Substitution and Continuity in Southern Chukotka Traditional Rituals: A Case Study from Meinypilgyno Village, 2016–2017

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Abstract. The village of Meinypilgyno is located on the shores of the Pacific Ocean in southern Chukotka. In the past, some of its inhabitants were engaged in reindeer herding on the tundra, while others fished. However, 20 years ago, during the economic crisis that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, reindeer herding was lost. However, the Chukchi of Meinypilgyno did not stop performing their main reciprocity ritual. Instead, they substituted small reindeer models and dried salmon for live animals. The central theme of the ritual has remained unchanged over 100 years, despite radical changes to the social organization and economy of this region. The clever use of ritual substitutions allows the community to keep in touch with the spirit world in a new social and economic context. This paper describes this significant ritual and also makes comparisons to Chukchi communities to the south and north.

In the past few years, there have been many works devoted to the topic of the "revival" of traditional rituals among Siberian peoples. This tone of this literature is celebratory, often identifying the long-term resilience of belief and practice despite the persecution of all forms of religious life during the Soviet period (Kharitonova 2005, 2006). At first glance, Chukotka presents much the same situation. However, rather than stressing the theme of "revival," this article will examine how the resilience of traditional ritual life is sometimes assured by employing clever substitutions, which may, at first glance, appear to be innovations. In this case, I wish to document a remarkable "reindeer-herding" ritual from the Southern Chukotka Chukchi village of Meinypilgyno that is conducted without reindeer. I will argue that through important substitutions—in this case with fish and models made of a wild sorrel paste—Chukchis have been able to maintain their obligations to the sentient environment around them while balancing their sometimes difficult access to the animals that are the focus of this ritual.

During the Soviet period, both the Governmental and the Communist Party endeavored to eliminate all religions and cults, including those practiced by indigenous pastoralists. Traditional rituals were replaced by the authorities with public professional holidays such as "The Day of the Reindeer Herder" or the "Day of the Fisherman." These events typically involved speeches, sporting events, and often displays of traditional costumes, feasts, and song. However, the observance of traditional rituals was discouraged, and the sacrificing of a live animal would have been unthinkable.

Following the collapse of the Soviet order, religious rituals were no longer banned, and in some cases, local government authorities demanded that they should be performed (Leete 2017:27). This led to the publication in the 1990s–2000s

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of a significant number of articles about the rites and ceremonies of indigenous reindeer herders in Western Siberia (Barkalaja 1997; Khariychi 2001, 2012; Leete 1999, 2004, 2017), the Trans-Baikal region (Anderson 2011; Brandisauskas 2017), and Tuva (Stepanoff 2011). David Anderson (2011) gave a detailed description of a reindeer sacrifice by an Evenki-Orochen family in the Zabaikal taiga in 2004, described the transformation of rituals in the post-Soviet period, and pointed out a tendency towards the recovery of such rituals (Anderson 2011:74–79, 87–91). On the whole, these articles have emphasized the ethnopolitical importance of these rituals (Anderson 2011:81–82). Leete (1999, 2004, 2017) argues that these newly revived rituals help indigenous peoples to retain access to their rights to their traditional territories. Natalia Novikova (1995:44) report how, at a sacred place, the Nenets had carried out a ritual of dedicating a reindeer to the then-president of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsyn. In 1993, police beat Khanty shamans who were holding a ceremony in the village of Russkinskie because they refused to sign an agreement allowing the oil companies to extract oil on their tribal territories (Leete 2017:27).

There are also many references to the rituals of the Chukchi reindeer herders in the literature, but only a few authors have made and published their detailed descriptions. The best known are the classical descriptions by Vladimir Bogoraz (1901, 1904, 1907), as well as those of Varvara Kuznetsova (1957), written based on her fieldwork in 1948–1951 in the Amguem tundra in northern Chukotka. In 1982, a collection of sacred family objects from the village of Meinypilgyno was brought to the Magadan Museum of Local History, and Raisa Ragtytval's (1986) published its detailed description. More recently, Chukchi reindeer-herders' rituals have been investigated by Virginie Vaté (2005a, 2005b, 2016) and Andrei Golovnev (2015:88–89). Similarly, Vladimir Lebedev and Iyrii Simchenko (1983) published a detailed ethnographic account from the village of Atchaivaiam located in the Koriak autonomous district. Their work has been updated by Patrick Plattet's (2005) unpublished dissertation. Alexander King (2002), Alersandra Urkachan (2002), and Erich Kasten (2004) published significant materials on traditional culture and rituals of Koriaks. These accounts differ significantly from the rituals of the Chukchi, although they share some common features with them. Some of this work has recently been synthesized into a theory of ritual by Leanette Lykkegård and Rane Willerslev (2016).

In this article, I wish to contribute to this literature by giving a full account of the main community festival in the village of Meinypilgyno in the southern part of the Chukot district. As I shall show, the rituals of this district display significant similarities and differences within the well-documented communities located to the south and north. I document the fact that the central sacrificial theme of the ritual has remained unchanged over 100 years, despite radical changes to the social organization and economy of this region. Furthermore, I argue that the clever use of ritual substitutions by the Meinypilgyno Chukchis allows the community to keep in touch with the spirit world in a new social and economic context.

Methodology

The customs and rituals of the peoples of Siberia can be divided into several groups. First, there are seasonal ceremonial days linked to the annual economic cycle. For example, the Chukchi have two such cycles: one of them relates to reindeer herding, where the central event of the ceremonial day is the slaughter of a sacrificial reindeer, and the other one to marine-mammal hunting, where sacrifice is made to the sea.[1] Second, there are rituals related to some important but nonperiodic events, for example, funeral rites. Third, there are rituals related to everyday life. The most common of them are the traditions of feeding fire, making presents to spirits—the masters of a place, and ceremonies with the bones of slaughtered animals (Anderson 2011:79–80).

Mainly, rites related to ceremonial days are reviewed herein, although some everyday life rituals are also mentioned. The article is based on the descriptions of rituals recounted by Olga Elianto, which were recorded, transcribed, and edited. Elianto is the head of the municipal authorities of the village on Meinypilgyno, one of the leaders of the local Chukchi community. She and her family annually perform the said rituals, as well as several other families of the indigenous inhabitants of Meinypilgyno. Her texts are supplemented with some shorter stories about traditions and customs told by Valeria Masalova and several other villagers of Meinypilgyno.

