

probably very archaic ones. Out-of-song events are subdivided in accordance with this belief. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the structures of the song texts of both above-treated groups are analogical to the models of the worlds. The songs are organised in accordance with the organisation of the world.

### Literature

<sup>1</sup>*Zhivaya starin a. E. 2. S.-Peterburg, 1911, pp. 233-246.*

<sup>2</sup>Shein, P. *Velikor us v svoikh pesnyakh, obychayakh, verovaniyakh, skazkakh, legendakh i t.p. I., e. 1-2. S.-Peterburg, 1898-1900, No. 555.*

<sup>3</sup>Korinfsky, A. *Trudovoi god russkogo krestyanina. I. Moscow, 1904, p. 22.*

<sup>4</sup>Zhuravlyov, A. *Okhranitelnnye obryady, svyazannye s padezhom skota i ikh geograficheskoe rasprostranenie. In: Slavyanski i balkanski folklor: Genezis. Arkhaika. Traditsii. Moscow, 1978, pp. 76-77.*

<sup>5</sup>Dobrovolsky, V. *Smolenski etnograficheski sbornik. IV. S.-Peterburg, 1903, No. 19, p. 221.*

<sup>6</sup>*Pesni, sobrannye P. V. Kireyevskim: Novaya serya v 2-kph. Moscow, 1911, No. 388.*

<sup>7</sup>See Note 4, p.77.

<sup>8</sup>*Poeziya krestyanskikh prazdnikov. Leningrad, 1970, No. 479.*

## ABOUT THE RELIGION OF THE MANSI

Natalya Sainakhova. Khanty-Mansiisk, Khanty-Mansi District, Russia

In the past, the Khanty and Mansi belonged to several tribes, each of whom had its own dialect. The larger Mansi tribes settled in Upper Lozva, Lower Lozva in Upper and Central Konda and elsewhere. Each tribe had its common customs and beliefs and calendar festivals, for which the community summoned to a common assembling place all those who lived up the water-ways. On the Konda such a place was the village of Nakhratsky, on the Ob it were Kondinsk, Belogoye and other villages.

The Ob-Ugrian tribes belonged to two large communities called *Moshch* and *Por*. In the past, the communities were strictly exogamous units, the members of which we called 'blood relatives' and named 'brothers' and 'sisters'. The community comprised numerous lineages, the name of which shows

whether their lineage is of earlier later origin. The names could be several, and they came down from the totemic ancestor or the forefather-hero.

The list of totem animals can be long, and here we will present only a few examples. The totems of Por community included:

Diver (*pahot oika* – 'Old Man Diver'), who lives, according to the belief, in Shominon huts on the Sosva River. The settlers there name themselves 'the Shoi nation' (*shoiyng mahum*). The creator of their lineage – *shoiyng otor* – is the diver-bird, *otor* means 'hero'.

Seagull (*halev oika* – 'Old Man Seagull') settles in Oruin huts on the Sosva River. Earlier there lived the lineage of 'shed-hair parka', whose founder and later totem was the seagull.

Hawk (*hortahan oika* – 'Old Man Hawk') lived, according to the beliefs, in the huts of Hurumpaul on the Lyapin River, and became the forefather of the lineage.

Among the totem animals of Moshsh community belonged:

Frog (*porygpan yhva* – the 'Old Woman Frog'), which was honoured in the Sardei houses.

Eagle (*yusvoi*), honoured in Menseng houses.

Sable (*nyohos*), honoured in Manon houses.

There are numerous legends, folk-tales and songs about the totems, the lineages, mythical forefathers and protectors, where the theme of witchcraft, magical formulae and magic present themselves.

The position of the bear is important in the custom-related folklore. This king of the Siberian forest was a special animal for the Mansi, and therefore deeply honoured. He was considered to be wise and a clairvoyant, sent by the gods to look after the fulfilment of promises and justice on earth.

He was the highest defender and keeper of man. According to the myths, it was the bear who taught the Mansi the exploitation of fire and he was the healer of serious diseases.

The forefathers of a lineage could be animals, birds, seldom plants or insects (e.g. butterfly).

Every representative of the species could be an object of worship, for they were considered blood-relatives with each other. A community could not kill its own totem animal, or a strict ceremony had to follow. In case of killing a bear (in Por lineage a well-known totem) the bear-feast was organised.

The bear-feast is a total folklore-complex, consisting of songs, dramatic scenes, fairy-tales and riddles. Songs, of course, are most numerous. According to their time of performing, idea and content, they are divided into 3 strictly different groups: songs about the bear, songs accompanying the drama per-

formances and songs of invocation of the tribal spirits. The feast begins with the bear songs (*ui eryg*), which in their turn are divided into:

1. Songs about bringing the bear into the hut. The way from the hunting-place to home is described. The songs present a detailed and precise list of the toponyms: the finest change in the landscape is observed, also every hill and mountain. In the songs the bear is honoured on its way to the hut. The hunters frequently stop and shoot in the air. On the tree trunks along the road idiographic sketches are carved to inform the passer-by about the number of hunters, dogs, and killed bears.

2. Morning songs sung at every dawn to wake the bear. The songs have many different variants.

3. Songs about the origin of the bear. The bear is either the son of the god Numi-Torum, or it has human origin: it is the son of a woman from Moshch community, who turned into a bear. The songs from this subgroup also have several variants.

4. Songs about the wanderings of the bear and his death through the hunter. The songs are numerous, but rather stereotypical: the bear wanders in the mountains and forests, and finally a village hunter finds tracks of the bear and kills it.

5. Songs about the bear-hunters. The characters in these songs are various nature spirits and spirits of the ancestors who imitate the humans in worshipping the bear and holding a feast in his honour.

6. Songs about the promises of the bear. The bear is portrayed as a protector of vows on Earth. The bear must judge the person accused of something and giving an oath about innocence. The person is guilty when, meeting a bear, he is killed.

7. Songs of farewell, admonitions and appeals to the bear. It is a case of seeing the bear off, saying that he must not lurk around the food in the storage hut, steal the prey from a trap, attack domestic animals, etc.

The main theme of the bear-feast songs is the exaltation of the bear as a totem animal and a protecting forefather, and the description of the hunt on him. Their aim is to turn aside the bear's anger with kind, flattering and respectful appeals.

Translated by Ume Kelam