generalized (Sárkány 1998:97–98). Among the rural Tigrinya I studied – who lived in the vicinity of the city – Sárkány's observation that the community was able to produce for itself pretty much the same food as what they would receive as a gift so it was unnecessary to acquire it through the exchange seems valid (Sárkány 1998:97). In the economic sense, this explains why food was not sold. However, it remains a question why the Tigrinya attach so much importance to the community feasts accompanying the holidays where one can witness large-scale food distribution. For me, the answer lies with Sahlins and Lévi-Strauss, who see the sharing of food and drink as an opportunity to establish or refuse friendly relations (Lévi-Strauss 1969:58–59; Sahlins 2004:216).

Among the Tigrinya, catering provides the most typical form of food distribution. All prestigious events (wedding, christening, vigil, graduation, the visit of a relative who lives far away, the local church's patron saint's feast [*ngdet*], Christmas, Easter, etc.) are opportunities to provide abundant feasts to visitors.[11] Among these, the wedding, the *ngdet* and the vigil deserve special attention, because these three are not strictly affairs of the immediate family but ones that mobilize the whole kinship and neighborhood. The more people attend an event and the larger the financial transactions, the more important the social role one can attribute it. That is, attendance and transactions ensure the event's prestige. However, since these two are not just for family members, one can speak of significant redistribution.

Within the family, the mother, the grown woman keeps track of and collects information about funerals, weddings, sick children, and people in need of help. One of my urban female relatives attended three weddings and two funerals within three months, regularly visited his girlfriend's baby in the hospital, and even attended four or five gatherings where someone was either sent off to or welcomed back from a long journey. In the evenings, she would watch her sister's wedding video. Women have the task of maintaining relations, and their husbands can join them. Catering is also the women's responsibility; therefore, they assume a primary role in the redistribution of food.

Upon my last visit to my rural relatives I received eggs that were addressed to my four-year-old daughter. My aunt who lives there says this means that since I came from far away, they wanted to give me a gift, and they had nothing but the eggs laid by their own hens. Notable guests may even receive a chicken, but nowadays the villagers are less able to afford that. This whole message can be found condensed in a few eggs. This gift is not only about the obligation, but about our relationship, and even my own family status. Similarly condensed information is being communicated to us through the other exchanged foods and drinks, as well as their ingredients.[12]

Without going into much detail, it is worth mentioning that catering requires a lot of time from the female members of the household. It necessitates the children's constant help. The more children who can participate in household chores, the more free time the lady of

[11] In my grandmother's example, we saw that a significant part of the wedding expenses was contributed by rural relatives and friends. The remaining amount was supplemented by the family. Today this has changed a lot. I presented above that today's youth often use loans to cover the wedding expenses, which is supplemented by the *ödme*. All invitees pay a cash contribution at the entrance of the tent, which is methodically recorded in a notebook by an entrusted relative. The names of donors of larger amounts (who are mostly affluent and close relatives) are then read out loud for everyone to hear. In this case, their reward is respect, prestige and honor.
Relatives and acquaintances are also hosted for several days during vigils. "Pooling" in this case happens in a way that all relatives and visitors bring pre-made foods, which are consumed together. "From an economic view point no one has gained and no one has lost" (Lévi-Strauss 1969:59). The prepared food cannot be used for profiteering. Rather, sharing the food is intended to express the cordial relationship. Thus, the redistribution of the food consumed on the occasion of a wedding or a vigil serves to integrate the members of the community.

[12] To reciprocate warm hospitality is befitting. While it used to be sugar, today a bottle of araki (anise distillate) or pastry are the most common gifts that visitors can bring. A close relative can show up without a gift. Food distribution in this case actually takes the form of generalized reciprocity. In addition to the quality of the relationship, gifts also reveal the financial background of the parties and the occasion of their meeting.

the house has and the more guest she can accommodate. An affluent family may even hire a servant, but the help of the older children is still needed. This serves as a backdrop for family prestige. A household where three or four individuals are constantly bustling around certainly enjoys a higher social status than one where the mother does everything.

A city woman, who usually has a higher prestige than a village woman, can dedicate a significant part of her time to the preparation of meals. The higher the status of a family, including their financial status, the number of their children and their age as well, the greater the number of guests they can accommodate – as they are doing. Villagers with less income and less free time can only provide a modest replica of that. It can also be observed that the more affluent heads of families – due to owning a car and a telephone and being able to afford to regularly contribute to the events of their relatives and acquaintances – attend weddings more frequently or become hosts or guests. Their financial circumstance, their status imposes a broader social involvement upon them.

This all implies that hospitality, catering has a high social value. Persons and occasions are basic "marking services" (Douglas – Isherwood 1996:50–52). They focus on consumption. The amounts consumed and the number of attendees indicate the rank of the event and the family. Beyond the quantitative indicators, who attended the event and what they consumed also serve as indicators. In this regard, social consensus is the benchmark. This consensus is behind the reality that hospitality carries hidden information about the financial background of the households and the relationship between them. Consumption is a social act, and in Tigrinya society, its examination is only possible within the system of its kinship, friendship and economic aspects. This system allows the ranking of the constituent units of society, attributing high status to the largest households, hence able to host the most costly events. Because of this, weddings, *ngdets*, and even church donations have indicator value in this area.

MONEY VERSUS GIFT

In my grandmother's time, the man gave money to his new wife on their wedding night. They pressed bills to the dancers' foreheads and clothes when they wanted to express approval. Urban relatives visiting their rural kin may also give money, including to children. Wedding guests contribute to the event with money. Money is morally neutral, and as such, it seemingly contradicts the view that Western money is liable for the collapse of the moral economy (Bloch 1996:166; Bohannan 1959). Like the gifts, it strengthens the existing kinship ties.

"It comes hard, goes easy," said one elderly villager. Money is liquid (Douglas 1967:139). For this reason, there is a need for tools that can compensate for this property. The above-mentioned *mahber* associations fulfill this task because members support those in need with an amount stipulated at the monthly or annual meetings. In this regard, then, money does not hinder intimate relationships and friendships; on the contrary, loans, contributions and membership fees take on the function of integrating the social fabric.

CONCLUSIONS

In Tigrinya society, kinship and friendly relations are given great importance, and their maintenance is ensured by frequent visits, meetings and telephone conversations. These are complemented by the gifts, the sharing of food, contributions and loans, which move in the form of objects and money among the individuals that make up society. All transactions and exchanges indicate the quality of the relationship and the prestige of the event. This system is imposed upon the members by the culture, a tradition that gets transmitted within the family and the immediate environment. This is the root of the significance of keeping track of mate choice and descent. In America, Eritrean men marry girls from Asmara that were selected for them by their close – predominantly female – relatives. On the one hand, culture requires these young girls to lead a modest and chaste life in their pre-wedding years, befitting the social norms, because only their and their family's reputation can bring them the long-awaited "prince" (Otnes – Plec 2003:12). At the same time, this also explains why diaspora Eritreans form such an integral part of the home communities. In this way, because of the exchange of women, words and objects, the cultural reproduction continues abroad (Lévi-Strauss 1969). All of this seems to support the following statement by Lévi-Strauss: "There is no need to call upon the matrimonial vocabulary of Great Russia (...) for the likening of women to commodities, not only scarce but essential to the life of the group, to be acknowledged" (Lévi-Strauss 1969:33). That is, the Eritreanness of foreigners feeds on the home medium.

Things are given their meaning through human transactions (Appadurai 2008:63). Similarly to the Tigrinya, these meanings are unequivocal in all densely woven social environments. Specific occasions call for the movement of specific goods.

To live as a member of society means that the individual is involved in community transactions. Among the Tigrinya, the community becomes a visible group on the occasion of major events – not just to the outside observer, but also to the participants. They represent the community whose members are linked by long-term obligations.

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Cargo System, Religion, and Debates of Community Inclusion in a Mexican Nahua Village

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Abstract: The case study presents certain aspects of modernization and cultural changes in a small Nahua Indian village in Mexico. It investigates the local cargo system and its religious background; analyses the emergence of protestant denominations and its impact on the cargo system. Debates about locality, inclusion and exclusion, and the symbolic borders of the community are also discussed. The study is based on fieldwork conducted in the Huasteca hidalguense during the period 1996 and 2002.
Keywords: Mexico, La Huasteca, Nahuas, cargo system, civil-religious hierarchy, religion, Protestantism, modernization

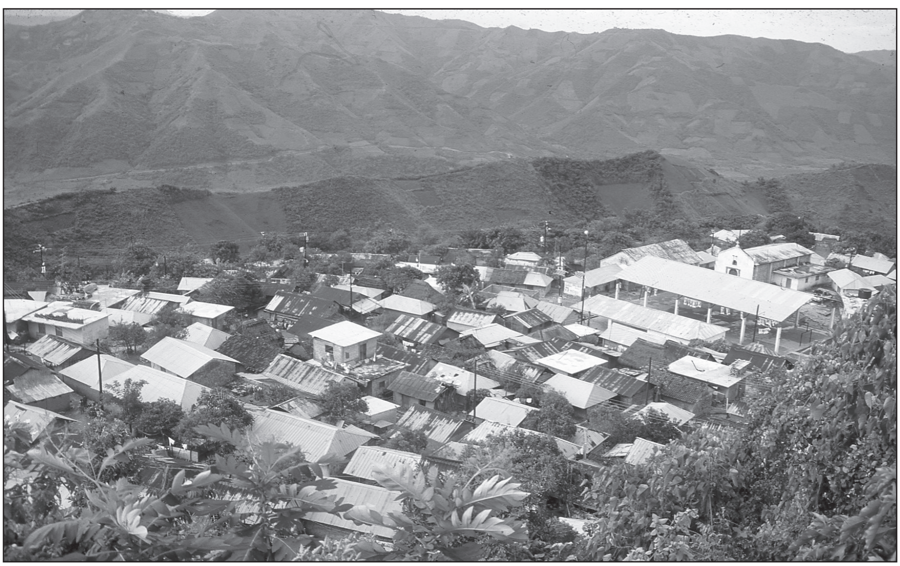

Figure 1. The village of San Pedro de Pachiquitla, Mexico, 2002. (Photo by György Szeljak)

INTRODUCTION[1]

Between 1996 and 2002, I conducted extended fieldwork on three occasions in the Huasteca Hidalguense area of Mexico, in the Indian villages nestled among the Sierra Madre Oriental mountain ranges, mostly in San Pedro Pachiquitla. During my stay there, the village of about 1,200 Nahua farmers was just at the beginning of a modernization process: migration into cities has started, subsistence farming was being augmented by income received through migrant work, medical care was more available locally, representatives of New Protestant churches have arrived, and the Mexican political parties also increased their influence among the Indians living there. In this process of change, one of the distinctive elements of the multifaceted discourse about locality, inclusion and exclusion, and the symbolic boundaries of the village was the status of the cargo system which defined important aspects of community belonging as well as the village's traditional ethos. Without being comprehensive, this study presents a few of the religious elements of the debates surrounding this system.[2]

ON THE MESOAMERICAN CARGO SYSTEM

The system of political and religious institutions in Mesoamerican Indian communities is based on a specific system of officials (or cargo system, *sistema de cargos*), whose structure is based on the so-called political-religious hierarchy (*jerarquía cívico-religiosa*). The system, which followed Pre-Hispanic patterns and became widespread in the colonial era (Carrasco 1976), and which has undergone a significant transformation in the 19th century[3] and continues to adjust to social changes even today, serves to institutionalize the individual's role in the community. Political officials are responsible for the management and administration of the community, for arbitration within the village, and for maintaining relations with mainstream society. Religious officials organize public Catholic celebrations, secure the financial background for certain celebrations, and care for sacred community spaces.

In this particular system, all able-bodied, adult, married men must assume a role. Younger men are initially assigned to lower caliber and thus less prestigious offices. In later stages of life they may assume progressively more important positions (which involve increasingly more time and financial investment), and may get to the positions of village chief or judge – although the pyramid-like system does not make this available to everyone – and then get into the Council of Elders. After fulfilling the duties of each office, a certain number of

[1] This study is dedicated to András A. Gergely, one of the most unselfish and helpful people I have ever known, with gratitude for professional support and friendly conversations. I am also immensely grateful to Jesús Ruvalcaba Mercado, Manuel Pérez Zevallos and the inhabitants of Pachiquitla. A version of the study was published in Hungarian: Szeljak 2013:215–229.

[2] See further discussion of this topic, e.g., Szeljak 2000; 2008; Szeljak – Van't Hooft 2008.

[3] After the establishment of independent Mexico's public administration, the *cabildo indigena*, a colonial Indian council that served as a collective regional representation of Indians, lost its legitimacy and was limited to individual villages; and after religious corporations were banned in 1857, the *cofradias* slowly disappeared, too, so the organizing of Catholic celebrations became the responsibility of the cargo system within each village. For an analysis of this historical process on the scene of the study, see: Carrera 2007.

Figure 2. Community work (*faena*), Pachiquitla, 1996. (Photo by György Szeljak)

rest years follow, depending on the number of community members. The position – unlike positions in the state administrative system – does not come with a salary, and the officials contribute to the management of the community with their time, energy, and in certain posts even with the distribution of a portion of their material possessions.

This system links the Indian villages to the state administration, and the local Catholic cults to the Mexican Catholic Church. Through the functioning of this institution, the communities appear as independent units within the state, and decisions concerning the internal affairs of the village are made on the basis of their own traditions, their own legal customs – even if they occasionally contradict state laws and political intentions.[4] From a religious point of view, this sovereignty is most helpful in preserving rituals based on the cult of saints but saturated with Pre-Hispanic religious notions – even if the official representatives of the Catholic Church sometimes see it as a divergence caused by superficial evangelizing.

The system is also part of the community's protective mechanism, conservative and "traditional" in nature. The community – or its more influential members – often try to interpret and control the social changes associated with modernization and integration with the nation-state through the operation of this institution.[5]

As for its historical development and internal functions, the system may vary in many ways in certain parts of Mesoamerica. The differences may be prompted, among others, by economic and demographic factors, proximity to larger cities, the ethnic and religious structure of communities, as well as different degrees of modernization or migration.[6]

[4] For the common laws of Indian villages, see, for example: Chenaut – Sierra 1995; Contreras 2008.

[5] It is no coincidence that in the middle of the 20th century, a number of pro-integration indigenist thinkers (e.g., Aguirre Beltrán) saw this local government structure as an obstacle to development and modernization, while according to turn of the century movements that demanded autonomy, it is one of the most important foundations of ethnic identity, which helps Indian communities preserve their language, common laws and traditions.

[6] Of the extensive anthropological literature on the peculiarities of the Mesoamerican cargo system, see, for example: Cámara 1952; Cancian 1976; Dow 1990; Dow – Stephen 1990; Friedlander 1982; Greenberg 1981; Sandoval et al. 2002.

THE CARGO SYSTEM IN PACHIQUITLA

In a village that was largely isolated from mainstream society – as was Pachiquitla until the 1980s – the criteria of community belonging were unambiguous. These included continuous residence, land ownership for men, a largely self-sufficient way of life, women marrying within the village, the performance of local religious community rites called *kostumbre* which combined Pre-Hispanic and Catholic elements (Szeljak 1997; 2003; 2008), the adoption of the legal customs of the village, as well as participating in the cargo system and, until the age of sixty, in the weekly communal labor. Of the above criteria, this study analyzes the relationship between religion and the cargo system.[7]

In Pachiquitla, the cargo system is based on a hierarchical structure in which, by law, all married, able-bodied adult male residents of Pachiquitla must fill an office in their lifetime. Because of the demographic explosion of the last three decades, however, this is de facto becoming increasingly difficult. Filling the offices is mandatory, and community members are under constant pressure and their participation is verified. Only those suffering from serious physical or mental illness and single or widowed men can get an exemption. Only a man who is willing to take on these tasks has the right to be an equal member of the community, get housing plots and arable land, build a house there, care for his children and school them in the village, and eventually rest in the cemetery. Each office can be held only once, and the majority of appointments last one year.

Thus, the system is built primarily on men; women's duties – with the exception of the Women's Health Committee, formed in 1990 – are not institutionalized, and their involvement is primarily as their husband's aides. Young boys are entered into the community registry at the age of eighteen as "privileged residents of the village," and – if they do not leave for work in the city – they may already take an office. The community does not have a traditional religious rite of passage that symbolically marks a man's transition into adulthood, therefore participation in the cargo system and commencing communal labor are the public representations of this, and each individual position becomes an important reference point for each stage of life (Szeljak 2000:119–122).

For lack of space, there is no way to meticulously describe the structure and operation of this complex system here. I rely simply on the brief introduction of those aspects which are essential for the interpretation of our topic.

[7] Anthropologists doing research in Mexican Indian communities often dichotomize private and public rituals (Dow 1990:14–15). The Pre-Hispanic notions and supernatural beings of *kostumbre* are more closely tied to the shamanic rituals, which are now mainly carried out in a family setting. Examples include the majority of fertility and healing rituals, which are directly associated with the reproduction of the individual and his environs. In the case of community rituals, however, large, public community celebrations associated with the Catholic calendar are emphasized. These are led by priests or local catechists. The shamans are only present as community members. In these festivities, the issues featured are those of collective identity and belonging to the village, in other words, of community reproduction. Their organization is closely linked to the cargo system that integrates all members of the village.

In 2002, the following offices were held in the village:

a. Judge and his aides

This traditional body is of utmost importance in everyday life. Pachiquitla is today divided into three parts. In terms of production, marriage and commerce, there are no distinct rules that apply to residents of certain parts of the village. The division of the settlement is more administrative and sectoral in nature, and is intended to enable to integration of residents into offices as the village's population grows. In practice this means that each village sector developed its own separate circle of duties for its judge and his ten-person team of aides. The work of each judge is helped by the secretary and eight elected members *(topil),* who mainly fulfill organizing and policing roles. Among the three judges, one will rise as the most powerful, known as First Judge *(juez primero).* During his one-year mandate, he officially represents the village before state officials. He has the right to settle any disputes between the villagers, put someone in jail, or impose a fine.

The secretaries (or deputies) are the main aides to the judges. They organize communal labor, collect fines submitted in cash or in kind, and administer the community's finances (Szeljak 2008). The commander and law enforcers are responsible for ensuring order in each village sector. They keep the keys to the village jail, bring disputants before the judge, and above all protect the order and prevent fights associated with alcohol consumption during celebrations.

The judges and their aides meet at least two or three times a week to consult and discuss the legal affairs of the villagers. During the meetings, the judges are required to provide coffee, brandy and cigarettes to their aides, and during the communal labor they organized, they should even provide them with food. There is also communal labor that only officials are required to perform.

b. Committees

A closer relationship with mainstream society, school education, and the emergence of various public developments in the past two decades necessitated the widening of the range of officials, requiring more and more people to perform those duties. These offices are at the bottom of the hierarchy, involve less work, and are mainly held by younger men. At the time of my research, in the village there was a Kindergarten Committee, Elementary School Lower Grades Committee, Elementary School Upper Grades Committee, Health Committee, Drinking Water Committee, and Women's Health Committee, all of which ensured the functioning of the given institution, partially secured its financial background, and mediated between the village, the teachers, as well as medical staff.

c. Religious Officials

The religious side of the hierarchy in Pachiquitla is less stratified and partly linked to organizations performing political duties. In any given year, the highest religious sponsorship belongs to the all-time judges, as it will be discussed later, but the judges' aides also have to contribute.

Church servants (*fiscales de la iglesia*) perform other religious duties. Every year, they elect for this post three elderly men who have lived exemplary lives and have held the post of judge. Their duty is to clean the village chapel and to secure candles and other ceremonial objects. They ring the bells, open and close the village chapel. If a priest or a missionary arrives in the community, church servants provide them with food and accommodations. During celebrations or processions, they often host musicians and dancers.

The Catholic priest serving the district lives in Xochiatipan, which is two and a half hours walking distance, and only gets to the village a couple of times a year. He is locally represented by a few young catechists, but they do not belong among the elected officials.

d. Council of Elders

Every villager who has held the post of judge can become a member of the Elders' Council *(consejo de ancianos)*. Although the role of the council declined after the land wars of the 1970–1980s (Schryer 1990), it still retained a kind of advisory position. The council, usually assembling men over fifty or sixty years of age, has been adapting to past practices of a closed, self-sufficient community until the turn of the millennium because of its standard-setting and approach. Upon the start of his mandate, a judge selects five aides from this council, whose opinions he relies on in his work and whom he must periodically feed. One of the most important duties of the Council of Elders is that every year on November 3, they record the liabilities of the former judges and make recommendations on the following year's judges.

e. General Assembly

The General Assembly *(asamblea general)* is open to all heads of households over the age of eighteen. This is where they discuss government programs, labor, the schedule of joint actions, issues and events affecting the village. The Council of Elders selects officials from among them. However, the proposals must now be approved by the General Assembly as well. The General Assembly debates are done in the Nahuatl language. At these meetings, often lasting well into the night, everyone has the right to explain their views, even at length.

f. Ejido Officials

Land-owning men have to serve on the Ejido Council (*comisariado ejidal*), set up according to public agrarian laws, as well as on the Supervisory Board (*consejo de vigilance*), although it is partially independent of the cargo system. Members of the Ejido Council, elected for three years, watch over the village boundaries and properties under the leadership of the *comisario*. In Pachiquitla, the leader of the council can be an experienced man that has been a judge. They register changes, cultivators of individual parcels, inheritance, they resolve minor disputes among the villagers concerning land, and they can also organize communal labor. In disputes with adjacent villages about land, they represent the village before the Agrarian Court.

In 2002, some seventy men and six women held some major or minor office. Although the number of committees can vary over the years, an adult man can hold up to eight or ten positions during his lifetime. The sequence of offices is not rigidly defined, but the general perspective is that young people first serve on the different committees, then they become aides to the judge, or lower-ranking officers on the *ejido*, and after having held these respective offices, they may become judges and enter the Elders' Council.

The system is also known in the literature as prestige hierarchy. The higher a post, the higher the social recognition, while also requiring more financial contributions.

State employees working in the village who are from elsewhere (doctors, medical staff, teachers) are not considered members of the village, and outside of their areas of expertise they have little say in decisions affecting the village. They have no right to attend the General Assembly, to own land or build a house in Pachiquitla. Except for school-related celebrations, they rarely take part in community celebrations. A typical example: in 1996, primary school children visited the judge and his aides – paying them the usual respect, i.e., bringing brandy and cigarettes as gifts – because someone was stealing at school. They thought that this was a problem for the village leaders and did not fall within the jurisdiction of the teachers.

The officials are not functionaries experienced in administrative or management practices, just simple peasants. It often happens that the village judge undertakes seasonal wage labor on the land of a neighbor or relative who is not an official. Even the judicial office does protect one against violations of community rules and the principle of equality. In 1998, on the feast of the patron saint of the village, one of the sponsoring judges was jailed by his own aides because he did not respect the village and incited a drunken brawl. In 1999, another judge ended up in the same place because he did not honor his duty, i.e., he did not give respect to his aides, he did not give them food, coffee, brandy and cigarettes after the nightly meetings and communal labor.

Commitments impose responsibilities upon the whole family. The whole family participates in the production and preparation of the foods and drinks offered, and in the case of a higher office, a head of household may often depend upon the financial and physical help of his older sons.

OFFICIALS AND RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

In any given year, the judge and his aides are not only responsible for managing the affairs of the village, but also for liaising with supernatural beings and ensuring the spiritual safety of the community. The method of their inauguration in the village also marks this, as I observed during my fieldwork. On January 16, 1999, at the administrative center, the judges received from the district political chief the command baton (*baston de mando*), an ornamented insignia symbolizing their authority, which indicated that the Mexican government recognized them as village leaders as well as intermediaries between the village and the Mexican government. That evening, past officials created a symbolic, arched gate at the entrance of the village made of cane, leaves and flowers. It was similar to the one they set up for the Day of the Dead altars. The arch connects the terrestrial and celestial worlds, and beneath it a sacred space is created. After they returned from the district center to the village through the mountain paths, the new judges and their aides indicated their arrival by setting off fireworks. They stopped outside the arch representing the village boundary, while the past officials and the assembled village residents were seated inside with the musicians. The shamans standing under the arch then lit the copal incense. The new judges were ritually cleansed, supernatural beings were asked to assist in their work, and ceremonial musical instruments were sounded. Finally, the past officials presented the new ones with flower crowns, garlands, brandy and refreshments under the arch. As they passed under the arch, they symbolically took over the management of the village. From here they proceeded to another sacred space,

Figure 3. Ritual cleansing of the new cargo holders by the village shamans, Pachiquitla, 1999. (Photo by György Szeljak)

Figure 4. The new cargo holders light the candles sanctified by shamans and pray at the church altar. Pachiquitla, 1999. (Photo by György Szeljak)

the village chapel. Here the shamans and the new judges knelt before the altar and prayed, the latter also lighting the candles which the shamans handed them under the arch. Subsequently, the local catechist representing the Catholic Church greeted them, and with his leadership, together they prayed that the officials may perform their duties well. The judges then recounted what they wanted to do for the village, and they began their year-long mandatory sponsorship duties, offering all villagers biscuits and coffee at the chapel, and later at their house also food, coffee and brandy.

The judges lit candles on their home altars every day, and at regular intervals they called a shaman to pray for the village there. Until the second half of the eighties, it was also their task to summon all shamans in the area in case of extreme drought during one of the important periods of corn maturation (June – July), who would then hold a seven-day rainmaking ritual in the village chapel and on the tops of the surrounding sacred mountains.

The religious sponsorship of the officials is continuous throughout the year. Among the major occasions for food and beverage offerings are New Year's Day, the judges' Inauguration Day (January 16), Easter, Finding of the Holy Cross Day (May 3), the village patron's feast day (June 27–29), and Our Lady of Guadalupe Day (December 12). Of these, the biggest financial investment is required by the holiday of the village's patron saint, St. Peter, which is sponsored by the judges themselves. This is the most important feast day in the village, when those working in the city come home, priest arrives, children are baptized, and many get married on this day as well. Groups of young girls (*virgencitas*), men, as well as dancers from other villages dance for days in the church before the statues of the saints. After the procession, the saints are brought out of the chapel, a wreath of flowers is placed on their heads, and under St. Peter's leadership, they are taken through the village. They stop at the well, and the statues of St. Peter and St. Paul are dampened with flower petals immersed in water so that they could "work and not parch," provide rain, and watch over the villagers. For three nights, fireworks are held in their honor. The idea is similar to the fertility and healing rituals addressed to Pre-Hispanic supernatural beings (Szeljak 1997; 2003). According to ritual exchange, this periodically repeated hospitality is a way for the villagers to express their respect and give thanks to the saints for taking care of them and supporting them.

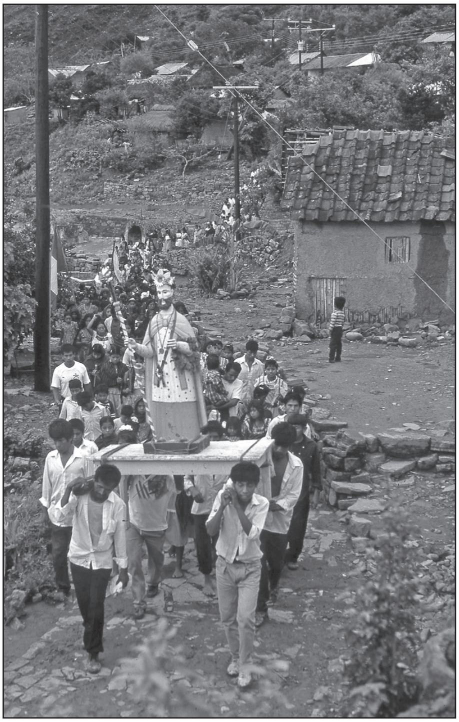

Figure 5. Procession at the Patron Saint's Day celebration, Pachiquitla, 1999. (Photo by György Szeljak)

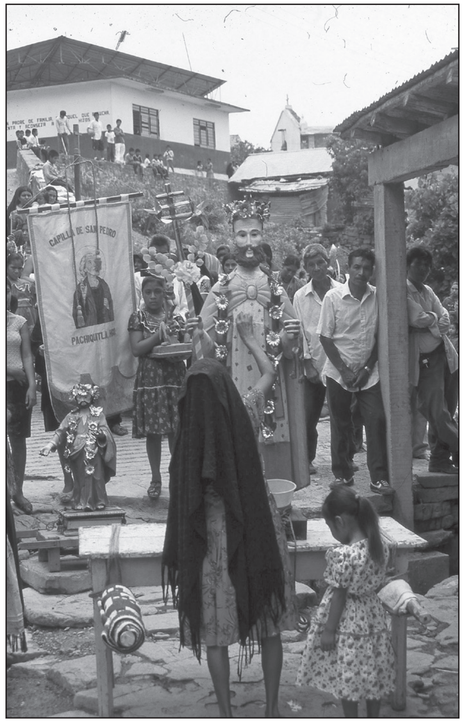

Figure 6. St. Peter's statue is sprinkled with water at the well to ensure his strength to work for the village, Pachiquitla, 1999. (Photo by György Szeljak)

Up until 1996, the judges hosted for six days (at that time all three judges got two days each), since then they host for three days all those villagers who visit them at this time, as well as the appointed members of the Elders' Council, and the visitors and dance groups coming from other villages (food, brandy, coffee). Additionally, they must pay the musicians playing during the feast, such as the traditional "huastec trio" from another village, and since the mid-nineties (since there is electricity in the village), even a young ranchero band. To ensure a festive consumption, at the three-day celebration in 2002, each judge may have spent up to 4,000–5,000 pesos (cca. 400–500 USD), if you count the market price of their own plants and animals used to prepare the food. The annual costs of the judges may have even doubled, although they tried to cover some of the expenses with plants produced by themselves, and part of the alcohol provided to their aides came from the brandy collected as penalties (Szeljak – Van't Hooft 2008). It should be noted that a village day laborer earned 45–50 pesos with eight hours of work at this time. The majority of the judges could only cover this amount after many years of saving, from the salaries earned by their children working in cities, perhaps with the help of state child support, or with a loan. The office of judge is therefore not as popular as one might think. The term "everyone must suffer" accurately describes the attitude of the locals in the annual election of judges. The judicial office is a station in life that is

Figure 7. The jugde's relatives prepare *tamal*, the traditional festive food for the Patron Saint's Day celebration, Pachiquitla, 1999. (Photo by György Szeljak)

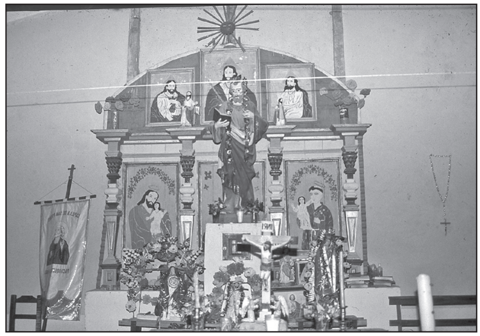

Figure 8. The church altar, Pachiquitla, 1999. (Photo by György Szeljak)

based on the community's idea of equality, is required and demanding, mandatory and very prestigious, but it does put a heavy financial burden on families.[8]

All healthy and married adult males have a theoretical obligation to accept the judicial office, regardless of the financial background of their family. In the case of the men serving as judges between 1996 and 2002, I did not notice that the village had any particular regard for the size of their house or land. The position was filled on the basis of the "principle of equality". All they could do was defer the request for a couple of years.

This celebration is symbolically the culmination of the decades-long official work of the judges. They are the hosts of the celebration catering to the saints and members of the village. A judge's perception depended on how successfully he represented the village's problems before the State Administration, as well as how well he catered to the guests at the village feast. When asked about their time as a judge, their reply usually highlighted what they contributed to the development of the village in a given year, as well as how much they spent on the feast of the patron saint.

The cargo system is therefore a service, a way of expressing respect for the village and the supernatural. To go through the hierarchy, and then, as a judge, to sponsor the celebration of the patron saint, is the culmination of a traditional Pachiquitla man's lifetime, a mirror of a full life. As the holiday affects the whole family, it is also a recognition for his wife and children.

In Pachiquitla, the cargo system is built upon the principles of egalitarian ideology which emphasize reciprocity and distribution. These principles are embedded in both

[8] In contrast to the well-studied Chamula or Zinacantán system, e.g.: Cancian 1976, in Pachiquitla the post requiring the largest financial contribution is not voluntary, and it is not filled from a "waiting list" because of too many applicants. The reason for this is sure to be found in the situation of the noted villages. Wasserstrom demonstrated through ethno-historical sources from Chiapas that the elaborate religious cargo system and the voluntary "fiesta sponsorship" developed in Indian areas that were nearby regional political and economic centers, and as corn and cattle farmers or wage workers, they have been connected with these regional and national centers and were thus more socially stratified (Wasserstrom 1983). For those living in Pachiquitla, these economic integration opportunities were not available until the last decade of the 20th century.

social and ritual practices. Over their lifetime, in their minor offices, community members helped the community solely through their labor. However, they did share in the ritual offerings made by other judges and the benefits of feast sponsorships, be it ritual food and drink distribution, or harmony with the saints. By the principles of reciprocity, this is what they are repaying to the community during their judicial mandate. In this sense, the individual is part of a symbolic community which includes everyone who has ever lived and still lives in the village. References to this symbolic unity are often emphasized in the prayers shamans offer during community celebrations (Szeljak 2008:210–211). In certain villages of the district, for example in Ohuatipa in 2002, the tradition of electing officials in the cemetery was still practiced, while in Pachiquitla this is done in the community center.

NEW PROTESTANTS IN PACHIQUITLA

One of the strongest ideological effects among modernizing Mexican Indian communities in the second half of the 20th century was brought on by Protestantism, particularly Pentecostal denominations. Charismatic Pentecostal congregations originating in the United States started to gain success in predominantly Catholic Mexico in the 1970s. They won believers mainly in regions inhabited by Indians and among impoverished urban populations, and their religious expansion continues unabated ever since.[9] The less hierarchical and centralized organizational structure, a commitment to active proselytizing, and a desire to create their own congregation prompts many missionaries to reach the farthest, most marginal regions, which provides these denominations with a unique dynamic.

Until 2002, in Pachiquitla there were about 45–50 people who were members of two Pentecostal congregations. They had not built a church of their own but met two or three times a week in private houses that had part of it converted into a tabernacle. The gatherings were not limited exclusively to members of the village; sometimes others from the nearby settlements also came for the evening prayers.

Conversions had a number of reasons. One of the first families to convert did so as a result of a miraculous healing. In many conversion stories the chief motivation was the alcoholism of the husband, which affected the whole family. But belonging to a religious community also created a new opportunity to build social networks necessary for urban migration and successful integration. The arrival of Pentecostals had an increasing impact on the life of the village; it became a matter of debate as to how non-Catholics were to relate to the community ethos and to the specific features of the cargo system.

[9] Higher rates of population growth among Mexican Protestants can be observed particularly from 1970. While in 1970 only 2.3% of the population considered itself Protestant, in 2000 it was 8% of those over the age of five. James Dow's quantitative comparative research shows that Protestant expansion that accelerated from 1970 to 1990 did not gain ground primarily among the urban middle class but rather in marginal areas. Mostly in federal states with a significant number of Indian populations (Dow 2001:7–10). Garma came to a similar conclusion. Based on a comparative analysis of the statistics, he states that in the country's districts where the proportion of the Indian population exceeds 70%, i.e., those that are considered "Indian districts", the Protestant ratio among the population over the age of five reaches 9.89% (Garma 2001:60).

"We believe in the living God, whereas they believe in the paintings and sculptures of their saints. But they decay, they break, there is no power in them," described the situation one young convert. The believers considered the religious feasts and processions of the village to be idolatry. It was forbidden for them to go to the Catholic Church, which is the main venue for community festivals and feasts, as well as to dance and consume alcohol at these celebrations.

From a New Protestant point of view, the Catholic holidays were about pointlessly wasting the judge's fortune or the money of the other officials contributing to the festivities. If the saints do not exist, the festivals in their honor are useless, idolatrous rituals. The time "wasted" during the celebration could also be spent working instead. "Why hold so many festivals, they're just wasting their money, getting drunk, that's how they honor their saints, rather than living a sober life and working" was the New Protestant criticism of the Catholic religious holidays in the village.

In the religious sense, local New Protestants questioned at once the cult of saints as well as the shamans' ritual activities. They transformed the system of the relationship with the supernatural, and used the concept of reciprocity in a different sense. Mediation between man and God is not necessary; divine grace and support is not dependent upon ritual offerings of food and drink. Continuous prayer to God, spiritual devotion, and the realization of a moral life to His liking are enough. At the same time, a focus on individual goals, entrepreneurship, amassing material goods and prosperity are not to be condemned, but rather a sign of divine providence.

With the appearance of the Pentecostal denominations, the more unambiguous signs of belonging to the village community have become uncertain. They formed a new group with powerful symbolic boundaries. They maintained close relationships with those of similar faith living in other villages, and met with them frequently. Solidarity relations were increasingly established between those belonging to a religious community, and previous contacts, based, for example, on kinship ties, became overshadowed among those of different faiths.

This separation within the village and classification based on religious affinity is also reflected in the use of the word "*hermano*" (brother). Among New Protestants, this was a category of group belonging that was general, independent of denomination, a way of addressing each other. However, Catholic villagers used it in a stigmatizing, pejorative sense.