The ritual descriptions were collected in Meinypilgyno in July–August 2016 and July 2017. In August 2016, I was present at the "Young Reindeer Day" holiday that took place in Meinypilgyno, which I documented photographically. In July 2017, I came to Meinypilgyno again to ask for details and add to the data received in informal interviews and to work together with Elianto and Masalova. At the same time, sets of traditional ritual objects, used for the rituals in Elianto's and Masalova's families, were photographed.

The Village of Meinypilgyno and Its Inhabitants

The village of Meinypilgyno is located on the Pacific coast, 200 km south of Anadyr (the capital of

Chukotka) and 100 km north of the border between the Chukchi and Koriak autonomous regions. You can get there only by helicopter, which flies three to four times a month. About 400 Chukchis and 60 nonindigenous (mostly Russian) residents live in the village. About 100 of them are employed in social services (e.g., housing and communal services, the school, the cultural center, and the hospital), with the rest living off of fishing, especially sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*). Among the nonindigenous residents, there are traders reselling salmon and its caviar in a semi-legal way. There are no interethnic conflicts in the village, but the majority of the nonindigenous residents look down on Chukchis and have little contact with them. Special economic surveys have not been carried out, but an outsider observes that Chukchis are poorer than the settlers are. The lack of jobs and alcohol abuse are important problems in Meinypilgyno as in most other villages in the north of Russia.

The Chukchi of Meinypilgyno belong to the group of southern Chukchis—telkepylyt (Rangtytval' 1986:170)—which usually includes all Chukchis living to the south of the Anadyr River. The group was formed from the tundra Chukchi reindeer herders, who migrated there over the Anadyr River from the north in the first half of the 18th century (Lebedev and Simchenko 1983:106–107). As distinct from the northern Chukchi, the southern Chukchi had constant contacts with their southern neighbors, the Koriaks, and especially with the Kereks. The Kereks are a "small people" who used to populate the Pacific coast of northern Kamchatka and southern Chukotka and have almost disappeared. There is not a person in Meinypilgyno, presently, who would call themselves a Kerek, but there are people who believe one of their dead parents was a Kerek.

As compared with southern Chukchi migrating with reindeer over the tundra and seldom going out to the sea, the Kereks lived sedentarily in small villages on the seacoast and practiced fishing and seal hunting. There was a Kerek village in the neighborhood of the present location of the village of Meinypilgyno. Friendly relations and bartering existed between the Chukchi and Kereks. In this respect, they resembled the relations between the Chukchi reindeer herders and the coastal Chukchi and Eskimos in the northern part of Chukotka. During the period of Soviet reformations in the 1920s, the Kereks, who lived in the area under discussion, were united into a fishing *kolkhoz* (collective farm), while the Chukchi reindeer herders entered the reindeer-herding *kolkhoz*. Gradually, the Chukchi were transferred to a settled lifestyle, and their families were moved to the village of Meinypilgyno (meaning "a large lagoon" in Chukchi), located on the seacoast where the Kereks lived. Thus, two different ethnic communities became united in one village: coastal fishers, Kereks, and nomadic reindeer herders, Chukchi. For the next several decades the Kerek minority were assimilated into the Chukchi majority. Having found themselves on the sea coast, the Chukchi started fishing actively, and by the end of the 1960s, the two *kolkhozes* were united into one *sovkhoz* (state farm) covering two main economic industries: reindeer herding and fishing.

As far as reindeer herding is concerned, its background deserves special attention. During the Soviet period, four large reindeer s*ovkhozes* were organized in the southeast of Chukotka in the villages of Khatyrka, Meinypilgyno, Alkatvaam, and Tavaivaam. In the 1980s, the total number of domesticated reindeer in this area exceeded 70,000. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, the *sovkhozes* of southeastern Chukotka were transformed into municipal enterprises. Due to the transition from a planned economy to a market one, they were deprived of state support, of the opportunity for centralized sales of their products and material, and of access to centralized technical support, and within a few years, they lost their production potential. The majority of the reindeer were slaughtered, and the meat was distributed or sold to the village inhabitants, who were suffering from hunger at the end of the 1990s. Reindeer herding disappeared in all the villages of southeastern Chukotka by the end of the 1990s, except Khatyrka where there were only 320 reindeer left.

At the beginning of the year 2000, Roman Abramovich became the governor of Chukotka, and he allocated significant funds to support reindeer herding. The municipal enterprise in the village of Khatyrka received a subsidy from the regional budget and bought 1,000 reindeer stock in the neighboring Koriak Autonomous Region to add to the small existing herd. The purchased reindeer adapted well to the new place, and the stock began to grow. For the last three years (2015–2017), the reindeer livestock in Khatyrka kept steady at the level of 6,000 animals.

Looking at Khatyrka example, the inhabitants of Meinypilgyno also started to search for the ways to rehabilitate reindeer herding. In 1997, the *sovkhoz* crumbled away forever, and about twenty reindeer herders in Meinypilgyno remained jobless. Later, some former herders and their children came from Meinypilgyno to work at the municipal reindeer-herding enterprise in Khatyrka to recover the experience of working with reindeer and earning money towards purchasing their own reindeer. People thought to create in Meinypilgyno a municipal enterprise similar to Khatyrka's, and then to buy reindeer from other farms. However, this demanded significant investment from the regional budget, which the residents of Meinypilgyno could not achieve. They achieved success

only in 2015 when Anatoly Cheivyteghin, the son of the formerly famous reindeer herders' team leader, took an alternative approach and registered a family legal entity to get an official status as a farmer.[2] Later, his sister received the same status. The registration of the two farms gave them an opportunity to receive two grants for business development from the federal budget. With this money, they bought 600 reindeer in the village of Kanchalan, located 300 km to the north of Meinypilgyno. In March 2017, they received their reindeer and started to drive the stock to Meinypilgyno.

When I last visited Meinypilgyno at the end of July 2017, they had passed the halfway point of their journey. During the fawning, which occurred after they had started from Kanchalan, 200 more calves were added to the stock. Additionally, the farmers reached an agreement with the government of the Chukotka Autonomous region that the latter will allocate money for purchasing 300 animals in Khatyrka. So, by the end of 2017, the number of reindeer in the herd will total about 1,000 units, which is sufficient for the sustainable development of reindeer husbandry in this area.