For Catholics, the biggest issue became: how to preserve the village's unity in the process of Protestant conversion? Is it even possible? Can a New Protestant man elected for important offices if he does not believe in the saints? How can this problem be solved when participating in the cargo system is mandatory, and one can only be considered a full member of the village – own a house and land, send his children to the local school – if one serves in it? And how can further conversions even be prevented?

In 1998, the village first elected a judge that recently converted to New Protestantism because of his alcohol problems. He solved the problem simply by returning to his Catholic faith under community pressure. Others were elected to only minor offices until 2002. In their case, a compromise was reached that they had the right to stay away from the Catholic celebrations but could not openly criticize them in their official position. The villagers tried to find a kind of compromise. The New Protestants were considered full members of the village but they could not forcefully proselytize, and they could not use the village's public spaces for their rituals. As they were often relatives and close acquaintances, the village was trying to maintain the unity of the community in spite of religious differences, and the question of collective identity surpassed religious commitment. For example, New Protestant men participated in communal labor related to Catholic celebrations and in fundraising, even though they were absent from the religious part of the celebration. Most families also contributed to the costs of the fireworks set up for the feast of the patron saint, notwithstanding its connection to a Catholic holiday. The relationship was not entirely harmonious, but there were no open clashes for a while. However, in 2001, the first major conflict erupted.

"WE DO NOT WANT A PROTESTANT CHURCH!"

A respected widow lived near the main square with her father. Her son was still young when he moved to the city more than ten years before the incident, and over time he became the pastor of a Pentecostal congregation; eventually he converted the members of his family who stayed behind. As long as he only came back to visit, no one in the village objected. I met him several times during my fieldwork. He vehemently criticized the ignorance of the locals, and enthusiastically talked about the faith that changed his life. However, in 2001 he decided to return home permanently and build his own house on the plot once allocated to his parents. This plot was located near the main square, directly opposite the Catholic chapel. Catholics living in the village suspected that the house would also become a tabernacle, and his return would set off a forceful proselytizing movement in the village; it might not be possible to find the same compromise with him as with other converts. They also feared that the central location of the tabernacle would symbolically divide the main square as well. This was not just mere rivalry, but the ritual fear of followers of a syncretistic religion incorporating Pre-Hispanic imagery that the construction of a tabernacle would threaten the goodwill of supernatural beings.

The Catholics began to organize, the uproar increased, and they demanded a decision from the village leaders. Meanwhile, the pastor quickly began to build a simple, traditional house on the property, hoping that if he built it, the village would be powerless to do anything. The house had been completed, the sides were covered with reed, the roof had been raised, crops had been planted, and only the mud plaster was left to do.

The village did not take the case before the state court, because they thought that in this case, the local judge had the right to decide. He eventually ordered the demolition of the house, which the local Catholics quickly implemented. The plot of land was seized as part of a symbolic expropriation for the benefit of the community, and they very quickly built a stone building in its place that has since been used as teachers' quarters.

The underlying basis of the argument for the demolition of the house was that the village has an "internal law". It may not match the Mexican Civil Code provisions in this regard, but the village's internal, common laws override all of it. According to this, only he can be a member of the village and build a house there who regularly takes on an office in the community, and with weekly communal labor continuously contributes to the village's investments in infrastructure (installing electricity, constructing community buildings, maintaining roads and trails, reinforcing the hillside against landslides with retaining walls, bringing drinking water from a remote river), or pays fines to redeem himself. All this they wanted the man to pay for, but they imposed a fine of such an unusually large sum that they did not expect the man would be able to pay it. The core of their argumentation was thus not the open expulsion of New Protestants but compliance with the village's internal laws, the principle of equality.

Although the man took the matter to the state court – which was still ongoing during my last visit in 2002 – but left the village after the incident. Interviews about the matter revealed that, as in so many cases, both sides tried to condense into the concept of respect the system of moral rules which proved their truth. For the Catholics, this meant respect for the supernatural and recognition of the village's common laws. For the evangelist, it meant free religious exercise and the sanctity of personal property, as well as the supremacy of state institutions over the local cargo system.

SUMMARY

This study sought to answer how Pachiquitlans tried to demarcate the village community around the turn of the millennium, and what role the cargo system played in this. As Govers notes, in Mexican Indian villages, community is not considered inherent; it must be created and maintained continuously through cultural practices (kinship relations, exchanges, festivals, rituals, communal labor, collectively accepted legal customs, etc.) and through the debates over them, amid the challenges of modernization (Govers 2006:8–12).

In Mexico, the spread of Protestantism is most intense in the Indian regions where subsistence and other forms of amassment linked to market economy, such as wage labor, gained an increasingly more significant role in the formerly self-sufficient communities, and where the villages are becoming more open and migration is affecting an increasing proportion of the population. New lifestyle patterns are emerging, and everyday thinking incorporates elements that increasingly emphasize individual and family prosperity to the detriment of community traditions. Conversion in these villages may also be prompted by the fact that it can discharge them from the obligation of the sponsorship of Catholic celebrations. However, these processes are associated with new ideas about the creation of community and locality (Appadurai 1996), and the establishment of solidarity relations, which could lead to changes in the village's cargo system. One solution is the secularization of the system, when religious tasks and the financial sponsorship associated with them are separated from the cargo system, and they become the internal matter of each individual denomination. At other times, the Indian villages become daily battlegrounds of religious disputes and clashes, and in extreme cases, members of one sect try to drive out of the village members of another sect – for which there are also many examples in Mexico. All these conflicts surface parallel with the generational challenges affecting the system, in which the power and decisions of older officials who have reached a higher position in the hierarchy are being questioned by the younger people who have experience in urban migration, speak Spanish better, and belong to various Mexican political parties. But this is already part of a different story.

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The People Who Are Never Lost

Family Trees in a Political Context in Present Day Bashkortostan

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Abstract: The study seeks to find an answer to the issue of how a revived tradition can serve political interests that are simultaneously attempting to satisfy the demands of ethnicity-based Bashkir nation-building and the demands of affiliation with the larger multi-ethnic nation of the Russian Federation. The core of the analysis is centered around the political contextualizing of the program called 'Holiday of Family-Tree' as well as the instrumentalist interpretation of local special literature and methodology related to the program. The paper, on the one hand, scrutinizes the family-tree research as a Bashkir tradition, which supports the power and autonomy of the Bashkir nation through the Bashkirisation of Tatars living in the north-western areas. On the other hand, it highlights how this ethnic tradition is adjusted to the traditions of the Russian local history research (*kraevedenie*) and thus, how it legitimates symbolically the role of the Bashkir nation in the multi-ethnic nation of the Russian Federation.
Keywords: Bashkortostan, Bashkir, Tatar, Bashkirisation, family tree, local history, ethnicity, nationalism, political anthropology

"Just as the mighty and wild river gains strength from a tiny stream, so is our republic enriched by families and clans." Amina Ivnievna Šafikova, Minister of Culture in the Republic of Bashkortostan, Karmaskaly District, Family Tree Celebration, September 23, 2013.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) the central powers allowed considerable freedom, albeit within a controlled framework, not only for the modern appearance of national folklore, which had already begun to flourish during the Soviet period, but also for the revitalisation and practice of various religions and other traditions that may have been previously forbidden. These conditions enabled a more tangible manifestation of ethnic identities as well as the reinforcement of cultural autonomy among individual groups. As to which traditions gain prominence in the case of which ethnic groups, this is largely determined by the culture of the given group, its territory, and its administrative, legal and political status within the Russian Federation, but also by the culture of neighbouring groups and the nature of interethnic relations.

In the case of the Volga republics discussed here,[1] in the Udmurt Republic, for example, efforts made by the Udmurt Ortodox majority primarily aim to foster the everyday use of minority language and culture. Udmurt language gastro and erotic blogs, ethno futuristic fashion events parading modernised versions of traditional folk dress, street art promoting notable Udmurt poets and the second place prize awarded to Buranovskie Babuški at the Eurovision Song Festival in 2012 have all been attempts to reinterpret and pass on Udmurt language and culture. While there are those in the Udmurt Republic who have returned to the original Udmurt religion, its presentation as symbol of ethnicity is more typical of unbaptised practitioners of the Udmurt faith living in neighbouring Bashkortostan, trans-Kama Udmurts, who are known for their continuous practice. So-called national prayer (*rasken' ozks*) performs a similar function in the life of Erzya Mordvins as it does in the religion of those living in the Mari Republic (Knorre 2008; Knorre – Konstantinova 2010). A return to what is regarded as an ancient, original and uniquely ethnic religious practice provides an opportunity for a distinct separation from neighbouring ethnic groups who practice Islam and is a policy of identity that promotes strong cohesion and unity among various groups.

By contrast, in Tatarstan, which is struggling for both cultural and political autonomy, religious overtones merely serve to colour far-right movements[2] as Islam is not regarded as a typically Tatar ethnic religion. Here, the alignment of Tatar history and ethnography in opposition to Russians, and in some cases Bashkirs, is a far more decisive symbolic element in politics, in which a glorious historical past and the political legacy of the Kazan Khanate are what predestine the Tatar nation to realise its autonomy (Gorenburg 2004:12–18).

Given its place on this colourful palette, it has not been easy for Bashkortostan to find its own ethnic symbol. The religion, culture and language of the Bashkir people are very closely related to those of neighbouring Tatars, and so none of these have proven suitable as ethnic markers since political strategies for promoting national identity are usually characterised by distinct boundaries drawn in opposition to other identities. Bashkir society and its political elite have found another tool for the reinforcement of national identity by revitalising a tradition that succeeds in expressing a strong separation while melding smoothly with certain Russian traditions. The national genealogical research program does not simply encourage, but in fact makes compulsory the practice of what is regarded as an ancient Bashkir custom while also satisfying a commitment to Soviet and Russian moral *education* (*vospitanie*) in the context of research on local history. This duplicity is especially important in Bashkir politics, which swings on the line between nationalism and Russian-friendly policies, making it possible to simultaneously reinforce both political independence and loyalty. The encouragement of genealogical research therefore manages to fully serve practically every Bashkir political goal. Based on an analysis of the political context, professional ethnographic literature used in the

[1] Based on their proximity, their similar historical pasts and their close interethnic relations as well as their administrative status, it is possible to classify these Volga republics in one group as a basis for comparison, including: the Udmurt Republic, the Mari-El Republic, Chuvashia, the Mordvin Republic, and the republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan.

[2] Not counting the "muslimisation" of Christian Tatars, which the Tatar political elite has attempted to achieve as a way of increasing and retaining the Tatar majority.

development of the program and the history of local historical research in Russia, the aim of this study is demonstrate how the Bashkir genealogical research program helps to support this multifaceted policy.[3]

"PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORLD" THEORIES OF ETHNICITY

Local perspective and public thinking with regards to Bashkir ethnicity are significantly determined by the primordialist theories of ethnicity in Soviet ethnography. These cannot be ignored in a discussion of Family Tree celebrations since the related works of ethnographic literature also played an important role in determining the basic principles and methodology of genealogical research. The most important among these was research conducted by historian-ethnographer Rail Kuzeev (1929–2005), which dealt with the study, categorisation and care of still traceable genealogical depictions. Kuzeev regarded family trees as a more or less reliable historic source, a *genealogical chronicle* (*genealogičeskaâ letopis'*), implying the *ethnogenesis* so important to Bashkir history and Russian schools of thought. The centre of interest in Soviet ethnography was the study and primordialist analysis of *ethnos*, meaning a well-defined unit with its own culture, language and "character", and research on ethnogenesis i.e. the birth and development of ethnos. Analysis of inner identity, its modes of construction and ethnic boundary building mechanisms was alien to the Soviet academic mentality, and so ethnicity was also interpreted as a rigid category which at most could undergo either consolidation or assimilation. Methodology was based on morphological, functional, historical and typological analyses, which set a narrow and inflexible framework for Soviet ethnographical research (Gumiljov 1975; Bromlej 1976; Filippov 2010). These methodological principles were pervasive in Kuzeev's analyses and terminology, the unchanged use of which demands some explanation.

Following in Kuzeev's footsteps, most Bashkir researchers and those in Bashkortostan dealing with the subject apply the terminology used by Kuzeev and the Soviet school of thought, and this is also common to discourse in connection with Family Tree celebrations. My goal is not to engage in an analytical critique of works dealing with Bashkir ethnic processes, but to provide an understanding of the use of genealogical research for political aims. Therefore, my study will make use of the original terminology and analyses (such as ethnos, ethnogenesis, and later tribe), knowing that these may not be valid or suitable for my own research position. At the same time, usage of these terms is absolutely necessary since it is only via the categories defined by Soviet ethnography that it is possible to understand the mentality adopted by the current political course, which presents Bashkir family trees as an ethnic symbol and the Bashkir nation as a coherent unit. In other words, I am interpreting Kuzeev's works as a kind of *emic* text,

[3] The research has been made possible by the support of TÁMOP-4.2.4.A/2-11/1-2012-0001 *Young Researcher Scholarship for Hungarian and International Researchers in Convergence Regions of the National Program of Excellence* (NKP). The project was coo-funded by the European Union and the European Social Fund. The research was also part of the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA) no 57093 project titled "Symbolic landscapes and ethnic relations in post-Soviet Russia".

which is an integral part of the celebration's ethnography and which – if interpreted according to its own mentality and logic – will facilitate understanding of the broader social and political processes taking place in Bashkortostan.

On the other hand, these narratives can also be considered *etic* since ethnographic science regards Kuzeev's works to be interpretive and academic. From this point of view, I already consider it important to distance myself from Kuzeev's analyses and to emphasise the constructivist and instrumentalist approach of my own analysis. The constructivist school that developed during the 1960s, hallmarked by Fredrik Barth, examines ethnicity with an approach entirely different from that of primordialist theories. According to constructivism, an ethnic group is not a given homogenous unit formed by its cultural constant, but the result of dynamically changing boundary building activity which can only be manifested through interaction with other ethnic groups. Constructivists regard this activity as *ethnicity* (Barth 1969). In keeping with this approach, ethnicity is primarily manifest in social processes and its cultural features only make sense when examined in this light.

Barth's constructivism does not place a special emphasis on the role of culture in ethnicity and it is precisely this that the majority of critics find lacking. While agreeing with the constructivist view that ethnicity must be studied at the level of social life, Thomas Hylland Eriksen asserts that "Ethnicity is the enduring and systematic communication of cultural differences between groups considering themselves to be distinct" (Eriksen 2010:69). In Eriksen's interpretation, the intent to display culture and cultural features precedes and actually initiates social processes. In my opinion, setting an established order between the cultural and social processes of ethnicity is not worthwhile since the two are in a dialogue with one another, making it difficult to determine which takes priority over the other (or whether addressing this issue is important at all). The case of Bashkir identity examined in this study also provides a good illustration of why it is impossible to decide which of these processes gave rise to the other.

Using the expression *groupism*, Rogers Brubaker criticised the entire constructivist point of view, and not just with regards to methodology. Brubaker's instrumentalist concept argues that constructivism also tends to thinks in terms of homogeneous groups, using primordialist terminology when discussing ethnicity and ethnic conflicts and treating ethnic groups as "substantial entities to which interests and agency can be attributed" (Brubaker 2002:164). These conflicts can rather be called ethnicized or ethnically framed conflict, in the course of which a narrow strata tries to display its efforts as the interest of an entire ethnic group. In this way, "Ethnicity, race and nationhood exist only in and through our perceptions, interpretations, representations, categorizations and identifications. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world. These include ethnicized ways of seeing (and ignoring), of construing (and misconstruing), of inferring (and misinferring), and of remembering (and forgetting)" (Brubaker 2002:174). This is why I consider it important to stress that my study focuses on the interests and activities of a narrow political elite which sees Bashkir culture as the cause of all people who the same elite regards to be Bashkir, a perspective supported by Bashkir modes of ethnography and writing history.[4]

[4] Nevertheless, this does not mean that everyone truly identifies with this perspective, the analysis of which shall remain the subject of another study.

"THE RIGHT OF THE BASHKIR NATION"
BASHKIR NATION-BUILDING DURING THE 1990s

The current political situation in Bashkortostan has been determined to a great extent by the demographic and economic circumstances following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Maintaining its status as a republic within the Russian Federation has remained an important factor up to the present day,[5] a fundamental criterion being the status of the Bashkir majority as a titular nation[6] as opposed that of other peoples. On several occasions throughout the 20th century, the Bashkir political elite has had to take decisive steps to ensure that those considering themselves Bashkirs did not become a minority among those proclaiming Tatar identity. The Tatar population has always had a threatening impact on the status of Bashkirs, not only due to its size, but also because of political support coming from Tatarstan. Tatar movements in Bashkortostan have demanded that Tatar forums, schools, media and political representation be given official status, but for Bashkirs the spontaneous processes of Tatarisation and assimilation also meant a continuous danger. Bashkir nationalism has primarily developed within this context and therefore can only be appropriately interpreted in this light.

The issue is basically rooted in the cultural, religious, linguistic and territorial proximity and permeability of the two ethnic groups, which the administrative structure of the Soviet Union only complicated further. As Russian imperial provinces were dismantled, more than two thirds of the mixed population living in territories along the border came under the authority of the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, in which the benefits of belonging to a titular nation and a consistent language policy led to the rapid assimilation of those swinging between the two identities. However, the remaining third attached to the Bashkir Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic were unable to feel an absolute connection with the Bashkir titular nation since the Bashkir literary language formed during the 1930s was the least compatible with the north-western Tatar dialect characteristic of the territory (Gorenburg 1999:566). As a consequence, data from population surveys clearly reflect a Tatar speaking Bashkir group using the privilege of titular nation to assert its Bashkir identity while taking advantage of native language education and the close similarity of their dialect, preferring to retain Tatar as their mother tongue.

The policy of "one nation – one language" during the 60s and 70s, however, was an attempt to *Bashkirise* north-western groups in order to turn them into "true Bashkirs" as well. Even today, true Bashkirs are primarily regarded as those living in southern

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[5] The Russian Federation comprises a total of 83 different subjects, each of which have different rights, constitutional sovereignty and authority to coordinate and control administration depending on their status.

[6] The concept of titular nation (*titul'naâ naciâ*) is connected to the political arrangement of the Soviet Union. Those regarded as titular nations were autonomous Soviet socialist units (republics, counties or territories) named after the prominent national group in the given territory. The language of the titular nation was the second official language after Russian, and its members enjoyed special rights in the sphere of politics, employment and education. While the special rights of titular nations were abolished in the wake of reforms during the 1980s, in Bashkortostan the benefits enjoyed by Bashkirs on the basis of ethnic differentiation (political status, distribution of financial resources, language usage etc.) remained after the political transition as well.

and south-eastern areas, whose dialect served as the foundation for the Bashkir literary language and whose culture ethnographers also considered to be "more Bashkir" in a traditional sense. Using language as a tool of Bashkirisation, political circles continued to regard the north-western dialect as Bashkir rather than Tatar. Native language education was authorised on the basis of declared ethnic identity, which means that Bashkirs who had previously studied in Tatar had no choice but to take part in education using literary Bashkir or to choose Tatar identity, thereby depriving themselves of the special rights enjoyed by the titular nation. After these privileges were also cut during the Gorbechov era of the 80s, those living in north-western territories favoured retaining their mother tongue instead and declared themselves to be Tatars. As a result, the census taken in 1989 indicated that they comprised 28.5% of the population, with the Bashkir population at 22%. Moreover, after the union collapsed, the north-western territories demanded total autonomy and secession from the republic (Gorenburg 1999:570–574).

This significantly limited opportunities for national and political independence when the new republic of Bashkortostan was established in 1993. While the political elite in Tatarstan strove to establish a new, sovereign Tatar state on the basis of an obvious Tatar majority, Bashkortostan was forced to search for a fundamental base that was also capable of legitimising its Bashkir minority in a leading role. As a consequence of this process, the new constitution declared the multi-ethnic (*mnogonacional'nyj*) composition of the population in Bashkortostan while simultaneously asserting the inalienable rights of Bashkirs to seek autonomy based on historical precedents and several centuries of territorial possession (Konstitucii Rossijskoj Federacii 2015). The multi-ethnicity declared in the constitution directly resulted in a multilingual state, which meant that two official state languages existed alongside other acknowledged native tongues (Zamâtin 2012:23): Russian and Bashkir, the latter being a manifestation of Bashkortostan's right to autonomy (Respublika Baškortostan, Zakon o âzykah narodov Respubliki Baškortostan 2015).

The Bashkir nation has also attempted to assert its political control through quotas and extended privileges, citing that its failure in elections behind Russians and Tatars is due to its minority status whereas Bashkirs enjoy a special right to control the territory and its population by way of their indigenous status. The compulsory ratio of Bashkirs in the parliament, in government agencies and in legislative committees was set at 50%, and it has also been stipulated that only Bashkirs can represent the republic in the national chambers of the federal Duma (Gorenburg 2006:98). Presidents are expected to have perfect knowledge of the Bashkir language, and so it is no surprise that the first head of state in Bashkortostan was also of Bashkir origin, Murtaza Rahimov, a "true" Bashkir from the southern territories who held the post for almost two decades. Rahimov, who had acquired considerable economic knowledge and an extensive network of contacts through his days in the oil industry, quickly recognised that the outstanding economic potential of the republic could serve not only as a possible foundation for national sovereignty, but also as one of the most important elements of nation-building. During the 1930s, Bashkortostan was counted as the largest oil producer in the Soviet Union, and although the significance of this decreased as the century progressed, the industry was expanded with oil refinement, petroleum production and petro-chemical research. With regards to its mineral resources, the territory is rich in copper and iron ore, but also boasts sites containing natural gas, gold, and coal. These characteristics provided a strong foundation for economic stability in Bashkortostan. In 1992, for example, the average income per person was 35,500 RUB,[7] ranking the republic in fifth place within Russia (Gorenburg 2006:22). Among other things, this situation resulted in Bashkortostan being able to retain 70% of the income derived from exports, allowing it to become one of the most financially and economically independent republics in the federation (Gorenburg 1999:253).

On the other hand, this income was not equally invested, at least not in economic terms. A significant portion of industrial and infrastructural development was concentrated in the southern territories, where the majority of the population is comprised of the previously mentioned "true" Bashkirs. In this sense, being Bashkir also meant special advantages in the sphere of employment, even though this was not possible according to the law. Bashkir cultural development and initiatives could also rely on financial support from the government e.g. the "Ural" Bashkir National Centre, which was quickly able to acquire its own building, conference room, vehicles and computers when it was established in 1989 (Gorenburg 2006:60), and government funding has been and continues to be used for the promotion of Bashkir language and culture.

This economic and cultural support is already providing suitable assistance for the reinforcement of Bashkir social solidarity as well. The majority of such initiatives have been organised and spread along the lines of Bashkir clan networks based on kinship, and this filter has inhibited any outsiders or resisters from infiltrating the ranks of activists in the movement (Gorenburg 2006:59). Although prohibited during Soviet times, a tightly observed sense of clan belonging within families nevertheless meant a common identity, social bond and trust which easily mobilised the majority of Bashkirs. These are the initiatives and movements which led to emergence of *Šäžärä Bajramy* in 2006 – the national Family Tree celebration officially supported by the government, which has become an important tool in Bashkir nation-building strategies in a newer attempt to Bashkirise the population in the north-west.

"WE MUST NOT FORGET"
THE FAMILY TREE FESTIVAL AS A TOOL OF BASHKIRISATION

The presidential order of 2006 stipulated the compulsory annual organisation of the Family Tree Festival throughout the entire territory of Bashkortostan, which meant that celebrations took place not only in areas with a Bashkir majority, but in every single municipality, regardless of ethnic affiliation. In spite of the above, the presidential order as well as several methodological reference books and the media do not regard Family Tree Day as a national celebration, but as a Bashkir ethnic festival. While the tracking of ancestral origin is not regarded as a uniquely Bashkir trait, its criteria have clearly adjusted to Bashkir traditions, particularly encouraging depictions of the patrilineal lineage and as well its tribal and clan[8] affiliations and attributes (tamga, tree, bird, battle cry). The Family

[7] In 1992, one USD equalled 55–57 RUF, which means that 35,500 RUB counted as approximately 620–645 USD (Archive of Bank of Russia, 2015). The average income per person in 2010 was a total of 16,400 RUB, which then totalled roughly 540 USD (1 dollar = 30.5 rubel – Exchanges Rates UK, 2015), which ranked Bashkortostan fifteenth within the federation (Srednemesâčnaâ zarabotnaâ plata regionov RF za 2010 god, 2015).

[8] See further below regarding usage of the terminology.

Tree competition and modes of celebration also follow traditions that are considered to be Bashkir, which contend that "no Bashkir celebration can be conducted without a competition" (Burakaeva 2010:45). Officially, the celebration was preceded by a local family tree competition in which all of the family trees prepared in the given village or city were evaluated prior to the national festival, where only the winners were displayed. Of course this was not always possible in smaller villages which produced far fewer family trees, and so all of the entries were then displayed during the festival as well. Family trees were primarily judged on the basis of their "depth", meaning how many generations the genealogy was able to cover, which could also be supplemented with essential data and family narratives. Important information included the citizenship and personal data of family members, their religious and political affiliation, their level of schooling and social circumstances as well as their appearance and details concerning their state of health. Competitors were especially encouraged to research and present any particularly talented members of their families. The national festival then entailed the presentation of family trees specifically belonging to famous historical figures from various municipalities.

The government provided a suitable structural and financial background for all of the above, ensuring cooperation between the Ministry of Culture, the Bashkortostan Academy of Sciences and registry offices. In addition, research centres were established throughout the entire republic, where all relevant local materials were archived and made available to the public. Computer databases were set up for these centres, which allowed public access to the materials on the internet along with reference guides and source materials in order to make research easier for laymen. Therefore, numerous materials can also be accessed on the homepages of archives in Bashkortostan (Arhivy Baškortostana 2015). There was also a strong government effort to incorporate genealogy in the educational program, and this has remained an integral part of the curriculum to this day. The development of skills related to constructing genealogical depictions covering three generations has even become a part of studies at the kindergarten level, which also serves to provide a pedagogical method for conveying the family as a fundamental value. Pupils engage in a comprehensive study of genealogy within the framework of the subject called *Istoriâ i kul'tury Baškortostana*, meaning the history and culture of Bashkortostan, introduced during the early 1990s, and also within the context of compulsory Bashkir language lessons, during which they prepare their own family trees. Naturally, local, municipal and national competitions were announced for students as well, giving them the opportunity to display one or two richly illustrated family trees or to display their genealogical depictions of famous individuals born in the Bashkir homeland.

This broad and carefully structured national program has aimed to achieve numerous goals. The most important point mentioned in the presidential order was that genealogy not only facilitates the accumulation and transfer of knowledge in connection with the family, but also plays an important role in reinforcing the bonds of kinship while helping to ensure generational continuity and health. The latter is considered important in order to prevent intermarriage and the genetic problems it causes, stressing adherence to seventh generation exogamy. According to the order, in addition to the study of families and the clan as well as the collection of family legends and anecdotes, genealogy also enriches the history of the homeland, the revival of family tradition being a way to foster the aesthetic, moral and spiritual development of future generations. The program has also fulfilled somewhat of a propagandistic role, with the revitalisation of Bashkir national

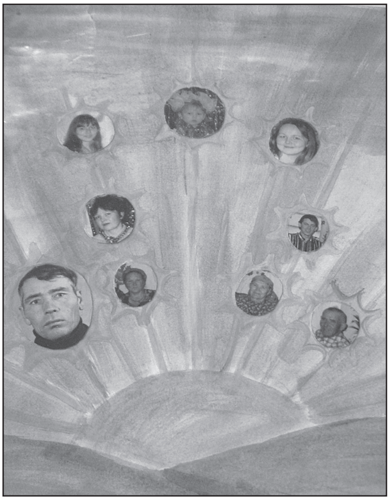

Figure 1. Family tree of a kindergardener, Novye Tatyšly, 2012. (Photo by Boglárka Mácsai)

Figure 2. Family tree of a student in the elementary school, Verhnie Tatyšly, 2012. (Photo by Boglárka Mácsai)

traditions and customs as its explicitly expressed goal along with the popularisation of Bashkir national games (Zakonodatel'stvo Rossijskoj Federacii 2015).

In other words, while the program has involved the entire population, with attempts to de-ethnicise it at certain points along the way, it was rather designed to facilitate Bashkir national unity on the basis of Bashkir traditions, as manifested in the texts published in methodological reference books:

> The history of Bashkir tribes and clans is the history of the Bashkir nation. (…) Although no tribes exist today in the classic sense, many Bashkir people continue to remember their ethnic roots. They are aware of their tribal history and the history of their clan. They have thus preserved the memory of their ancestors. We must not forget that the people which remembers its own historical roots will never be small and will never be lost. (Ângužin 2010:9)

Genealogy has proven appropriate for satisfying this goal in several aspects. It looks back on a significant past. Its tradition, even if curtailed, has remained strongly in memory. It has given a well-defined and tangible rendition of the Bashkir nation and has already provided a strong academic foundation for research on tribes and various clans.

This academic foundation, and especially its kinship terminology and categorisation, is largely due to the work of historian-ethnographer Rail Kuzeev, who writes the following in his book entitled Origins of the Bashkir People:

> The Bashkir clan-tribal system [*rodo-plemennaâ sistema*] could be divided into three parts: tribe [*plemâ*], clan [*rod*] and lineage [*rodovoe podrazdelenie*]. Nevertheless, this terminology can only be applied under certain conditions. While it serves to express the structure of the Bashkir clan-tribal system, it does not include socio-economic content, which is usually associated with these terms in a classic sense. (Kuzeev 1974:76)

In light of the above, Kuzeev's interpretation of these three concepts in the course of discussing Bashkir social structure entailed the following. He defined lineage as an exogamic unit of related families descended from a distant common ancestor. Relatives with common names and *tamgas* living in separate places in the same village cooperated economically and took part in each other's rituals. *Clan* was comprised of more distantly related lineages, who were presumably descended from a presumably famous or heroic ancestor. These also possessed common names and *tamgas*, which were further varied according to lineage. In most cases, they were characterised by exogamy and a common territory of settlement. *Tribal* organisations were comprised of several unified clans, which, according to Kuzeev, were also bonded by kinship, not only due to common ethnonyms and territory, but also because of common attributes, such as *tamgas*, species of trees and birds, or war cries symbolic of the tribe. Tribes also operated as political entities, given the presence of elder councils and public assemblies (Kuzeev 1974:76).

This categorisation proved to be an important tool in the Bashkirisation of north-western groups, in which the last phase of Bashkir ethnogenesis as described by Kuzeev played a key role. According to Kuzeev, allies of tribes migrating to and settling in the south-western region of the Ural Mountains during the first half of the 2nd century provided the basic foundation for the formation of the Bashkir ethnos. He regarded the 15th century migration of clans separating from these tribes and relocating to the north-western territory of Bashkiria in the service of the Kazan Khanate as the closing phase of the ethnogenesis, indicating kinship with south-eastern tribes with the help of family trees discovered in north-western areas (Kuzeev 1974:319). In other words, the Bashkir identity of those living in the northwest was already no longer an issue for Kuzeev during the 1950s and 60s, certainly not in the genealogical sense.

Accession to the Russian Empire and the related consequences during the 16th century proved to be a major turning point. The earliest of the surviving family trees are dated to this period. These not only render patrilineal genealogy going back upwards of ten or even fifteen generations, but were also supplemented with additional information: dates, inheritance data and narratives concerning various events. According to Kuzeev, this proves that the rapidly growing population was also forced to keep records in order to remember its ancestors and relatives, and also to ensure possession of territories and patrilineal inheritance following accession to the Russian Empire – the latter of which seems to be a more plausible explanation. This was especially important in the case of Bashkiria since the contract established with the Russians stipulated that the territory of Bashkiria could remain in the hands of indigenous people in exchange for military service, and the unity of family lands was also taken into account when administrative units, *volost's,* were established later on (Kuzeev 1960:6–14).[9]

According to local research, this is also the period to which the "authenticity" of Bashkirs living in the north-western part of Bashkiria can be traced. The issue of authenticity essentially involves deciding which cultural features can serve to make a distinction between Bashkirs and Tatars, and the changes taking place during the 16th century were also significant from this perspective. The north-western territories quickly stepped on the path towards feudalism, which provided suitable conditions for a settled

[9] For a post-colonialist critique and further information on the role of volosts, see: Mészáros 2013:57–83.

agricultural lifestyle taking place in the 15th and 16th centuries (Kuzeev 1960:14). By contrast, the majority of Bashkirs living in south-eastern areas continued their nomadic way of life up to as late as the 19th century. In comparison to neighbouring ethnic groups, this divergent lifestyle was also clearly reflected in the summer landscape, in which herds of cattle and yurts defined the characteristic Bashkir existence.[10] The costumes and material culture of those living in the border territories of the northwest (which researchers suggest were mainly characterised by the use of birch, straw and reeds) also clearly showed the influence of Tatars as well as the impact of interethnic relations maintained with other groups living in the area (e.g. Udmurt, Chuvash and Mari) while the population living in southern areas upheld the most typically Bashkir traditions by continuing to preserve traditional leather craft and wearing costumes distinct from those of other ethnic groups in the region. With regards to family trees, fieldwork in the south yielded far more in the way of collected samples, which Kuzeev saw as newer proof of the continuous practice of tradition. In any case, the abundance of material enabled more thorough and detailed research in these areas. As I have already mentioned above, the southern dialect of the Bashkir language was the one that differed the most from the Tatar language, and this also counted as a contributing factor when judging “authenticity” later on. That is to say that Bashkirs living in territories adjacent to Tatars adapted to the culture of their neighbours in several ways (and the same is true in reverse), while the denser concentration of Bashkirs in the southern and south-western regions was characterised by fewer interethnic relations, and so was therefore less influenced by Tatars. This gave their culture a stronger, more Bashkir character, which proved to be more conducive to creating a distinct policy of ethnic identity and nation-building.

Figure 3. Gali Čokroj family tree, Karmashkaly, 2013. (Photo by Boglárka Mácsai)

Figure 4. The seven Bashkir tribes, Karmashkaly, 2013. (Photo by Boglárka Mácsai)

[10] The famous Bashkir dairy products of today cannot be attributed simply to centuries of animal husbandry and milk processing either, but also to the unique farming of vegetation on the southern steppe and its high concentration of vitamin and mineral content, which is not so typical of the northern areas.

The problem developed in the new, ethnically based administrative structures of the Soviet Union and in ethnic categories of population surveys during the 20th century, which culminated prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union in the results of the 1989 census mentioned above. The Tatar majority also caused significant problems in the course of developing nation-building and minority policies, which President Murtaza Rahimov took great care to alleviate. During the next census in 2002, the government placed a serious emphasis on the Bashkirisation of north-western population, which was not manifested in media propaganda, but also in the falsification of the results. This succeeded in reversing the earlier ratio, putting the number of Bashkirs at 30%, with the number of Tatars representing only 24% (Vserossijskaâ perepis' naseleniâ 2002; goda 2009). In several places, the propaganda was so successful that people in the northwest became completely confused as to their identity. Even today, many describe themselves as half-Bashkir and half-Tatar, but in the census of 2010, they tended to choose the Bashkir ethnic category.[11]

This tendency was largely assisted by the development of the Family Tree Festival as well. Methodological supplements and databases created on the basis of Kuzeev's research specifically stipulate that north-westerners be categorised among tribes which Kuzeev already identified during the 1960s as having ancestral, and therefore authentic, Bashkir roots among south-eastern clans.[12] Given that local historical research has pervaded the entire program and practically every level of education, lay researchers responsible for local knowledge as well as entire generations of youth have acquired genealogical "evidence" of their ethnic affiliation, which could also have strong impact on the assertion of their identities in the future.

"TWO BRANCHES OF THE SAME TREE"
THE FAMILY TREE FESTIVAL AS A RUSSIAN TRADITION

The Family Tree Festival provided flexible solutions in answer to the ethnic processes and political processes taking place in Bashkortostan, which could also be adopted by other ethnic groups in the republic and even Russia itself. To begin with, the program was organised in the framework of the 450th anniversary of Bashkiria's voluntary accession to Russia (Zakonodatel'stvo Rossijskoj Federacii 2015), which in 2007 was designed

[11] I collected relevant data in the course of my fieldwork in 2012 and 2013 in the municipality of Tatyšly (in the northwest territory of Bashkortostan). Procedures used here in 2002 were so successful that two thirds of people who had previously considered themselves Tatars were registered as Bashkir. The media propaganda also convinced an acquaintance of mine who was known to regard himself as Udmurt that the primary interest of the republic was to increase the number of Bashkirs, which led her to register as Bashkir too. Her case can actually be considered an exception since the majority of people in the municipality at the time still talked about Tatars in reference to locals whom the government regarded as Bashkir. Another illustration of the difference between discourse in local and state-supported research was the case of an ethnographer of Udmurt descent who expressed surprise when explaining that according to researchers in the capital, Tatar locals who she had known since childhood were in fact Bashkir.

[12] In this example, the winner of the national competition from Tatyšly municipality, the family tree of Bashkir-Tatar poet Gali Čokroj (1828–1889) also displays attributes of the *iràkte* tribe previously belonging to the *kara tabyn* tribe which had migrated from the south.

to commemorate centuries of Russian-Bashkir coexistence since 1557 in the form of grandiose festivities and projects.[13] Otherwise called "450 years together with Russia", the series of events was presumably encouraged for financial reasons as well since the federation also contributed funding to the organised programs.