The story shows the significant role of reindeer herding for the local community and provides an opportunity to better appreciate the unique fact that, despite the loss of reindeer herding, the residents of Meinypilgyno kept on celebrating the main ceremonial days from the reindeer herders' annual cycle for 20 years, performing the related reindeer herders' rituals, though they changed them a little.

The Rituals of the Meinypilgyno Chukchis

From 1990–2010s, despite the lack of reindeer, some Meinypilgyno residents, mostly women, kept on performing rituals related to reindeer herding. The overall annual ceremonial cycle of the Chukchi includes a dozen days related to important events in the reindeer herders' life (Valgirgin and Nuvano 2008; Vaté 2005a). Presently, several families in Meinypilgyno remember and partially fulfill the rituals of the three most important of these ceremonies. The first one is *Kilvei*, celebrated in May and related to reindeer calving. In 2017, eight families celebrated *Kilvei*, though each family observed the celebration at a different time. It was a tradition of Chukchi reindeer herders to celebrate the same ceremonial day at different times. Due to this, the families living in different nomad camps could visit each other. Besides, ceremonial days were often accompanied by a slaughter of many reindeer, which demanded a great amount of manpower.

As there are no reindeer, the ceremonial day is now observed independently of calving, when it suits Meinypilgyno residents. The Elianto family chose days after the end of the school year, at the beginning of June, which is why a large number of people, about 50, gathered for their ceremonial day.

In Meinypilgyno, during *Kilvei* traditional lodges—*Iarangas*[3]—were set for one or two days half a kilometer outside the village. Some families only erected tripods of three central poles, which symbolized the lodge.

The second ceremonial day to speak about is *Vaamkoranmat* (or *Vaamkaanmat*), the Day of Water. It is celebrated at the beginning of June when the ice drift starts on the rivers. *Vaam* means river or water in Chukot; *koranmat* (another variant of pronunciation is *kaanmat*) means reindeer slaughter. Formerly, soon after this ceremonial day, reindeer herders left for summer pastures and parted for two months from their families. In summer, wives, children, and old people did not move nomadically with the men but lived in a summer camp processing skins, sewing clothes, fishing, and making dried fish for the winter. During this ceremonial day, reindeer herders slaughtered several fat bulls to provide their families with meat for at least two months.

Valeria Masalova (interview July 15, 2017) described how the ritual was performed in the past and how it is performed today.

> *Vaamkoranmat* was to be held on the bank of the river. It started early in the morning like all other ceremonial days. I remember that, early in the morning, while the kettle is going to boil, my mother and I went to gather willow branches. After tea, all the necessary things for the ceremonial day (e.g., the gathered branches, dishes, kettles and tripods for cooking) were carried to the bank of the river. There a fire was made. One or several reindeer might be slaughtered, as the head of the household wished. He pointed to a reindeer, which was caught and taken by a lasso. Men slaughtered it with a spear or a knife. When the reindeer was killed, the men standing with spears near the water took the victim to the river. They pronounced special words for the river to bring fish and for themselves not to stay hungry. The killed reindeer was given water (watered), observing the same ritual as during other ceremonial days.
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> The reindeer carcass was first butchered from the left side, and then it was turned over to the right side on the laid willow branches. The right shoulder bone was separated from the flesh to be used for fortunetelling later. The legs bones were separated from muscles and sinews and broken to get raw marrow. Part of the raw meat was taken away for the second day; the rest of the meat was boiled in big pots. When the meat was cooked, women cut small pieces of meat (both raw and boiled) from all parts of the reindeer corpse, as well as pieces of skin, hooves, and a tail, cut them into tiny pieces for the ritual giving.

> During the gifting ceremony, men put small pieces of meat on a small branch of willow and pronounced something—I do not know what it was. After that, everybody started eating. After the meal, men burnt over the cleaned scapula to see the cracks and to divine the fortune by their form: how successful the summer period would be, which route to choose, how much fish there would be, [and so on]. On the second day, the women broke bones and cooked raw marrow; they also fried hooves, lips, tail, liver, and lungs. If there were several lodges in one place, the ceremony took place in each of them, in turn. After *Vaamkoranmat* people did not part, games and competitions started.
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> Our family last celebrated *Vaamkoranmat* in this way in 1990. Presently, instead of it, I carry out a simple ritual with beads. This ritual replaces reindeer sacrifice at any ceremonies. I perform it if I do not forget. Last year, I fulfilled it on *Kilvei* and *Vaamkoranmat*, but this year I did not. It is held in the following way: one should take a branch of willow of about 30 cm long or a [blade of] grass, string two beads on it and put it on the ground. A lasso is put on the grass or the branch as if it were a reindeer. We have a small lasso made of thin skin, but it is a real lasso. When a reindeer is slaughtered it moves, so the grass or the branch is moved as well as if it were a moving reindeer. White beads are usually taken; I do not know why they are two.
>
> Such ritual with beads was also carried out earlier before a live reindeer was slaughtered. But presently, when there are no reindeer, one may confine oneself to the ritual with beads. But it is not a standard. One may simply, if there is raw marrow, take all home relics—sacred ritual strings (*tainykwyt*),[4] boards for making fire (*gyr-gyr*), and other sacred objects and grease them with raw marrow from reindeer bones. That is "to feed" them, as we say. I have not done it this year yet; I have wanted to do it today but have been too busy. I'm going to break a bone and cover all these objects with raw marrow.

The third and main reindeer herders' ceremonial day is celebrated at the end of summer and is dedicated to their coming back from summer pastures to the main camp. The reunion of families after a two-month-long parting is the main event in the annual cycle of the Chukchi's nomadic life.

In Russian, it is called "Young Reindeer Day," and in Chukot, its name is *Vylghykoranmat* or *Vylghykaanmat. Vylghynalghyn*, meaning thin fur summer skin of a reindeer in Chukot. The title of the ceremonial day is related to the traditional slaughter of young reindeer to get skins with thin fur. Later, when reindeer are slaughtered for meat, the skin of young reindeer has become rougher and is not suitable for making light clothes. Formerly, a great number of reindeer were slaughtered at this time, and ceremonies lasted for several days. Like other Chukchi reindeer herders' ceremonial days, they ended with competitions in running and wrestling (Kuznetsova 1957:282; Ragtytval' 1986:190).

Presently, as there are no reindeer in Meinypilgyno, the reindeer slaughter is performed only symbolically and the ceremony duration reduced. Thus, in 2016, *Vylghykoranmat* lasted for two and a half days instead of the traditional five, and the most significant portion of that time was taken up by sports competitions. However, the reindeer meat for the participants to help themselves to and the reindeer skins were real. They were brought by the invited guests from Khatyrka.