Even so, affiliation with the Russian Federation was not explicitly placed in the foreground of the Family Tree program, which made a much stronger attempt to integrate within the trends and standards of state education. Until 2007, the Russian Federation delegated 60% of the education structure to the state, 30% to various federal subjects and 10% to local institutions (Vaillant 2005:223). The 30% allowed Bashkortostan to introduce the subject entitled "History and Culture of Bashkortostan", initiating the acquisition of learning material dealing with local and regional subjects, and the incorporation of genealogy in the curriculum, meaning a large portion of the educational dimension in Bashkir nation-building policy. This education standard was practically abolished in 2007 so as to standardise federal education, but protest from Bashkortostan and Tatarstan resulted in some concessions in the curricula of the two neighbouring republics – which meant that the previously introduced subjects could remain in addition to the compulsory number of lessons (Zamâtin 2012:25).

At the same time, the new standard also meant the compulsory inclusion of afternoon extra-curricular activities in six categories: intellectual preparation for subject-specific competitions (*intellektualnoe*), moral instruction ensuring appropriate citizenship (*nravstvennoe*), instruction designed to increase patriotic sentiment among students (*patriotičeskoe*), physical education promoting fitness and a healthy lifestyle (*fizičeskoe*), art-aesthetics to satisfy students' creative desires (*hudožestvenno-èstetičeskoe*), and training design to encourage enthusiasm for work and its accomplishment (*trudovoe*). In the course of application, however, the line between these categories is often blurred, and it depends on the given school as to which form of training receives greater emphasis. In any case, moral and patriotic training are completely suited for genealogy, even if this is not immediately apparent.

Moral and patriotic training are regarded as tightly interconnected sectors of education, which are primarily manifested in citizenship training (Mácsai 2014b). The main space for this in schools is the so-called school museum, which in a narrow in sense involves the presentation of national history and famous figures, being an exhibition space central to the serious Russian tradition of *kraevedenie* (Mácsai 2014a). Following the Family Tree festivities, the family trees of famous individuals and notable villagers are put on display in school museums, in part so that locals can also observe them and partly as a tool of illustration to foster the acquisition of skills in connection with family tree depiction and *kraevedenie*.

For lack of a better expression, the term *kraevedenie* is usually translated as local history, but I would prefer to use the original term in light of its multi-layered and complex

[13] As in the case of several neighbouring republics, the expression "voluntary accession" (*dobrovol'noe prisoedinenie*) is an official term which completely ignores military resistance by indigenous peoples against Russian conquerors in the 15th and 16th centuries.

meaning.[14] The expression *rodnoj kraj* should also be noted here. Its meaning can best be illustrated with the word homeland, which can refer to a village, a municipality or to Bashkiria in its entirety, but it can also function as a cognitive category, which sets linguistic, cultural and ethnic boundaries for the homeland rather than geographical ones. The expression "little homeland" (*mala*â *rodina*) can also be used as a synonym for *kraj* and *rodnoj kraj*, a verbal association suggesting a part-whole affiliation with the larger homeland (*Rodina*), which also sheds light on the essence of *kraevedenie*. As such, *kraevedenie* strives for the research and conservation of local subject matter established by state, regional and local institutions and players in addition to its institutionalised transfer from generation to generation, including all branches of academic science as well as local references placed within the framework of official interpretation controlled by the state. In other words, just as the little homeland is included in the larger homeland, local content cannot be interpreted without knowledge of broader contexts.

It is precisely due to this embeddedness that the history of *kraevedenie* is not devoid of political influence either. The academic sphere formed during the 18th century was already regarded as a popular occupation among researchers by the beginning of the 20th. By the 1930s, however, the work of those representing *kraevedenie,* who believed in cultural and economic diversity, was becoming a problem for Soviet powers. Opposition to Stalinist collectivism and institutional uniformisation led to the persecution of *kraeveds* and the closure of numerous museums, after which science was put under central control. While museums retained their geographical, archaeological and ethnographic content, a new emphasis was placed on local revolutionary movements, the history of the school, and the history of industry and agriculture. Following World War II, all of this was supplemented with portraits of war heroes and soldiers who came from villages, expanded over time by the stories of newer and newer warriors (Stroev 1974).

Beginning in the 1950s, the content of exhibitions was essentially determined by this theme, but due to the essence of *kraevedenie*, other local and regional themes could also be added at any time. It was practically as a result of the latter that the Family Tree program found its place within the context of *kraevedenie* – and also within the context of a broader Russian tradition. Presumably due to the Bashkirisation of north-western groups, it was not only the Bashkir population who were obliged by the Bashkir government to take part in the program, but other ethnic groups as well, and so it also became necessary to find categories like family or cultural homeland, which were more neutral in terms of ethnic content. This is reflected nicely in the following quote, which handles genealogy as a far more universal value:

> The aim of our work is embodied in manifestation of a richer spiritual and moral strength among our nations and the residents of our district, in the revitalisation of the centuries-old patriotic foundation of our social and private lives, in the psycho-philosophical reinforcement of our children and adolescents, and in our attempts to carefully redirect our children towards the stream of authentic culture in its true spirit and beauty. I believe that every human and every

[14] The term is derived from a Kraj word that also has multiple meanings. It partly designates a relatively smaller geographic territory, such as an area or region with natural borders, but it can also refer to the borders of a specific territory, i.e. "the ends". In addition, it also refers to official or semi-official Kraj administrative units comprising the provinces of the Russian Empire from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 20th, for example Altaj Kraj, Perm Kraj or Kamchatka Kraj.

> nation must understand their place in the world, in nature and among other humans and nations, which is impossible without knowledge of history, culture, and the customs of our Homeland [*Rodina*] and our family. Every person is tightly connected to the present, future and past of their Homeland [*Rodina*] and their family. (Kunakkildina 2010:73)

It was in this manner that exhibitions on local history in Bashkortostan came to incorporate family trees as a unique display of local and ethnic social history, which could then be easily connected to sections presenting narratives about local village heroes or local ethnic groups. In this way, they also could become an integral part of ethno-local identity policies. Organisers of Family Tree Festivals consciously strove to approach the traditions of *kraevedenie* since the competitions were enriched by local exhibitions, excursions, conferences and roundtable discussions, and by the publication of methodological reference guides that continuously emphasised the importance of knowledge about and love for the homeland. Consequently, the program became compatible with other Russian programs emphasising the value of local identity, e.g. the project entitled Our Homelanders (*Zemlâki*), announced in 2010 by the Unified Russia Party (*Edinaâ Rossiâ*), which means that participants in the competition searcing for the greatest villagers were also able to utilise the results of genealogy since the majority of entries in the competition dealing with migrated heroes also contained their own genealogies.

Last, but not least, the Family Tree Festival was also easily adapted to the Russian Year of the Family in 2008 (God Sem'i 2008).[15] Education had originally regarded the love of family as an important aspect of training, with the goal of encouraging family pride and respect for parents among young people as well as developing their interest in family history and traditions (Kunakkildina 2010:73–74), but the transfer of family values supported by state propaganda became increasingly important:

> We do not know our roots well, which is our poverty. Family pride and an interest in our family tree – these are two branches of the same tree. We must not live without knowing our kinship, and we must not study the history of the Homeland and of the family separately. Family memory plays an important role in education promoting clan pride. Through the history of family, every child is learning learns the entire history of Russia. Text for kindergarten presentation, collected: Novye Tatyšly, 22 May 2012.

As can be seen, the Family Tree Festival was not merely a solution to for nation-building and ethnic problems in Bashkortostan, but was also sensitive to the complex alliance and cooperation with Russia. Within the framework of *kraevedenie*, it fit perfectly within the traditions of Russian education and also fulfilled the task of moral training by communicating the values of family and patriotism.

[15] The population of the federation declined with five million according the 2006 census, thus the government implemented several initiations to reverse the process. Maternity grant after the birth of the second child has been introduced from January 1, 2007 This is a remarkable amount of one-time sum (250 thousand RUB in 2007; 430 thousand RUB in 2014) to be spent on construction, health care or tuition fees. The grant seems to give inevitable impetus in demography. Thereafter 2008 was announced the "Year of Family" when several complex educational and media programs were run.

"SOLIDIFYING THE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH OF THE NATION" CONCLUSION

This study has sought to find an answer to the issue of how a revived tradition can serve political interests that are simultaneously attempting to satisfy the demands of nation-building based on ethnicity and the demands of affiliation with a larger multi-ethnic nation. First, I examined the utilisation of tradition in support of attempts by an ethnic nation to gain power and autonomy through a conscious program of re-ethnicisation aimed at certain ethnic groups. This was followed by an indication of how a tradition that is fundamentally regarded as ethnic can be in a broader non-ethnic context, and how it can legitimise its place thereof. In this way, I managed to show how seemingly contradictory strategies for the use of this tradition can effectively complement one another in reality. Thanks to encouragement by the government, the Family Tree Festival was able to continuously fulfill this role all the way up to 2010, when Rustem Hamitov became the new President of Bashkortostan, after which nationalist policies were forced into the background. Among other things, this new direction was due to the fact that the president was from one of the north-western municipalities in the Bashkirised part of the republic. While Hamitov clearly expressed his rejection of the Bashkirisation and fraud that took place in the course of the 2002 census (Hamitov 2011), the census of 2010 only reflected this to a minimal extent.[16] The Family Tree Festival lost its compulsory requirements, but funding was not completely abolished and the established structures and educational programs were retained. If not in every village, the family tree tradition continues to exist today, having been deeply rooted in Bashkir consciousness and also in the preservation of *kraevedenie,* and thus has the "Family Tree Festival solidified the spiritual strength of the nation [*naciâ*]". (Šaripova 2010:47)

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[16] The most recent census indicated the Bashkir population at 29.5% and the Tatars at 25.5%. (This ratio was 30%–24% in 2002.) While the national results did not show a large difference, the results of the census in the Tatyšly municipality clearly reflected the current political attitude towards the issue of north-western Bashkirs. In 1989, the ratio of Bashkirs was 54% while that of Tatars was 21%. In 2002, this difference was increased to 70% and 5% respectively. The change in 2010 brought the number of Bashkirs back to 60% while the lost 10% returned to the Tatars, who then comprised 15% of the population in the municipality.

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"There is no nation without history, there is no family without a family tree"

On Sibe Ethnic Nationalist Aspirations through the Example of a "Family Tree Unification" Story

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Abstract: The 1949 rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party (Zhongguo Gongchandang 中国共产党)[1] was the beginning of a new era in China: the declaration of the People's Republic of China (Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo 中华人民共和国) was the first step on the "socialist road" leading to the creation of the long-coveted Chinese national unity. However, progress on the "socialist road" has posed many challenges for the ethnic minorities living within China's borders. Mostly because melting into the Chinese national unity – paradoxically – became a symbol of the autonomy of ethnic minorities. In the spirit of this process, the ethnic nationalist aspirations of the Sibe (Chin. xibo zu 锡伯族; Sib. sibe uksura ᠰᡞᠪᡝ ᡠᡴᠰᡠᡵᠠ), the ethnic minority I studied, unfolded alongside the writing of Chinese national history. In my work, I follow these endeavors from the 1950s until recent times. At the center is a story that is seemingly about the knowledge base of Sibe ancestors, the family trees, and beyond that, about the "reunification" of a clan that was torn apart in 1764 by thousands of miles. But, in fact, it formulates much more than that: the idea of political martyrdom by the Sibe in the interest of creating the Chinese national unity. It is through this story that I wish to provide an insight into how Chinese national unity was created.

Keywords: ethnic minorities, nation, nation-building, nationalism, patriotism, genealogy
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[1] In the Latin script transliteration of languages using non-Latin script writing systems, I tried to consistently stick to unification. In the case of the Chinese language, this means the internationally accepted transliteration form of *pinyin* 拼音, while in the case of the Manchu/Sibe language, I used the transliteration form adopted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Zhongguo Shehui Kexueyuan 中国社会科学院). When using words and expressions transliterated with Latin script, upon their first occurrence I also provide their original script, adapted to the specified forms used in the source material.

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INTRODUCTION

The idealized notions about the Chinese nation and state can be considered the result of a long historical process (Hyer 2009:257). As a result of this process, the need for the creation of a unified Chinese nation arose simultaneously with the fall of the last imperial dynasty (1911). The chaotic period of the 1920s–1940s, however, did not allow for the then-emerging nationalist movements to have lasting consequences.

But historical events that hindered the expected development – such as internal power struggles or the Japanese occupation (1937) – still contributed much to the shaping of China's national identity (Szajp – Tőrös 2010:163). The Chinese Communist Party, which rose to power in 1949, earmarked the creation of a national unity formulated within the framework of statehood – and the "melting together" of all its ethnic minorities – as the essential element of the legitimization of its power (Vámos 2009:60).

This is well reflected in the official Chinese-language terminology used for the nation as well as for ethnic minorities. Namely, in Chinese, the same expression of Japanese origin, *minzu* 民族, is used for both "nation" and "nationality," within which *min* means "people", and *zu* carries the meaning of "clan". The term *minzu* can also be found in the compound word *shaoshu minzu* 少数民族, used to indicate the ethnic minorities that lived within the borders of the People's Republic of China. The literal translation of this word could be "a nation of few people." *Minzu* is also compounded in the concept indicating the Chinese nation, *zhonghua minzu* 中华民族. Given that the compound word of *zhonghua* is made up of *zhong*, which means "centralized," and *hua*, which means "blossoming, civilized," this term is a political category as well: it is intended to refer to all the citizens of the People's Republic of China, regardless of their ethnic identity (Vámos 2009:62).

In Chinese-English dictionaries (see, e.g., Wu – Cheng 2007), in addition to nation and nationality, ethnic community can also be found listed under *minzu*. Simultaneously, *shaoshu minzu* is translated both as "national minority" and "ethnic minority". However, social and cultural anthropological terminology makes a sharp distinction between these two concepts, preferring the use of ethnic minority in the case of *shaoshu minzu*. The reason is that the ethnic groups living within the borders of the People's Republic of China, who are very different in linguistic, cultural and religious aspects, do not claims rights to create their own nation-state – with two exceptions. In their case, ethnicity is expressed in the form of rivalry between groups, not in political secession (Eriksen 2008:31).

Similarly, a distinction could easily be made between the concepts that indicate the nation-building efforts of the Chinese Communist Party and the efforts aimed at strengthening the ethnic identity of ethnic minorities in the People's Republic of China. Quite simply, this is because at the "official" level of the definition, nationalist ideology can be defined as ethnic ideology that claims the right to a state in the name of an ethnic group. That is, in the case of Chinese ethnic minorities, one can hardly talk about nationalist aspirations. In practice, however, it is necessary to reconsider nationalism and ethnicity, as well as the use of the terminology marking the above efforts, while examining the creation of Chinese national unity. First of all, because nationalism can express an ideology beyond ethnicity that emphasizes the common rights of citizens instead of – or, in my opinion, alongside – the common cultural roots. Secondly, because in many cases it depends on the individuals whether they define themselves as members of a nation or an ethnic group, and national and ethnic identity can also change, depending on the situation.[3] I myself use the concept of ethnic nationalist aspirations in my research with this in mind: on the one hand, the concept is used to describe the plasticity of the relationship between nationalism and ethnicity; on the other hand, it distinguishes the ethnic minorities' ambitions of strengthening their identity from the Chinese Communist Party's nation-building ambitions.

Within China, the above mentioned efforts became concrete in the light of events taking place in the middle of the 20th century. Though built on the model of the Soviet Bolshevik Party, the new regime that came to power in 1949 always put more emphasis in its policy on the issue of social development than on governmental and economic problems. The creation of this required the transformation of society. In the 1950s, the Chinese Communist Party – in the spirit of establishing a Chinese national unity – announced its program aimed at studying the societies and histories of ethnic minorities. Sibe ethnic nationalist aspirations emerged alongside the implementation of this program, and their long-forgotten communal history was being written step by step – through the (re)construction of history. And the (re)construction of Sibe history came about via collecting the stories and material carriers of the preserved knowledge of the ancestors – the family trees.

Some 30 years after the initial measures, in 1988, in a book called *The Chronicle of the Sibe of Shenyang* (Shenyang xibozu zhi 沈阳锡伯族志, Shenyang Shi Minwei Minzu Zhi Bianzuan Bangongshi 1988), details of seventeen Sibe family trees had been published, the collection of which was initiated in the 1950s with the purpose of achieving the above goals. The authors of the "prefaces" to the family trees, most of which were re-edited several times,[4] tried to grasp through a variety of poetic images all that remembering their origins meant for their clans. Of all the prefaces, one of the most quoted among the Sibe is the preface written in 1947 for the family tree of a clan known in Chinese as An 安. This is where a sentence fragment can be found, which is most commonly quoted when the topic of writing and preserving Sibe family trees comes up. I quote:

[…] "There is no nation without history, there is no family without a family tree […].

[…] *Guo bu neng wu shi, jia bu neng wu pu* […].

[…] 国不能无史，家不能无谱[…]"[5](Shenyang Shi Minwei Minzu Zhi Bianzuan Bangongshi 1988:64).

I only understood the significance of the above words when, during my research about the nation-building efforts of the Sibe, my attention turned to Sibe family trees.

The term "family tree unification," just as the "family tree unification" story, which I mention in my subtitle, comes from a person of exceptional importance within the Sibe ethnic nationalist efforts:[6] Han Qikun 韩启昆 (1925–2010), a former employee

[3] For more on the specific subject areas, see Eriksen 2008:164–166.

[4] The issues of family tree reconstruction, forms, types and contents are discussed in detail later.

[5] The *guo* expression within the highlighted quote means country, state and nation in Chinese. In this case, I used "nation", in line with the political discourses heard during my fieldwork in which the highlighted text was quoted in reference to the issue of the creation of a Chinese national unity.

[6] Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story is discussed in more detail in my doctoral dissertation under the heading "There is no nation without history, there is no family without a family tree."

of the Shenyang College of Education (Shenyang Jiaoyu Xueyuan 沈阳教育学院).[7] In the summer of 2012, when I was in the city of Shenyang 沈阳, the regional seat of Liaoning 辽宁 Province, I did not have the chance to personally meet Han Qikun. However, Ding Linye 丁林野,[8] a folk healer of great renown among the Shenyang Sibe, made it possible for me to get in touch with the descendants of Han Qikun. The meeting with them eventually took place in Ding Linye's home, where Han Qikun's descendants showed me three family trees preserved within their clan.[9] They then took out their father's treasured photo album, and while looking through it, a picture of Han Qikun's life – and through it the history of Sibe ethnic nationalism – developed photo by photo. Finally, before we said goodbye, Han Qikun's descendants handed me a small, paper-bound blue booklet: the bound edition of Han Qikun's notes (Han 2004).

In this booklet there is a section, *Notes on tracing the Hashihuli*[10] *clan kinship across ten thousand lis*[11] (Hashihuli jiazu wanli xunqin ji 哈什胡里家族万里寻亲记) (Han 2004:11–20). This is the "family tree unification" story which nicely frames the story of the "unification" of Han Qikun's clan. The story begins with the following lines:[12]

> The Hashihuli [name] is nothing more than the name of our clan in the Sibe language, which was translated into Chinese as Han. This is the name of my clan. Recorded here are my experiences that I gained when even ten thousand *li* wasn't considered too far for me to travel to the motherland's northwestern border region (…) in search of my relatives. The story is true, I write this now, and I recommend it to all my compatriots of Sibe ethnicity, as well as all ethnic readers who are interested.
>
> In my childhood I often heard the old people say, "We have a branch in Yili." The old people considered it to be particularly important to bring this up when we celebrated the New Year. To us, Sibe, our holidays are important; upon the New Year, sacrifices had to be presented to our ancestors. First we bowed before "Xili Mama"[13] and the "family tree" (touching the ground with our foreheads); then we came in front of our sitting grandfathers and fathers so we could bow

7 Today's Institute of Education at Shenyang University (Shenyang Daxue Jiaoyu Xueyuan 沈阳大学教育学院).

8 In Ding Linye's family, herbal medicinal knowledge is handed down from generation to generation; they do not reveal their knowledge to anyone born outside of the clan. Ding Linye's and his father's name is included in the *Cultural Dictionary of Chinese Minorities* (Zhongguo shaoshu minzu wenhua dacidian 中国少数民族文化大辞典), see Tiemu'er 1997:424.

9 Two of the family trees shown to me at this time for purposes of documentation will be discussed in detail later on.

10 The titular Hashihuli name 哈什胡里 is the Chinese transcription of Han Qikun's clan name. The clan name in Manchu/Sibe is written as Hashūri. In the following, I use these two forms when transliterating the clan name with Latin script, depending on whether the specific quotes come from Chinese or Manchu/Sibe language texts.

11 *Li:* Chinese length measurement (= 1/2 kilometer).

12 The length of Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story precludes me from providing the full text; considering the length of my work, I can only include excerpts, without providing the original text. In the quotes taken from Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story, only those words and phrases are in quotation marks which Han Qikun himself enclosed in quotation marks. The explanations within brackets in the original text are also in brackets in my text. My own remarks are enclosed in curly brackets.

13 The female deity known in the Sibe language as Sirin mama, in Chinese as Xili mama 喜利妈妈, is responsible for the protection of children and the continuance of the family.

> before them; finally we visited all the families of our clan to pay them our respects, seeking first the closer, later the more remote branches (…).
>
> When coming to bow before "Xili Mama," the "family tree" and the generations of grandfathers and fathers, our clan chief lectured the children and grandchildren about the history of the clan (…). After listening to the lecture about the history of the clan, the eldest grandson shouted while kneeling: "Happy New Year to Grandfather!" Then everyone bowed low with him. Then the Grandfather fluttered his shawls, indicating that he accepted the best wishes of the children and grandchildren, then admonished all of us: "Oh! Children, remember that we have a branch in Yili!" So these words, that "we have a branch in Yili," have become entrenched in my childhood heart. But where is "Yili" to be found? And what are those "branch people" called? I did not yet understand it all. (…) (Han 2004:11–12)

To understand what Han Qikun's lines quoted above actually mean, I must first and foremost explain the knowledge preserved through the family trees and what it might have meant for the Sibe.

THE SIBE AND THE CARRIERS OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST

The Sibe are one of the PRC's 55 ethnic minorities officially accounted for. Their population in the present territory of China, according to 2010 census data, is estimated at 190,481.[14] The vast majority lives scattered in the northeastern provinces, in Heilongjiang 黑龙江 (7,608 people), Jilin 吉林 (3,113 people) and Liaoning (132,431 people) provinces, but large communities can also be found in China's western part, within the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu 新疆维吾尔自治区, 34,399 people). Their language belongs to the southern branch of the Manchu-Tungus group of Altai languages.

The first Chinese-language historical sources, which mention the name Sibe, are from the end of the 16th century – from the period when the Sibe were subject to the Khorchin (科尔沁ke'erqin) Mongols and fought against the more and more powerful Nu'erhaci (Chin. Tianming 天明; Mand. Abkai Fulingga ᠠᠪᡴᠠᡳ ᡶᡠᠯᡳᠩᡤᠠ; 1616–1626), the founder of the later Qing Empire (Chin. Chao Qing 清朝; Mand. Daicing gurun ᡩᠠᡳᠴᡳᠩ ᡤᡠᡵᡠᠨ; 1644–1911). There are no written sources about the Sibe available prior to this time.

The war waged by the Sibe, and which came to be recorded in Chinese history as the Nine Tribes' War (Jiu Bu Zhi Zhan 九部之战; 1593) (Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Dang'anguan 1989:3–4), sealed the fate of the Sibe. Following Nu'erhaci's victory and the defeat of the nine allied tribes, the building of the largest-ever "Chinese" empire began, along with the Eight Banners army that was the basis of the Manchus' power and to which the Sibe were also drafted, subject first to the surrendering Mongols, then the Manchus.[15]

[14] The census data were provided by the staff of the History and Culture Research Center of Northeast Ethnic Groups in China at Dalian Nationalities University (Dalian Minzu Xueyuan Beifang Shaoshu Minzu Lishi yu Wenhua Yanjiu Zhongxin 大连民族学院北方少数民族历史与文化研究中心).

[15] In addition to military tasks, the Eight Banners also had social, economic and political functions. The construction of the whole system, which was made up of the Manchu, Mongolian and Chinese Eight Banners, was completed by 1642 (Elliott 2001:59).

The disintegration of the Sibe's traditional social order was also accelerated by conscription to the Eight Banners army.

The basic, functional unit of Sibe social organization is the mukūn ᠮᡠᡴᡡᠨ (Chin. mukun 穆昆), which is in fact nothing more than a patrilineal branch encompassing 5–6 generations: a named, exogamous, solidary, ritual group whose members are descended from a common ancestor. The patrilineal branches are divided into larger units and clans; in Manchu, these are called hala (Chin. hala 哈拉). However, in addition to ties based on actual or presumed consanguinity, and simultaneously with conscription to the Eight Banners army, there was more and more emphasis on communities evolving as a function of their specific geographical location, which had irreversible consequences in maintaining kinship relations.

The resettlement, which took the Sibe who originally lived around Manchuria nearly five thousand kilometers away, took place in 1764, upon the command of Emperor Qianlong 乾隆 (Chin. Abkai Wehiyehe ᠠᠪᡴᠠᡳ ᠸᡝᡥᡳᠶᡝᡥᡝ; 1736–1795). At this time, a little more than 1,000 soldiers of the Sibe army were ordered to border defense service at the northwestern borders of the Manchu Empire, to the Yili River mentioned in Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story (Chin. Yili he 伊犁河; Sib. Ili bira ᡳᠯᡳ ᠪᡳᡵᠠ), along today's Chinese-Kazakh border; the Sibe soldiers set out with their families to meet the emperor's command (Wu – Zhao 2008: 61). The resettlement is today known in China as the Great Western Relocation (Da Xi Qian 大西迁). In the 250 years since then – during which a wide range of political powers exchanged each other – these two groups gradually lost their original unity: a significant part of their language, writing system and traditions has been preserved only by the Xinjiang Sibe.

The separated Sibe groups got their first opportunity to reconnect in the 1950s. I will address the way they reestablished contact later on; here and now, I just want to point out that during this reconnecting, the representatives of the northeastern and northwestern Sibe looked at each other as "strangers". Firstly, because both their language and their culture was now different from each other. Secondly, because their shared knowledge of a shared past was minimal. This is the point at which the family trees, as the carriers of knowledge of the Sibe's past, connect to the thread of my writing.

Sibe Family Trees

Among the Manchu and other peoples conscripted into the Eight Banners, family tree writing started after the development and introduction of the Manchu writing system (1629). To ensure that ethnic groups serving in the Eight Banners are able to authenticate their rank and preserve their identities, Manchu emperors encouraged the tracing of genealogies. Starting in the first third of the 17th century, in order to advance in the ranks and demonstrate their right of succession to a particular office, verification of one's descent was necessary (Li 2006:3–4). The visual inspection of the Eight Banners took place every three years: when boys reached 16 or 18 years of age, they were considered fit for duty. At this time, they all had to get registered by providing their ethnicity and official position (Xinjiang Shaoshu Minzu Gujiban – Beijing Shi Minwei Gujiban 2003:3–4).

The earliest available written evidence of the folk practice of family tree writing comes from the reign of Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (Man. Elhe Taifin ᡝᠯᡥᡝ ᡨᠠᡳᡶᡳᠨ; 1662–1723) (Li

2006:Prologue 1). The Sibe, having been drafted into the Manchu Eight Banners, "inherited" and took over the Manchu writing system, and with it the practice of family tree writing.

In these times – if the relevant ethnographic literature can be trusted – all Sibe *hala* and *mukūn* had its own family tree, written in the Manchu language (He–Tong 2004:364). Its writing and – when appropriate – distribution among the branches of the clan was originally the task of the clan chief, the *hala da* (Gong 2002:110). However, the terms that distinguished the different types of family trees, indicating whether a particular family tree is of a tribe or within that of a clan branch, are today echoed mostly in some Chinese idioms.[16] In the Manchu/Sibe language, family trees are referred to with the expression *booi durugan* ᠪᠣᠣᡳ ᡩᡠᡵᡠᡤᠠᠨ, which is the equivalent of the Chinese *jiapu* 家谱, i.e., family tree, translated into Manchu.

Formally, two variants of Sibe family trees can be distinguished: the so-called "Memorandum sheets", written on linen or silk sheets, and the so-called "Memorandum books", written in the form of books. In Chinese, the former is called *pudan* 谱单, the latter *pushu* 谱书 (Tongjia–Wen 2009:144).

Regardless of their type and form, Sibe family trees primarily enumerated the generations of the clan, starting with the first recorded ancestor. In addition to the names of ancestors and the order of descent between the lineage and the clan members, however, the most complete family trees also recorded the story of the given clan, along with the circumstances and the time of writing of the family tree. Furthermore, next to the names written on the family tree they sometimes added biographical data, too, such as the office the clan member held in the Eight Banners. In the documents appended to family trees, even regulations were recorded, in which the correct behavior and norms to be followed were set out for clan members. Common property issues and the registration of revenues and expenditures were also appended to the family trees. These documents, though not an integral part of the family tree but affixed to it, were handed down from generation to generation (Gong 2002:127). Additionally, family trees also played a key role in the commemoration of the dead, as shown in the above-quoted excerpt from Han Qikun's "family tree unifying" story.[17]

Sibe family trees can therefore be viewed as particular material carriers of commemorations of the ancestors, as well as physical tools used to transfer knowledge of the past, the main function of which was to create and maintain identity.[18]

The Loss of Knowledge of the Past

In light of the above, it becomes evident why the 1764 Great Western Relocation caused such a big rift. Naturally, after the relocation there was no way for the separated clans

[16] With regard to the different types of family trees, Chinese vernacular preserved these differences. For more detail on the issue, see: LIU 1959:25–26.

[17] In connection with his research conducted in the early 1900s, Shirokogoroff also reported that the records he called "clan lists" had a religious aspect among the Manchu-Tungus nations (Shirokogoroff 1924:57). Yan Yunxiang also wrote about a similar practice of sacrificing to the ancestors based on his research among the Manchus (Yan 1996:33).

[18] This form of remembrance of the dead is what Jan Assmann calls "retrospective memory" (Assmann 1999:61).

to maintain the knowledge of their common ancestors and their common history. In this regard, the loss affected much more the displaced Sibe groups. By indicating the relocating ancestors as the first ancestors on their newly started family trees (Tong–Wen 2009:145), the relocated clans determined the fate of their knowledge of the past.

At the same time, though it was theoretically possible for the Sibe groups that remained in the northeast to maintain the memory of this pre-separation ancient past through this peculiar form of commemorating the ancestors, it was to no avail. By the 20th century, this knowledge became severely compromised. First by the great devastation affecting the family trees, which Shirokogoroff wrote about in his book on the Boxer Rebellion (Shirokogoroff 1924:62). Secondly, because after the fall of the imperial dynasty in the northeast, the Manchu language was gradually lost and with it the ability to interpret the data recorded in the family trees, their translation into Chinese and the reconstruction of lost family trees becoming more difficult.[19]

However, the second great wave of forgetting ancestors and thereby their common past affected both separated Sibe groups. All this took place shortly after the Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893–1976), came to power in 1949. The establishment of the People's Republic of China was followed first by the "great leap" program (dayuejin 大跃进; 1958–1961), which led to the starvation of the masses, then the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Wuchanjieji Wenhua Dageming 无产阶级文化大革命; 1966–1976), which was aimed at the destruction of cultural values, the persecution of intellectuals, and the radical elimination of traditions. These were all cataclysmic historical events that affected China in general, but also brought about an irreversible setback in the traditional knowledge of the ancestors and the past within the two separated Sibe groups. During the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, many Sibe family trees were permanently destroyed; out of fear, clan members often burned them or buried them themselves, thereby permanently dooming the history of their clan to oblivion. And with the history of the clans, a significant part of Sibe history was lost as well.

However, all this still does not mean that the family trees had not survived, and that the significance of the knowledge of the ancestors necessarily diminished.[20] But until the beginning of the new millennium, only a single family tree survived which showed that the two Sibe clan branches torn apart in 1764 belonged together: the Manchu language family tree of the Hashūri clan. This is the one which Han Qikun's "family tree unifying" story is all about.

THE REVIVAL OF ETHNIC SELF-AWARENESS

Han Qikun's "family tree unifying" story – as is clear from the above cited excerpt – takes its readers first back to Han Qikun's childhood (the 1930–40s). Then it continues decades later, in the 1950s. In the beginning of that decade, in hopes of creating a

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[19] That there were attempts at all of this after the fall of the last imperial dynasty is evident from the research about Sibe family trees (He – An – He – Guo – Zhang – Wu 2009).

[20] A 2009 study found that 10 family regulations and 111 family trees have been preserved (He – An – He – Guo – Zhang – Wu 2009), both of which show a great diversity in respect to their shape, type, content, language and material carrier (Na 2005:227).

Chinese national unity, a draft of a trial program for the "feasibility of training ethnic leaders" (peiyang shaoshu minzu ganbu shixing fang'an 培养少数民族干部试行方案) was completed. The education of ethnic Sibe cadre also began within this framework (Ban 2010:107).

Six years later, in 1956, the Chinese Communist Party announced the launch of the "National Minority Social History Survey" (quanguoxing de minzu shehui lishi diaocha gongzuo 全国性的民族社会历史调查工作), which, being part of the central program for the employment of ethnic minorities (Ji 2004:1), primarily targeted the exploration of the living conditions of ethnic minorities living in autonomous ethnic areas. These objectives brought the opportunity for the Sibe, having been separated from each other for almost two hundred years, to reestablish contact for the first time since the Great Western Relocation.

The Role of the Manchu Language Family Tree of the Hashūri Clan in the Revival of Ethnic Self-Awareness

In July 1956, Han Qikun received authorization to join the delegates of Liaoning Province and travel to Beijing to attend the meetings convened by the Ministry of Education (Jiaoyu Bu 教育部). According to Han Qikun, it was at this time that he formulated the idea that in Beijing he might be able to contact Sibe students from Xinjiang:

> "All the while I was thinking: the Central Academy of National Minorities[21] is in Beijing; I wonder if it is possible that there are ethnic Sibe students from Xinjiang there? If there are, I will visit them, and I will ask them about the "Yili branch." Then I telephoned the Academy of National Minorities, trying to contact them, and an ethnic Sibe student talked to me. We arranged to meet the next day. That next day, five ethnic Sibe compatriots came, two of them students at the Academy of National Minorities, the other three instructors at the Academy of National Minorities; there were some among them who worked at the Research Institute for Nationalities. (…) After meeting, I immediately asked them whether there was someone with the surname of Han, of the Hashihuli clan, among the Sibe in Xinjiang – to which they responded that there was, but added that it is unclear which Han family is the descendant of the branch I was looking for. Despite it turning out like this, all in all, the most important part is that I had successfully established a connection with the ethnic Sibe in Xinjiang." (Han 2004:12–13)

In the above excerpt, Han Qikun refers to a problem which is closely linked to the issue of language loss, and with it the loss of ability to translate Manchu/Sibe surnames into Chinese. For the Hashūri clan, it is as follows: when Han Qikun contacted the "compatriots" from Xinjiang, his clan branch that stayed in the northeast called itself the Hashihuli 哈斯胡里 clan. Its simplified, official, Chinese-language version became their surname Han 韩 as well. However, clan members no longer knew in the 1950s how their name was written in the Manchu language and exactly how it was pronounced.

[21] Today's Minzu University of China (Zhongyang Minzu Daxue 中央民族大学).

Figure 1. Han Qikun and the delegation visiting Shenyang in 1956: Su Deshan, Na Qintai (standing, left to right), Aleke, Han Qikun, Guan Xingcai and Fu Lishan (sitting, left to right). (Source: descendants of Han Qikun, private property).

Simultaneously, it was not known – and still cannot be accurately known – which of the clans living in Xinjiang was referred to by the Hasihuli clan name, and beyond it the Han surname, written in Chinese script, since in Xinjiang there are several clans who used the transcribed surname Han. For example, the Hajiri ᡥᠠᠵᡳᡵᡳ (Chin. Hanjili 韩吉里), the Haira ᡥᠠᡳᡵᠠ (Chin. Hayila 哈衣拉), the Hashūri ᡥᠠᡧᡡᡵᡳ (Chin. Hasihuli 哈斯胡里), the Hanggari ᡥᠠᠩᡤᠠᡵᡳ (Chin. Hangali 杭阿里), etc. (Gong 2002:31). In addition, the Xinjiang clans bearing the surname of Han understand that the Manchu clan names Hanggari and Hashūri designate branches belonging to one and the same clan (Yong 2005:140). In light of this, the uncertainty of the "compatriots" meeting Han Qikun is quite understandable.

In any case, the meeting, which Han Qikun describes as the first contact between the Sibe clans torn apart in 1764 (Han 2004:12), did actually take place, and as a consequence, the reconstruction of the system of relations between "East and West" Sibe has commenced. In August 1956, following this first contact, a delegation arrived in the northeast from the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, among whom were five Sibe: Su Deshan 苏德善, party leader of Bortala Mongol Autonomous Prefecture (Bo'ertala Menggu Zizhizhou 博尔塔拉蒙古自治州); Aleke 阿勒克, head of the Sibe village Yiche Gashan in Huocheng County (Huochengxian Yiche Gashan Xibozu Xiang 霍城县伊车噶山锡伯族乡); Guan Xingcai 管兴才, Sibe poet; Fu Lishan 富里善, party leader of Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture (Yili Hasake Zizhizhou 伊犁哈萨克自治州), and Na Qintai 纳勤泰, a doctor accompanying the group (Na – Han 2010).

These five people, upon arriving in Shenyang, sought out Han Qikun (*Figure 1.*):

> "At the time, my knowledge about Sibe ethnicity was very shallow, I could not bring up any issues during the conversation with them, so I visited some relatives from the Hashihuli clan that worked in the regional seat. The next day I met with them again, and I even brought with me the Hashihuli clan's family tree written in the Manchu language, thinking it might be of some use." (Han 2004:13)

The second day after the arrival of the delegation, on August 26, 1956, at Han Qikun's initiation a small symposium was convened. At this symposium, evidenced by the photos taken there, apart from Han Qikun and the five-member delegation, there were certainly present two Tibetan Buddhist lamas, Fuling'a 福陵阿 and E'erdengbu 额尔登布, two of Han Qikun's close relatives, Han Desheng 韩德盛 and Han Zheng 韩正, as well as two students from Xinjiang studying in Shenyang, He Chang 贺昌 and Tuqishun 涂其顺 (Na – Han 2010:2).

The family tree that Han Qikun presented to the delegation then and there was one of those family trees which Han Qikun's descendants showed me as documentation upon my 2012 visit in Shenyang. This "family tree sheet" was written in the Manchu language, with only a single line of text in Chinese. This line runs on the right edge of the family tree, and according to its content, the family tree was made in 1872. The seven-line Manchu preface, which contains the history of the clan, is on the left side of the family tree.

Between this seven-line note and the Chinese text indicating the times and names of persons writing the family tree, there is a description of the clan's order of descent, divided into 14 generations. Within it, the kin relationship between clan members is indicated by red lines drawn between the names. Next to the names, written in two different colors, there are notes here and there. Some of the ancestors' position within the Eight Banners is indicated in red color, written in the Manchu language. In black color, also in Manchu, is indicated if an ancestor did not produce a male child. Under the names of such ancestors, the caption reads: "no descendants" (enen aku ᡝᠨᡝᠨ ᠠᡴᡡ).

The only entries that are different, written in Manchu, in black color, can be found under the names of three ancestors. The first inscription is under the name of Usubu ᡠᠰᡠᠪᡠ, the first-born son of Yacibu ᠶᠠᠴᡳᠪᡠ, the earliest ancestor of the clan, which says, "The descendants of Usubu are in Be ki"[22] (Usubu i enen Be ki de bi ᡠᠰᡠᠪᡠ ᡳ ᡝᠨᡝᠨ ᠪᡝ ᡴᡳ ᡩᡝ ᠪᡳ). The second and third entries are under the names of Darjan ᡩᠠᡵᠵᠠᠨ, Yacibu's sixth-generation descendant, and Walihai ᠸᠠᠯᡳᡥᠠᡳ, his eighth-generation descendant, and their content is the same: "He went to Ili" (Ili de genehe ᡳᠯᡳ ᡩᡝ ᡤᡝᠨᡝᡥᡝ).[23]

The interest of the Xinjiang Sibe delegation visiting Shenyang in 1956 was captured by the seven-line note on the left side of the family tree and the above records. The exact content of these was not known to Han Qikun at that time due to his loss of the Manchu language. Let us return to Han Qikun's words again:

> "As they caught sight of the family tree [in question, as described above], they became extremely happy: especially Guan Xingcai, the old man, who slapped his thigh in delight. Why? Mostly because he noticed two inscriptions on the family tree. One was the preface to the family tree, which says: "The clan initially lived in the Mo'ergen region, which belongs to Heilongjiang, and in the Yalu River Valley;[24] the ancestor is Yaqibu, who had two sons, the older was named Wusubu, the younger Wusumai (…). But the Xinjiang Sibe only knew that they resettled from

[22] Subsequent studies identified the specific geographic name as Baiqibao 白旗堡 in Liaoning Province.

[23] The relevant inscriptions were also circled in red pen, the Chinese translation of the Manchu language subtitles are next to them; they are likely to have been made when the delegation from Shenyang translated the Manchu writings on the family trees for Han Qikun.

[24] The Yalu River (Yalu he 雅鲁河) is one of the tributaries of the Nen River.

> Mukedun (Shenyang).[25] What they did not know is that the homeland of the Sibe in Mukedun (Shenyang) was in Heilongjiang, so this was a very pleasant surprise for them. The other is that on the diagram in the family tree they noticed an inscription under sixth-generation Da'erzha's name, which said, "He settled in Yili;" under eighth-generation ancestor Walihai's name it said: "He arrived in Yili." How is all this possible? […] They were happy because the history of the resettlement of our ancestors to the Yili border region found written evidence in the family tree of our Hashihuli clan." […] (Han 2004:13–14)

At this symposium, among representatives of the northeastern and northwestern Sibe, and based on evidence discovered in the family tree of the Hashūri clan, a dialogue aimed at exploring the common past of the separated Sibe was started.

The Significance of Family Trees with Respect to the (Re)Construction of Sibe History

The compilation work for "A Brief History of the National Minority and Their Local History" (quanguoxing bianxie shaoshu minzu jianshi jianzhi gongzuo 全国性编写少数民族简史简志工作) began in 1958 ("Xibozu Jianshi" Bianxiezu – "Xibozu Jianshi" Xiudingben Bianxiezu 2008:Preface 1–2). As part of this work, in 1959 two Sibe men born and raised in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region were commissioned to oversee the process of writing a comprehensive history of the Sibe; one of them was Xiao Fu 肖夫 (1924–1992), a high school history teacher, the other Ji Qing 吉庆 (1936–2006), head of the People's Government Office of the Qapqal Sibe Autonomous County(Chabucha'er Xibo Zizhixian Renmin Zhengfu Bangongshi 察布查尔锡伯自治县人民政府 办公室) (Ji 2004:2).

The first step for the two of them was to study the centrally mandated research methods concerning the history and society of ethnic minorities, along with relevant policy documents. The exact program of the research trip was conceived in the city of Ürümqi (Wulumuqi 乌鲁木齐), bearing in mind the need for Ji Qing and Xiao Fu to conduct research in both of the two large geographical areas inhabited by the Sibe – the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Manchuria. The main goal of the research was to collect as many documents and materials as possible relating to the history and culture of the Sibe preserved among the people, handed down generation after generation, in order to reveal the "historical development" of the Sibe (Ji 2004:2).

It was no accident, therefore, that in the process of (re)constructing Sibe ethnic history, Ji Qing and Xiao Fu's attention turned to the family trees: the clan stories recorded in them carried the possibility of sketching out the Sibe's history, while the appended family regulations hinted at folk customs – and with it ethnic identity. At the same time, the Great Western Relocation (as I mentioned above) had no trace in the family trees that were discovered and known at that time: those who were relocated to the west were not recorded by the northeastern Sibe, and among those relocated, the first generation of resettlers became the first ancestors.

[25] Since 1634, today's Shenyang city has been officially called Shengjing 盛京, known as Mukden in Manchu.

Figure 2. The „Yili branch." (Source: descendants of Han Qikun, private property).

However, the family trees preserved by the Hashūri clan afforded the opportunity to (re) construct the common past of the Sibe; furthermore, they held the allure of the possibility of physical evidence of the Sibe torn apart in 1764 belonging together, and of the revitalization of Sibe ethnic identity. The realization of the "family tree unification," however, was yet to come. Han Qikun recalled this period in the "family tree unification" story as follows:

About two months later, towards the end of 1956, I finally received a letter from Mr. Guan Xingcai. He told me that when they returned from Beijing to Xinjiang, he immediately visited all the *niru*s (villages) in the Autonomous District[26] to report on what he had seen in the internal parts of our country, all the while faithfully seeking the descendants of Hashihuli Da'erzha, until he finally found them in the Sixth village (inQapqal County, the seat of government in the AutonomousCounty). In the letter he also enclosed a photo of members of three generations of a family belonging to the descendants of Da'erzha (*Figure 2*). Seeing the shape of their heads, their faces, their clothes, they were like facsimiles of the people in my village in my childhood; that is when the "Yili branch" mentioned and sought by the ancestors was finally found.

But a photo is just a photo, and I have yet to face the man, from the northeast the northwestern frontier is ten thousand lis away, is not it easier to talk about the encounter than to make it happen? I would have wanted it, I craved it [meeting them], but I never had an opportunity, and so did 25 years pass! (Han 2004:14–15)

After a quarter of a century, however, all Han Qikun waited for seemed to become a reality. The Hashūri clan family trees survived the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution period too, and of the remaining family trees, they became the first evidence of the separated Sibe clans belonging together. And along with this, a symbol of the newly forming Sibe national identity.

[26] The original meaning of the Manchu word niru is arrow, but within the Eight Banners the word niru designated the basic unit of the banners (Uray – Kőhalmi 2000:6).

THE SHAPING OF SIBE NATIONAL IDENTITY

Following the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a new era began with respect to the (re)construction of Sibe history; this is when all Manchu language materials held in China's historical archives were systematically processed and translated into the Chinese language.

The central government tasked two young men born and raised in Xinjiang's Qapqal Sibe Autonomous County with conducting the research, who from that point forward dedicated all their energies to establishing and developing scientific research about Manchu-Sibe history: Wu Yuanfeng 吴元丰 (1956–), who in the meantime became the head of the First Historical Archives of China (Zhongguo Diyi Lishi Dang'anguan中国第一历史档案馆), and Zhao Zhiqiang 赵志强 (1957–), who is now the department head of the Institute of Manchu Studies at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences (Beijing Shehui Kexueyuan Manxuesuo 北京社会科学院满学所).

In 1975, Wu Yuanfeng and Zhao Zhiqiang applied for advanced studies in Beijing that trained cadres responsible for processing Manchu language archival materials (Manwen Ganbu Peixunban 满文干部培训班). Along with twenty-one other students from Beijing, Xinjiang and Heilongjiang, they continued their Manchu language studies for three years. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution ended just as they were finishing their studies, which prompted Wu Yuanfeng and Zhao Zhiqiang to take advantage of the emerging opportunities and deepen their scientific research (Wu – Zhao 2008:Preface 1–3).

Thus, starting from 1978, Wu Yuanfeng and Zhao Zhiqiang used all of their free time to begin a systematic review of archival materials, in search of data that might be relevant to Sibe history. The undertaken task proved to be far from simple, seeing that just in the former Ming-Qing Palace Museum Archives (Gugong Bowuyuan Ming Qing Dang'an Bu 故宫博物院明清档案部), today's First Historical Archives of China,[27] the number of materials relating to the Qing dynasty exceeds ten million.[28]

The continued processing of archival materials, however, did not lessen the significance of the clan stories preserved in family trees collected among the people. This is due to the ideological and political changes following the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, which were also determinants in Sibe ethnic nationalist aspirations.

The "Patriotic" Turning Point in Ethnic Nationalist Aspirations

Mao Zedong's death, and the launch of "Reform and Opening" (gaige kaifang 改革开放) brought, in principle, a new era in China: the era of building a "socialism with peculiarly Chinese characteristics" (Zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi 中国特色社会主义), which continues to this day (Chen 2010: 18). When Deng Xiaoping (邓小平; 1904–1997) came to power in 1976, he launched a number of programs that did not officially denounce Marxist tenets, just framed them differently (Vámos 2009:38).

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[27] The archive's name has changed several times since 1925; its current name was given in 1980.

[28] The majority of the material, about 80%, was written in the Chinese language; the number of Manchu language materials is close to 20%, but there are also preserved documents in Mongolian, Tibetan, etc. languages (Na 2005:31).

At the same time – as a result of the forces of nationalist ideology moving in opposite directions (Chang 2010:16) – the political elite recognized the timeliness of changing the terminology that framed the nation-building ideology. Consequently, beginning in the 1980–90s, the term "patriotism" was meant to express the concept of national belonging, and patriotic sentiment became inseparable from the road to the creation of Chinese national unity (Vámos 2009:62–63).

Thus, in the mid-1980s and early 1990s, Sibe ethnic nationalism came to a crossroads. On the one hand, the persons controlling the ethnic nationalist efforts had to remain true to the values along which these aspirations continued to unfold since the 1950s. On the other hand, they had to adapt to the state*,* which called for the patriotic "metamorphosis" of ethnic nationalist aspirations in service of the establishment of China's national unity. This turning point is also behind the much discussed principle of "autonomy for loyalty" principle (Vámos 2009:70). But where can this turning point be detected within the Sibe ethnic nationalist aspirations, and what role in all of this does Han Qikun's "family tree unifying" story play?

To answer this question, one should know that the first step towards the culmination and legitimacy of Sibe ethnic nationalism was the establishment of learned societies providing an institutional framework for these aspirations. After Deng Xiaoping launched the "Reform and Opening" policy in the late 1970s, eleven such societies of great significance were founded:

(1) the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Regional Sibe Language Association (Xinjiang Weiwu'er Zizhiqu Xibo Yuyan Xuehui 新疆维吾尔自治区锡伯语言学会) in 1980;
(2) the ÜrümqiSibe Linguistic Society (Wulumuqi Xibo Yuyan Xuehui 乌鲁木齐锡伯语言学会) in 1980;
(3) the Yili Sibe Historical, Language and Literature Art Council (Yili Xibozu Lishi Yuyan Wenzi Wenxue Yishun Xueshuhui 伊犁锡伯族历史语言文字文学艺术学术会) in 1986;
(4) the Liaoning Province Sibe Historical Society (Liaoning Sheng Xibozu Shixuehui 辽宁省锡伯族史学会) in 1987;
(5) the Liaoning Province Sibe Historical Society's Dalian Branch (Liaoning Sheng Xibozu Shixuehui Dalian Fenhui 辽宁省锡伯族史学会大连分会) in 1988;
(6) the Shenyang City Sibe Society of Friends (Shenyang Shi Xibozu Lianyihui 沈阳市锡伯族联谊会) in 1988;
(7) the Qiqihar City Sibe Society of Friends (Qiqiha'er Shi Xibozu Lianyihui 齐齐哈尔市锡伯族联谊会) in 1988;
(8) the Changchun City Sibe Society of Friends (Changchun Shi Xibozu Lianyihui 长春市锡伯族联谊会) in 1988;
(9) the Harbin City Sibe Society of Friends (Ha'erbin Shi Xibozu Lianyihui 哈尔滨市锡伯族联谊会) in 1988;
(10) the Jinzhou City Sibe Society of Friends (Jinzhou Shi Xibozu Lianyihui 锦州市锡伯族 联谊会) in 1989;
(11) and the Liaoyang City Sibe Society of Friends (Liaoyangshi Xibozu Lianyihui 辽阳市锡伯族联谊会) in August 1989 (Na–Han 2010:612–613).

The list above makes it clear that following the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, a single decade was enough for the wave of ethnic nationalism to sweep through all of the more significant Sibe-inhabited communities. In the spirit of these efforts, the Xinjiang

Uyghur Autonomous Regional Sibe Language Association was also established in 1980, as I note above. The first scholarly symposium of the Association took place in 1981, in the Qapqal Sibe Autonomous County. All major Sibe communities were represented at the symposium, and Han Qikun himself was among those invited.

The main topic of the symposium was the issue of preserving the Sibe language, but also discussed were questions of Sibe history, culture, education and literature. Han Qikun gave a lecture, *Overview of the Sibe Ethnicity in Liaoning* (Liaoning xibozu gaishu 辽宁锡伯族概述), in which he summarized all the problems and objectives that the northeastern Sibe were most concerned about (Han 2004:15).

At the symposium, Han Qikun met Su Deshan, who was a member of the delegation that visited Han Qikun in Shenyang 25 years earlier. Han Qikun writes about their encounter as follows:

"As soon as we met, he immediately asked me: 'Did you receive the letter sent to you by Guan Xingcai? And what about the family photo of the descendants of Hashihuri Da'erzha? I said I got everything.'" (Han 2004:16)

As the story goes, one word led to another, and they decided that the next day they should seek out the Darjan offspring noted in the family tree. At the first meeting, Han Qikun could only speak with one man, the ninth-generation Wusheng 吴胜, but on the third day they set out together to meet with the numerous relatives waiting at Wusheng's father's, Manqian's 满钱 house, about twenty of whom gathered in the courtyard to greet Han Qikun. From here on, let me quote the story again verbatim:

> "Upon entering the house, I saw that some people were murmuring out there, I asked, what's the problem? They said we should call a car so that an elderly aunt could come and meet me. I asked them how old she was, they said 84, to which I said that I should go to her instead. So I went with them to the elderly aunt's house, where I first offered a benediction for peace upon all residents, then Wusheng introduced me to the elderly aunt. The old woman (…) asked: 'Hashihuli?' I said, yes. She asked again: 'Did you come from Mukedun?' I replied, yes. The old woman cried! I also cried! Everyone in the house cried! Then a man leaned over to the aunt's ear and asked her in the Sibe language: 'What is the name of the ancestor of our northeastern homeland?' 'Yaqibu'! The old woman uttered the words without hesitation. Alas, the aunt called out the name of our Hashihuli clan's ancestor. Then I was really surprised. It seemed that the descendants of the 'people of the Yili branch' that I was looking for were actually found. (…) With Da'erzha's offspring, I unified the family tree." (Han 2004:17–18)

The resulting unified family tree – preserved to this day by Han Qikun's descendants – was finally completed in the form of a family tree book by 1987, in the Chinese language. In it they recorded both of the major branches of the Hashūri clan separated from each other. The book is covered in a blue jacket, gold writing indicating that this is the "Family Tree of the Hasihuli clan of the Sibe nation" (Xibozu Hasihuli shi pushu 锡伯族哈斯呼里氏谱书). The family tree has a five-page-long preface, written, presumably, in Han Qikun's handwriting. Within it, in the short summary titled New introduction to the Hashihuli clan's family tree (Hashihuli shi jiapu xin xu 哈什胡里氏家谱新序), Han Qikun, through the example of his own clan but actually speaking on behalf of his entire ethnic minority group, outlines the problem which the two large groups of Sibe had to face, both individually and collectively:

> "By now, our family members have grown very numerous. Following the social development and the necessity life brings with it, many families have moved to another land; some do not know upon meeting each other that they are from the same clan; some clan members do not know the ranking within the clan; there are some who do not know who their grandfather is. And tracing their steps even further back, it is even more unclear which branch they belong to."

So Han Qikun traced the story of his clan all the way back to the secession of the clan members, and even beyond, thus breaking a practice that had a centuries-old tradition among the Sibe. By also including the question of the past and future of all Sibe in the story of his clan's family tree, he became the spokesperson for not only his clan but the common belonging of his entire ethnic group. This is why Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story does not actually end here.

Between 1980 and 2008, within the framework of the above-mentioned institutions, the Sibe organized more than thirty symposia which addressed mostly the questions of developing the Sibe language, culture, as well as education (NA – HAN 2010:489). But there was one issue that was of major importance to all communities: drawing up an ever more accurate picture of Sibe history and adapting it to the new spirit of the new age, the spirit of patriotism.

Three years after Han Qikun's "family tree unification," in September 1989, there was another such symposium, titled Strengthening Patriotic Education and National Unity (Jiaqiang Aiguozhuyi Jiaoyu he Minzu Tuanjie Yantaohui 加强爱国主义教育和民族团结研讨会). This was followed in September 1991 by another symposium, Sibe Patriotic History Workshop (Xibozu Aiguo Lishi Yantanhui 锡伯族爱国历史研讨会). The former assembly was attended by 45 people, while the latter by 85 (NA – HAN 2010:618).

Attendees of both symposia examined those historical turning points which were thought to be useful in proving the patriotism of the Sibe. Thus the subject of Sibe participation in the 1911 revolution came up (see, e.g., MA 1994:175). They also highlighted the northeastern Sibe joining the patriotic forces during the Japanese occupation, as well as the courageous resistance of the Xinjiang Sibe during the Three Districts Revolution (San Qu Geming 三区革命).[29] Still, no other event garnered more attention than the Great Western Relocation.

A number of historic moments were highlighted as evidence of the patriotism of the Great Western Relocation. These included the role of the Xinjiang Sibe in turning the Yili land into a "granary",[30] developing the country's western border defense,[31] and their

[29] For more on the Three Districts Revolution, see: DIMULATI 2008:10–11; JI 2004:57–63; and HA 1997.

[30] According to available resources, in the early 19th century the Sibe farmed an area as large as 78,700 *mu* 亩 (1 mu = 1/15 hectares). The most important crops included wheat, corn, barley, millet, sunflower and tobacco. But alongside these, animal husbandry and horticulture was also exemplary (DIMULATI 2008:15).

[31] Although of the military camps set up in the Yili region only one was named the Sibe camp (xibo ying 锡伯营), Sibe soldiers served in multiple camps. For example, after infectious diseases decimated the Solon camp twice – first in 1798 and then in 1834 – the Sibe were ordered to serve at the Solon camp (DIMULATI 2008:8).

fidelity in providing protection.[32] Most importantly, however, they emphasized the fact that during the western relocation, the Sibe sacrificed their clans – and thereby their "ethnic unity" – for the homeland. Such a view of the Great Western Relocation affected both Sibe groups torn apart in 1764.

This emphasis on the idea of martyrdom is what gave wings to and made Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story ever more well-known among the Sibe, whose symbolic power even Han Qikun himself was well aware of. It is thus not by chance that at the end of the story there is a toast, which speaks of the significance of the "unified" family tree of the Hashūri clan:

> "The journey across tens of thousands of waters and through thousands of hills is so remote,
> Sealed in the hearts of the Sibe nation (…).
> Today the Hashihuli's union
> is the symbol of our nationality."(Han 2004:19–20)"

CONCLUSIONS

In China, the process of becoming a nation – just as in modern European nation-states – coincided with the process of writing the national history. Sibe ethnic nationalist aspirations arose parallel with this process, too, making memory a key evidence in the writing of Sibe history.

The objectivity of this history and its writers is, of course, in many places and in many respects questionable. On the one hand, there is the cardinal problem of historiography, which is the direct consequence of the influence of the prevailing ideological and political powers: the delicate issue of ministering to political legitimacy. In other words, the influence of imperium, which is at once the main obstacle and the shaper of historical memory (Duby – Lardreau 1993:63).

On the other hand, there is the debatable objectivity of personal testimony, the main source that fuels the history of ethnic minorities. In fact, "memoirs" compiled on the basis of recollections – sifting arbitrarily through the products of historiography controlled by the imperium – have themselves become the shapers of historical consciousness. Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story is imbued with such historical consciousness-shaping power, which I detailed above, and which in fact ends with the description of the quoted toast.

The news of Han Qikun's story and of the newly "unified" family tree spread quickly among the Sibe. Its importance only increased when following the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and parallel to the "unification" of the Hashūri clan's family tree, historical scientific research discovered more and more documents regarding the Great Western Relocation, yet until the beginning of the new millennium, no other clans were able to successfully prove that their branches torn apart in 1764 belonged together.[33]

[32] The Sibe knowledge elite classifies here the 1860s Russian conflict, which was resolved by 1882 (see Dimulati 2008:8–9), as well as any action against all the riots that took place in the southern parts of Xinjiang in the 1800s (Guo 2005:357–362).

[33] Since then, if the rumors can be trusted, two other clans "unified" their family trees – the publication of the "unified" family tree of one of them is expected in 2015–2016.

This, too, served to reinforce the symbolic nature of the reconstructed family tree of Han Qikun and the Hashūri clan members.

Meanwhile, since the emergence of Sibe ethnic nationalist aspirations, the political-authoritative frames limiting those efforts had not changed. Patriotism remained the buzzword, and consequently, Han Qikun's "family tree unification" garnered state-level attention: since 2001, it has been regarded as the epitome of the last ten years of 21st-century socialist modernization (Han 2004:65). This is reflected in the story having gone through several editions since then (see, e.g., Na – Han 2010:289–299; Han 2005), and having been expanded with clarifications appended to it. These clarifications – without delving into them at this point – served a dual purpose. On the one hand, they allowed Han Qikun to adjust the data recorded in the family tree to the Manchu language archival materials that have been processed in the meantime. On the other hand, they allowed him to put the so-adjusted family tree entries in the service of writing Sibe history.

In other words: Han Qikun's "family tree unification" story served not merely and not primarily the purpose of personal self-concept and remembrance; by emphasizing a key event in communal history, it played a crucial role in shaping the national identity. However, it was not only extremely important because it provided evidence about the separated Sibe clans belonging together. Its importance lies much more in that it brought before the emerging Chinese nation the seemingly almost lost cause of the unification of the Sibe nation-bodies, taking an important step towards making the Great Western Relocation the evidence of martyrdom – as a tangible reality of an event in the ancient past which once separated the Sibe clans but has now become the symbol of the unity of Sibe "nationality".

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Lingering Nomad Ideology in 21st Century Mongolia

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Abstract A specific economic and social realignment can be observed in Mongolia nowadays. Due to the rapid transformation in the last two and a half decades, the mentality and way of life of Mongolian people have also changed to a great degree and a specific national or nomadic ideology has appeared and gradually strengthened, which has become one of the pillar of national identity. This ideology is shared in many respects by Mongolians, living not only in Mongolia, but China and Inner Asia too.

In the economic environment the Mongolian society is changing at an accelerated speed. The urban population is getting far from the nomadic way of life and has started to follow behavioural models that are very different from the traditional patterns. With the regression of nomadism one of the fundamental constituents of the Mongolian culture seems to disappear. Although in the last 25 years Mongolians have increasingly adapted to the globalized culture, the tradition of Genghis has not totally vanished, what is more, nowadays it revives. The need for independent cultural identity is getting stronger. It plays a role in elaborating economic strategies that are adaptable to the changed environment. It can be observed, for example, in turnout of shamans in the towns, in the changes of the Buddhist Church's social functions or in the "pretended" nomadic lifestyle around the main destination of tourism.

Keywords: Mongolia, nomad traditions, social changes in Mongolia, national traditions, national and/or nomadic ideology

A unique economic and social realignment can be observed in Mongolia today as a result of the rapid changes occurring in the course of the two decades following the political transition, leading to a significant transformation in both the mentality and lifestyle of its people. In parallel, a characteristic nomad ideology has also gradually emerged, and while this has grown to become a strong pillar of Mongol national identity, it has also divided the Mongol population into distinct groups – not only within the present borders of Mongolia, but also in the surrounding territories of Central Asia.

Opportunities for Mongolia are greatly inhibited due to its geographical circumstances. Wedged between two much larger neighbours – Russia and China – both of which are notably stronger nations in terms of their economic power and populations, Mongolia has significantly less economic and, to a certain extent, political mobility, which has also been reflected in Mongolian history until now. In a political sense, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent transition taking place during the 1990s as well as the normalization of relations with China have created a new environment. Economic growth in China since the end of the 1980s has been both a blessing and a curse for Mongolia, meaning that in spite of important structural changes its previous economic dependence on COMECON has partially remained, albeit shifting in the direction of China.

Mongolian political life over the last 25 years has seen changes that cannot be experienced in any other post-Socialist or ex-Soviet satellite nation in Asia. Even by European standards, Mongolia today is a working democracy that has undergone a spectacular economic and social transformation. Consequently, it can surely no longer be regarded as a country where there is any validity to the image that the lifestyle of its people has remained unchanged since the time of Genghis Khan. Nevertheless, the most significant changes have taken place over the last quarter of a century. Social, economic and political processes in Mongolia during various periods since the 17th century have been greatly influenced by its two neighbours, beginning with the Qing Dynasty, which lasted for more than 250 years, followed by Russian (Soviet) influence throughout much of the 20th century, frequently in keeping with prevalent relations between the two larger powers. No significant social transformation occurred in the country from the 13th century up to the end of the 19th, and in this sense no decisive change can be attributed to the Soviet period after 1921 either.

It is undoubtedly a fact that Mongolian nomadism today partly continues to follow centuries-old traditions, making Mongolia one of last countries – if not the only one – where traditional nomadic pastoralism is still practiced in its original form. At the same time, this lifestyle is rapidly being supplanted, to the extent that the economic stability of the country has come under a certain threat while the nation is simultaneously facing new economic and social challenges brought on by its rapidly growing urban population. This process is not limited merely to economic consequences, however. Apparently, the disappearance of the nomadic lifestyle also means that a traditional pillar of Mongolian cultural tradition is disappearing as well. In contrast, even though Mongolians have over the past twenty years increasingly adapted to the influence of "Western" consumer society – often indirectly conveyed to them through the "Oriental" filter of Korea, Japan and Manchu-Chinese traditions have not completely vanished and are in fact currently experiencing a kind of renaissance.

SOCIAL CHANGE

The last decade of the 20th century brought sweeping changes in global politics, and thus in Mongolia as well, enabling the country to open towards the world after more than seventy years of political isolation. The borders of Mongolia were opened at a time when the growing effects of globalization were gradually beginning to transform the entire world. The internet revolution and a new market environment were also having a strong impact on other countries and societies, but the transformation in Mongolia was particularly explosive. Due to its political environment and closed borders, the country had previously experienced very little change and at an extremely slow pace.

A certain modernization did exist, strictly controlled from above, but its impact was only felt by a narrow layer of society – and was therefore largely unsuccessful. For this reason, the nomadic pastoralism and livestock herding typical of the region for centuries remained in a significant portion of the country in spite of decisive, ideologically-based governmental attempts at cultural transformation. The latter had already begun during the 1930s in keeping with the government's anti-religious ideology (Teleki 2011:32–33), but its true cultural impact could not be discerned until the middle of the century. Although the forced overshadowing of national traditions in Mongolia was not initiated with methods as drastic as those used in China during the period from 1966–76,[1] the prevalent government ideology and system of political alliances dictated that Mongolians be integrated within a foreign regime via the repression of national traits.

These efforts, however, have merely resulted in a situation where post-transition Mongolian society is having to face the challenges of globalization while reconfiguring its basic cultural traditions. Moreover, this must now be accomplished in a period of extremely intensive economic and social transformation. In the new economic and social environment of the post-Soviet period, the mention and revival of Mongolian, or "nomadic" traditions not only entails the reconstruction of Mongolian culture, but may also present a unique economic solution to current challenges. Hereafter, I will examine individual aspects of this social and economic transformation as well as the role of religion in Mongolian society.

While the structures of the traditional nomadic lifestyle are apparently disintegrating under the effects of the new political and economic environment, two distinct social groups have gradually emerged. In Mongolian cities – and primarily in the capital – one group is living an entirely settled lifestyle adapted to urban economic circumstances, including those who increasingly see living abroad (not necessarily in an "urban" setting) as a means to achieve their existential goals. Their aim is to settle and work in Asian countries with better economic conditions – mainly South Korea and Japan. China is a less attractive destination, partly due to prejudices arising from misinterpreted national consciousness, historical tradition and nationalism – mostly in Chinese cities – despite the fact that a significant Mongolian minority can be found living in the territories bordering Mongolia. I will return to this special issue later in this study.

An outstanding number of young people living in cities are following a new trajectory completely divergent from the traditional Mongolian model. For them, the fashion, music and lifestyle dictated by the global culture of the United States or major economic centres in Asia are the example of choice. They are gradually losing their connection with Mongolian traditions, rejecting the example represented in the way of life their parents and grandparents followed. As a consequence, migration is a growing tendency, primarily among young urbanites moving abroad to study or work, and who are being replaced by new arrivals from rural communities. The depopulation of rural

[1] The Cultural Revolution was introduced by events in the fall of 1965 – the ousting of the minister of culture and his undersecretary – but the movement took hold in the summer of 1966. Minor intervals notwithstanding, it lasted for a decade until the death of Mao Tse-tung and resulted in a severe political and social crisis. According to individual sources, more than 36,000,000 people were put on trial and 750,000 – 1,000,000 among them were murdered (Gernet 2001:501–503; MacFarquhar – Schoenhals 2006:262).

areas and the disappearance of traditional lifestyle can largely be attributed to this trend. Half of Mongolian society today lives in cities, with the population of Ulaanbaatar drastically increasing over the last decade. Residents of the Mongolian capital during the 1990s numbered around 700,000. By 2010 the registered population had increased to over one million (Szilágyi 2010a) and has steadily continued to grow since then.[2] This phenomenon has been clearly visible from year to year in the growth of *ger* (yurt) districts built by settlers on the hillsides surrounding the city, which have continued to expand and are now extending to the far side of the hills in the area to the north of the capital.[3] Over the past few decades, it has become a common habit among local urban dwellers to maintain smaller rural homes near the city, usually in the form of yurts, where they live from spring to autumn, only returning to their city residences during the extremely cold winter months. This acquisition of space has been simplified by zoning laws stipulating that all Mongolian citizens have the right to fence off a specified area for their own use, which has led to the development of a special system of "summer homes" or yurts in the outlying areas beyond the residential districts surrounding Ulaanbaatar.[4]

This situation has radically changed in the years following the transition, especially in the last decade and a half, which has seen the number of new settlers increase far more rapidly than the number newly constructed flats – which those moving in from rural areas were often unable to afford.[5] Taking advantage of the aforementioned regulations, many people have simply chosen to fence off an area of a few hundred square meters as a mode of settlement in the capital. As a consequence, the vicinity of Ulaanbaatar has been populated by yurts and wooden cottages standing on plots surrounded by wood fencing. These settlements are provided with electricity, but running water and sewers are often lacking, making it impossible to provide residents with appropriate hygienic conditions. Due to the inherent features of the territory, it is especially difficult to establish a suitable infrastructure as there are no designs guaranteeing the establishment of an appropriate street grid. Many yurts have been washed away by heavy summer rains in recent years, and these catastrophes have claimed the lives of numerous residents, which means that first generation settlers have by no means found the living circumstances that prompted them to leave their rural homes (Janzen – Bat-Ochir 2011).

At the same time, it is also important to mention additional pressing factors. Unfortunately, Mongolia today still lacks suitable veterinary treatment for the livestock that provide a living for the rural population, which means that in some cases a significant portion of these animals are vulnerable to extinction. Furthermore, as there is no established feeding system, and given the fact that open-air grazing can only ensure the circumstances necessary for survival and reproduction under certain environmental conditions, mass death among livestock during the winter continues to occur.

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[2] According to the latest data from the Ulaanbaatar Bureau of Statistics, the registered population of the capital in 2011 was 1,206,000. http://www.ubstat.mn/ (accessed January 16, 2012)

[3] Data from 2013 indicates that the population in the capital had reached 1,226,991. http://www.infomongolia.com/ct/ci/208/137/Ulaanbaatar%20General%20Information (accessed April 28, 2015)

[4] In addition to establishing temporary homes and "summer residences", many have also used this opportunity to build storage facilities and wholesale warehouses connected to their businesses.

[5] Estimates by the Asian Development Bank suggest that the annual number of new arrivals to Ulaanbaatar is up to 40,000. http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/dafcddc6-9bfc-11e4-a6b6-00144feabdc0.html (accessed April 13, 2015)

This often leads to complete financial disability for some families, who are then forced to leave their pastures behind.[6]

While suitable work opportunities for large numbers of first generation urban dwellers have been scarce for years, the pace of migration to cities has continued to increase up to the present day. Rising unemployment has also led to significant social tension, a fact made clearly evident by the riots that took place in the summer of 2008 (Szilágyi 2010a) – and the simultaneous depopulation of rural areas may also mean the end of traditional Mongolian nomadic pastoralism. It is no accident that there is now growing discourse regarding ways to integrate the nomadic lifestyle within a 21st century economic environment. This issue gives rise to numerous problems (Campi 2011). Some are already envisioning the "end" of nomadism (Humphrey – Sneath 1999) while others have described nomads as a gradually marginalizing group (Dyer 2001). Nomadic conditions cannot provide an appropriate standard of education, which can only be achieved in cities, and this in turn reinforces migration. It is only in the rarest of cases that young people who have moved to cities from rural environments in order to study in secondary schools or universities return to their original communities, which is the second major reason for the rapid growth of urban populations and the depopulation of rural areas. Limited opportunities for education also call attention to another fundamental problem. In the decades prior to the political transition, it was common for nomads to send their children to boarding schools located in rural municipalities in order to obtain basic schooling. Secondary and higher education were a narrow privilege financed by the state. Although education is available to a much broader strata today, noteworthy institutions of higher education are only located in the capital city and in one or two rural centres – for example Khowd or Darkhan. Without the availability of major scholarships, university education requires significant financial sacrifices from nomadic peoples, who often do not possess large amounts of money. A nomadic lifestyle can ensure a living for large families comprising up to three generations, yet rarely provides a sizable income for the families involved. More precisely, the infrastructural and market conditions necessary for generating financial income from the sale of goods produced in the context of a nomadic lifestyle are at present still not accessible to every nomad. Consequently, it is only the members of a relatively narrow strata who are able to have their children educated in cities.

NEW ECONOMIC MODELS

The growing demand for financial income in rural areas has also resulted in the appearance of new strategies, manifest in the emergence of new enterprises, such as goat breeding in Kashmir, for which there is an increasing demand, and the wholesale purchase of other animal products. The latter does not necessarily entail an environmental burden, and so can easily be combined with a nomadic lifestyle. The former, on the other hand, is already

[6] Such mass extinction took place in the winter of 2001–2002 and more recently in 2010. Reports on the latter indicated that more than two million animals had died, with the complete destruction of entire livestock herds in some territories. "Severe winter kills two million livestock." Montsame News Agency, Ulaanbaatar, February 11, 2010. http://www.montsame.mn/index.php?option=com_news&mt=normal_news&tab=201002&task=news_detail&ne=799 (accessed January 16, 2012)

having a significant visible impact on territories in southern Mongolia. The number of goats in the northern area of the Gobi Desert has grown to a point where desertification has accelerated and traditional nomadic livestock husbandry is no longer viable.