A specific custom before the beginning of *Vylghykoranmat* is a ritual moving of a lodge to a new place (Kuznetsova 1957:265–267; Vaté 2016:141). In nomad camps, a lodge was usually symbolically moved several meters, though it was set in a special way with the performance of some special rituals: first, fixing grass tufts to the booms of lodge, and second, fixing a willow branch to the top of the three central booms (Kuznetsova 1957:267). In Meinypilgyno, the lodges were not moved but purposefully set before the ceremonial day, and both the customs were observed.

In 2016, in Meinypilgyno, the ceremonies began with the ritual of cleaning— *emtenragtat* in Chukot. This ritual had traditionally been performed for herders who came back from summer pastures. During the summer period, they traveled the tundra, far from their families, and could catch or be charged with a kind of negative "energy." One could get rid of it with a special ritual of cleaning. In Meinypilgyno, such a ritual was performed for all those present. They were smudged with the smoke of the fire, which was ignited not with matches but with friction (Fig. 1). Then everybody's forehead, hands, and feet were covered with charcoal mixed with water.

On the next day, there were no rituals, and a concert and sports competitions took place. On the third day, the rituals were performed differently in each lodge. The number of symbolically killed reindeer and of ritual appeals differed, as well as the order of ritual activities. As these peculiarities are handed down through families, when comparing the rituals in different lodges, one can imagine the relations between the lodges in the past (Lebedev and Simchenko 1983:109).

For such rituals, a paste was made from stewed arctic dock (*Rumex arcticus*)—a type of wild sorrel. In the past, the paste was a typical food dish. Today, it is cooked mainly for rituals. Arctic dock is gathered in June when it first starts to grow. As the paste simmers, foam gathers on the top. This sticky foam is skimmed off in order to small model figures of reindeer by modeling it into a ball into which willow twigs are inserted to represent antlers. These models replace real reindeer for sacrifice (Fig. 2). Then raw salmon caviar

Figure 1. Obtaining fire with the help of ritual tools (photograph by Andrey Maksimov).

Figure 2. Figures of sacrificial reindeer made of ritual Arctic dock paste, and ritual cups and spoons with Arctic dock paste (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

or berries are added into the remaining arctic dock paste. A small amount of paste is laid in two, three, or four wooden dishes in every lodge.

Offering rituals were performed in every lodge in turn, starting from the one located on the eastern side. Before the beginning of the ritual, all necessary accessories—pieces of dried turf, reindeer figures and dishes with arctic dock paste, dried fish, ritual bows and arrows, and other paraphernalia—were carefully laid at the southern part of the lodge (Fig. 3). At the beginning of the ritual, evil spirits are shooed away. Two women took out a board with two pieces of peat and put it on the ground some meters to the south of the lodge. Then two men, one after another, shot arrows in its direction with a small ritual bow. These actions helped shoo away evil spirits. Then they shooed away the spirits with a special staff with ritual objects tied on the end. Only after when the

Figure 3. A set of ritual objects, exposed before the beginning of the rituals (e.g., lassos, tainykwyt, ritual bow, herder's staff). On the right, there is a pot of water with willow twigs to water the reindeer and salmon after they are sacrificed (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

Figure 4. The beginning of the ritual to drive away evil spirits. Women carry a board with two small bonfires of pieces of turf (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

women shooed the evil spirits away, they lifted the fire board from the ground (Fig. 4) and threw it in the direction of the south. Each of the mentioned activities against evil spirits was accompanied with cries: "O-hey! O-hey!"

Then followed appeals to natural forces and feeding them. For that, the prepared arctic dock paste was thrown in the southeastern direction. The appeals had a definite order: first to the forces

of outer inanimate nature, then to reindeer and fish, then to the graves of the ancestors, and finally to the ancestors themselves. In different lodges, the number and the set of such appeals may not coincide. As the verbal messages are pronounced inwardly, an observer may not know to whom the message is addressed.

Olga Elianto spoke about the most widespread appeals to the growing moon, to the full moon, to the sun (dawn, sunset, noon), and to the ground. Unlike the tundra reindeer herders, the families from Meinypilgyno also appealed to the sea, as their life is closely related to it. Feeding was marked by throwing arctic dock paste in the southern direction and accompanied by the cries: "O-hey! O-hey!"

After that, a symbolic reindeer and fish slaughter was carried out as the reindeer, and the fish (salmon) are considered to be brothers. A ritual lasso was put on reindeer figures made of arctic dock paste and willow twigs and a dried fish (Fig. 5), and then a knife was stuck into them (Fig. 6). The actions signify that the reindeer and fish were caught and slaughtered. The fish heads were cut off, and the places where the knife struck were marked. The meat around those places was cut out with a knife and cut into small pieces (Fig. 7). As there was no real reindeer meat, willow twigs were cut into pieces instead (Fig. 8). Further, the small pieces of fish and willow twigs were given to all members of the family. All the participants of the ritual threw their pieces forward in the south direction with the cries "O-hey!"

According to tradition, every slaughtered reindeer was to be given drink (i.e., be watered). For that, a pot with water had been prepared in which there were willow leaves: reindeer's food. As reindeer at the ceremony were represented by figures of arctic dock paste and twigs, these figures were watered. The same water was poured on dried fish, the reindeer's brothers (Fig. 9).

In total, 12 reindeer were symbolically slaughtered in Olga Elianto's lodge during the ceremonial day. In other families, the number of reindeer could be greater or smaller: thus, some families slaughter five reindeer, others 30. According to Olga Elianto, the practice of using arctic dock paste and willow twigs as a substitute for reindeer is an old tradition. In the past, when real reindeer were slaughtered, the actions mentioned previously were performed before slaughtering a real reindeer. Thus, at the ceremonial day in Meinypilgyno, there was no replacement of one ritual with another; it was simply that real reindeer were not slaughtered because of their absence. That is why all the rituals took only several hours instead of several days.

The last portion of the ceremony was treating all those present, including guests, with arctic dock paste and dried fish. Each guest could eat a spoonful of ritual paste with berries and a piece of fish (Fig. 10).

Further rituals were family ones. They were carried out inside the lodge for the members of the family. I was not present at those ceremonies, but Olga Elianto provided me with a general description. After fulfilling all the rituals, a lot of traditional Chukchi dishes were cooked from local fish (salmon) and reindeer meat brought from Khatyrka for all the participants.