Strategies for obtaining direct financial income have primarily developed near major centres of tourism, where nomads have established small “open-air museums” for visiting tourists. While these families are ostensibly conducting their traditional way of life, their primary source of income is the money they earn by providing tourists with photo-ops and other services. One of the most visited tourist destinations in Mongolia is Lake Khöwsgöl (Khalkha: Xöwsgöl nuur), the shores of which are populated – in the spring and summer months – by the aforementioned nomad families, who “control” specific territories among themselves. There is frequent “cartel activity”: guests regularly hosted in yurts built by certain entrepreneurs, or specific families offering photo opportunities to foreign tourists who are always transported by chauffeurs familiar with the territory. Families providing such tourist spectacles have seemingly not rejected their nomadic lifestyle – grazing their animals in their winter abode and then moving to their “summer residence” by the lake. Their main source of direct income, however, is the photo-ops they sell to both Mongolian and foreign visitors for pre-negotiated fees, allowing visitors to take pictures with them or with their animals. On such occasions, friction between locals and other Mongolians who have arrived at the lake as tourists is not uncommon. Rural travel destinations are popular among urban Mongols nowadays, but while such trips may seem to be simple excursions, they are often infused with a special emotional content, and their aim is not only to provide “settled” Mongolians with an opportunity to relax outside of the city or to visit their nomad relatives in the countryside. The Mongolian plains and the traditional Mongolian way of life today are prominent elements of Mongolian national identity, and so Mongolians living in urban environments show far greater pride and enthusiasm in visiting the rural territories of their country than can be observed among city dwellers in other nations. For such urban visitors, paying fees to be photographed with families camped by Lake Khöwsgöl constitutes a decidedly negative experience, even if they are being photographed with reindeer or horses. Comments like the following can be frequently heard: “It’s my country. Why should I have to pay for it?”

Such environments have also given rise to the appearance of self-entitled “business shamans” who no longer play the traditional role of shamans in their communities and who have not become sacred leaders in the traditional way. Such individuals have merely recognized “market opportunities” and perform various rituals for travelling visitors – often based on information they have learned from books or by word of mouth.[7] If they do these activities well, it is often difficult to distinguish them from authentic shamans, which means they are even able to provide their audiences with a sacred experience. In local communities, however, self-proclaimed shamans fulfill an entirely different role than their authentic counterparts who achieved their status in accordance with sacred traditions. In fact, it can be said that they play no important role at all and do not even attempt to do so. They have simply taken advantage of developed stereotypes in connection with nomads and conduct shamanistic activities merely as a source of income.

[7] A similar theme is addressed by anthropologist Laetitia Merli in the documentary film *Shaman tour*, which premiered on October 7, 2011 at the 10th annual ISSR conference in Warsaw.

This process correlates with a phenomenon that has also been observed outside of Mongolia in certain territories of China and Siberia. The general demand for sacral fulfilment in the post-Soviet age of free religious practice has seen an increase in the number of fake shamans working to satisfy this demand, in connection with whom adherence to tradition would be difficult to verify. Although researchers claim that it is also possible to find shamans who can be regarded as authentic, it is likely that many individuals are performing rituals that they have reconstructed based on the accounts published by these same researchers. Whether taking place in cities or in rural settings, this phenomenon raises many new questions. In the period of revival arising as a result of free religious practice over the last two and a half decades, followers of both Buddhism and shamanistic tradition have been attempting to reconstruct and reassert the role of Mongolian traditions forced into the background or eliminated during the time before the political transition. This is an easier process in the case of Buddhism thanks to written source material and religious centres abroad, where a young generation of Lamas have now for several decades been able to train themselves in keeping with Mongolian Buddhist traditions originating from Tibet. In addition, it has taken nearly two decades to re-launch religious education in Mongolia, which has now developed education centres that are also able to provide suitable training for monks.

With regards to shamanism, which lacks written traditions, the same process has proven to be far more complex. On one hand, Buddhism has significantly limited shaman activity since the beginning of the 18th century – especially in central territories – which means that shamanistic traditions only survived among Mongolian groups living in peripheral regions, including Darkhats, Buryats and western Mongols. The impact of anti-religious movements during the 20th century was far more drastic in these territories, leaving very little or practically no basis for the reconstruction of traditions. The lack of written sources had two consequences. Firstly, it was only possible to reconfigure the role and function of shamans in a traditional way in areas where shamans or shaman families had survived the more than 70 years of socialist rule preceding the political transition. Secondly, an increasing number of "self-proclaimed" shamans riding the tide of "neo-paganism" familiar to western societies as well began to engage in shamanistic practices for financial gain, often using the earlier work of researchers to establish their own systems. As was typical of the new socio-economic circumstances, they often moved to cities, where there was a concentrated demand for their services. In contrast to earlier times, it is not uncommon today for individual shamans to practice in shamanistic centres, attracting potential clients before setting out to establish private practices. Given this unique market environment, some shamans engage in a form of self-promotion, publishing books about their own activities or about shamanism *in general* – thereby creating an illusion of academic credibility and making sure to emphasise that they are also practitioners. In this way, audiences intrigued by shamanism and shamanistic traditions, who obviously have a sensitive commitment to the topic, often help to increase the clientele of the given authors.

While sacred traditions, especially Buddhism, have become a pillar of Mongolian national identity, financial considerations were not ignored among representatives of dogmatic religious circles either. In the wake of the recent Buddhist revival in Mongolia, there are obviously many who have taken on a monastic way of life based on personal conviction, but in an urban environment fraught with unemployment there are also individuals who merely view joining a monastery as a means to ensure a livelihood. The gradual reconstruction of the religious education system over the past twenty years has led to partial success in alleviating this problem, but it is doubtful that it can be fully eliminated (Szilágyi 2010b).[8] Even so, a certain restructuring can also be observed in recent years. While the first decade after the political transition showed a gradual increase in the number of lamas and monasteries, currently there is an apparent decrease in the number of monks, and so it is likely that those who are choosing this way of life today are only doing so out of personal commitment.

Simultaneously, the economic conditions created by the introduction of a market economy have enabled a small strata of Mongolians to accumulate a vast amount of wealth. Typically consisting of individuals living in urban centres, this strata has not generated income via traditional economic means and has primarily acquired its wealth through the private bank sector established following the transition, through privatized commercial networks and the developing mining sector, the latter of which has only emerged over the last twenty years and which has never been characteristic of historical Mongolian economic perspective.[9] The Mongolian language has already formed a new expression in reference to members of the ultra-rich strata who flaunt their wealth. They are called *Shin Mongol* (Khalkha: *šine Mongol*), meaning "New Mongolians" – a term which carries an obvious pejorative connotation in a Mongolian society struggling with vast social inequality. The expression denotes those who mimic foreign behaviour, forsaking respect for Mongolian traditions, and in light of opinions voiced in everyday public discourse, the term has in fact become synonymous with a social group prone to corruption and responsible for the deterioration of Mongol society.[10]

The Mongolian language reacts very quickly to such changes in public thinking. While an increasingly strong emphasis on Mongolian national traditions as an answer to socio-cultural crises is clearly observable, the emergence of social groups who are sceptical of the former can also be discerned. There are communities, primarily consisting of young people, who consciously mock Mongolian traditions and do not adhere to accepted forms of social communication e.g. they fail to show appropriate respect for elders, which constitutes a fundamental breach of traditional Mongolian social norms. They are referred to by the term "rural Indian" (Khalkha: *nutgiin indian*),[11] which clearly has a negative content. This group is straining the framework of the traditional rural nomadic lifestyle while offering no clear alternative for the acquisition of income. It remains to be seen

8 During the religious revival after the political transition, one of the biggest problems facing the Buddhist church was that religious education had been dismantled in the period of religious persecution. As a consequence, underqualified lamas were put in charge of many monasteries, which often resulted in the degradation of these institutions. In the course of reconstructing the education system over the last twenty years, this problem has been considerably alleviated through assistance from education centres, which are often operated by Tibetan emigrants.

9 According to Mongolian Head of State C. Elbegdorj, 90% of Mongolian GDP today is produced by the private sector. http://www.jst.go.jp/astf/document2/en_33doc.pdf (accessed April 23, 2015)

10 Ádám Halász is currently conducting research on related themes under the guidance of the author in the context of graduate work in the Mongolian Studies Program of the Central Asian Faculty at the Eötvös Loránt University (ELTE) in Budapest.

11 Ádám Halász has not published on the basis of his fieldwork in 2006. I thank him for his consent to allow use of his data.

whether this is merely rebellion against tradition for its own sake or the development of a fundamentally new social group conducting a non-urban way of life.

In contrast to these negative social phenomena, a new concept has gradually emerged which views the preservation of Mongolian tradition as a means to reinforce the economic and cultural development of the country, an idea which arose practically in conjunction with the political transition.

NATIONAL TRADITION

It is peculiar that after the political transition it was not the opposition, but the political offshoot of the governing party that managed to build the newly resurfaced symbols of Mongolian nationalism into its rhetoric. This launched a conscious traditionalism that has been adopted by practically all players in Mongolian public life today, which means that Mongol traditions and national symbols have now become constant tools of political discourse. It is characteristic that the preservation of national heritage as the basic foundation for a stronger Mongolia was a central theme in the opening speech given by current Mongol President Ts. Elbegdorj (Khalkha: C. Elbegdorǰ) in 2011 at the 10th International Congress of Mongolists.

The Mongolian population today is not uniform with regards to either its ethnic or its linguistic composition. Numerous theories have been developed in connection with the formation of the Mongolian language (Ramstedt 1912; Poppe 1960), none of which will be dealt with in detail here, but it can be ascertained that among the population living in Mongolia today the Khazak, Khoton, Tuvan and Catani ethnic groups (Somfai 1998) belong to the Turkish branch of the Altaic language family while a larger portion of the population speak languages belonging to the Mongolian branch. This can be further broken down into dialects spoken by western, central and eastern groups (Tumen 2004).

Linguistic diversity notwithstanding, and in light of our present theme, it is more interesting to focus on examining the ethnic composition of Mongolians. The earliest known source on this subject is the 13th century literary work *The Secret History of The Mongols* (Ligeti 1962), which chronicles the heritage of Genghis Kahn and provides the basis for the present day sense of Mongol identity. Numerous articles have analysed the language and culture of Mongolian ethnic groups (Nacagdorǰ 1963; Badamxatan 1965; 1987; 1996; Okada 1987). Based on these, it is possible to claim that Mongolians today can also be grouped on the basis of ethnicity into one of the three large linguistic categories listed above – western, or Oirats, central (Khalkha) and eastern. It is important to emphasise linguistic and, in a certain sense, ethnic diversity here because it is in this context that nomadic and Genghisid tradition are a unifying factor.

State ideology prior to the political transition did not benefit the independent manifestation of different ethnic groups. As the consequence of a process lasting since around the 17th century, this continued to reinforce the predominance of the Khalkha peoples, which also resulted in the development of the literary Mongol language based on the Khalkha dialect. The political transition therefore created a new situation in this sense as well. While Mongols had previously taken into account ethnic origin in the course of personal communication, during the reorganization of administrative procedures it was suggested that ethnic origin should also be registered on personal documents. Although this procedure was not introduced, it can be recalled that when attempts were made to do so during the 1990s, there was a sudden increase in the number of people who declared themselves to be of Borjigid descent, directly placing their origin in the Genghisid tradition. It should also be mentioned that around the same time it was not uncommon for young people in urban environments to proudly use the term "pure Khalkha" (Khalkha: *ǰinxene xalx*) when asked about their origins. While this could certainly be a natural answer, the inherent pride suggests a possibility that for young urbanized Mongols the expression also symbolizes a connection with urban life and modernity as a value.

In accordance with the ideology of the Soviet period, mention of the great Mongol Empire, or Genghis Khan – as a symbol of the Mongol state, independence and power – was not acceptable in the prevalent political environment. The historical role of Genghis Khan was blurred more as a result of suppression than falsification of history. It is no accident that when Mongolian independence was declared, the founder of the Mongol state became one of the most important themes in Mongolian culture, public discourse and historical research. Innumerable books have been published dealing with the Great Khan's life and his role in history, making him the symbol of Mongolia, although his personality has been somewhat degraded as a result. Genghis Khan's name has also become a well-known commercial trademark outside the borders of Mongolia. A wide variety of products have been named after him, ranging from beer and vodka to travel agencies. His portrait adorned Mongol banknotes issued after the political transition, and the international airport in Ulaanbaatar is also carries his name today. Moreover, his personality enjoys a unique respect outside of today's Mongolia as well.[12] A sacred Genghis Khan cult has existed in Inner-Mongolia in the Ordos region since the 13th century (Birtalan 2001), and legend holds that he was buried here. It is interesting to note that Genghis Khan has also been elevated to the pantheon of Chinese emperors as the founder of the Yuan Dynasty, which ruled in the 13th and 14th centuries, although Genghis Khan never intended to establish a dynasty. He wanted to rule China as a conqueror rather than sitting on the Chinese throne. The latter was achieved by his grandson, Kublai Khan, who did so in the face of growing hostility among the contemporary Mongol aristocracy. Naturally, Kublai is remembered today as one of the greatest rulers in Mongolian history – his statue stands beside that of the great founder in front of the Mongolian Parliament – but judgement by his contemporaries was by no means uniformly positive.

It is intriguing that increased attention to the preservation of Mongolian national traditions today in the territories of Inner Mongolia – naturally due to favourable political changes – has unfortunately not brought Mongolian peoples living on opposite sides of the border closer to one another.[13] In fact, the reverse is true. Recent years have indicated a peculiar kind of opposition, which is rarely voiced, but which is nevertheless present in public thinking. Nowadays, a portion of the Mongolian population, typically the urban

[12] Surprisingly, one of the reasons for the relative urgency of re-christening the airport in Ulaanbaatar is that Kazakhstan was also planning to name one of its airports after the Great Khan, which Mongolia naturally could not allow to happen.

[13] This is also evident in the maintenance of the Genghis shrine, a gigantic Inner Mongolian museum built in 2008 in Hohhot ("Blue City", the royal seat founded in the middle of the 16th century by the Tumen Mongol Altan Khan, today the centre of the Chinese Autonomous Province of Inner Mongolia).

segment, is especially hostile towards those in Inner Mongolia. China can be regarded as the most significant commercial and investment partner in Mongolia today, and nearly 5.6 million Mongol speakers – almost double the population of Mongolia – are currently living within her borders.[14] To an outsider, this fact would constitute an opportunity to expand economic cooperation, but in everyday life it has actually not strengthened relations between the two countries. The anti-Chinese sentiment that can be observed today in Mongolia – which is clearly visible in the communication taking place between young people bickering with each other on social network sites – also presents Inner Mongolians in a negative light. I have heard more than once in Ulaanbaatar that Mongol people living south of the Gobi Desert cannot even be considered Mongolian because they are "Chinese". At the same time, when travelling in Inner Mongolia, on several occasions I experienced locals qualifying Ulaanbaatar "city Mongols" with a simple dismissive wave of the hand, designating an extremely negative critique. When I asked about the reason for this opinion, I was told that "those are not real Mongols anymore": they live in the city, they engage in commerce, they imitate the West, and so cannot be considered the true heirs of Mongol tradition – rural Mongolians perhaps, but definitely not those in Ulaanbaatar.

To the outside observer, it would seem that a certain rivalry has developed between the two groups, based on the preservation of Mongol and nomadic traditions. Both sides are driven by a uniquely interpreted national consciousness, which is understandable when we examine the circumstances. Preserving and practicing their cultural traditions is imperative for Mongolian people living in China as it is the only way for them to preserve their identity within the overwhelmingly Han Chinese majority.[15] For the inhabitants of The Republic of Mongolia, it is the reinforcement of national identity and the preservation of traditions that bring a guarantee of social stability, and it is here that we return to the unequal socio-economic circumstances mentioned at the beginning of this study.

In recent years, several publications have addressed the issue of whether a nomadic way of life can be integrated into the circumstances of the 21st century (Bold 2001; Enkhtuvshin 2011). The answer is not obvious and also raises numerous economic issues that cannot be analysed here. Even so, there is an obvious government intention to keep the issue of national identity at the highest level of discourse. In addition to the aforementioned presidential speech, the opening of the 2011 International Congress of Mongolists contributed other interesting information as well. The event was not only dedicated to the 100th anniversary of the founding of the theocratic Mongol State, but also to the 90th anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution. From an ideological point of view, the latter does not correlate with the political course today, but Mongolians mark this event as the beginning of their separation from China, even if it cannot be dated as such

[14] The territory of Inner Mongolia comprises 1,200,000 square kilometres. Based on the census in 2000, only 17.13% of those living here, approximately four million people, referred to themselves as Mongolian. Mongols can also be found living in Northeast China, in Qinghai, Gansu and Xinjiang.

[15] A smaller factor contributing to this may be that according to current Chinese law minorities receive certain benefits in connection with childbirth, which are well known to be limited among Han inhabitants.

in legal terms.[16] The two anniversaries and the date can be easily explained, but the fact that the event was timed to coincide with the 2220th anniversary of nomadic statehood demands further explanation. The fact that Mongolians link Mongol statehood to the establishment of the Asian Hun (Xiongnu) state[17] (Vásáry 2003:35–38) proves that a conscious – and newly intensified – traditionalist concept exists at a governmental level, one in which the appearance of the nomadic state as first documented in Chinese sources as well as Mongol traditions are mentioned within a comprehensive system. It might be worth noting here that experts and spokesmen on the topic make a unique argument to the effect that the appearance of Mongols in the Xiongnu Empire itself proves that there is no obvious counter-argument. We know that the first nomadic state and the ones that followed were – in a modern sense – a nomadic empire based on a loosely configured system of multinational tribal alliances. Therefore, it is quite possible that those living under Xiongnu authority included peoples who spoke an early form of the Mongolian language. Based on Chinese sources, some researchers have dated their appearance as early as the 2nd century B.C., in the event that they spoke the Topak Mongol language used by the Sienpi (Xianbei) tribes that defeated the Xiongnu Empire and established the Wei Dynasty in North China between 386 and 538 B.C. (Vásáry 2003:46).

Within this system of rhetoric, the founding of the nomadic state (Xiongnu) and the appearance of nomadic traditions in the earliest written sources are gradually becoming a part of Mongol historical tradition. Since a significant part of the Xiongnu state lies in the territory of today's Mongolia, this concept can easily be integrated in the viewpoint clearly illustrated by the following phrase: "The history of Mongolia, the history of the Mongol land" – which is a commonly used expression today.

A similar argument can be heard in connection with Mongolian cultural tradition and the history of the Buddhist religion, which constitutes another important pillar of Mongol national identity. In keeping with the accepted consensus among the academic community dealing with the topic, two Mongol Buddhist conversions are usually mentioned in relation to the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia – one in the 13th century and another from the 16–17th century. In recent years, however, "newer" conversions are said to have been discovered which characteristically seem to date farther and farther back in time. In this context, there is talk today of a Buddhist tradition that appeared in the territory of present day Mongolia from the 6–8th century, the Buddhism of the Kitan, who can indeed partially be traced to the territory of Mongolia today, but cannot be considered predecessors of Mongol Buddhism as there is a significant difference between speaking about Mongol Buddhism and the Buddhism which appeared later in Mongol territories. Nevertheless, the aim in both examples is the same: to project religious and historical traditions as important elements of national identity as far into the past as possible.

We do not intend to deal with the validity of the theory in connection with Xiongnu here (Pelliot 1912; Ligeti 1970). At present, it is perhaps more interesting to mention that it is not only the Mongolian government who uses the possibility of Xionghu origin

[16] Republican Chinese troops were in fact exiled from Ulaanbaatar by Mongolians in 1921 with the help of the Soviet Red Army, but in a legal sense China did not officially recognize Mongolian independence until January 5, 1946.

[17] The Xiongnu state was established by Tuoman and his son Maotun (Modu) at the end of the 3rd century, in the year 209 B.C.

at a political level. Many researchers in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia are showing serious interest in this issue. The subject is experiencing a kind of renaissance today, and yet, surprisingly, it is not serving as a means to bring Mongols living on the two sides of the Gobi Desert together either. Government rhetoric on both sides incorporates the idea that nomadic peoples appearing in the region in the 4th century B.C. established the first nomadic state and that the nomadic people who Chinese sources first described in detail can be regarded as cultural predecessors of Mongolians. In spite of this, nothing is said about how Mongol peoples on either side of the border are related to one another. At the moment, it seems that distrust is only the observable arch spanning across the border.

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Thoughts on Kinship at the Citizenship Office in South Sudan

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Abstract: Building of a yearlong anthropological fieldwork inside the South Sudanese citizenship office, the paper elaborates the topic of the negotiated statehood through an analysis of the flexibility of kinship. As almost nobody in South Sudan posses genuine birth certificates, the new country struggles to verify the citizenship-applicants, and recognise the fraudulent applications. South Sudan introduced an ethnicity and kinship-based system. Each and every applicant has to arrive with a 'next of kin', an elder, blood-relative, to verify her life-story. These debates between verification officers and applicants open up a new space for kinship studies. The paper concludes, that nevertheless the continued flexibility of the meaning of kinship these situations cannot be understood without the normative basis of kinship.
Keywords: Anthropology of the state, Kinship, South Sudan, East Africa, Civil war, State, Bureaucracy

"The average anthropologist (...) has his doubts whether the effort needed to master the bastard algebra of kinship is really worth while. He feels, that, after all, kinship is a matter of flesh and blood, the result of sexual passion and maternal affection, of long intimate daily life, and of a host of personal intimate interest. Can all this really be reduced to formulas, symbols, perhaps equations?(...) The average common-sense anthropologist or observer of savages feels that this personal approach to kinship is sadly lacking. There is a vast gulf between the pseudo-mathematical treatment of the too-learned anthropologist and the real facts of savage life. Nor is this merely the feeling of the non-specialist. I must frankly confess that there is not a single account of kinship in which I do not find myself puzzled by some of this spuriously scientific and stilted mathematization of kinship facts. (...) I believe that kinship is really the most difficult subject of social anthropology; I believe that it has been approached in a fundamentally wrong way." (Bronisław Malinowski, 1930)

I spent my year-long fieldwork in South Sudan at the Directorate of Nationality, Passport and Immigration (hereinafter: DNPI), which falls under the authority of the new country's police force.[1] I just observed a citizenship interview where the Dinka officer did not accept as a witness the relative – a maternal cousin – of a Kakwa applicant, arguing that the law requires a paternal, older relative. The two sides got into a long dispute about who qualifies as a relative and who does not. The Dinka police officer insisted that he can only accept a witness who has at least one name of the four that is the same as the applicant's, meaning that according to the Dinka (as well as Nuer and Shilluk) naming system, they have at least one grandfather in common. By the end of the debate, the applicant managed to convince the bureaucrat that although the Kakwa are also a patrilineal ethnic group,[2] maternal uncles – and, accordingly, their children – play a more important role in family life than the father, while on the other hand, due to the logic of the Kakwa naming system, kinship would not be clear even in the case of paternal relatives. After some hesitation, the Dinka police officer accepted the applicant's arguments and was willing to interrogate the witness.

All of a sudden I found myself in the middle of the anthropological debates of the last century. Of course my fieldwork location was not chosen by accident. I was attracted by the intimate relationship between the discipline of anthropology and South Sudan, from the divine kingship of the Shilluk that had such a central role in James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (Frazer 1913; Evans-pritchard [1948] 2011; Graeber 2011), through the relativism of Azande witchcraft (Evans-Pritchard 1937)[3] and the premise of stateless societies derived from the lineage-based political system of the Nuer (Fortes – Evans-Pritchard 1940; Evans-Pritchard 1940; Hutchinson 1996), all the way to Godfrey Lienhardt's study of Dinka religion (Lienhardt 1961; Cormack 2014).[4] Despite all this, I did not plan on dealing with the topic of kinship directly. My research focused on the institutionalization of South Sudanese citizenship. I was most interested in finding out how a newly created – and relatively weak – state can select and document its own citizens, provided that the majority of the applicants have neither a birth certificate nor a previous, Sudanese identity card. The first six months of my fieldwork

[1] My fieldwork was made possible by a research grant from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and an academic scholarship from Central European University. Archival work was conducted at Oxford and Durham Universities. I am grateful for all the support. This article is a slightly revised version of an earlier piece written in Hungarian (Markó 2014).
I left South Sudan in November 2013, a few weeks before the outbreak of the latest civil war, which is why my article does not address the tragic period since then. In the short, peaceful year I spent there, Nuer and Dinka police officers worked together at the Citizenship Office.

[2] See Marisa Ensor's article about Kabili, a Kakwa child soldier (Ensor 2012).

[3] See also: Geertz 1983:73–93 or Jennings' philosophical approach to "Zande common sense" (Jennings 1989), as well as the resulting debate about relativism (Triplett 1994; Sankey 2010).

[4] Godfrey Lienhardt spent 18 months among the Gogrial-area Dinka as Evans-Pritchard's student and with his support, focusing primarily on religious life. After his mentor's retirement, he succeeded him at the head of the department of anthropology at Oxford. Zoe Cormack's dissertation, based upon nearly two years of fieldwork, but also synthesizing Lienhardt's books, photographs, field notes, letters, as well as British and (South) Sudanese archival materials – which she submitted to the history department of Durham University – presents Dinka kinship, gender roles, and the way the Gogrial-area Agouk Dinka remember the past and imagine the future in this light, from a completely new aspect (Cormack 2014).

were spent at the DPNI, as well as socializing with lower ranking officials working there. In the second half of the year, I continued my research among the applicants seeking citizenship. I interviewed applicants and members of South Sudanese non-governmental organizations, and tried to map out the – mostly illegal – market of documents validating an applicant's affiliation with South Sudan that evolved in the vicinity of the office.

According to the Nationality Act approved two days before the proclamation of South Sudan, one can be considered a native of South Sudan if "such person belongs to one of the indigenous ethnic communities of South Sudan";[5] however, the law did not come with a list of indigenous ethnic groups, nor a list of members of ethnic groups living on both, or in some cases all three,[6] sides of the border. Thus, in the case of a dispute, the decision is entirely in the hands of the police officer conducting the hearing. The South Sudan Nationality Regulations supplementing the act require that, in addition to properly completed forms and any available evidence, "the applicant must provide a witness(es) who is/are believed to be elders and next of kin".[7]

"Next-of-kin" is an Anglo-Saxon legal category. According to my informants, the text of the South Sudanese Nationality Act and the supplementary Regulations were codified by lawyers repatriating from the United States. However, according to the Dinka major general running the office, they were not given any kind of instruction as to how exactly they should evaluate the evidence and whom they should admit as a witness. The major general and his direct staff – mostly Dinka and Nuer – relied on "common sense" in the Geertzian meaning (Geertz 1983:73–93) when they created the official naming system of the new state, on the one hand, and a selection mechanism, on the other hand, which best ensures compliance with the law by having close relatives of the applicant testify. The three Nilotic ethnic groups living in the northern part of South Sudan (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk), which make up about 55–60% of South Sudan's population,[8] follow a naming system based on patrilineal descent. The newborn child's name – if a second name is not given in baptism – is generally followed by the name of the father (in exceptional cases the guardian) and the grandfather (father of the guardian), sometimes spanning six or seven generations (for a detailed description of the Dinka naming system, see Deng 1972:38–40).[9] The clarity of the system is assisted by the fact that wives do not take

[5] The South Sudan Nationality Act, 2011. http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e94318f2.html (accessed July 27, 2016)

[6] Approximately 1.1 million Azande live in the area of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic and South Sudan triple border, often nurturing family relationships across borders. Hundreds of thousands of Eastern Nuer remain divided between Ethiopia and South Sudan (Johnson 2010).

[7] South Sudan Nationality Regulations, 2011, Chapter I, Article 25. http://www.refworld.org/docid/4ffab4582.html (accessed July 27, 2016)

[8] Fifth Sudan Population and Housing Census, 2008. http://ghdx.healthdata.org/record/sudan-population-and-housing-census-2008 (accessed July 27, 2016)

[9] A man's name is combined with his father's name as, for example, "Kwol, son of Arob, son of Biong, son of Allor" – and on to the degree necessary for identification. To state the relationship involved it may be necessary for a person to introduce his father, grandfather, and maybe the founder of his clan. Among other things, this serves as a guiding chart for the observance of exogamous bars. By knowing each other's ascendants, a couple can more or less tell whether marriage between them is permissible" (Deng 1972:38–40). This same "incest logic" is followed, but of course in reverse, at the DNPI when comparing the applicant's and witness' names.

their husband's name. The senior bureaucrats at the DPNI envisioned this system as the basis of the new government system, with the stipulation that the official name must always consist of four names, where the last name will be the "family name".[10] Naturally, however, in this case only the paternal lineage shows the degree of kinship, because the names of the maternal or affinal relatives contain the paternal ancestors of the Ego. Demonstrated through a concrete example, let us assume that the Dinka Jok Deng Adout Kiir is applying for citizenship and brings a paternal cousin to testify.

applicant	**Jok** (name)	**Deng** (father)	**Adout** (grandfather)	**Kiir** (great-grandfather)
witness (cousin)	**Achak** (name)	**Luol** (father)	**Adout** (grandfather)	**Kiir** (great-grandfather)

Figure 1. Dinka applicant, a hypothetical ideal case.

Clearly, the names of the grandfather and great-grandfather are the same name, so the official can see that they are certainly relatives, namely cousins. Of course, the situation gets complicated even among the Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk by taking on a baptismal name (usually, but not always, used after the first given name, so in our hypothetical case, our witness would be called Achak *John* Luol Adout); furthermore, in many cases men without a herd – i.e., wealth – can pay neither the bride price nor any compensation to the bride's parents, so the children get associated with the patrilineal branch of the maternal uncles,[11] and they will be named accordingly. Individuals coming from such families have two options when applying for citizenship at the DNPI. Either they seek out their father and ask him or one of his relatives to testify for them, in which case, of course, their official name will be different from the name they used so far, as the name of their father, grandfather and sometimes great-grandfather will replace the name of their maternal uncle and his patrilineal ancestors; or they claim on the papers that their maternal uncle is their biological father, and then they can bring to testify any of the relatives they grew up with. The child of their uncle, for example, who is "really" a matrilineal cousin, but at the office they claim to be patrilineal siblings. Recycling the names used in the previous example, let us suppose that the Dinka Jok Deng Adout Kiir, who was born out of wedlock and raised by his maternal uncle (or his patrilineal branch) applies for citizenship. If he follows the paternal line, he must get a new name; if the maternal line, he must lie about his father, on the one hand, and about the witness' degree of kinship, on the other hand.

[10] Obviously, this way a father and son's family name can never be the same. The family name category was necessary due to the machines producing identity cards that were imported from Europe, as they invariably operate on the family name – first name logic.

[11] Evans-Pritchard writes about this in detail (Evans-Pritchard 1951:26–27), and see also Hutchinson's Nuer monograph: Hutchinson 1986, McKinnon's article on the creation of Nuer patrilineality: McKinnon 2000, and Gough's article: Gough 1971, according to whom nearly half of the children in Nuer- and Dinkaland were born in such families (and this is data from before the second civil war!).

applicant	**Jok** (name)	**Deng** (maternal uncle)	**Adout** (maternal grandfather)	**Kiir** (maternal great-grandfather)
applicant's official name	**Jok** (name)	**Achak** ("biological"[12] father)	**Luol** (grandfather)	**Wek** (great-grandfather)
witness (paternal sibling)	**John** (name)	**Achak** ("biological" father)	**Luol** (grandfather)	**Wek** (great-grandfather)

Figure 2. Dinka applicant raised by maternal uncle who secures a patrilineal kin witness.

applicant	**Jok** (name)	**Deng** (maternal uncle)	**Adout** (maternal grandfather)	**Kiir** (maternal great-grandfather)
applicant's official name	**Jok** (name)	**Deng** (maternal uncle)	**Adout** (maternal grandfather)	**Kiir** (maternal great-grandfather)
witness (cousin)	**Alex** (name)	**Deng** (father)	**Adout** (grandfather)	**Kiir** (great-grandfather)

Figure 3. Dinka applicant raised by maternal uncle who secures a matrilineal kin witness.

I have seen examples for both strategies; in each case, the applicant's choice was the result of individual decision. Factors include which branch of relatives is easier to contact in Juba, which branch is easier to ask for favors, how much the applicant insists on having the "real" name appear on the identity card, and countless personal reasons. Of course, there have also been examples of someone refusing to change the name or lie about the kinship relationship. In such cases, the decision is left up to the individual official whether to recognize the applicant as South Sudanese or not. If at first sight you, my reader, find the system too complex and too difficult to follow, you can be assured that most of the applicants did not understand it either. Particularly when it came to non-Dinka, Nuer or Shilluk applicants, there were long disputes between the police officers and the applicants.

Three ethnographic incidents support this case. The first case is about Durka, whose mother is Bari, father a Dinka soldier.[13] His parents never married, their relationship was limited to the period when Durka's father was stationed around Juba as a member of

[12] Biological is in quotation marks here because it is far from certain, of course, that we are talking about the biological father in the scientific sense.

[13] The interview was made in March 2013.

the SPLA.[14] Durka has never met her father, only inherited her family name. At barely three years of age, she was sent to Khartoum, where her maternal uncle took care of her education. She was in Switzerland when South Sudan became independent, and to her astonishment, she became displaced from one day to the next, since Sudan's embassy in Geneva refused to renew her passport. After thirty years, she traveled home to Juba for the first time – using a temporary laissez-passer – where her application for citizenship with her old passport was unsuccessful; the police officer told him that no one can become a citizen without a witness. Her astonishment increased even further when her maternal half-brother he just recently met was not accepted as a witness. The clerk told Durka that, given the circumstances, he may have accepted a maternal kin witness, but because Durka's father was Dinka, and ethnicity is inherited patrilineally, in her case he can only consider a Dinka witness. Eventually, Durka had to find her father who was, fortunately, stationed in Juba.

My second story features Albino, an Acholi man working for the World Bank,[15] who, besides his high ranking civil position, is also the leader of the semi-official umbrella organization of the Acholi community in South Sudan. Albino was born in a hospital in Khartoum, so he applied for his citizenship with his birth certificate, with his paternal cousin as a witness. The official politely told him that this birth certificate was not acceptable, because Albino's name does not match the official naming system. On the one hand, he only has three names; on the other hand, it does not include the names of his paternal ancestors. Albino argued in vain that although the Nilotic Acholi are also a patrilineal ethnic group, in their naming system it is downright unacceptable for someone to be named after their own father. Finally, he had no other option but to request a document called Age Assessment Form*,* on which his new name had to comply with the state logic.

As a result of nearly half a century of civil war,[16] family relationships disintegrated (or were never established), thus many applicants are unable to secure witnesses complying with the law – particularly youth repatriating from Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, and foreigners seeking citizenship.[17] They have no other option than to find someone at the "bazaar of evidence" who is willing (for a fee) to get the Age Assessment Form from the National Medical Commission filled out with the appropriate name, and testify at the DNPI.

My third ethnographic case involves two of my acquaintances from the Nuba Mountains, who fled to South Sudan from the still ongoing civil war in Sudan. According to the law, they are not South Sudanese, because despite the populations around the Nuba Mountains having had supported the SPLA for decades, upon South Sudan's secession, the area remained in Sudan. These two friends had to obtain official papers in order to accept employment – and to avoid possible deportation – therefore, they developed a strategy. Although they came from two different ethnic groups, they testified for each other, since they built a whole new life story for the agency, and they even obtained

[14] Sudan People's Liberation Army, the main rebel organization in the civil war in South Sudan, which has functioned both as a government party and the national army since 2005.

[15] The interview was made in June 2013, together with Dr. Katrin Seidel.

[16] The First Sudanese Civil War, which claimed half a million fatalities, took place between 1955 and 1972, while the Second Civil War between 1983 and 2005 claimed more than 2,000,000 victims (Johnson 2003).

[17] East African youth come to Juba either to do business, or hoping to find a job with one of the relief organizations or with the UN, which – because of the quota system "helping" the locals – is greatly expedited if they can prove that they are South Sudanese, so many of them try to obtain the documents.

"evidence" supporting it. First of all, they selected an appropriate South Sudanese ethnic group – it had to be a group with a small population whose language was not spoken at the agency, lest they be caught – and created new names and life stories for themselves, and testified as one another's brother. Since then they have been renting a cottage together in Juba, helping each other in everyday life, and most of their South Sudanese friends think they are brothers. The life story and kinship thus created by them has gained a new life.

In his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Pierre Bourdieu explains for the first time the theory of habitus and the methodology focusing on everyday practice (Bourdieu 1977). The theory had a productive effect on various sectors of sociology and anthropology, with the only exception being kinship studies, which is especially interesting in light of Bourdieu introducing his methodology through the analysis of a Kabyle cousin-marriage (Bourdieu 1977:30–58). One of the few researchers who have used this theory anyway was Krista E. Van Vleet, during her research on Bolivian kinship. Van Vleet studies the evolving and ever-changing "kinship" relations among the indigenous people living in the highlands of Bolivia (Van Vleet 2003; 2008). She introduces the concept of "relatedness", which is derived from kinship but goes beyond it, and is much more flexible that kinship structures.