Discussion

As already noted, the modern rituals of the Meinypilgyno Chukchi are similar but not completely identical to their rituals in the past. In this section, I will identify the main features of the rituals that remained unchanged and how they may have evolved and changed in comparison with other regional groups of Chukchi. In particular, I will address the "economic" question of how these ritual innovations are perhaps linked to the changing social and economic context. Finally, I will examine the role of these rituals in the contemporary lives of the Meinypilgyno Chukchi.

Attitude To Space, Time, And Landscape

In the works dedicated to the rituals of reindeer-herding people, much attention is paid to the conceptualization of space and time (Anderson 2011; King 2002; Leete 2017; Plattet 2010). For example, Patrick Plattet (2010) investigated different symbolic logic that underlines Chukchi and Koriak hunters' and herders' engagement with important ritual sites in the northern part of Kamchatka. As a rule, in these works, ritual activities are performed away from ordinary life space—as in this case. The general principles are similar to how these rituals are performed in Meinypilgyno. Khanty (Leete 2017:28), Koriaks (Plattet 2010), and the Meinypilgyno Chukchi associate the east and the south with positive, or light, forces. For Meinypilgyno Chukchi, they start their rituals in the most easterly lodge and finish in the western one. Rituals which appeal to dark forces were carried out on the northern side of the lodge. Interestingly the west is ignored in all rituals.

Moving in a clockwise direction also had sacral meaning, which was observed in rituals (Barkalaja 1997:61; Leete 2004:131–132; Plattet 2010: 97–116). During the *Vylghykoranmat* and *Kilvei*, members of the family walked around their lodge clockwise. According to Olga Elianto, in the past, this direction of motion was obligatory in all acts, but presently it is observed only during ceremonial days.

It should be noted that now that the Meinypilgyno Chukchi no longer hold living reindeer they

Figure 5. The sacrifice of the salmon (beginning). A lasso is thrown on the dried salmon (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

Figure 6. The sacrifice of the salmon (continued). The dried salmon is stabbed with a knife (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

Figure 7. The sacrifice of the salmon (continued). Salmon meat, around the place where the knife was stuck, is cut out and chopped (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

Figure 8. The sacrifice of the reindeer. After the reindeer has been symbolically killed, willow twigs depicting its antlers are chopped (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

have considerably more freedom in scheduling their ceremony. In the past, rituals were coordinated with specific events in the seasonal round of reindeer herders. Presently, when there are no reindeer, they are held at any suitable time; for example, *Kilvei* is now connected with the end of the school year. However, the order of the ceremonial day succession remains.

According to the interviews, the present topography of the sacred landscape of the Chukchi of Meinypilgyno is much simpler than the one of the Khanty (Leete 2017) and Orochens (Anderson 2011), although it bears many similar characteristics. Like other peoples, they have special respect for the graves of their ancestors (Anderson 2011:88–89). One can hear many mystical stories about graves. When one passes or drives by graves, one should stop to make an offering. When moving across the landscape, one must "feed" the spirits of

Figure 9. Sacrificed salmon and reindeer are given a "drink" of water (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

Figure 10. When the rituals have been completed, each participant of the feast eats a spoonful of ritual Arctic dock paste (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

the place, who usually reside in uplands: mountains, hills, escarpments. When one travels, one should never pick up anything from the tundra without replacing it with some other object.

> Because the object taken might be a gift made by another person to the spirit of the place or it might be put on a tomb. That is why, if somebody finds a knife in the tundra, and he wants to take it, he must put a substitute on the same place, for example, a small image of a knife cut out of wood (Valerii Iatrygin, interviewed July 16, 2017).

The more complex rituals, like the ones documented here, are also subject to simplifications. In its full form the reindeer-sacrifice ritual should have several stages: first, the sacrificial animal (or substitute) is caught with a lasso, then it is struck with a knife, the place of the strike is cut out, and then it is cut into small pieces that are scattered around. Then the sacrifice victim is "given water to drink." Presently, a simplified version of the ritual is practiced. Valerii Iatrygin summarizes the possible simplifications:

> When slaughtering on a ceremonial day, a lasso is used. [However,] when you have arrived from somewhere else, you may do it without a lasso. And we do not pour water on it either. We just put something on the ground. If we are passing a holy place, we put something on the ground: tobacco most often, and do not slaughter [there]. We may put matches, bread—it is desirable that the objects be entire, uncut. But, if there are no such things, anything will do (Valerii Iatrygin, interviewed July 16, 2017).

Other authors have identified similar simplifications. For example, a recent study on the traditional knowledge held by coastal Chukchi and Eskimos about the polar bear uncovered that, although the 1956 law protecting polar bear affected the rituals, the reciprocity rituals connected with this continued to be performed secretly and in a simplified manner. Out of 64 hunters questioned from 1990–2005, only four people (6.2%) said that the ritual is still performed in its traditional way, and 11 people (17%), mainly old men, were able to describe the traditional ritual they had seen in the past in detail. At the same time, 70% of hunters performed the simplified "modernized" variant of (Kochnev 2014:43–44).

Historical Continuity

Comparing descriptions of the ceremonial days in Meinypilgyno with the descriptions of events more

than 50 years ago, we see that the modern rituals are very close to the historical models. Although texts written by Vladimir Bogoraz (1907) and Varvara Kuznetsova (1957) describe different groups of Chukchi, the general structures of the ceremonies coincide or almost coincide. Vladimir Bogoraz (1901:49–50) stressed the special importance of three sacred items that were carefully preserved in every lodge and passed over to their descendants. First was a *gyr-gyr* (a special anthropomorphic board) for making fire during ceremonies, the second was a *tainukut* (meaning misfortune averter)—a tied bundle of various sacred objects, and the third was an *iarar* (drum). According to Olga Elianto, Meinypilgyno residents continue to preserve all these sacred objects and use them for performing rituals during ceremonial days.

According to my observations, all the main rituals described by Vladimir Bogoraz (1907) and Varvara Kuznetsova (1957) were performed during *Vylghykoranmat* in 2016. These included the following:

- The special raising of the lodge before the ceremonial day;
- The ritual of making a fire with the help of a *gyr-gyr*;
- Shooing away evil spirits with smoke and with threats;
- Feeding and devotional appeals to natural forces and other spirits;
- The sacrificial slaughter of a reindeer (or its substitute);
- Giving the slaughtered reindeer a drink;
- A number of private family ritual activities within the lodge including anointing family members with wet willow bark (a substitute for reindeer blood).

The continuity with older traditions also includes sports competitions during the ceremonial day, visits of a great number of guests from other villages, and treating the guests to traditional dishes (e.g., boiled reindeer meat, reindeer marrow) including specially cooked arctic dock paste.

There are of course some differences. The elements of contemporary ritual practice in Meinypilgyno that differ from the descriptions of Vladimir Bogoraz (1907) and Varvara Kuznetsova (1957) may be divided into two types: first, the reduction and simplifying of the rituals with some parts omitted, and second, the introduction of new ritual actions into the ceremony.

In the first case, the most important was, of course, the absence of reindeer. This made the sacrifice bloodless, and the ceremony itself was much shorter. It should be noted, however, that Vladimir Bogoraz pointed out that at the turn of the 20th century some Chukchi replaced reindeer with other items when they felt that reindeer were too valuable to a family to sacrifice. In Bogoraz's (1907:369) monograph, there are pictures of reindeer figures made of paste from willow leaves or other plants used for food by reindeer herders. These figures were used as a substitute for a live reindeer for sacrifice. Vladimir Lebedev and Iurii Simchenko (1983:117–118) also noted that a substitutional sacrifice with the use of small reindeer figures could be performed both before the reindeer sacrifice and instead of it. Thus, the practice of the substitution of live reindeer with models is, in a way, an exception that was well documented in the past. The change, in this case, is that the exception has become the rule.

In the second case, I documented a significant elaboration of the reindeer sacrifice ritual. This was the symbolic sacrifice of a real salmon in addition to the reindeer models. This particular substitution of salmon for reindeer in not unknown and has been documented among Chukchi groups living further south in the Koriak Autonomous District (Plattet 2005; Lykkegård and Willerslev 2016; Willerslev 2009). At Meinypilgyno, this situation was explained by the fact that the salmon is the reindeer's brother—unfortunately, my informants did not elaborate on precisely what that kinship relation implied. The sacrificed fish was processed exactly as per the standard ritual. The fish was caught with a lasso, stabbed, and then given water. The two brothers—salmon and reindeer model—were thus treated alike in the same ritual. As with the reindeer figures, my Chukchi respondents claimed that salmon had been used during this festival even in the times when residents held a lot reindeer. Thus, according to their account, this substitution is not unusual. Rather, today it has become a much more prominent part of the ritual, eclipsing the role of the other brother.

Sacrificial Substitutes and Ritual Resilience

A strong theme in the Chukchi rituals of the past and present is the use of substitutes—a process that seemingly has accelerated in recent times. In the theoretical literature on sacrifice, this is not unusual. Sacrifices are by their very nature substitutes, and many cultures have set practices whereby one item replaces another for reasons of expediency, economy, or intention. Perhaps the most well-known and most appropriate example is the Nuer ritual wherein a wild cucumber can be sacrificed in the place of an ox. According to Evans-Pritchard (1956:128–142), these East African pastoralists would rather sacrifice an ox, but in hard times they saw the vegetable as an appropriate substitute. The wild cucumber, in this case, performs a very similar role to the models made of

cooked arctic dock paste. According to Smith and Diniger (1989:217), sacrifice is always associated with substitution: "sacrificial substitution is absolutely necessary for the integrity of the category 'sacrifice.' It is substitution, in other words, that defines sacrifice as sacrifice."

The Chukchi, albeit in other regions, have been documented using long chains of substitutes. The reindeer serves as a substitute for a person, which is confirmed by the fact that the blood of the reindeer is used to draw on the face of each member of the family, the signs denoting the eyes, ears, and deer's mouth (Willerslev 2009:699). In Meinypilgyno, instead of the blood of a living reindeer, each man's forehead was smeared with a moist willow twig. A living reindeer can be substituted, in the next instance, with a sausage made from the stomach and fat of a previously killed reindeer. The sausage, in turn, can be replaced with a small wooden image of the sausage. The reindeer can also be replaced by fish, or by a model made from grass or leaves (Plattet 2005:253–255, 351; Ragtytval 1986:188; Willerslev 2009:699), or even a small stone can be substituted for it (Plattet 2005:192–196). Finally, according to the residents of Meinypilgyno, in the most extreme case, when there is absolutely no time to conduct a more or less complete ritual, any of the victims can be replaced with a bead threaded on grass or string. I did not find any mention of the use of beads among the published descriptions of other pastoralist Chukchi. However, some authors note that the Koriaks can substitute the victim with beads as the offering (Kasten 2004:13; Urkachan 2002:24).

As Lykkegård and Willerslev (2016:15) note, the Chukchi substitutes are in an important sense "enhanced" reindeer—that is, reindeer endowed with the superior powers of different bodies. Hence, the fish is said to be a reindeer that has the capacity to swim quickly and wriggle itself around any physical obstacle, and it will, therefore, reach the ancestral realm more quickly than any reindeer with an ordinary body. The stone is said to be a slow but steady reindeer, which has the advantage of using its rock-solid body to force its way through any physical blockage. Thus, the reindeer too are sometimes given enhanced bodies, just as any deceased person is given an enhanced body through the death suit, which is effectively the body of a reindeer.

Without objecting to this assumption, I want to draw attention to the fact that such an extensive list of possible surrogate substitutes suggests that the question of what exactly can be chosen as a substitute for the Chukchi is not so important. In this case, the villagers are prepared to make large concessions in order to ensure that the ritual itself continues. This can be interpreted as something more than a "revival" and goes to the heart of ritual resilience itself.

It is possible that the choice of a surrogate substitute is primarily determined by convenience. The use of sausage or fish necessitates an abridged ritual process. If one were using a live reindeer, one must first cut off its head and tail. The layer of meat surrounding the point where the animal was stabbed needs to be carefully removed and then cut and shredded for offering. The reindeer has to be given water in three places: in front, behind, and at the point of impact with a knife or a spear. Plattet (2005:285–290) describes in detail how all this is done with a "reindeer-sausage." I myself watched as all these actions were done with dried reindeer-salmon (Figs. 5–7). Such intricate operations are much more difficult to conduct with a reindeer-paste model. Instead of removing the meat surrounding the stab wound, it is only practical to chop up the willow twigs representing the antlers. In the case of a stone, chopping is completely impossible, and the sacrifice of the bead already completely excludes all additional actions. Thus, the substitution principle for the sacrifice allows Chukchi individuals to adapt the ritual to the current situation and to conduct it even under unsuitable conditions.