> "I develop critical perspectives on the cultural construction of social relationships that take kinship as their core but not as their boundary. I illuminate relatedness through a double focus. An ethnographically grounded discussion of the intimacies and hierarchies of kinship and gender among Quechua speakers who live in the rural region of Sullk'ata, Bolivia, is the heart of the book. My own negotiation of relationships with Sullk'atas is a secondary but analytically significant nexus of reflection. By highlighting the everyday talk and practices of Sullk'atas, and especially the telling and retelling of stories, I show how relatedness is a mutual production among people, including the ethnographer and her informants. People interpret meanings and relationships in process." (van vleet 2008:2)

Caren Freeman's book on the cross-border marriage customs of the Korean minority living in China also falls into this category (Freeman 2011). Freeman shows how the Korean government, struggling with a severe demographic crisis, encourages Chinese Koreans to "discover" kinship relations on the peninsula, and how this incentive and the promise of a better life assists in the creative invention and experience of these non-existent kinship relationships.

In my opinion, and Bourdieu's arguments notwithstanding (Bourdieu 1977:37), these types of studies of kinship relationships – using the category of kinship intentionally permissively – that are re-evaluated based on state influence or other external factors, invented, situational, and malleable, are rare because the two spheres of kinship relations, the familial and the political, have been traditionally separated by the discipline of anthropology (Peletz 1995; Sahlin 2013). Evans-Pritchard's study of the Nuer was published as a trilogy, thus designating what he considered to be the three main topics of anthropology: familial-domestic kinship (*Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer*, 1951), politico-jural institutions (*The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People*, 1940), and religion (*Nuer Religion*, 1956). As Mayer Fortes writes – with whom Evans-Pritchard co-edited *African Political Systems*, the saga of segmented, stateless societies: "The major advance in kinship theory since Radcliffe-

Brown, but growing directly out of his work, has been the analytical separation of the politico-jural domain from the familial, or domestic domain within the total social universe of what have been clumsily called kinship-based social systems" (Fortes 1969:72).

In addition to using English labels instead of emic Nuer kinship categories,[18] Evans-Pritchard's "big trick" was the separation of political and familial kinship, as many of his critics pointed out (Evans 1984; Gough 1971; Holý 1979a; 1979b; Karp – Maynard 1983; Kuper 1982; McKinnon 2000; Rosaldo 1986). While many justifiably criticize Evans-Pritchard for staying silent on anything that disturbs the egalitarian, patrilineal, clear structure, or simply relegating it to the familial sphere of kinship, they usually forget to mention that Evans-Pritchard was very much aware of the complexity of Nuer reality:

> "The sentiment of *mar*, of communion with his kin, gives a Nuer the comfort of security, the feeling of being in a known and friendly world. I would again stress that *mar* is a cognatic kinship, a set of relationships to any person through either father or mother and, among the Nuer, embracing also close affines, and further that in this general interpersonal sense one does not evaluate between the relationships. The maternal uncle is just as much kin as the paternal uncle, and the mother's sister's son as the father's sister's son. They are all people one helps when they need help and who help oneself when one needs aid. 'Jimarida', 'my kin', are the people who are near me, irrespective of their precise category of relationship." (Evans-Pritchard 1951:156)

The system experienced at the DNPI, which at first seemed like a strictly patriarchal system that only allowed older paternal relatives to be a witness, became more complex when looking at the individual strategies of applicants, or when the personal affairs of the Dinka and Nuer officials came to the fore. Several high-ranking police officers tried to find a job for their relatives at the police station. One older Dinka colonel – who perhaps most strictly checked and enforced that the witness be a paternal relative – secured a guard position for a young protégé. Like to everyone else in the office, he told me that the boy was a close relative (using the English term "next-of-kin" as prescribed by law). After many attempts, he turned out to be a grandson of his maternal aunt, a degree of kinship that the Dinka language has no word for (Deng 1972), but he must nevertheless take care of the boy because his matrilineal aunt entrusted him with it, and he feels towards her, as well as the boy, as Evans-Pritchard's Nuer about the *mar*. I got another example of the situationality and flexibility of kinship when I returned to Juba after a one-week absence. An excerpt from my field journal reveals how easily someone's classification changes in certain situations:

> "I board the Cairo airport bus, and in the crowd I end up next to three men. One of them is a large, round headed, bald, muscular South Sudanese, in tidy but not conspicuously expensive

[18] Evans-Pritchard himself admits that, for example, the word "clan" had no equivalent in Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940:195). The afterlife and numerous re- and misinterpretations of Evans-Pritchard's Nuer ethnography deserve a separate study. Here I pose only one comment, namely as regards the most famous dialogue in anthropology. At the very beginning of the first Nuer book, Evans-Pritchard illustrates the difficulty of fieldwork with the following ironic dialogue, which has been included in most academic books in the same sense:

clothes. Immediately I try to categorize him, my first thought being that he is a highly skilled Equatorian[19] who works for an NGO or the UN rather than the government, but not in a very high position. The second one is a nervous and seemingly confused white man in his forties, in worn clothing and with a battered bag that has seen better days. Perhaps he is a Spanish or Greek venturer, I'm thinking, struck by the crisis and trying to find some kind of work in Juba, and is obviously filled with questions. The third one is a middle-aged Middle Eastern man in a light blue sport coat, Ray-Ban sunglasses, with a large Rolex on his wrist, full of confidence. I suspect that he is an Egyptian or Lebanese businessman who either operates a hotel or a restaurant for aid workers in Juba, or has partnered with the Chinese and is doing some construction. It looks like he made his fortune in Juba."

"E.-P.: Who are you?
Cuol : A man.
E.-P.: What is your name?
Cuol : Do you want to know my *name*?
E.-P.: Yes.
Cuol : You want to know *my* name?
E.-P.: Yes, you have come to visit me in my tent and I would like to know your name.
Cuol : All right. I'm Cuol. What is your name?
E.-P.: My name is Pritchard.
Cuol: What is your father's name?
E.-P.: My father's name is also Pritchard.
Cuol : No, that cannot be true. You cannot have the same name as your father.
E.-P.: It is the name of my lineage. What is the name of your lineage?
Cuol : Do you want to know the name of my lineage?
E.-P.: Yes.
Cuol : What will you do with it if I tell you? Will you take it to your country?
E.-P.: I don't want to do anything with it. I just want to know it since I am living at your camp.
Cuol: Oh well, we are Luo.
E.-P.: I did not ask you the name of your tribe. I know that. I am asking you the name of your lineage.
Cuol: Why do you want to know the name of my lineage?
E.-P.: I don't want to know it.
Cuol: Then why do you ask me for it? Give me some tobacco" (Evans-Pritchard 1940:12–13).

Since the English words "lineage" and "clan" have no equivalent in this sense in Nuer, therefore the text can be interpreted – and I think this is closer to reality – as the fledgling anthropologist asking Cuol so much nonsense that in his confusion he cannot help but ask for a little tobacco to relieve the tension. It is incomprehensible why after his Nuer visitor responded to the request for his name and asked his own, Evans-Pritchard gave his last name, not his first, in response, thus confusing the conversation. Had he responded with his first name and then asked Cuol about his father's name, the entire misunderstanding could have been avoided (and he would have likely retained more tobacco).

[19] The political self-determination of ethnic groups living in the three southern states of South Sudan (Western Equatoria, Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria), through which they wish to distinguish themselves from the three Nilotic groups (Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk) who have acquired key positions in the army and in state powers. It is not a linguistic or anthropological category, since the Nilotic Acholi also consider themselves Equatorians.

Of course, half of my stereotypes proved to be wrong, which was quickly revealed as soon as they began to talk:

> "The Greek man to the South Sudanese: You live in Juba? How is Juba these days?
>
> South Sudanese: Juba is great! Full of progress and opportunity. The weather is gorgeous. I just took my children to Nairobi and we were kind of shocked how cold it is there.
>
> Greek: I was born in Wau,[20] and haven't seen Juba in thirty years. Do you know Major General Vasily?[21] He's my uncle...
>
> Lebanese: Is this the same Greek who manages the Olympus restaurant in Juba?
>
> Greek: No, he's Dimitris, but he's my cousin, too.
>
> Lebanese: So you were born here? You're lucky, you can apply for a South Sudanese passport.
>
> Greek: I don't know...
>
> South Sudanese: But if you were born here, even if to a Greek family, you are entitled!
>
> Greek: Actually, my father is a Cypriot, my mother a Shilluk, you just can't tell looking at me.
>
> South Sudanese: Ha! We might even be blood relatives, I'm also Chollo,[22] but I've lived in Rumbek and Juba for decades.
>
> Greek: Do you know Boba Agar? He's my uncle, my mother's brother.
>
> South Sudanese: Yeah, he's a cousin (embraces the new relative), so we are also cousins.
>
> Lebanese: You can get a passport, it helps a lot if you want to live here, it unlocks lots of doors and makes everything easier. He (points to the South Sudanese man) can help you. Do you want to live here?
>
> Greek: Yes, my brother is working for the UN, I've worked for them in Khartoum before the secession, but then it became more difficult...
>
> South Sudanese: I can witness for you as a cousin, I even know someone at the agency, it will be easier for you at the UN, too, because they have to employ South Sudanese, take my card."

Three kinship relationships were defined as cousins by the English-speaking players, even though at most one of them can be a "truly" cousin relationship. The repatriating, half Cypriot and half Shilluk man cannot be the cousin of the Greek businessman operating the Olympus restaurant, because I know from an earlier interview that the Greek businessman is a third generation Sudanese Greek, without any Cypriot ancestors or collateral relatives. And it is quite clear that in structural terms someone cannot be one's uncle's cousin's cousin, so the two Shilluk men cannot be cousins. But in this situation, and likewise at the DNPI, the exact degree of kinship relationship does not matters, but as Evans-Pritchard said: "They are all people one helps when they need help and who help oneself when one needs aid" (Evans-Pritchard 1951:156). Marshall Sahlins, in his last book on kinship, reached a similar conclusion (Sahlins 2013). According to him, kinship is not biology, not a strict structure, but the *mutuality of being*, persons who are truly involved in each other's existence – and nothing more. It is in this sense when

[20] Wau is a South Sudanese town of 150,000, the capital of Western Bahr el Ghazal State. It is on the border of the area inhabited by the Dinka, and is very culturally diverse (Fertit, Luo, Dinka, Arabic).

[21] Gregory Vasili is a half Dinka, half Greek commander in the SPLA/M, the rebel army that became a government party.

[22] Chollo is the name the Shilluk call themselves (Howell 1941).

Pinaud writes that the warlords of the SPLA in South Sudan[23] are replacing the family ties torn during and after the civil war[24] with their kinship structures by assuming their soldiers' burden of bride price instead of their destitute families, thereby ensuring that the soldiers will remain their loyal followers (Pinaud 2014).

I probably would not go so far, because, although everyone who has heard of the Nuer ghost marriage or met an adopted child who grew up in happiness knows that kinship is not biology, Malinowski's sentence – quoted in the motto – still rings true a hundred years later: "after all, kinship is a matter of flesh and blood, the result of sexual passion and maternal affection, of long intimate daily life, and of a host of personal intimate interest" (Malinowski 1930).

Yes, kinship is about personal interests, as well as about economic relations, but the need for human reproduction is also an indispensable part of it. Therefore, I do not believe that the SPLA warlords are buying kinship with their herds of cattle; they are simply developing a patron – client relationship with their soldiers. Malinowski was right about kinship being more than just "bastard algebra", and that the complexity of the issue cannot be encompassed in tables and formulas. In South Sudan, especially at the DNPI, I observed the continued flexibility of the meaning of kinship. And this flexibility has constantly influenced people's view of kinship. Durka, the half Dinka, half Bari woman who repatriated from Switzerland and who had to look up her father to testify for her, developed a really good relationship with her father. One of my Kuku interviewees had to look for a far-removed paternal relative because her entire family lived in Uganda. This cousin, whom he would have never met under normal circumstances, traveled to Juba to help him, and in the three weeks they spent together, they became such good friends that my interviewee decided to move to his cousin's village instead of returning to Uganda.

But these flexible kinship situations cannot be understood without the normative basis of kinship, to which – like it or not – the road leads through "bastard algebra". These are the normative foundations which the police officers and applicants alike have referred to in their debates. Of course, these normative foundations are not closed sets expressed through formulas; oftentimes even two Dinka officials disagreed about a disputed issue. And these experienced, flexible kinship relations – such as the official naming system thus set up – are themselves continually affecting the normative foundations treated as reference points. Anthropological research conducted in social spaces in which civilians confronting state powers must validate their family or ethnic identity – aside from citizenship agencies, I am thinking of border crossings, customs offices, child welfare agencies, and probate courts – may have a lot to add to the topic of kinship, but it should not dismiss the kinship structures that are treated as norms by the participants in these debates.

[23] Pinaud talks exclusively of Nilotic army commanders and soldiers, although the SPLA/M is not limited to Nilotic soldiers; lots of Equatorians have also served in the army (Rolandsen 2005).

[24] Pinaud talks about torn family relationships, but I think use of the term "severed" would be more appropriate. The SPLA used a lot of child soldiers, during whose training a lot more time was spent on deriding their families than on their military training. For a long time, the training motto of the SPLA was the telling "Even my father, I will give him a bullet!" (Ensor 2012; Leonardi 2011).

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Reading Project Society in the Landscape

Sierra Leone, 2018–2012

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Abstract: *The paper proposes a short reflection on the nature of the post war political transformation in Sierra Leone, taking the visual signs of the streets as a starting point. The author observed the post-conflict democratisation process over five years, between 2008 and 2012, and describes how reading the political slogans, bill boards and popular graffitis allowed her following the subtle socio-economic changes characterising the country. The underlying argument is that the largely externally led liberal peace building using foreign and local NGOs as engines of a deep social transformation was based on abstract promises that ultimately failed to realise. Without effectively changing people's lives, these abstract promises normalised a value system that prepared a capitalist take off but ten years after the end of the civil war capitalist development still worked only for a tiny minority, making many people doubt about the benevolent nature of globalisation.*
Keywords: liberal peace, democratisation, project society, NGOs, Sierra Leone, urban landscape

SIERRA LEONE, 2008–2009. [1]

Educated by the State

At the international airport in Lungi, a life-size ad greets travellers with the following slogan: "Love Salone. Change your attitude for good." Forming the map of Sierra Leone, the poster is printed in the national colours and is undersigned by the "Attitudinal and Behavioural Change Secretariat". The message might as well serve as an introduction to the major themes of the post-war reconstruction process. It reflects the tone of the large-scale social experimentation undertaken by the state and its

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international donors, aimed at the overall transformation of Sierra Leonean society emerging from a ten year civil war.[2]

According to a widely accepted view, this heroic enterprise was made necessary by the total collapse of social infrastructure as a result of the armed conflict. Accordingly, the bulky corpus of NGO literature often portrays Sierra Leone as a “blank sheet” (ICG 2007), a society that has to be reconstructed from scratch.[3] Not only do developers present the country as a vast social laboratory, but they also indicate prescribed changes, which are seen as necessarily cultural rather than political. The attitudinal change slogan implicitly blames Sierra Leoneans, making their “attitude”, i.e. their culture responsible for the war and for underdevelopment. This is an extremely biased way of analysing the situation, completely omitting economic and political factors and the role of the international community in the explosion and escalation of violence.

Surprisingly, citizens adhere enthusiastically to this analysis and to the prescribed change. In everyday life, they express the same idea in their own way: whenever a car overtakes in a dangerous way, a politician is accused of corruption or whenever people start pushing each other in a queue, somebody is ready with the usual comment: “*Wi na Salone we no lov wisef.*” This Krio sentence has a double meaning. It should be translated “people do not care for each other in Sierra Leone”, but it could also mean “we, Sierra Leoneans, do not have love for ourselves”. The word “love” stands here for a particular type of social relationship governed by mutual solidarity, responsibility for others, and sharing – the opposite of selfishness and greed, the two most common accusations against corrupt leaders. For Sierra Leoneans, it is clear that the present state of their country is the result of a moral squalor, hence the force of the slogan demanding attitudinal change, which capitalizes on the genuinely Sierra Leonean tendency to make sense of the things of life in terms of moral economy rather than political economy.

This moral penchant relieves the ruling class from taking direct responsibility for the state of the country, instead laying the blame on national character, harmful tradition or backward culture. The reference to “attitude” has the additional advantage of flattering the international community by containing blame within the country, making it unnecessary to speak about the global causes of inequality, which, according to all inside witnesses, contributed greatly – if not directly – to the war.

Consequently, the “attitudinal change” campaign has no opponent; it unites across socio-cultural and even national boundaries. However, this broad agreement is based on an illusion of consensus. In fact, if all the parties involved speak the same language, everyone

[2] The country went through one of the 20th century’s most brutal civil wars between 1991 and 2002.

[3] The 2007 ICG paper summarizes the situation in the following way: Sierra Leone ranks 176th out of 177 countries on the HDI scale (Human Development Index), the rate of youth unemployment is at 80%, 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, and 26% in extreme poverty. The perception that the state is corrupt has grown since the war. Transparency International downgraded the country from the 126th to the 142nd position in 2006. Although this is the usual way for presenting Sierra Leone, especially in project documentation destined to convince donors, sometimes the blank sheet theory is contradicted by observations regarding the surprisingly intact character of the social fabric. In the cited ICG paper, for example, we find references to a research project funded in 2005 by the EU, which found a “very low level of violent crime”. Some authors do not hesitate even to express admiration for what they see as the “remarkable resilience of ordinary Sierra Leoneans” (Bellows – Miguel 2009:1145).

assigns a different meaning to the words, and consequently draws different conclusions. From the point of view of Western donors, the attitudinal change should probably begin with the dismantling of patrimonial networks which keep national leaders under an obligation to cater to their families and close supporters rather than serving their broad constituencies. For the political elite, citizens should give up their exaggerated demands and exercise self-discipline. For ordinary people, quite to the contrary, the powerful have to be reminded of their obligation to share: for the lay citizens regard the redistribution of wealth within limited (and localized) personal networks as totally normal. The problem for them is not that leaders are corrupt. It is rather that their chain of distribution is not adequately expanded. What the international community regards as corruption is a burdensome obligation for the elite, whereas the average citizen regards it as a moral duty. This approach is very different from the Western concept of corruption, based on the "Weberian stereotype of bureaucracy as a legal-rational organization" (Shore 2005:131). The general approval given to the attitudinal change campaign is therefore based on a vast intercultural misunderstanding. Allowing different – even contradictory – translations to coexist makes it possible to emphasize common objectives while veiling opposing interests.

Successful translations are based on a "maximized agreement", which depends heavily on similarities among the "belief-and-desire networks" of the interlocutors (Grandy 1973:440). When similarity is only apparent or partial, translation becomes a question of approximation, an effort to transfer representations expressing beliefs and desires "from one frame of reference to another", hoping that the representation does not lose its validity in the process (Rottenburg 2009:xxxi). I suspect that the success of the attitudinal change campaign is in reality based on bad translation, keeping apart, rather than bringing closer very different belief-and-desire networks. In political terms, however, "bad translation" pays off. It allows different ideas about the desirable future to co-exist side by side without overt conflict, thus avoiding social upheaval.

In the context of international development, the debate about the desirable future becomes one about the form of modernity to achieve. Modernity here is used as a status marker to distinguish certain societies from other not-so-modern ones (Latour 1993). As everyone would like to stand high on this status ladder, the desirability of modernity is not an issue for anyone (Ferguson 2006); the question is not if Sierra Leoneans should have modernity or not, but rather what sort of modernity they should strive for. Highly divergent, but equally plausible – if not equally legitimate – ideas about the kind of modernity to be achieved produce what I would call *parallel worlds*: coexisting but distinct (and sometimes opposing) frames of reference.

The official frame-of reference – that of the liberal peace-building experiment in Sierra Leone – contains a social theory according to which the way to access the material benefits of modernity (better roads, fewer black-outs etc.) necessarily follows from a social process understood as democratization (Newman et al. 2009). The second corollary of this theory is that effective democratization depends on the strength of civil society. The final logical step consists of equating civil society with the number of voluntary organizations or NGOs formally registered in a country (Feldman 1997). Although the chain of causality seems to be based on common sense, application of the theory for development is relatively new.

In the early days of international aid, the contrary was presumed. It was suggested that technological-economic development paved the way to democracy (Allen –

Thomas 2000). This concept was the ideological foundation for many of the earlier developmental interventions, including the structural adjustment agenda of the IMF, practiced on a wide range of societies on different continents. By the 1990s, the failure of the structural adjustments became evident and the development frame proposed by the international community lost its credibility as well as its popularity (Reno 1996). A new form of development had to be invented: a development with a "human face". This change coincided with the end of the cold war, which left neoliberal capitalism as the only player in town. It followed that the issue for developing countries was no longer whether to build capitalism or not, but how to build it. The transformation of developmental thinking resulted in a growing interest in democratization, leading in turn to the gradual "dematerialization" of development objectives (Szántó 2011), shifting from the erstwhile hegemonic concepts of "appropriate technology", "intensive agriculture" and "export orientation" (Crewe – Harrison 1998); to more sophisticated development goals, such as "good governance", "the rule of law" and "transparency". It is in this historical context that the announced objective of attitudinal change takes on its full meaning.

My discovery of the giant poster in the shape of the Sierra Leonean map at Lungi airport was not the only time I was made to reflect on the use of strong visual signs to express complex moral and political ideas in post-war Sierra Leone. Such images were absolutely omnipresent and they seemed to fulfill the same educational purposes that stained glass cathedral windows served in the middle ages: to convey an entire moral system to the illiterate population through pictures. In the capital as well as in the provinces, the ideals of the new – modern and cosmopolitan – development regime were systematically presented for immediate consumption on political posters and sign boards, underlining the opposition with the value system to be overcome that was supposed to be local and traditional.

One of the billboards targeted gerontocracy by depicting an old man in a customary garment pointing his finger at the spectator in an accusative fashion, with the inscription: "You! Start listening to the voices of youth!" Another showed a well dressed woman in her office asking for "fifty-fifty", i.e. 50% representation of women in politics. The essence of the message was that the time had come to reject the system of patriarchy and gerontocracy and transfer power to young people and women. In this new philosophy, the identity marker of being young and female was immediately imbued with symbolic capital, at least in theory. Youth (a category of persons, which, at the same time, was not easy to dissociate from that of the perpetrators of atrocities in the war) and women (some of whom were also ex-combatants) effectively became the two favourite target groups of democratization through civil society building, which made members belonging to (or classified as belonging to) these categories extremely vulnerable to co-optation by the powers that be. While the use of this rhetoric did in effect help some women to achieve leading positions in politics and civil society, it was difficult to see how effectively the new regime addressed the most burning concerns of youth – male and female alike: inadequate education, unemployment and poverty.

Another poster admonished policemen to participate in the fight against HIV with the following words: "the force of good uses condoms". A third one is addressed to careless parents, urging them to send their "girl child to school". One publicity slogan seemed to draft a theory of social welfare, leaving the identity of the addressee unidentified: "*we kopo no dae, well body no dae, i noto fo bi so*" (when there is no money, there is no health –

this should not be like this). Another image depicted a squatting man trying to hide behind a thin tree trunk, with the solemn warning: “There is no place for a corrupt man to hide.”

The themes addressed by the posters were multiple and disparate, but their common thread was a call for individual responses in the face of broad structural problems: lack of education, lack of medical care, health threats, corruption. Read together, the messages of the posters drew the contours of a coherent value system – that of an enlightened, post-industrial liberal democracy based on the individual responsiveness of citizens.

Posters have a magical force: they not only fix targets, but by making them visible, they also paint an imaginary and desired society as one that almost exists already. There is no problem if the picture does not correspond to the daily experience of millions of Sierra Leoneans. Everyone knows that in real life corruption does exist and it is relatively easy to get away with it. Even the two top officials in the Attitudinal Change Secretariat had to be dismissed after being implicated in corruption cases that grew too noticeable. In fact, children often fail to attend school simply because their parents are unable to cope with the informal financial burden, even though education on the primary level is officially free. Badly paid teachers frequently require “fees” from students or simply sabotage the teaching process altogether, even registering students who physically never have to appear, in exchange of “gifts”. In reality, schools are full of “ghost students” and even “ghost teachers”. Consequently, while learning is costly for the students, the efficacy of the teaching is extremely low. Young children and pregnant women routinely die because without money they do not have access to hospitals, despite the newly introduced “free health care system”,[4] or even if they are admitted, they might still lack treatment. On one hand, there is the shiny poster-realty that depicts the country in a projected state of already – or at least nearly – achieved “development”. On the other, there is real life, which systematically negates these idealistic images. Although everybody is aware of this delusion, very few would denounce it. Poster-reality is not seen as a lie, but as a projection of society’s own self-reflection in an idealizing mirror.

PROJECT SOCIETY

It is not only the government that educates citizens through pictures. NGOs also use this channel to convey their messages. NGO publicity is coherent with overall political goals, but often translates these into specific project objectives. The overwhelming presence of projects, manifest in signs painted on walls, gates, posters, even on moving vehicles, is indeed the most striking feature of the country for a newly arriving visitor in 2008. The rapid decay of the signboards by the roads shows that projects are constantly born, but then quickly die. As a result, the countryside resembles less a burgeoning worksite than a

[4] The “Free Health Care System” was introduced in 2010 at the instigation of UNICEF, which remains its main funder. The system aims at providing free hospital admittance and treatment to pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under five years of age. The scheme has resulted in undeniable achievements, but its implementation is not without problems. In 2011, the notorious disappearance of “free health care drugs” was a regular topic in urban gossip. The biggest scandal broke out when two boats full of drugs were discovered in the port of Freetown the night before they would have sailed for neighboring Guinea.

vast cemetery of defunct projects. Some traces are left behind: schools or hospitals were constructed (which does not necessarily mean they still function), but many of them publicize more subtle results: "empowerment", "sensitization" and "awareness raising" – in conformity with the general trend of the "immaterialization" of development aims.

One dusty bill-board set up at the entrance of a village, for example, advertised an entire list of projects: "Access to Justice", "Conflict Transformation and Prevention", "Human Rights Monitoring", "Empowerment of Youth and Women", "Adult Literacy", "Skills Training and Income Generation", "Community Management and the Power Relation Process". The particularity of this list is, of course, its language, which makes it impossible to understand what exactly happened here. Such blurring comes about through the use of "buzz words", i.e. typical discourses" (Angé 2009; Cornwall 2007), which perform a "magical" function in as much as they create the very world they are supposed to describe. In this way, they reveal much less about what they are indexed to in real life than about the social universe in which they are to be interpreted.

Sampson calls this universe of meaning "Project Society" (Sampson 2005). Although the term was first used to describe a time-specific social reality in the Balkans related to the institutionalized fight against corruption, its application can be generalized and extended. It seems to suit the case of Sierra Leone perfectly. Sampson defines "Project society" as a system combining certain types of activities, a specific structure and a relation system between different social roles, the main function of which is to organize redistribution.

> "'Project society' entails a special kind of activity: short term activities with a budget and a time schedule. Projects always end, ostensibly to be replaced by policy, but normally to be replaced by yet another project. Project society entails a special kind of structure, beginning with the donor, the project identification mission, the selection of an implementing partner, the disbursement of funds, the monitoring, the evaluation and of course, the next project. Project society is about the allocation of resources in an organized, at times bureaucratic way." (Sampson 2005:121)

Projects are not isolated, individual actions. They take place in a complicated network, in which different categories of actors carry out specific tasks. This is why the signboard cited above is undersigned by a number of agents: "Supported by the European Commission", "European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights" through "Christian Aid UK". This enumeration gives quite an adequate hint of how the system works. In order for a project to exist at all, first a "donor" is needed – in general a foreign (Western) agency, or a transnational entity, in this case the European Commission. The "European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights" is the financing instrument whose role is to channel the resources from the donor to the implementer. The financing instrument presupposes the existence of a particular type of implementer: an international organization or NGO (non-governmental organization).[5] In this particular case, Christian Aid UK apparently

[5] Created by an initiative of the European Parliament in 1994, the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) grouped together budget headings for the promotion of human rights, democratization and conflict prevention, which generally had to be implemented in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/human_rights/human_rights_in_third_countries/r10110_en.htm (accessed January 15, 2012)

implemented the project(s) directly, but it is possible that a local NGO was switched in the system. The final destination of the project, the last point in the chain, is the “target group” or the group of “beneficiaries” – usually confounded by a “local community”.

In post-war Sierra Leone, projects are omnipresent because they constitute the dominant redistribution system through which resources are allocated to hierarchized objectives, within the framework of Project Society. In this framework, it is not only NGOs that may become intermediary recipient organizations responsible for redistribution, but also the State itself. Inevitably, donors within this system of exchange have a higher position than recipients – in accordance with the exchange theory of Mauss and Levi-Strauss (Mauss, 1954; Lévi-Strauss 1969). As a recipient, the state – as with smaller organizations – is controlled by donors, and when the state acts as a re-distributor, it also controls others recipients. The homology of the position occupied by the State and NGOs as recipients explains the similarity between the idiom of state ideology and that of NGO language. In other words, it shows the dependency of the state on foreign donors.

This dependency is not only technical, but largely cultural. Through the projects, money as well as technical and human resources are channelled from higher hierarchical levels to lower ones. Through buzz words and political slogans, ideas, norms and values are simultaneously transferred in the same direction. This special linking of economic and cultural capital turns Project Society into a specific type of governmentality in a Foucauldian sense. In Foucault’s view, governmentality is a particular set of techniques and rationalities by which “a society is rendered governable” (Mayhew 2004). Saying that NGOs participate in governing does not necessarily mean sharing the criticism which accuses NGOs of directly serving the neo-liberal agenda (Feldman 1997), but it effectively implies that the chain in which NGO operations become meaningful in Project Society is necessarily a part of the power structure. Ironically, donors who also recognize this connection, somewhat resentfully, often lament about the “donor-driven” nature of Sierra Leonean development.

SIERRA LEONE, 2011–2012.

Popular appropriation of project society

The power structure in which NGOs participate is necessarily one of a hegemonic kind in a Gramscian sense (Gramsci – Buttigieg 1992), which means that its efficacy largely depends on the subjects’ appropriation of and identification with its norms. In Sierra Leone, evidence of this collective adherence to the state’s value system is reflected in graffitis and popular inscriptions that are often painted on selling stands, ordinary buildings or on standing stones. These messages seem to respond to the political agenda with an enthusiastic approval. One street vendor celebrated the 50th anniversary of independence by painting the following message on his wooden tobacco stand: “Motto: Agenda for change – 50th Anniversary”; and at Lakka beach, a restaurant owner decorated his kitchen with a solemn incantation: “Sierra Leoneans! Love one another!” To this call responds the inscription on a bodega introducing itself as the “Peace and Love Telecenter”, or the inscription on an urban fence, which reads “Welcome to the base of S.T.C. Social Club. To unite is our pride.”

These messages speak about love, unity and peace – probably fed by the natural instinct of a people which has just emerged from a terrible war. At the same time, it is striking how these popular slogans are in conformity with dominant discourses of state policies. Such apparently humble adherence to the official ideology is, however, mitigated by the inherent ambiguity of the slogans themselves. While the "Agenda for change" is the official development plan of the Sierra Leonean government, the urgent call for necessary change could be interpreted as bold social criticism as well. Urging for "love" – as we have seen – may be read as a claim for a more equitable and just sharing. The call to "unite" certainly corresponds to the nationalist project of the state, but it is also the last resort of the oppressed. All of these inscriptions are (in all likelihood unconsciously) double-edged, but what is remarkable is that even their potential for subversion is expressed in the idiom of the dominant system – as if it were indeed impossible to talk outside of it.

This self-imposition of a certain language is achieved by its omnipresence, which makes it the daily experience of people. Repetition creates the sense of normalcy and routinized practices and taken for granted discourses assure that project society is experienced not so much as a disciplinary mechanism, but rather as a shared life/world, with all its banality. What Scheper-Hughes – referring to Gramsci – establishes in her description of another poor society in the North of Brazil seems to remain valid here:

> "Gramsci realised that the dominant classes exercise (d) their power both directly through the state and indirectly through a merging with civil society and identification of interest with broad cultural ideas and aims (…). It is through this blend of instrumental force and the expressive, contradictory (but also consensual) common sense of every day culture that hegemony operates as a hybrid of coercion and consensus." (Scheper-Hughes 1992:171)

What traditional intellectuals are to Gramsci and the technicians of the modern bureaucratic state are to Scheper-Hughes, it is what the NGO elite is to Project Society, its role being "to sustain common sense definitions of reality through their highly specialised and validating forms of discourse" (Scheper-Hughes 1992:171).

On a planetary scale, the social and cultural distance between the hegemonic elite and the subaltern was once reproduced in the hierarchical distance established in the opposition of developed versus developing nations. It was those belonging to the first group who had the power to produce the "common sense definitions of reality" for the second group. Today, the somewhat obsolete "developed – underdeveloped" dichotomy tends to be replaced by the "global – local" opposition,[6] which in spite of its apparent power neutrality, has inherited the implications of inequality based on an old pattern, that of the global diffusion of a Western worldview (Rottenburg 2009:xii). Crewe and Harrison (1998) go to great lengths to list the main characteristics of this worldview, symbolically embodied by the figure of what – after Nancy Folbre – is referred to as the REM, or the Rational Economic

[6] Ferguson points at the ethnocentrism of the expression, usually implying a planetary network of connected points, one that "Africa" is marginal to (Ferguson 2006:6). By exploiting the dichotomy, I certainly do not wish to suggest that Africa is not part of the global, whatever the latter might be. Like any other local point, Africa, including Sierra Leone, and the world viewed from any point of reference – for example from Sierra Leone – looks like a web of foreign influences. It is from this emic perspective that I use the world "global".

Man. The REM, a human committed to individualism, humanism and rationalism, not only represents an ideal self-image of the West, but has also been transformed into the ideal recipient of development projects (Crewe – Harrison 1998:40).

> "Arguably, reforms within the development industry remain entangled in the principles and ideas upon which it was founded. These include a series of related assumptions, with their origin in European Enlightenment, in which rationality, the search for objective truth and a belief in a movement towards modernity are paramount." (Crewe – Harrison 1998:15)

In West Africa, this statement still holds, albeit in some self-contradictory way. In the changing political and economic landscape, the impact of other, non-Western powers and organizations – and consequently world views – is constantly increasing. Sierra Leone's membership in the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union is only the official façade of this non-Western alignment, but influences linked to economic participation – Arabic, Chinese, Brazilian and Indian – also play an important role. Nevertheless, while economic power is increasingly multi-continental, the institutional system of Sierra Leonean Project Society is still dominated by a concept of the global which is synonymous with Western, and for which "local" is another word for "traditional", while "modern" is used as an exclusive self-identification by donors with Western headquarters.

The occupation of this twice winning – global and modern – position, endows Project Society with a universal value. Universality is non-questionable by definition as there is no legitimate point from which it could be questioned. It is a meta-position, placing itself above all localizable positions, denying its own localized origins. The messages of Project Society are written in a "meta-code", a universal code that boasts to fit all frames of reference (Rottenburg 2009:xxix) while not being totally valid in any of the actually existing cultural contexts. Because "transparency", "the rule of law", and "good governance" do not really exist as models that can simply be transferred from one geographical zone to another, they are rather labels for idealized practices that nowhere exist full-fledged in the real world. Consequently, it is not Western modernity that is being transferred, but its own idealized self-image. The encounter is not between two cultures, but between one meta-code and various cultural codes, between the existing life world of Project Society and different pre-existing cultural worlds.

The "othering" aspect of Project Society is not only a specific framing mechanism; it also penetrates everyday relations. Within the hierarchy created in this way, higher social status, economic power and proximity to the "international community" are merged together on one side. At the top of the social hierarchy sit the experts, office holders and diplomats of bilateral and multilateral donor organizations, and just below them are the experts and technicians of international NGOs, two categories lumped together under the common denomination of "expatriates".[7] In theory, the term simply means a

[7] It is to be reminded that the analysis proposed here is highly contextualised. It is precisely located in place and time. The situation is quickly changing and what was true for the Sierra Leonean society in 2010 is by no means valid today. Also in Sierra Leone the relation between the State and civil society has become more conflictual and the poltical elite often express their refusal of this hierarchy.

workforce acting locally on the account of a foreign employer; in practice it connotes an entire organizational field as well as a special place within it, with serious consequences for the social value of individuals. Expatriate then becomes a somewhat racially tainted status definition.[8] It is not that all expatriates are white, but expatriates logically come from more developed countries, and whatever the economic reality is today, Europe and North America still stand as models for development. Consequently in local minds there is a conflation between whiteness and the status of the expatriate. Even black NGO workers are shouted after, children calling them "*pumuy*", or "*opoto*", the informal form of address reserved to white people.

In the ranking order expatriates are followed by members of the local political elite and the elite of the local NGO world – two categories which frequently are also merged and both of which are linked in various ways to international agencies. In principle, there is no place in this system for representatives of the traditional order (for example chiefs and paramount chiefs), and in Freetown they do indeed seem to be absent from Project Society. Even so, in the countryside it is easier to realize that the boundaries between the traditional elite, the political elite and NGO elite are equally fuzzy. This seems to confirm Bayart's theses on the "reciprocal assimilation of the elites" (Bayart 1993).