It should be remarked that the Meinypilgyno Chukchi think the authenticity of their rituals is very important; they try to perform everything as carefully as possible as their predecessors did it. Such carefulness is considered important because it allows them to have their past and their predecessors' authority as a powerful background. At the same time, they stressed that the careful following of the tradition actually should not prevent its fulfillment. That is why they think it quite admissible to use simplified variants when there is no opportunity or not enough time to perform the whole of the ritual. For example, some families installed only three central poles instead of the whole lodge before *Kilvei*, and this was not criticized by the Chukchi, though the nonindigenous residents found a cause for mocking it and said that "the Chukchi did not even manage to put up a lodge."

It would also be of interest to compare the ceremonial days of the Meinypilgyno Chukchi with the modern ceremonial days of the Khanty and the forest Nenets described in the literature (Barkalaja 1997; Leete 1999, 2004, 2017). The difference is significant. There were both mystic and performance elements present in the ceremonies in western Siberia: active participation of Shamans; use of mushrooms; persistent attempts to enter the trance condition (altered conscience); communication with spirits, including evil forces (Barkalaja 1997:64); loud public appeals to spirits (Barkalaja 1997:61); drinking alcohol during the

ceremony; and a strongly marked political context (Leete 1999, 2004).

By contrast, the modern ceremonial days of the Meinypilgyno Chukchi were held quietly, without the participation of shamans (there are no shamans in Meinypilgyno at all), without mushrooms, alcohol, and attempts to enter trances. All appeals to nature were pronounced inwardly (silently). The rituals were performed with the most careful observance of traditions but without abundant formalism. Although all the rituals were performed publically, it would not be correct to say that it was a theatrical performance. Except for a number of curious people, most of the observers were members of the Chukchi families. According to Olga Elianto, though the rituals lately were performed in a way that everybody who was interested may be present at them, they cannot be regarded as a performance. Although it was entirely possible that some of the participants fulfilled the rituals formally, such "mechanical" fulfillment was still important. Having learned to fulfill the actions and remember their sequence a person might learn to understand their meaning.

During every ritual, the one who performed it did not only fulfill a definite succession of actions. These actions were accompanied by an inner appeal to the forces of nature, ancestors, and spirits, and they were not pronounced aloud. As I was told, though it is improper to speak about it, appeals to spirits are most of all very simple, of the type "I give it to you," and the requests of a very general nature, of the type "For things to come right."

According to my observations, during the *Vylghykoranmat*, the majority of the nonindigenous participants were not interested in the meaning of the rituals; they were just spectators watching a performance. However, the Chukchi were quite serious about it. There was not a single intoxicated person among the Chukchi who came and took part in the rituals, though drunkness was seen among the non-indigenous (for readers unfamiliar with Russia, it should be noted, that usually many people are drunk on village holidays).

Comparing two cases of *Kilvei*, one in the nomadic reindeer herders' community in the tundra and another in the suburbs of Anadyr (*Tavaivaiam*), where the organizers and participants had long ago abandoned reindeer husbandry and nomadic life, Vaté (2005a) showed two quite different models of the evolution of pastoralists' traditional rituals. In the tundra, the rituals mostly matched to ancient traditions, and their connection with reindeer husbandry was evident. Appeals to spirits were necessary for reindeer health and successful herding. In *Tavaivaiam*, many important points of the rituals were excluded. In particular, the family no longer plays the central role in the ritual. The lodge built for the festival was not really the home of any particular family. Social relationship was reasserted mostly at the level of the indigenous community, which represents itself as united at least for a short time (Vaté 2005a:57). As a result, the Tavaivaiam festival had largely turned into a performance, which was accompanied by comments of the old people, explaining the importance of ritual actions to the participants. Vaté (2005a:54) also stressed that the ritual was strongly oriented towards television reporting. In fact, during the festival, those who still remembered the Chukchi traditions showed parts of the ritual actions to those who forget or began to forget them.

Ritual Revival and Ritual Refugia

Victor Turner (1968:23), in his classic work on the Nedembu of East Africa, pointed out that ritual can be considered as an adaptive mechanism that facilitates the perception of the new. There is certainly no shortage of change and innovation in this part of post-Soviet Russia. In the past, the calendar cycle of the traditional ceremonial days performed a stabilizing and organizing function regulating the annual economic cycle. In contemporary conditions, ceremonial days and rituals have become a type of refuge for retaining traditional cultures of indigenous peoples in Siberia (Khariychi 2012:99–100).

The role of refugia was considered in detail by Vaté (2005b:60–61) for northern Chukotka (Iultinskii district), where she saw ceremonies as maintaining the integrity of the two social and economic groups of the Chukchi: the tundra reindeer herders and the coastal sea hunters. Travel was a major theme in Meinypilgyno. For the *Vylghykoranmat*, relatives gathered from all the villages of southeastern Chukotka, despite the fact that in this area there are no roads between the villages. It was especially important that relatives from Khatyrka participated since this is the only village where reindeer herding still continued. These special guests used a track-wheeled vehicle to bring reindeer meat and skins with them.

Unlike in other settings, there was no overt ethnopolitical subtext to ceremonial day in Meinypilgyno. However, the fact of the mass participation of the residents in it was important from the standpoint of indigenous people's position in the context of the regional policy of Chukotka. It is relevant that Olga Elianto, head of the municipal administration of Meinypilgyno, is an expert in the Chukchi traditions and customs and their propagator among the youth. On the day of ceremonial, she both carried out the rituals in her lodge and attracted a big group of schoolchildren to it (Fig. 11).

Figure 11. Children participate in the ritual together with adults (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

In this regard, it should be noted that during Soviet times, the authorities paid special attention to reconciling the ceremonial rituals of the Chukchi reindeer herders with the state ideology. Modern rituals in Meinypilgyno demonstrate that the attempts of the Soviet authorities to control the traditional culture failed: the rituals retained their content and did not turn into a performance. Instead, they have become a factor in ethnic mobilization.

The rituals are almost unchanged; the local residents have always striven to perform them carefully, as accurately as possible, with the reminiscence of their childhood and their parents' stories as the ground for their future. With the same perseverance as women have undertaken in annually repeating the most important of the reindeer herders' rituals, the Meinypilgyno men kept on struggling for the restoration of reindeer herding.