At the bottom of this hierarchy is the local community: an undifferentiated pool of Sierra Leoneans simultaneously providing both the target group and the human context for Project Society. On this level, a new terminological opposition is created between "civil society" and "local community". In its broadest sense, civil society could simply mean a group of civilians constituting a community, sharing – and representing – collective interests and values, but the fact that the bureaucratically organized NGO world has practically expropriated the expression facilitates the demarcation between what belongs and what does not belong to civil society, placing "democracy" on one side and "culture" on the other. In this particular scenario, an officially registered one-man organization with no other agenda than getting a slice of the big cake distributed by bigger NGOs would be listed as a proof of an existing democracy. In contrast, a female secret society responsible for mediating power within the local and national – essentially male – political leadership would be relegated to the domain of culture. Culture in this context is regarded as a dangerous link to tradition, obstructing the way to modernity, in spite of references to culture in political discourse as something that has to be protected. In everyday use, the term culture has become something much simpler. Street hustlers selling tourists cheap beads of wood and plastic offer their merchandise as "culture". Community is another term intimately linked to that of culture, and it is treated with the same ambiguity: sometimes as a threat, the very something to be changed, and sometimes as a supreme value and a justification for intervention, proving its embeddedness in the "grass-root".

In this complicated semantic field, dichotomies are generated by ramification, each newly invented term producing a new meaningful binary pair. The forest of public signboards and promotions also reflects this expanding nature of Project Society. Its dichotomizing, "othering" character is revealed in a picturesque way on one giant signboard exposed in the city centre of Kabala – certainly a relic originating from the early days of international engagement in the country. The picture shows a large jeep

[8] For an analysis of "the transformation of a social category into a self-recognizing and self-defined group" in the case of EU bureaucrats, see: Shore 2005.

with white people sitting in it and a few waving black soldiers on foot, trying in vain to get a lift. The inscription in Krio explains in a friendly manner: "*Wi nor dae gi lift to fetman no to se wi hate una, na wi lo no dea permit wi fo do dat*" (We cannot give rides to soldiers, not because we hate you, but because our law does not permit us to do so).

In fact, the internal regulations of NGOs are full of rules that function to separate locals and expatriates, arranging segregation on the basis of nationality. Differentiation of rights and duties appears as a cumbersome, but unavoidable bureaucratic necessity; a consequence of the inherent dangerousness of the local context. Even ten years after the end of the civil war, this philosophy has yet to change. Expatriates are protected by a series of rules, prohibiting them from getting around in town alone, from taking public transportation, from walking around after sunset, etc. The rules are obeyed with uneven zeal, but they are never contested openly. NGO jeeps and high electric fences are the external manifestation of this obsession with security. In a way, the rules of the NGO world haphazardly endorse a powerful theory sometimes expressed explicitly by political analysts and journalists who attribute the horrors of the civil war to the intrinsic barbarism of Africans (Kaplan 1994). This type of analysis systematically underestimates the role of international actors in creating the violent social and economic situation which led to the armed conflict. In this perspective, local is not only linked to traditional but also to barbarous. It is no wonder that in such conditions changing attitudes becomes an imperative: it is the condition for the transformation of an ignorant brutal horde into a modern society of rational, enlightened, liberal democrats.

The Kabala sign-board may reveal an even more complex social reality. After all, it shows black people on foot unsuccessfully demanding help from white people in a car. I believe the picture also evokes an old theme in European (and also North American) social history: the fear of the poor. However understandable and justified NGO regulations are, the ironic self-contradiction inherent to the situation – rich (white) people protecting themselves from (black) poor people they have come to help – transcends the basically informative aspect of the sign board. The picture translates into a concrete situation the social and cultural hierarchy the reigning power structure produces – which, by the force of being presented as necessary and natural is becoming accepted by the population as: necessary and natural.

BUILDING THE LIBERAL PEACE, BUILDING CAPITALISM

Project society seemed to be monolithic and permanent when I first met it in Sierra Leone but over the years I observed it undergoing slight changes. Despite superficial resemblances, by 2012 Sierra Leoneans lived in a very different world as compared to 2008. In 2012 the slightest improvement of life was still only an unreachable dream for most people, but development started to be actually visible in the street.

I remember back in 2008 I was once contemplating the traffic on a major street from a terrace and suddenly became aware that practically all the big jeeps passing were NGO vehicles. It was really as if NGOs had been taking over the power. By 2012, the traffic jam on Saturday night in the more residential west side of town had become at least as unbearable as the one in downtown Paris. Many vehicles were still undoubtedly driven by expatriates, but to all likelihood many cars were owned by locals. Wherever one looked, immense and beautiful new buildings were growing out of the dusty and heteroclite urban landscape. As the most blatant emblems of the new society under construction, two giant screens exposed at the two extremities of the city now shed bright light on the street, diffusing publicities and loud video clips to the greatest joy of passers-by used to the darkness of frequent power cuts. The contrast between the bright, trendy pictures and the chaotic and obscure street scene is striking. Economic development is unquestionable, but even visually, it is limited to isolated islands within a sea of still ambient and no less ostensible mass poverty.

By 2012, the visual education of the people through posters, sign boards and painted slogans was reinforced by a new genre: that of commercial publicities. Just like their predecessors, these also came to shape the imagination and project the desirable future. Their ever increasing presence and growing importance in the urban landscape testify to a new, still embryonic, but clearly visible and rapidly expanding capitalist form of development.

Contrary to what might be expected, the new capitalist-consumerist city does not supplant Project Society. The latter remains the main frame, easily accommodating the former. The same words can be used to build democracy and make fair profit. Buzz words of the NGO world have also entered business.

One new publicity warns: "It is time to protect our resources." It is indeed a reasonable message, taking into consideration what an important role the looting of the country's natural resources played in provoking the war. However, it soon becomes evident that the signboard is not calling upon the state to protect natural resources from foreign exploitation so much as instigating the man on the street to watch over "transparency and accountability". The message continues like this: "Join the effort to enforce transparency and accountability in the extractive sector – signed by the SL Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative." The irony of the message lies in the fact that it is public knowledge that "transparency" and "accountability" do not at all characterize either the foreign-owned companies that monopolize the mining sector or the state's policies towards them, which openly transgress its own legislation.[9] What can the man in the street really do about this?

While their styles are certainly different, the publicities of the state, NGOs and companies resemble each other more than they diverge. All rely on the responsiveness of the individual, skilfully mixing moral pressure, conviction and seduction by projecting an idealized image presented as an achieved normalcy. The buzz words of the consumerist world may be "worth", "dream" or "improved living standard". These expressions are as abstract as "rule of law", "accountability" and transparency" – far from the reality experienced by the vast majority of the population. Nevertheless, they do "talk" to the people. When an ordinary pedestrian looks at the giant poster of the People's Bank showing a young woman playfully dancing amongst her newly acquired assets (a washing machine, a TV and a sofa), the impression created is not that the poster is lying about the

[9] The Mines and Minerals Act came into effect in 2009. It prescribes certain rules by which foreign mining companies are expected to share the benefits of their activities with the state and cooperate with local communities. And yet, practically none of the big mining companies abides fully with this law. The irregularities include excessive tax concessions, abnormally long extraction rights (one such contract gives the extraction right to the company for 100 years) and the harassment of local communities.

average living standard of Sierra Leoneans. On the contrary, it suggests that this "living standard" is the norm, and any deviance from it is an individual tar. The visual message is reinforced by an explicit message: "Achieve your dream of improved living standard."

Material well-being has thus become a question of individual choice and personal achievement. Another sign, advertising PHB Bank, responds more directly to the call for "attitudinal change". It invites the onlooker with impressive simplicity: "Be you, be free, be brilliant!" Thus, the circle is closed and the relation established: The cultural revolution that was announced for the betterment of the country, demanding personal effort from each citizen to change his/her attitude, is expected to produce a new type of person, conscious of his/her personal uniqueness, freed from the chains of tradition and community – in other words, the perfect subject of a Western-type individualistic society. This is how the idealized world of state-designed social reform, the NGO world and the capitalist world blend and exist in harmony within Project Society.

This harmony is not completely flawless, however. Despite general optimism and faith in a better future – so surprising for an anxious European mind terrified by the perspective of crisis – the people of the street do not hesitate to express their dissatisfaction with certain facets of the transformations proposed to them. While the international character of the NGO world is acknowledged to be the necessary condition for the circulation of resources, not everybody buys into the idea of globalization as a benevolent magician freeing the individual and enriching the community. Ordinary citizens sense their exposure to global forces with much scepticism. The popular expression "we have the global", usually accompanied by an expressive gesture meaning "what can we do (?)", refers to the negative sides of globalization. People evoke it sarcastically when they want to talk about rising fuel and food prices or their own incapacity to acquire even the most basic goods.

This sarcasm also appears visually. The insignia on one sign-board of a small shop selling simple articles reads: "global needs shop". Two steps from there, a giant poster greets investors: "Welcome to the new gated-community of Grafton." The orderliness and luxury of the (still imaginary) new housing estate in the picture may indeed be the future, but this future proposes little relief to those who tomorrow, just like today, will queue up unwillingly in front of the "global needs shop". Project Society, despite all its internal contradictions, has begun to fulfill its promise in Sierra Leone, but if the expanding frontiers of capitalist development function as the walls of gated communities, pushing poverty – and the poor – farther and farther back to the hinterland of underdevelopment, would this not deepen the gap between the parallel worlds and after all give reason to those who have come to the conclusion: "*wi na Salone wi no lov visef?*"

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"Up" and "Down". "Zomia" and the Bru of the Central Vietnamese Highlands

Part I.: Are the Bru Natives in "Zomia"?

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Abstract: The 2009 publication of J. Scott's epoch-making book, *The Art of Not Being Governed. An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* initiated a long-standing debate about the ethnohistory of the Southeast-Asian Highlands ("Zomia") and, more generally, about lowland-highland relationships, "nativeness", state evasion, self-government, and "secondary primitivism". This article joins the discourse based on one concrete ethnographic example, the Bru, a Mon-Khmer speaking dry-rice cultivator hill tribe in the Central Vietnamese Highlands. Using detailed ethnographic and ethno-historic data, it argues that the Bru are, if not "native", at least the oldest known inhabitants of the area inhabited by them – a fact that does not contradict Scott's deep insight concerning their state evasion.

Keywords: Continental Southeast-Asia, Vietnamese Highlands, Zomia, ethnohistory, shatter zone, state evasion, self-governing peoples, secondary primitivism, lowland-highland relations

It's been nearly a decade since James Scott's epoch-making *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* was published (Scott 2009), a work which is persistently in the crossfire of debate, while constituting a continuous source of inspiration. For readers unfamiliar with the topic, let us reiterate briefly the main thesis of the book and what "Zomia" is.

> "The thesis is simple, suggestive, and controversial. Zomia is the largest remaining region of the world whose peoples have not yet been fully incorporated into nation-states. Its days are numbered. Not so very long ago, however, such self-governing peoples were the great majority of humankind. Today, they are seen from the valley kingdoms as 'our living ancestors,' 'what we were like before we discovered wet-rice cultivation, Buddhism, and civilization.' On the contrary, I argue that hill peoples are best understood as runaway, fugitive, maroon communities who have, over the course of two millennia, been fleeing the oppressions of state-making projects in the valley – slavery, conscription, taxes, corvée labor, epidemics, and warfare. Most of the areas in which they reside may be aptly called shatter zones or zones of refuge." (Scott 2009:IX–X)

Figure 1. Scott's "Zomia". (Based on MICHAUD 2010:201)

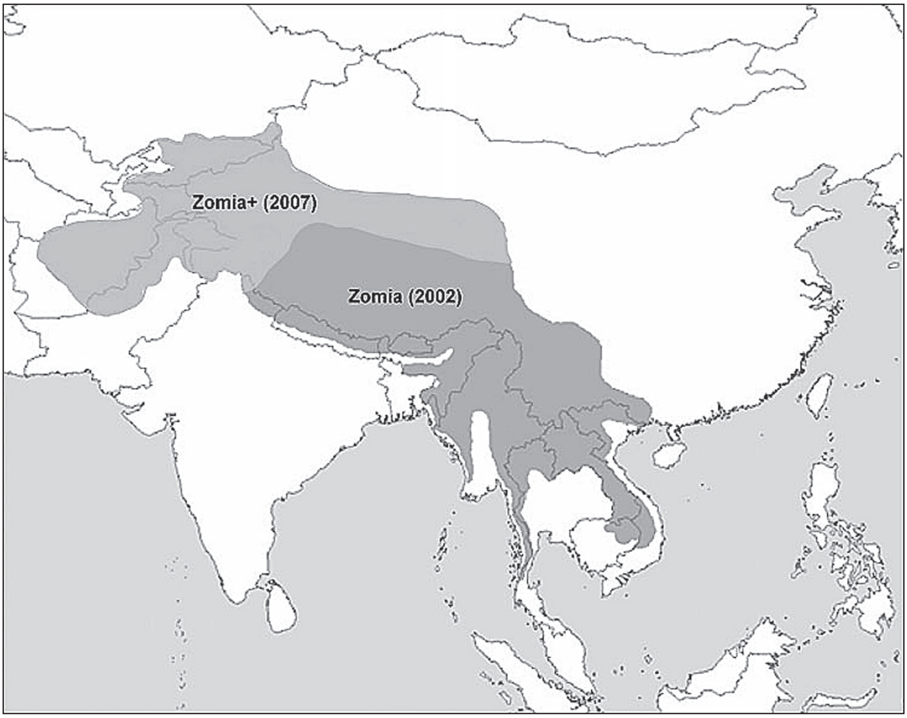

Figure 2. Schendel's original "Zomia" and extended "Zomia", respectively. (Based on Michaud 2010:188)

Zomia "is a new name for virtually all the lands at altitudes above roughly three hundred meters all the way from the Central Highlands of Vietnam to Northeastern India and traversing five Southeast Asian nations (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Burma) and four provinces of China (Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, and parts of Sichuan)" (Scott 2009:IX; *Figure 1*). "Zomia", the new – and not so fortunate[1] – name of the area encompassing some 2.5 million km^2 and a population of about 100 million of truly bewildering ethnic and linguistic variety comes not from Scott, but from a Dutch geographer, Willem van Schendel (Schendel 2002), who, however – and this is important! – used

[1] Not too fortunate, because it extends an arbitrarily coined term based on some small Tibeto-Burmese languages and taken from a restricted geographical area on the India-Bangladesh-Burma tri-border zone onto a whole region encompassing multiple language families and spanning a huge geographical area. "*'Zo'* is a relational term meaning 'remote' and hence carries the connotation of living in the hills; *'Mi'* means 'people'" (Scott 2009:14–15) = that is Highlander.
Slightly more neutral collective names were used in French literature for Southeast Asian hill *tribes* (although not the regions they lived in) (e.g., "Les Montagnards" and "PEMSI", the acronym for "Population Montagnarde du Sud-Indochinois") – but they either did not become generally prevalent (PEMSI), or their colonial connotations called their raison d'être into question recently (see: The Great Montagnard Debate http://www.lib.washington.edu/SouthEastAsia/vsg/elist_1999/mont1.html (accessed May 11, 2013)

the name “Zomia” in a much broader sense than Scott[2] (*Figure 2*). Nonetheless, the new *terminus technicus* adopted by Scott became a well-known, popular catchword beyond the narrow circles of specialists after the publication of “Anarchist History,” so much so that today Wikipedia has a separate article addressing it, and in the French translation of the book the word “Zomia” became part of the main title![3] No matter how popular the term is, however, the fact remains: “Zomia” – at least in Scott’s understanding – means nothing more than the geographic region that was previously referred to, in the geographic and cultural sense, as Southeast Asia or “Upland Southeast-Asia”. An evidence of this is the book’s subtitle, in which Scott himself sticks to the established geographical concept. Thus there is no scientific novelty in the name “Zomia” – despite its popularity.

The main thesis of the book and its macroscopic vision, on the other hand, are all the more so!

> “Virtually everything about these people’s livelihoods, social organization, ideologies, and (more controversially) even their largely oral cultures, can be read as strategic positionings designed to keep the state at arm’s length. Their physical dispersion in rugged terrain, their mobility, their cropping practices, their kinship structure, their pliable ethnic identities, and their devotion to prophetic, millenarian leaders effectively serve to avoid incorporation into states and to prevent states from springing up among them.” (Scott 2009:X)

To sum up, “Scott proposes to read the history of these highlands as a narrative of state escape and refuge” (Michaud 2011:1856). And although Scott disapproves the infelicitous expression “secondary primitivism” (Scott 2009:8), he in fact reiterates a concept that has cropped up several times in the history of anthropology:[4] that the inhabitants of the relict areas once had a more developed culture, and only because of their displacement, they developed – through “secondary adaptation” – a culture that is seemingly primeval. “The argument reverses much received wisdom about ‘primitivism’ generally. Pastoralism, foraging, shifting cultivation, and segmentary lineage systems are of the ‘secondary adaptation’, a kind of ‘self-barbarization’ adopted by peoples whose location, subsistence, and social structure are adapted to state evasion” (Scott 2009:X).

Thus, according to Scott, the highlands of Southeast Asia are a “relict area”, as well as an ecological “niche”, populated continuously through thousands of years by peoples retreating under the growing impact of state formation. In his view, the socio-cultural-political dynamics of the lowlands/highlands dichotomy are formed by conflicting (binary) centripetal and centrifugal forces: one creates centralized systems, the other segmented socio-political classes. The dominant force in this process is the

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[2] Beyond the regions of Northeast India and South China that border Southeast Asia (which are usually considered “Southeast Asia” anyway, except for “certain parts of Sichuan”), he also includes Nepal and the entire Tibetan highlands, the Himalayan countryside, i.e., “High Asia”. In fact, later on, in the wake of the debates and reflections prompted by his study (Michaud 2010:188), he extended the boundaries of “Zomia” even further, which in its current articulation includes the southern areas of Quinghai and Xinjiang provinces within China, as well as a significant part of Central Asia, the highlands of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

[3] *Zomia, ou l’art de ne pas être gouverné* (Scott 2013).

[4] In relation to South America, see: e.g., Beltrán 1979 and Clastres [1974] 1987. For the Borneo hunter-gatherers, see: Sellato 1994:115; the examples are numerous.

state; Scott is not interested in the formation of the state, because the state "is there", and he thinks it mobilizes the highlands as a *deus ex machina.* Culture is for him a protective mechanism responding to the surrounding socio-political reality. Highland socio-political systems, therefore, historically developed due to *a conscious* effort to evade the impact and scope of state organizations, that is, Scott attributes "agency" and "intentionality" to the highland peoples, of whom this has been so far denied for reasons of their "primitiveness" and subordinate position. In the spirit of the Pierre Clastres motto quoted at the beginning of the book,[5] instead of the history of *class struggle*, Scott writes the story of a more romantic kind of resistance, the *fight against the state* – hence the reference to "anarchism" in the subtitle.

As expected, Scott's views stirred up heated discussions: in addition to a number of reviews (Coyne 2010; Davis 2010; Sadan 2010; Subrahmanyam 2010; Tapp 2010; Brass 2012), the *Journal of Global History* devoted a special issue to "Zomia" (Michaud 2010), and the debate continues today. While most of his critics admitted that his theses are actually stimulating, and that the book's "paradigm-shifting" vision is "quite something", almost everyone has hit a critical tone – castigating him for overgeneralizing his theses; for relying, as a "historian", upon secondary (anthropological) literature rather than primary, first-hand sources; for his "macroscopic" vision gliding over the "microscopic" local facts and events; for his use of vague and debatable definitions; and for his vision being basically a romantic antigovernmentism that turns social evolution on its head.

How do the Bru of Central Vietnam that I have studied in 1985–1989 and 2006–2007, fit into this picture, or do they fit in at all? Do they confirm or refute Scott's eminent hypothesis? Given that most of the problems raised by Scott I myself have dealt with thoroughly more than a decade before the publication of the "Zomia" theory in connection with the Bru (Vargyas 2000; 2002; 2008a) and several times since (2010a; 2010b; 2012), picking up the thread of the discussion started in the *Journal of Global History*, I wish to comment above all on Scott's essential thesis ("nativeness" and "state evasion") with the help of "micro-historic" data that the critics found insufficient. Because of the wealth of data available to me but for lack of space necessary for their explication, in this first section I will only focus on the problem indicated in the title: are the Bru native to their current territory? Are there any sources or data that would support Scott's theory that the Bru originally lived in the lowlands in historical times, before they retreated into the mountains trying to evade the (Vietnamese) government? In part two, I will explain the other side of the issue: the issue of state evasion, proving that even if the response to the first question is negative, Scott still provides a deep insight into the Bourdieu-esque habitus of the mountain-dwellers, including the Bru, and that his thesis is much more than just a "populist post-modern history of nowhere" (Brass 2012).

[5] "It is said that the history of peoples who have a history is the history of class struggle. It might be said with at least as much truthfulness, that the history of peoples without history is a history of their struggle against the state."

"NATIVES" VERSUS "NEWCOMERS"

The question of "natives" *versus* "newcomers" (refugees evading the state organization) is, as we have seen, one of the main – although highly contested – theses of Scott's book, to which he explicitly and firmly commits himself over and over again. One should note immediately that Scott does not use the term "indigenous" in his book; the terms "natives", "autochtonos population", "original inhabitants", and especially "aboriginal" do not even appear. But the idea that peripheral areas are populated by runaway people having fled the state-building processes, who again and again push in front of them the populations already living there, or the fact that, he repeatedly refers to the negative stereotypes that label the highlanders as the "living ancestors" of the lowland peoples ("what we were like before we discovered wet-rice cultivation, Buddhism, and civilization"), make it clear that Scott implicitly refers here to Southeast Asian highland populations conventionally called "indigenous", or "aboriginal". In any case, using his excellent analogy of "you cannot clap with one hand", there are always two elements in an oppositional set. Anyone who posits newer and newer waves of refugees must at the same time implicitly take for granted populations that are "native", that have already been "living there", or at least have lived there "longer". This, of course, raises the question of *who* is aboriginal to a place – because it is obviously almost impossible to find an area on Earth where there had not lived another population before the people currently living there, which is now perhaps extinct, assimilated, emigrated, etc. I will return to this question later.

Being aware of all this, Scott then uses in several places a somewhat more permissive, less exclusive language: "*Many, perhaps most* [my italics, G.V.], inhabitants of the ungoverned margins are not remnants of an earlier social formation, left behind, or (…) 'our living ancestors'" – he says at one point (Scott 2009:8). Another example: "The history of the various non-state peoples of this region can (...) be written as the bifurcation between those *who had long been in the hills* [my italics, G.V.] (for example, the Wa people) and those who sought refuge there" (Scott 2009:23). Or: "Such areas represented a reliable zone of refuge for those *who lived there* [my italics, G.V.] or who chose to go there" (Scott 2009:63).

So even despite his own polarizing statements, Scott himself does not rule out completely the possibility that "indigenous peoples", that is, peoples who were historically likely to "remain on site", could also have populated or at least inhabited "Zomia".[6] "Floating" the question in this manner – even despite the main thesis – is not without reason: though this process of retreating into the mountains may be true, well documented, and lasting to this day within the whole of Southeast Asia (think of the gradual expansion within the last centuries of the Chinese, the Viet, the Thai, and of what demographic pressure this may put on neighboring peoples!)[7] – the fact is, that because of the lack of written documents almost nothing concrete from the history (and especially the *early* history) of these highland ethnic groups is known, save for a few exceptions, and in the last few centuries. We cannot generalize saying that they were living always

[6] Although I myself consider the name "Zomia" an unfortunate designation, for the sake of simplicity, I kept the term in quotation marks here and hereafter.
[7] For this, see: for example, Michaud 2000; 2006.

where they are today; just as we cannot say that they are all relatively "new" newcomers fleeing the state. In each case, the answer must be based on concrete data and analysis.

The Bru, for example, when they first appear in Vietnamese historical sources in the 16th century, are already living in their current territory. Naturally, hypotheses can be formulated about where they lived before this period and what effects they may have been exposed to there – I myself have attempted such[8] – but it must always be taken into account that there is practically no data about the region's history, even about larger states, and in particular about their demographic and ethnic composition, or about the relationship between the local populations and the surrounding nations.

THE BRU AND "ZOMIA"

Let us now turn to the details of Bru ethnic history, and to the geographic, historical and political contexts that constitute its framework. Although the Bru have until quite recently led a relatively enclosed self-sufficient life in the Vietnamese central highlands, their isolation in the historically traceable times was only relative.[9] This fact can be explained by geographical, historical and geopolitical reasons. First of all, the strip of land between the coast and the central mountain range is the narrowest here in Vietnam: in certain places it barely exceeds 30 kilometers. The place of my fieldwork, Khe Sanh, in the heart of Bru country lies only about 40 kilometers as the crow flies from Đông Hà by the sea, and merely 150 kilometers from Hue, the imperial capital of Vietnam! On such a narrow land, contact and interaction between the otherwise secluded lowland and mountain peoples can hardly be avoided (*Figure 3*). Secondly, this is where one of the three strategic passes through the Vietnamese highlands can be found,[10] the Ai Lao Pass,[11] which happens to be the lowest and most easily walkable, as well as the shortest (commercial and military) route between the coast and the Mekong valley. The area inhabited by the Bru is therefore of strategic importance geographically. In the 20th century, the Vietnam War contributed one more political factor: this is where, along the 17th latitude, the so-called "demilitarized zone" separating the two Vietnams was established – a demarcation zone that split in two the area inhabited by the Bru, and so they became North Vietnam's southernmost and South Vietnam's northernmost ethnic group.

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[8] Such hypotheses can be made based primarily on linguistic and accurate historical data (see: Haudricourt 1966; Hoshino 1986; and in their footsteps Vargyas 2000:149-152; 2002; 2008a); but in relation to the bilingual (Bru + Phutai) nature of Bru ritual and folklore genres, I also raised the possibility of influences from earlier Laotian historical events.

[9] The following historical part is a summary of the reasoning detailed in Vargyas 2000; 2002; 2008a. See also Hickey 1982a; 1982b.

[10] Elevation: Keo Nua: 722m; Mu Gia: 591m; Ai Lao 410m above sea level.

[11] By no accident does Sadan say that "One man's mountain is another man's hill" and that "Mountains themselves, as with the distinctions between uplands and plains, are also culturally constructed, partly subjective categories" (Sadan 2010). The Bru live on the mountainous plateau rather than in the "mountains" anyway: their villages (unlike, say, the Hmong's) are never built on the mountaintops or the hillside but in relatively flat areas.

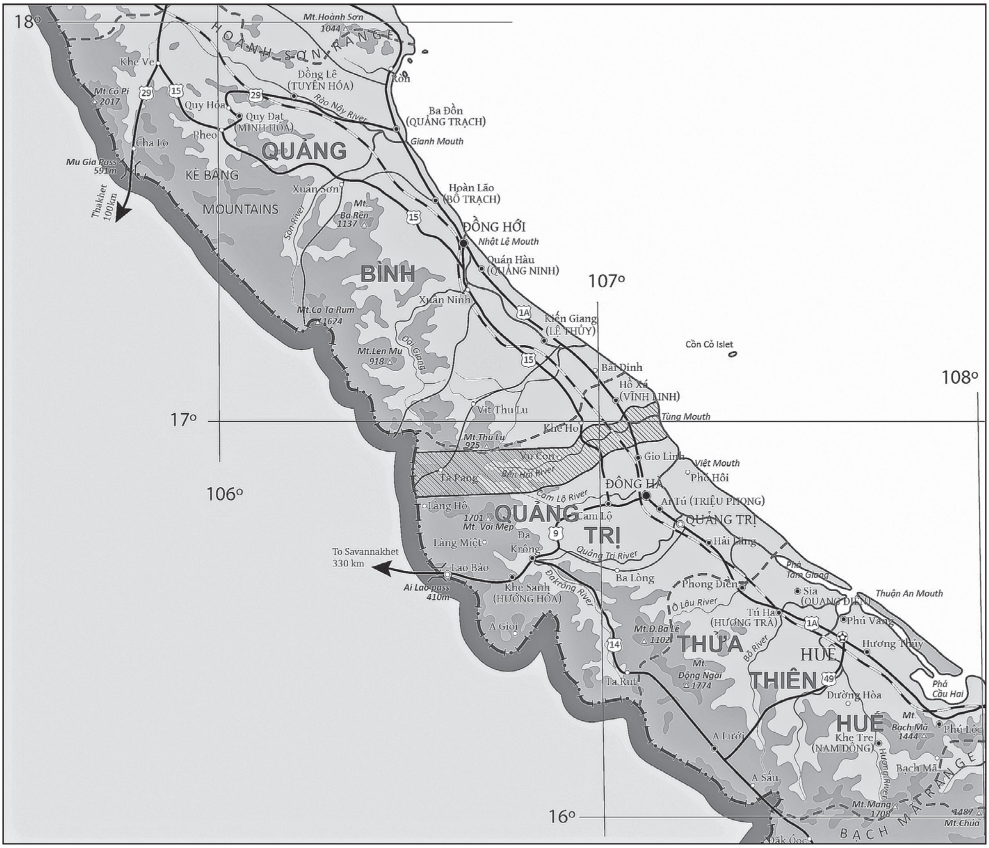

Figure 3. The area inhabited by the Bru. Based on an enlarged detail of the relevant parts of *Vietnam Tourist Map Northern Section 1:1,500,000,* Third Edition, 2002. (Made by Zsolt Horváth, 2016)

I have summed up several times the data and literature regarding the area's history.[12] Suffice it to say that the passage through the Ai Lao Pass has been known at least since the 13th century: the Mongolian troops that ravaged Vietnam and the Champa Empire marched through here in 1282, on their way from the seaside to the Khmer Empire. Starting in the 14th century, the Vietnamese empire gradually expanding to the south, to the detriment of the Champa Empire, then gradually took control of this area and the populations inhabiting it.[13] The first mention of "Viên Kiêu" as the highlands populated

[12] Vargyas 2000; 2002; 2008a.
[13] For the following, refer to the appropriate map sheets in Pluvier's historical atlas (Pluvier 1995).

today by the Bru goes back to 1553,[14] and is probably the source of the Vietnamese name still used for the Bru, "Vân Kiều".[15] A later, 18th century Vietnamese source[16] already provides detailed descriptions of the commercial routes leading through the Ai Lao Pass into Laos and Thailand, as well as the mountain "hinterlands", mentioning the "barbarian peoples" living there, recounting military and administrative infrastructure, roads, duties, forts, markets, the goods exchanged in the markets, the products submitted as tax payment by the mountain peoples, etc. Given that some of these descriptions refer specifically to the Khe Sanh neighborhood and the Bru population living there, *it is possible in some cases to project the "ethnographic present" back at least several centuries based on these sources*.

The Bru, nominally Vietnamese imperial vassals since the 16th–17th centuries, came under direct Vietnamese control in the early 19th century during the Siam [Thai] – Vietnam rivalry for the left bank of the Mekong: in 1827–28, Vietnamese emperor Minh Mang, to compensate for the Siamese expansion, extends the limits of his empire and places the mountain "hinterland" under direct Vietnamese management. Continuing the expansion, by around 1830 the two empires practically divide among themselves the Laotian buffer zone: the boundary between them is the Mekong valley.[17] The war for the Mekong valley continues, with alternating success and boundaries being shifted back and forth, for another half a century, when – in the second half of the 19th century – new players take to the stage: the French. Their presence results in a radical change in the geopolitical situation: the French use the 150-year-old Vietnam – Siam rivalry for

14 See the work written around 1553 by the mandarin Dương Văn An (1513–1591), and the modern transcription published in 1961 as *Ô Châu Cận Lục* [Description of the region of Ô châu] (Part I:17). To understand the title of the book, one needs to know that "Ô Châu" and "Ri Châu" were two Cham provinces which in 1306 the Cham king Chế Mân gifted to the Vietnamese ruler Trần Nhân Tông as bridewealth in exchange for his daughter Huyền Trân, who was married to the Cham king. A year later, in 1307, the two provinces, which largely correspond to the present-day Central Vietnamese provinces of Quảng Trị – Thừa Tiên, were assimilated into the ever expanding Vietnamese kingdom as Thuân Châu and Hóa Châu (aggregate: Thuân-Hóa). The book in question contains the geographic, administrative, historical and cultural descriptions of this region (Dương 1961).

15 See: Vương 1963:71; Vargyas 2000:136–139.

16 Lê Quý Đôn: *Phủ biên tạp lục* [Frontier Chronicles]. The author of this work was an outstanding political statesman of the Lê Dynasty (1428–1788), military leader, mandarin, historian, neo-Confucian philosopher, etc., who wrote his work after the Thuân-Hóa (see Footnote 13) and Quảng-Nam regions (then considered part of the Vietnamese Empire) were recaptured in 1775–1776 by the Trịnh, who governed the northern part of the country on behalf of the Lê, from the separatist Nguyễn rulers who for about two centuries considered themselves an independent dynasty. Lê Quý Đôn was one of the leaders of the invading army, later military governor of the reclaimed land, who was responsible for restoring Vietnamese "morals" and "harmonious administration". As such, "like a curious West German functionary from Bonn who in 1991 travels to East Germany to look around and then settles in Leipzig, where he writes down everything he had seen" (Woodside 1995:158), in his work he provides exceptionally detailed and in-depth descriptions (geographical, political, administrative, economic, demographic, cultural, etc.) of the whole region we are talking about, which by now, due to two centuries of separation, possessed very different habits and "morals" than the northern part of the territory.

17 The above discussion is based primarily on Nguyễn Thế Anh 1997. See also Pluvier 1995: "Mainland South-East Asia in the first half of the 19th century" map. This was the largest historically known westward expansion of the Vietnamese Empire. If current demographic trends and population movements continue, in a few generations the Socialist Republic of Vietnam will once again reach this border.

the Mekong valley as an excuse to interfere; in the 1893 Bangkok Peace Treaty Siam finally renounces its claim to the left bank of the Mekong; the French troops conquer the entire Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Indochina, the "gem" of the French colonies is born (1887, then 1893). The highlands and its inhabitants heretofore "trapped between the Annamese anvil and the Siamese [Thai] hammer" (Harmand 1879–80:298), including the Bru, now become part of the globalized colonial world. What follows is well-known from historical literature. After a relatively peaceful French era in the first decades of the 20th century comes the Japanese occupation, World War II, then the first Indochina War (Vietnam – France, 1946–1954) and the second Indochina War (late 1950s–1975, USA – Vietnam) which sweep across the mountainous hinterlands inhabited by highland ethnicities, the Bru among them, and in which the Bru become involuntary participants and victims; finally, the country's reunification under communist rule (1975) and the subsequent period of political, economic and demographic upheavals.

During this period encompassing approximately four centuries and replete with historical cataclysms, we see the Bru from the beginning where they have been and where they still are today: along the 17th latitude, in the Vietnamese Cordillera, on both sides of the Vietnam – Laos border, around the Ai Lao Pass; in Quảng Bình, Quảng Trị and Thừa Tiên provinces in Vietnam, in Savannakhet and Khammuane provinces in Laos, located in relatively compact, coherent areas, although sometimes surrounded by other populations, mostly mixed with Phu Thai, Vietnamese and Lao. Yes, it is historically documented that certain groups have fled the area, left the "original" residential territories – but they usually did not do it of their own will.[18]

So the question is: are the Bru "natives," that is, are they a population that have historically "stayed in place" in "Zomia"? Is there a trace of anything in their culture

[18] We know of three such "outbound flights", of which the first two are major and large scale, and the third less important; this latter can be detected from ethnographic data.
a) In the 19th century, during the Siamese – Vietnam wars, a larger group of Bru were deported as slaves to the right bank of the Mekong, the territory of present-day Thailand (the details will not be reproduced here).
b) During the 2nd Indochina War, after the Battle of Khe Sanh (January 21 – July 9, 1968) and the dramatic defeat of the American and American-backed South-Vietnamese troops, in April – May 1972, to evade the advancing Viet Minh troops, 2,588 people were relocated by aerial bridge to Ea Hiu rural village (*xã*) in present-day Đắc Lắc province (*tỉnh*) [Krông Pắc region (*huyện*)], in a well-organized military action that also served propaganda purposes. They still live in this village today; in 2007, I spent six months among them doing fieldwork (Vargyas 2010a; 2010b). Based on Nguyễn Trắc Dĩ's map ([1972]: 74) (*Figure 4*), we know that the air operation was conducted in two batches: on April 19 and 21, 1972, a total of 2,481 people, on May 24–25 another 107 people, thus a total of 2,588 people were rescued from the North Vietnamese troops and resettled. The vast majority of these people fought on the side of the Americans and the South Vietnamese government troops in the war. Ea Hiu was otherwise originally a Rade village, Buon Jat, at the time in the Phuoc An district. Today the name Buon Jat has been practically forgotten, only some of the elders remember it.
c) For unknown reasons, probably as a corollary to a spontaneous outbound migration, toward the end of the 19th century a group of "Vân Kiều" moved from Quảng Trị province to Quảng Bình province, the northernmost part of the current settlement area inhabited by the Bru. The author reporting on them (Vương 1963:71) tells us, based on his own fieldwork, that the "Vân Kiều" living today in Ham Nghi and Dinh Phung *xã*s in Lê-thuy district claim that they moved there 80 years earlier from Quảng Tri. Since the work was published in 1963, and the fieldwork took place "in the previous three years", the data refers to the end of the 1880s.

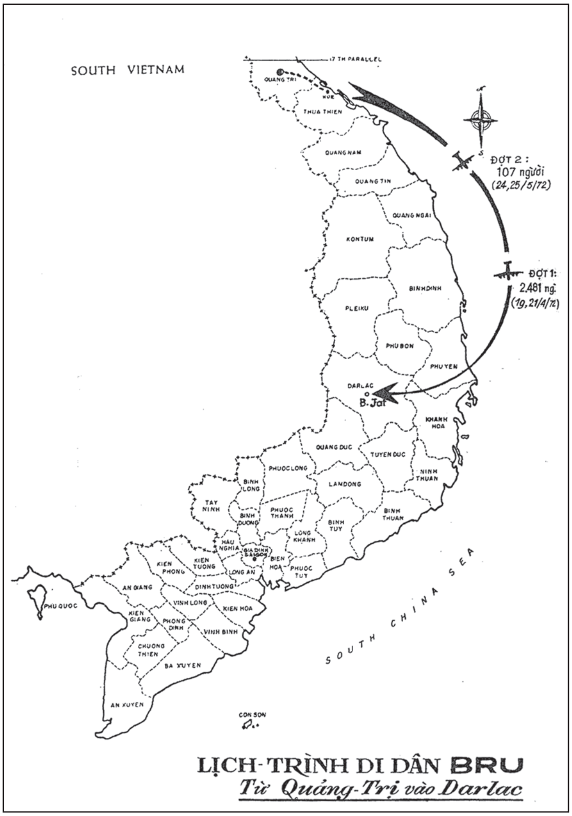

Figure 4. The relocation of the Bru in April – May, 1972. (After Nguyễn Trắc Dĩ [1972]:74)

or their known history that would indicate they are a "refugee" people fleeing valley or lowland states?

In my search for data shedding light upon the ethnic history of the Bru, I examined in my book (Vargyas 2000) more than a decade before Scott's book and the "Zomia" theory around one 140 years (and if I add in the Sino-Vietnamese chronicles, 400 years) of published material about the Bru, including maps, with special attention to the names and locations of villages and administrative units, as well as the geographic names (of hills and rivers). The total material was then compared with the results of current maps and any other administrative data from other sources.[19] Based on the above, I came to the conclusion that *the majority of the Bru still live where they lived 100 or even 400 years ago.*

Three authors (Damprun 1904; Lemire 1904; Valentin 1905), who in their writings provide more than average geographical data, were analyzed separately. Six of the nine cantons mentioned by Lemire and Valentin are still known by the same name and located in the same place as a century ago.[20] I was even able to identify some of the village names in these cantons, although the somewhat arbitrary transcription of Bru/Vietnamese/Phutai/Lao names caused no small difficulties in deciphering them. And even so, of the 18 village names in Viên Kiêu canton described by Valentin, I could identify seven (Huc, Huc Nghi, Ca Lu, Cat, Con, and their subclasses); in Miet, another canton, four of the seven village names (Miet, Tan and Cat, as well as their subclasses), etc.

Examination of the village names and geographical names provided by Lemire yielded similar results of 40–50%. Here the difficulty in identification rested on having to know not only the names of the largest rivers and the best-known villages, but also the names of smaller streams, springs, creeks, hills, farms, thus the entire local toponymy,

[19] See a summary in Vargyas 2000:153–154.

[20] 1) Viên Kiêu – this does not exist today, but it is identifiable through the ethnonym "Vân Kiều;" 2) Lang Thuân = Thuân; 3) Lang Sen = Huong Sơn; 4) Tâm Linh = Huong Linh?; 5) La Miet = Miet/Labuiq; 6) Adi = A Giơi; 7) Tâm Thanh = Thanh; 8) Lang Ha = ? 9) O Giang = ?

which would require not only a large-scale, good map, but also extensive own thematic data collection. Just as an example: in Viên Kiêu canton, Lemire mentions a village called Xom Wat. The 1:100,000-scale French map from 1913 and the 1:200,000-scale American map from 1954 (1962) do really show such village names. Today, however, they do not exist. At the same time, my research shows that in this same place, in this same area, the oldest clans (*mu*) are the *mu* Xom, whose members today live scattered in the surrounding villages. Thus, the village name of Xom was justified by my own ethnographic material.

I was able to identify a Vân Kiêu group in Quảng Bình province described by Vương Hoàng Tuyên in the same way. The ancestors of this group (see Footnote 18/c), according to their own traditions, arrived from Quảng Tri towards the end of the 19th century, and one of their most important clan names is *mu* Xom. From what we know so far, it seems very likely that these people migrated from the Khe Sanh region, where their religious center, the *mu* Xom clan shrine still exists. Such results lend a historical dimension to the data collected in the field.

Having analyzed the geographical names of Savannakhet province in Laos provided by Damprun, I arrived at even more satisfactory results. Of the fourteen *muong*s he described in 1904, five concern us, as these are a direct continuation of the region inhabited by the Vietnamese Bru across the border – that is, they must have Bru populations, among others. They are as follows: *muong* Tchépone, *muong* Vang, *muong* (Vang) Angkham, *muong* Phabang, *muong* Xienghom. I identified the names with the help of a 1972 1:200,000 map of Savannakhet province, with the following results (first comes the number of villages given by Damprun, then the number of villages identified by me): *muong* (Vang) Angkham: 14/10; *muong* Vang: 39/16; *muong* Xienghom 6/5; *muong* Phabang 8/7; *muong* Tchépone 53/18. The data show clearly that the ratio of identifiable villages grows exponentially with the diminishing size of the *muong*: *muong* Phabang 87.5%, *muong* Xienghom 83%, *muong* (Vang) Angkham 71.4%, *muong* Vang 41% and*muong* Tchépone 34%. In the case of *muong*s containing fewer than twenty villages, then, more than three-quarters of the villages are identifiable, despite the past 70 years! It is, however, not yet clear what causes the relatively lower ratio in the case of larger *muongs*.

In light of all this, the sum of my book was as follows:

> "The descriptions presented here provide more than one hundred years of insight into Bru culture. Their importance is that they show a fundamental coincidence with data collected in the field today. The villages' locations, names, geographical names, etc., essentially correspond to the current situation, thereby demonstrating the temporal continuity of Bru culture despite historical shocks, even cataclysms." (Vargyas 2000:154)

The same conclusion about the temporal continuity of Bru culture and identity can be drawn from the example of the three "disjoined" groups detailed in Footnote 18: the first group (the slaves hauled off to the right bank of the Mekong) has maintained its "Bru" language and perhaps even "Bru" identity despite 150 years (Theraphan – Puengpa 1980); for lack of ethnographic data, we cannot know any more than this about them. The other two groups have – for now at least – preserved their language, ethnic denomination, ethnic identity and ethnic organization in spite of a distance of a century and four decades, respectively, and even after having had been resettled or relocated, living in a depressing minority among the Vietnamese, and pauperized.

In ethnicity, identity, culture, social organization, etc., despite the flexibility and situational nature – that Scott speaks about, – there is then so much more permanence beneath the surface than it is commonly assumed! Looking at just the last 100–150 years, the Bru have been hit with a dramatic amount of trauma: they were hauled off as slaves; states and military troops came and went over their heads; willing or unwilling, they participated in perhaps the most devastating war of the era after World War 2: they – or their territory – were showered with hundreds of thousands tons of bombs, napalm, chemicals (Agent Orange), their villages, houses and fields were scorched, their domestic animals and valuables were annihilated, they were temporarily or permanently evacuated or relocated, locked in "strategic hamlets" fenced in by barbwire, and we cannot even estimate their dead;[21] all in all, world history has not been kind to them – *yet, as soon as the situation allowed for it, they returned, and, stubbornly stuck to their territory, to their language, culture, ethnic identity, they remained what they were – Bru*! This image or pattern is completely at odds with what we know from the history of many other Southeast Asian nations, such as the Hmong, who were able to populate all of Southeast Asia in 100 years of migration. There is not enough space here to go into further detail about this issue; yet that much seems certain from the above that in "Zomia" at least several types of "habitus" are to be expected as far as attachment to the territory and socio-cultural plasticity and flexibility are concerned!

In this regard, I must point out that, interestingly, Scott does not even bring up the possibility of resettlement of the "original" residence area. Yet in Bru oral history, which I cannot take into account here for lack of time and space, there are many examples I know of in which the Bru that were displaced by war settled back in their original place of residence after the event concluded. Nevertheless, most of my Bru informants were capable of listing 3–5 or more former village locations *(rangũal)* where they or their ancestors lived: the pattern of these places transferred onto a map shows that despite the temporary migrations and resettlements, the Bru only move *within a defined* area! And even if wartime cataclysms upset this pattern at times, the bottom line does not change.

As far as one can tell, therefore, the Bru are – if not "native" – at least *the oldest known* inhabitants of this area. They appear in historical sources where they are still living today, and in these sources they seem just as they are today. They started interacting with surrounding states in historical times, some 400 years ago, which is well supported by data;[22] and though in my personal experience their value systems, behavioral patterns, habitus (e.g., fears) show many signs that their history is inseparable from the histories of these surrounding states, they are not a people fleeing from – and only partially because of – the latter. The kind of questioning that asks whether, beyond the history observable

[21] Hickey, who as an anthropologist is considered one of the crown witnesses of the Vietnam War, says that of the approximately 220,000 highlander-ethnic victims, "as a result of the ecology of war, in all likelihood most of the civilian casualties were among the Bru, as well as the Pakoh, Katuic, Sedang, Halang, Jeh, Stieng and Roglai people" (Hickey 1993:267).

[22] This means first and foremost the Vietnamese state that has been continuously expanding over the past half-millennium. The Champa Empire, which existed in this area until approximately the 14th–15th century, did not affect the highlands inhabited by the Bru; there are no Cham ruins, epigraphic monuments, etc. there. See Hardy et al. 2005; Hardy et al. 2009.

through micro-historical data, the Bru are "indigenous" to this area in the true sense of the word or "newcomers from somewhere else" cannot be answered on the basis of our current knowledge, or rather it is too simplistic. However this does not detract from the significance of Scott's thesis, the eminence of his macroscopic vision, the depths of his empathy; part II. will provide proof of this, where I will speak in more detail about the state evasion of the Bru.[23]

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[23] The second part of this article will be published in the next issue of Acta Ethnographica Hungarica.

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Following a keynote article by János Szulovszky, „Can there be a Christian scholarly approach to the anthropology of religion,” a fairly wide-ranging debate developed in the columns of Ethnographia. (*Ethnographia* is the quarterly periodical of the Hungarian Ethnographical Society since 1890.) Through the ideological and methodological criticism of an article by Éva Pócs, and of the wider Hungarian ethnographic scholarly community as a whole, the treatise poses the following question: is scholarly objectivity strictly secular? He then proceeds, in a quite sharp and provocative tone, to advocate for the possibility of a Christian-oriented scholarship. The treatise is followed, on the one hand, by responses from Éva Pócs, Gábor Klaniczay, Gábor Vargyas and Tamás Mohay, which, beyond their immediate reactions, outline a possible broader scholarly context for the debate. On the other hand, Ágnes Hesz, Csaba Mészáros and Zoltán Nagy, while not directly discussing the treatise itself but building upon the issue it raised, plug it into one of the most pressing contemporary international debates.

The latter three articles might provide the real significance of the debate, despite the fact that they drift relatively far off course from the original problem inasmuch as they do not deal with Christianity itself but with researchers' religiosity in general (Hesz), the epistemological situation of indigenous, shamanistic researchers (Nagy), and with the perspectivism/epistemological relativism proposed by postcolonial anthropology (Mészáros). Szulovszky's proposal relates solely to Christianity, building on its deep intertwinement with rational scholarship, among other things, which he sees as an exceptional property in relation to other religions, and thus he is not likely to be persuaded by shamanistic or animistic examples as parallels. With this in mind, I shall attempt to present the dispute in a way that also covers the special situation of the issue of Christian scholarship.

With the rise of classic anthropological authors like Evans-Pritchard and Mary Douglas, the relationship of emic/etic approaches, scholarship and local terminology has been an important anthropological theme, as it is stated in Gábor Vargyas' response. In its contemporary form, through the analysis of the researcher's epistemological commitment, the debate questions whether it is politically and ethically problematic to view the scholarly discourse as a kind of meta-discourse whose interpretations provide more fundamental truths than the informants' own terminology. That is to say, is the language of academic ethnography ultimately suited to provide legitimate explanations for any object in a way that only takes into account its own (agnostic and objectivist) criteria? If we cannot find convincing arguments for the preeminent validity of scholarly epistemology, it becomes difficult to argue that the perception of a researcher seeing a wild boar run through the village is more correct than the local villagers' who see a spirit in this same phenomenon (Csaba Mészáros' example). Similarly problematic would be a description of possession in which the researcher's – possibly secular – interpretation would appear to dominate the interpretation of the individual and the community experiencing the possession.

Éva Pócs' response, in addition to exhibiting a calm and humble attitude that is exemplary, rejects the above proposition from the outset, arguing that the sphere of the researcher's personal life is separate from the research sphere, so his/her religiosity has no potential impact on his/her analysis. According to this perspective, scholarly objectivity is a clear and unambiguous criterion, which includes value-neutrality and scholarly detachment. The debate between schools of religious phenomenology and reductionism analyzed by Ágnes Hesz is a good illustration of the fact that few people would follow Éva Pócs in her stance since the postmodern revolution. However, it should also be taken into account that however widespread the critical literature may be, the scholarly conduct adopted by Éva Pócs, built on fieldwork and respecting the informants' position in all cases, is as close to the scientific ideal she set for herself as possible, so her agnosticism infringes neither the atheist nor the Christian readers' and researchers' sensibilities. However, if we accept that personal elements may inevitably leak into the scholarly description, it behooves us to address another issue.

The difficulty of separating emic/etic positions is just as obvious in the case of indigenous researchers as it is among researchers who, as a result of fieldwork, change their value-system and „become native." In such situations, the often conflicting epistemological positions and methodological preferences manifest not in the relationship between researcher and researched but within the research community itself. Szulovszky's initial outburst sort of illustrates this – the position of a religious researcher feeling marginalized and overlooked along with his own canon. However, despite marginalization – which results from the sociology of science and institutional framework – being a legitimate and important area in the discourses of contemporary anthropology, history of science and science of religion, an indication to such is totally absent from Szulovszky's text. Éva Pócs' accusation of outdated resource utilization seems slightly strange, given that Szulovszky's proposal seems novel, according to his self-concept, except for some German-language work cited, most of whom were not authors employing Christian epistemology but rather theologians. Talal Asad, Tanya Luhrmann, Saba Mahmood or Charles Taylor are all authors who could have helped in bringing up a sensitive, more up-to-date issue, which was left instead to the discussion partners.

Since in their response Éva Pócs, as well as Gábor Klaniczay and Tamás Mohay, try to show that the accusation of „vulgar Marxist" discrimination presumed by Szulovszky is untrue in the Hungarian scholarly context, the last point for us to address is the question of the role of theology. If we agree with Éva Pócs' response, a position that Klaniczay and Mohay also seem to represent, Christian theological works appear only as a source, as part of the emic discourse. For the field researcher this often means that their importance in relation to local practice becomes secondary, because it is not vis-à-vis church authority that the researched religious practice gains significance. The perspectivism and postmodern anthropological practice outlined by Csaba Mészáros would not necessarily allow the emic/etic perspectives to appear in such a binary opposition, so theology would be considered one voice among the many voices reflecting on each other. Szulovszky's solution seems to suggest that he sees theology as part of the etic discourse, even if utilized in somewhat self-limiting ways. It is perhaps this aspect of the debate that remains the most unresolved and which for exactly this reason would be worthwhile to continue working on in hopes of a future consensus.

Based on the above, it turns out that the religious-anthropological role of Christian paradigms is important in regard to their scientific validity and their relationship to the researched subject, as well as in their practical, sociology of scientific knowledge sense. The often radical innovations and explicit emic commitment of native researchers presented by Zoltán Nagy may provide a highly accurate analogy for Szulovszky's treatise, in some respects even holding up a curved mirror to it, yet the presented movement has not become as much of a theoretic challenge as its Christian counterparts. This is probably due in part to theology having significant roots within European scholarship, as well as to the never-ceasing debate about the Christian conceptual roots of secular scholarship. Overall, it seems that Szulovszky was kicking in an open door in regards to exclusion and the importance of theology, since his discussion partners did not represent a position different than his. If we accept this, the real outstanding issue remains whether scholarly discourse deserves preferred validity, and, consequently, whether theology should appear in Christian religious anthropology as an interdisciplinary secondary literature or as a primary source. The answers provide exciting propositions in these areas, but certainly leave enough room for further discussions.

MÉSZÁROS, Csaba: *Tekintély* és *bizalom. Kultúra* és *társadalom két szibériai faluközösségben* [Authority and trust. Culture and society in two Siberian village communities]. 2013, Pécs – Budapest: PTE – Kulturális Antropológia Tanszék, MTA BTK Néprajztudományi Intézet, L'Harmattan Kiadó, 359.

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According to the title of the book, Csaba Mészáros, a Hungarian ethnographer and a specialist in Mongolian studies, is writing about authority, trust, culture and society in two Siberian village communities. This is one of the important recent books that follow the old traditions of Hungarian ethnologists (such as Antal Reguly, Bernát Munkácsi, or Vilmos Diószegi and Éva Schmidt, among others) working in Siberia from the mid-19th century. This monograph is also in the line of monographs published recently by the new generation of Siberianists in Hungary, such as Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián, Zoltán Nagy, and the author of this review, whose intention is to describe various aspects of life in particular Siberian communities based on long-term fieldwork in accordance with the western requirements of socio-cultural anthropology and the possibilities for conducting fieldwork that opened after Gorbatchov's Perestroika in the Soviet Union and Russia at the end of the 1980s. The main argument of the book is a proposition to see society (culture and history) in Siberia as a result of continuous interactions between the state and local people, sometimes partly mediated by ethnographers. So, for example, the history of ethnography in the region is the history of interactions between state interests and the activities of ethnographers in the region supported by the state in particular periods. The author does not register any significant impact of western anthropologists working in Yakutia upon this web of interactions (between state and local people). The main method of analysis is a comparison of the society and culture of two villages: one "Sakha" (Yakut), the other 'Evenki" (Tungus). However, the main objective of the comparison is not the presentation of these (and other) ethnic groups, not even that of a local (regional) culture, as it is expected, but instead the analysis of how the available versions of social and cultural organizations and institutions are performed in these localities in particular periods in interaction with the state. Through the comparison of two village communities, the author provides descriptions and summaries (about perception of environment; resettlement, collectivization, de-collectivization, privatization; various forms of cattle economy; kinship, territorial and friend relationships, etc.), and introduces the reader to the broader context of Siberianist anthropology.

This approach is in accordance with recent trends in social anthropology, especially the proposed careful incorporation of categories used in postcolonial studies in the analysis of post-socialist materials. The author also uses Bourdieu's social capital theory in the analysis of social relationships, as well as theories rooted in hunter-gatherer studies (the works of Tim Ingold, David Anderson and Nurit Bird-David on the analysis of perception of environment, among others). His other objective is to present society as a dynamic phenomenon.

Authority, trust and family character are categories that provide the links between different parts of the book. Authority may emerge when a representative of a community successfully performs (manages) options available for the community, on the bases of his or her relation of a social web with the representatives of the state (bureaucrats) located in places closer to the centers and central power (of the state). Trust (or mistrust) are important categories to perform cohesion (or skepticism) among the members of the community in particular situations. The family characters are the available categories through which various members of a community have a chance to interpret order or disorder and to perform success or lack of success.

I appreciate very much an important aspect of this book: it gives tremendous and fine details (descriptions, classifications and summaries) about life in Northeastern Siberia. The body of material comprises mainly narratives collected through semi-structured interviews during long-term fieldwork in the region. At the same time, this feature is one of the limitations of the book, because the analyses of concrete events and situations based on personal observations were less systematic. Another important feature is that the author avoids the possibility of interpretations based on ethnicity, which could be a result of an intention to construct a politically correct analysis, but could also stem from a potential combination of the absence of references to ethnic perspectives and the domination of one particular group. I would expect the author to reflect on this danger more and discuss this problem. Another potential that I see in this text is to analyze how egalitarian features leak into the highly hierarchical structure of society in Yakutia. The author includes short references to this throughout his text but does not engage with this problem systematically.

Despite the very detailed descriptions and rich material, I would be interested to learn more about emic interpretations and reflections on local terms (for example, on 'authority' and 'family character').

Ultimately, I believe that publication of the book in English (and probably also in Russian) would be of high interest to social anthropologists, specialists working with narratives, ethnographers, specialists in Siberian studies, historians and interested readers.

Moreh, Christian: *Alcalái románok. Migráció és társadalmi differenciálódás* (Romanians of Alcalá. Migration and social differentiation). 2014, Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 227.

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The study of migration is a major area of study within contemporary social science. There are a number of theoretical and methodological approaches that attempt to describe and interpret migration as a social phenomenon, using keywords like transnationalism, diaspora, multi-sited ethnography, network, global society, or social capital. Christián Moreh intends to guide us through the complex system of migratory processes by bringing this topic close to us. He investigates the *migratory way of life* of Romanians in a Spanish city, Alcalá de Henares, starting with their *migratory plans*, the way they organize their travel, their travelling, their relations to work and to the incipient Romanian civil society in Spain, as well as the social differentiation of this migrant community, one that comprises 10% of the overall population and more than half of the migrant population of a city of 200,000.

The introductory chapter starts with the description of the five-months-long fieldwork conducted in 2009, the methods used (participant observation, informal conversations and in-depth interviews), as well as the existing theoretical and methodological approaches. The latter mainly point out the scientific potential of the research topic as the author deals with them only briefly, centered on certain concepts (*migration system*, *migratory culture*). The main part of his analysis rests on internal explanatory models grounded in his field, producing a text that may be placed somewhere between a case study and a community study. The second part investigates the history of Romanian migration, its development and current contexts. It focuses on the questions of *who*, *when*, *how many*, *from where to where*, *why* and *how*, and it discusses various inter-state agreements, immigration legislation, as well as the ethnic, religious and urban geographical determinants of migration. The third chapter may be read as an itinerary based on personal experiences and impressions. The author here uses his own travel experience from Bucharest to Alcalá as a starting point for meditating on the limits and possibilities of migratory goals, and on the various challenges met during the process, such as finding your way in the city, renting an apartment, and dealing with the authorities. This part contains many useful tips and detailed practical information for anyone who intends to travel. The next chapter discusses the relation between work and success, and introduces the reader to the internal system and workings of the *migration culture* of Romanians in Alcalá. The author describes the social networks and their enabling and limiting effects on succeeding, the situatedness inherent in a *culture based on trust*, the effects of work ethic, the difference between small and large corruption, and in the meantime we get a picture of a certain general *Romanian mentality*, of migrant lifeworlds and processes of self-stereotyping. The next chapter presents the self-organization and lobbying efforts of the Romanian elites, small entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and artists in Alcalá, discussing the personal and institutional determinants of political and cultural relations. Finally, the book concludes with a discussion on researching *community*, *diaspora*, and *social differentiation*.

One of the main strengths of Christián Moreh's book is its engaging style and personal voice. The author is able to bring the reader close to the stories, motivations, successes and failures of everyday people. This impression is reinforced by long quotations from interviews that offer us a glimpse into the dense network of Spanish and Romanian relations of the Romanian community in Alcalá, and into the personal stories of *getting on* and *making a decent living*. Such stories are representations also, narratives that reflect on personal ideas and desires, the expectations of those left behind and the stories of other migrants. One question we may ask ourselves while reading them is to what extent are they typical, and whether it is possible to describe through them the general mechanisms of the complex social phenomenon of migration.

Romanians of Alcalá leaves open various possibilities of reading and interpretation, and this makes it an exciting book for everyone. We can read it as a theoretical summary of contemporary migration studies, as a field diary full of personal stories, as a practical guidebook to Alcalá de Henares, or as a history of postsocialist Romanian mentalities and mobilities.

Ruttkay-Miklián, Eszter: *Amikor a láb elnehezül* [When the foot wearies]. 2014, Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó, 265.

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Two years after her first book on the Khanty kinship system, Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián writes another book about the Khanty people living along the Sinya river. The book summarizes the Khanty's perceptions of cleanliness. Reading the book, it soon becomes clear that even more important than cleanliness is its counterpart of uncleanliness, and knowledge of the rules stemming from its avoidance, prevention and elimination is what pervades the daily life of the Khanty. The book summarizes in an easy to read, personal tone that is comprehensible even to lay people the rules and behavioral patterns linked to the phenomena of cleanliness and uncleanliness.

One of the greatest merits of the book is exactly this personal tone which immediately creates in the reader an attitude of confidence in the author. This confidence is elicited not only by the unique field and language expertise that characterizes all of the author's work, but also by the fact that Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián formulates her thoughts on the topic based on situations she has experienced and rules she has internalized during her lengthy fieldwork.

In the detailed description of a complex set of rules on uncleanliness, it becomes clear that research techniques based on fieldwork and participant observation require that the researcher not only commit long-term to the research topic/area but also accept fieldwork as a lifestyle, namely because one cannot step out of the fieldwork position while staying in the field. Collecting does not end when the voice recorder is turned off or when the camera's shutter button is pressed. This life situation and research method often leads to a researcher getting personally engaged with the community (in fact, sometimes becoming a member) that was initially the subject of his/her interest. Thus the analytically approached research object sometimes becomes a subject in which the researcher's personality is dissolved.

This epistemological feature characterizes the study of cleanliness and uncleanliness among the Khanty. During fieldwork conducted among the Khanty (especially for a woman who has extensive kinship in the researched community), one must be sure to familiarize oneself with and adhere to the rules which apply to the preservation of cleanliness and confinement of uncleanliness. In other words, the rules described in the book all become behavioral patterns that the author had to not only learn but also practice every day.

Consequently, the book provides an extremely detailed and accurate roster of the Kanthy's notions of cleanliness. Since protecting the household and human life from uncleanliness is foremost the women's task, and because fertile women are one of the main carriers and sources of uncleanliness, the author paid special attention in her processing of the topic to the position of women, the rules pertaining to women, as well as the behavioral patterns to be acquired by women throughout their life. Thus, an important part of the book is the 65-page appendix that contains details of the author's interviews with Khanty women.

One of the main goals of the book is to shed light on the relationship between cleanliness and uncleanliness and the sacred and the profane, Concepts of cleanliness form a system among the Khanty. The road to understanding the Khanty system of cleanliness and uncleanliness leads from simply dirty but still cleanable places and objects, through contamination caused by the presence of human beings, to uncleanliness related to female bodily fluids and therefore surrounded by taboos. The human presentment of the clean as sacred and the unclean as profane is a well-known topos in international anthropology.

One of the distinct lines of thought in international research on religion following Durkheim's ideas assumes that every religion and belief system shares the common feature of classifying known phenomena and notions into two categories. One group includes those phenomena that are considered by a community profane and contaminated, the other group those that are holy and at once pure. At the same time, the mechanical opposition of the profane and the sacred worlds has received a lot of criticism. Most of the profound anthropological fieldwork shows that in most cases the notions considered sacred have their profane dimension. In this respect it is edifying, for example, the way Raymond Firth anchored the phenomenon of *mana*, which the anthropological literature on religion relates to the sacred world, within the everyday world of Tikopia. Eszter Ruttkay-Miklián also comes to this conclusion in the final, summary chapter of her book when she states that the two spheres are obviously not possible nor advisable to separate in the analysis of the Khanty lifeworld, because the two spheres mutually permeate each other. One can only agree with the author on this, adding also that explaining Khanty notions of cleanliness in the framework of discourse that is based on the opposition of the sacred and the profane might not prove to be practical in all cases.

Árendás, Zsuzsa – Szeljak, György (eds): *Vándorló tárgyak. Bevándorlók tárgykultúrája Magyarországon* [Migrating objects. The material culture of immigrants in Hungary]. 2014, Budapest: Néprajzi Múzeum [Tabula Könyvek 12], 280.

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In 2011, the staff of the Ethnographic Museum began a three-year research project titled „The Study of the Material Culture of Immigrant Groups in Budapest," not even imagining that by the time the project's final essays are published, third-world migrants will have become one of the most important topics of public discourse. For non-European, and especially for non-Hungarian migrants, Hungary is primarily a transit country; very few settle down here for the long term. Researchers only turned their attention to them in the last few years, therefore rather little is known about their local life and local homes, their integration, their everyday strategies, their relationships with the host and the departed communities, their plans for staying and/or continuing their migration.

The research providing the basis of the volume is museologically driven; the approach is object-oriented, a very innovative point of view within migration research and unprecedented in our country. The staff of the Museum of Ethnography seek solutions for the re-thinking of the limitations and possibilities of ethnographic museology in the early 21st century. Furthermore: How can global social phenomena be interpreted through objects (or their absence)? How can such objects be contextualized and embedded into the structure of museum collections?

Ethnographic and anthropological object collection has a great tradition in the museologizing and presentation of other peoples' cultures. But it is exactly the theoretical and methodological bases of this tradition that the research team is reinterpreting, as they were pervaded primarily by colonialism, modernization or an eleventh-hour approach, which resulted in the formation of specific museum object diasporas. This requires a rethinking of the terminology of museological activities, a conceptual change, and a renewal of methodology and enquiry. This time the museum staff embarked upon ethnographic and anthropological research not in a far-away terrain, but among the representatives of remote peoples living in Hungary. Their basic premise was that „there is a corpus of special objects connected only to migrants" (page 12) and that „migration created new local worlds and cultural shapes which can be traced back to the mingling of cultures, hybridization processes, and immigrants' multiple ties" (page 9).

After the introduction that outlines the project's basic concept (authored by Zsuzsanna Árendás and György Szeljak), the book, which features eight authors, starts out with two theoretical studies. Gábor Wilhelm redraws the theoretical framework for the study of material culture with an ontologically based enquiry which inspects the elastic boundaries between a person (as subject) and an item (as object). He emphasizes that objects fulfill not only a symbolic, communicative or representational role, but serve as agents; that is, they participate in social processes. With immigrants, this can be particularly detected in the case of so-called boundary objects. From among the migration theories, Zsuzsanna

Árendás highlights hybridity approaches, noting that an increase in migration leads to the emergence of new forms of mobility, „within which bodies and information, as well as different patterns of mobility mix with each other" (page 71).

The rest of the book reads like comparative research, as the authors explore various migrant groups in Budapest, in the same social space and urban context. The presence of Andean Indians in Hungary is analyzed from a 25-year perspective in an excellent study by György Szeljak and Júlia Széli. Since the early 1990s, they have been investigating the process of how immigrants who place their ethnic identity, their Indianness into focus and the global migration of objects relate to each other within the framework of economic and integration strategies. Gabriella Vörös explores Turkish entrepreneurs and thus the phenomenon of döner in Budapest; more precisely, the adaptation of a Turkish life to the consumption habits of a globalizing urban culture, as well as the integration strategies and transnational relations unfolding along the restaurant chains. Ágnes Kerezsi's research focuses on a particular group of Russian immigrants, the wives, and within an extended period to boot, because Russian women immigrated to our country even before the regime change. Her writing focuses mainly on the home and objects in the home, although, given the chosen topic, gender aspects are not strongly articulated. Gábor Wilhelm examines the material culture of East- and Southeast-Asian migrants, paying special attention to the home-making process. The target choice is quite bold, as the merely 21-page study includes groups of fairly large numbers and of very different social, cultural and migratory backgrounds; admitting to the problematic nature of his endeavor, he indicates that instead of seeking completeness, he just wants to bring to light „what is out there." Zsuzsanna Árendás chose the hybridity approach proposed earlier in her theoretical treatise for her interpretation of Indian immigrants. Through examples of the home and everyday life, she analyzes within a global cultural context individual identity, the transitional nature of lifestyle, strategies of making connections and maintaining multiple ties. Judit Farkas' choice of topic is slightly different, as it examines a phenomenon that is not tied to the migration of people, but instead to the ingress of a religion and its related set of objects into a new milieu. Thanks to the study we gain insight into the world of the inhabitants of the Krishna valley in Somogyvámos and can follow the processes of sanctuary-creation. Edina Földessy contributed two articles to the volume. She explores the material culture of Middle Eastern immigrants through another theoretical innovation by incorporating in her research the anthropology of the senses. She describes the process of home-making from the perspective of two senses: sight and touch.

The research resulted in the publication of a complementary collection of texts in a booklet series by MaDok. In this, the immigrants appear in a more personal way: faces and objects can be viewed, life stories and interviews can be read. I highly recommend Kerék, Eszter – Szuhay, Péter (eds) *Az otthon tárgyai. Képeskönyv a magyarországi bevándorlók tárgykultúrájáról*. [Home Objects: Picture Album of the Material Culture of Immigrants in Hungary] (2014, Budapest: Museum of Ethnography [MaDok-füzetek 9], 264 pp.) as a follow-up to these studies, but mostly as simultaneous reading.

Takakura, Hiroki: *Arctic Pastoralist Sakha. Ethnography of Evolution and Microadaptation in Siberia*. 2015, Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 254.

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Siberian studies have always occupied a central role in Hungarian anthropological scholarship, thus a monograph on ecological adaptive strategies in north-eastern Siberia fits exactly into the profile of this present number of Acta Ethnographica focusing on non-European studies in Hungary. A book published by a Japanese author is of particular interest for Hungarian scholars involved in the study of Siberian peoples, since in both countries Siberian studies have a rich legacy of research activities on Siberian peoples since the late 19th century. Furthermore, none of these countries belonged to the metropole centres of Siberian anthropology/ethnography, and thus they can be partly characterised with an independent epistemology. While mainstream anthropological studies found distant otherness in Siberian communities, Hungarian research tradition never theorized Siberian peoples as "others," and Japanese research tradition has not referred to them as particularly distant communities either. Commercial relations, as well as political ones, were frequent between Yakutia and Japan, and it is no surprise that one of the usual pretexts for purging members of the local intelligentsia in rural Yakutia in the years of repression was their "affiliation to Japanese secret agencies."

The book consists of the author's previously published and thoroughly revised articles in English and Japanese. The introductory and concluding chapters are new, thus setting all materials and argumentation in a unified framework. Hiroki Takakura has conducted fieldwork in Yakutia since the early 1990s and has a vast experience in rural Sakha and Even lifestyles. Although his studies initially focused on reindeer herder communities in northern Yakutia, later he started to carry out research among cattle and horse breeder Sakhas of Central Yakutia as well. This current book is the summary of fieldwork done in a dozen village communities in Central Yakutia, mostly at the fluvial plains along the river Lena in Nam and Khangalas regions (to the north and south of Yakutsk).

The monograph intends to describe the adaptive strategies of Sakhas residing in probably one of the harshest climatic regions of the northern hemisphere. By doing so, the author tackles all important questions of local agriculture, i.e., obtaining ice and water, making hay and managing pastures. Rich ethnographic data (especially on hayfield and pasture management) support the author's assumption that Arctic pastoralism cannot be restricted to reindeer breeding – a topic widely researched in current anthropological scholarship. I absolutely agree with the author that the example of Sakha and Northern-Tungus coexistence in north-eastern Siberia illustrates well that under the same climatic and similar geographic conditions two very different kinds of pastoralism may function at the same time. Besides Takakura Hiroki, so far only Susan A. Crate (professor at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA) has immersed herself in the study of Sakha horse and cattle pastoralism from an anthropological point of view. Therefore the importance of this book cannot be overemphasised.

There are two questions I would like to discuss more thoroughly. The first one is theoretical. I think the ways of pastoralism perceivable today in Yakutia do not only represent a form of adaptation to ecological conditions, but they are also the outcome of a nearly four-centuries-long coexistence with the Russian and the Soviet state. Although the author deals with this issue in the second and ninth chapters, in my opinion not enough attention has been given to this problem. The system of Sakha cattle and horse economy changed radically several times under Russian colonial legislation and later in the Soviet era. For instance, until the mid-18th century, good hayfields were intensively managed land plots and commodities to be sold and bought. Due to Russian land-tenure taxation system levied on Sakhas, the importance of cattle breeding grew steadily to the detriment of horse breeding. This process resulted in an increased demand for hayfields; therefore, in the 19th century Sakhas in Central Yakutia began to collect hay from territories formerly used as pastures as well.

As far as language skills are concerned, in current anthropological scholarship there is such a huge pressure on researchers to publish and to provide academic output that sometimes the core issue of anthropology (i.e., fieldwork) is overshadowed. Since it is more and more difficult for researchers to spend years on fieldwork, usually they do not have the opportunity to get immersed in the local vernacular (especially if coursebooks are hardly available). A limited command of the Sakha language may pose a number of problems during fieldwork and during the analysis of data. This common weakness (characteristic of the majority of current anthropological studies on Yakutia) is also detectable in this book. At the same time, these minor issues do not hinder the reader from getting a full picture on Sakha horse and cattle breeding. Current global climate change, in my view, will radically change the Sakha system of horse and cattle economy thoroughly described and analysed in detail by the author, and will thus trigger Yakutia's government to respond with new adaptive techniques to mitigate inevitable harms.