Conclusion

Reindeer herders' ceremonial days, especially *Vylghykoranmat* and *Kilvei*, are of fundamental importance in Chukchi culture. According to Lebedev and Simchenko (1983), such ceremonial days are both related to reindeer and depict the relations of the Chukchi to nature on the whole. The ceremonies are dedicated to everything: tundra, willow bushes, water, the sky, the sun, the moon, mountains, and people but the reindeer is the main character. The Chukchi have a proverb which expresses the essence of the rituals: "The tundra feeds the reindeer, the reindeer feed us." A human experiences his or her integration with the natural landscape via the reindeer. The ritual consumption of food on the ceremonial day is not just for eating rich, tasty food. In eating a reindeer, people unite their spiritual substance with the reindeer's, and as the reindeer is bred by nature and is an integral part of it, people in this way unite with nature. That is why, when all the representatives of the environment get their portion of ritual reindeer meat, they are thought to receive back the substance embodied in the reindeer by nature (Lebedev and Simchenko 1983:109).

In Meinypilgyno, after reindeer herding disappeared, the day of ceremonies absolutely ceased to be a feast day. Although the meat of the sacrificial animal reindeer has been replaced with arctic dock paste, the essence of the ceremony remains the same. The local community's switching over from reindeer herding to fishing is depicted in the ritual changes when a reindeer obtained a "brother"—salmon—and stopped being the only mediator between man and nature. Due to the inclusion of salmon into the ritual alongside reindeer, it has become more comprehensive and symbolizes the integration of people both with the world of tundra and with the world of the sea (i.e., with the whole surrounding world).

Having considered the changes in Meinypilgyno Chukchi rituals and compared them to other rituals (Kuznetsova 1957; Lebedev and Simchenko 1983; Plattet 2005; Ragtytval 1986; Valgirgin and Nuvano 2008; Vaté 2005a,b), it appears that the main features determining the ritual's meaning have not changed. As in the old days, they continue basic ritual actions: they make fire by friction, expel evil spirits, and perform sacrifice, offering, and many private family rituals. This resilience in an ever-changing social context and lifestyle is achieved through the main principle of sacrifice, which can be called the principle of substitution. The ability to replace one sacrificial victim with another without compromising the essence of the ritual allows the Chukchi to adapt their ritual actions to new conditions, even very unfavorable ones.

According to Dmitrii Likhachev (2006:178), the attitude to the past may be of two types: treating it as a kind of performance, theatre, or decoration, or viewing it as a document. As far as the Khanty ceremonial days described by Barkalaja (1997) and Leete (2017) are concerned, showmanship and theatricalization prevailed in them. It should, however, be noted that the theatricality did not exclude a serious attitude towards the ritual, at least on the part of those present (Leete 2017:32).

Two cases of *Kilvei* studied by Vaté (2005a) showed two different models of the Chukchi

festival's evolution. In the first case, the festival has retained a close connection with reindeer; in the second, it has become a performance and political action. The previous examples of modern festivals of the Khanty and the forest Nenets (Barkalaja 1997; Leete 1999, 2004) correspond mostly to this second model.

My observations at Meinypilgyno, where residents appreciate the authenticity and historical accuracy in their traditions, customs, and rituals, offered a third model of the festival's evolution. In Meinypilgyno, rituals were not a representation, but they no longer fulfilled their immediate function—to ensure the success of reindeer herding, since there was no longer a single reindeer left. I do not think that the rituals were an excuse to demonstrate the unity of the Chukchi for any political purposes. The participants that I interviewed stressed that they consider the continuation of the rituals an important component of Chukchi identity. The preservation of identity, including family ties, a particular perception of the world, language, and closeness to nature was precisely an end in itself, and not, say, a means to improve living standards and raise the level of income of a generally poor community. This same third model can be applied to the case of Zabaikal Evenki-Orochen modern rituals, where the combination of weak attention and feeble interest in the ritual's authenticity and a serious attitude to the ritual itself, was also remarked by David Anderson (2011:92).

As a final conclusion, I would like to say some words about the perception of all the events taking place in Meinypilgyno in the outer world. While coming back from my trip, I gave some interviews for the media in Anadyr (the center of the Chukotka Autonomous Region), in which I spoke of the fact that, after 20 years of effort, the Meinypilgyno residents had managed to achieve financial support to restore reindeer herding, and that the villagers have kept on fulfilling all reindeer herders' traditional rituals by sacrificing symbolic figures of reindeer made of arctic dock paste as substitutes for real reindeer. Having said that, I did not point out the interrelation between these two facts as I considered them to be independent. And none of those interviewed in Meinypilgyno suggested the existence of such correlation. However, the journalists immediately proceeded to publish the text of the interview on the internet and title it: "How sacrifice rituals helped to restore reindeer herding." The correlation of the reindeer-herding restoration and the rituals was more evident for them than for the Chukchi themselves. One can assume that the unrelenting focus on the spiritual connections between reindeer and people evident in these rituals kept Meinypilgyno Chukchi focused on their need to resuscitate the reindeer herding, and that could have significantly contributed to the solution of the problem.

Endnotes

1. The Northern Chukchi are historically divided into two social and economic groups: one of them deals with nomadic reindeer herding in the tundra, and the other lives sedentary life on the seacoast and deals with whale, walrus, and seal hunting. Sustainable family and economic relations have formed between the groups, and they are being supported presently (Vaté 2005b: 53–56).

2. According to the law of the Russian Federation, he became a "*head of peasant farm enterprise*."

3. An *iaranga* is a traditional dome-shaped tent about seven meters in diameter and constructed from a number of wooden poles, three of which are main poles, and covered by *rethem*—a covering sewn from reindeer skins. Nowadays, *rethem* is often made from tarps (Fig. 12).

4. *Tainykvyt* means "that which thwarts misfortune, that which protect from misfortune" (Ragtytval 1986:172). The *Tainykvyt* ties together diverse elements representative of important moments in the life of a family lineage: anthropomorphic wooden figurines around 10–15 cm tall, parts of killed animals, small stones found in the necks of reindeer, and small stones with holes that have been collected from paths and reputed to have protective powers. At festival time, each of these parts of the string is separately fed raw marrow (Vaté 2005a:45).

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Figure 12. *Iaranga* (traditional tent) on the beach near the village of Meinypilgyno, July 2016 (photograph by Konstantin Klokov).

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